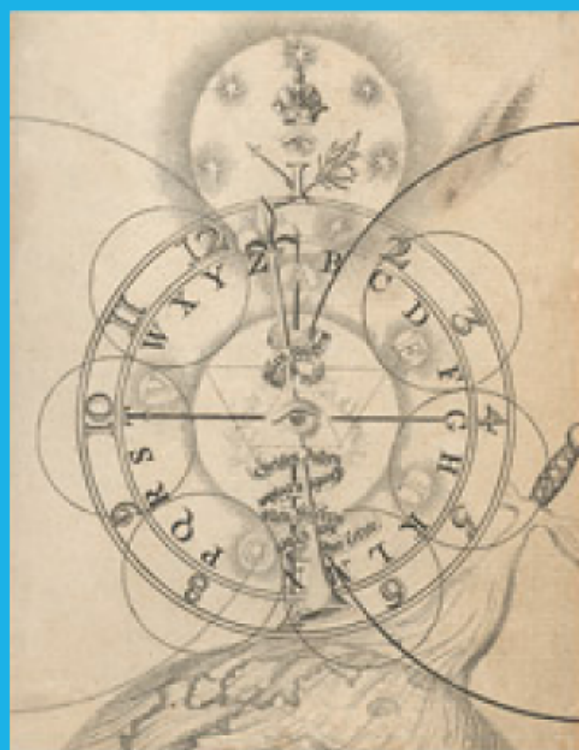


Dictionary  
of Gnosis  
& Western  
Esotericism



EDITED BY

*Wouter J. Hanegraaff*

IN COLLABORATION WITH

*Antoine Faivre*

*Roelof van den Broek*

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## INTRODUCTION

Under the general heading “Gnosis and Western Esotericism”, this Dictionary brings together a great range of historical currents and personalities that have flourished in Western culture and society over a period of roughly two millennia, from Late Antiquity to the present. By doing so, it intends not only to provide a comprehensive reference work, but also to question certain ingrained assumptions about the history of Western religion and culture, and promote new agendas and analytical frameworks for research in these domains. What is at stake in such a shift of perspective can best be illustrated by taking a short look at the main terminological conventions that have traditionally been dominant.

The term *Gnosticism* was originally a pejorative term, coined in the 17th century by the Cambridge Platonist Henry More. In adopting it as a purportedly neutral scholarly category, historians also largely took over the assumption that there had actually existed a distinct religious system which could be called Gnosticism, and which could be clearly defined in opposition to the early Christian church. In recent decades it has become increasingly clear, however, that any such reification of “Gnosticism” is untenable<sup>1</sup> and leads to historical simplifications; the idea of a clear-cut opposition of Christianity versus Gnosticism in fact reflects heresiological strategies by means of which certain factions and their spokesmen sought (successfully, as it turned out) to cement their own identity as “true” Christians by construing a negative other: the adherents of “the Gnosis falsely so called”, demonized as the enemies of the true faith. It is historically more accurate, however, to see the latter, who often adhered to mythological gnostic systems, as representatives of a much broader and variegated movement or type of religiosity ‘characterized by a strong emphasis on esoteric knowledge (gnosis) as the only means of salvation, which implied the return to one’s divine origin’.<sup>2</sup>

To this much broader movement of *Gnosis* in Late Antiquity belonged not only “Gnosticism”, but also, in their own ways, Christians such as Clement of Alexandria and, notably, the currents that inspired the Hermetic literature. In the domain of *Hermetism*, too, scholarly research has long been influenced by artificial black-and-white distinctions based upon normative agendas. The great pioneers of this field, Walter Scott and André-Jean Festugière, sharply opposed a “learned” or “philosophical” Hermetism against a “popular” hermetism: the worldviews belonging to the former category deserved the respect of serious scholars, but although the “occult” and “superstitious” practices belonging to the latter (nowadays referred to more neutrally as “technical” hermetica) also needed to be studied, they were referred to with contempt as no more than ‘masses of rubbish’.<sup>3</sup> A no less important bias concerned the almost exclusive focus of scholars like Festugière on the Greek and philosophical dimensions of the Hermetic literature, at the expense of their Egyptian backgrounds – an emphasis that echoes long-standing perceptions of Egypt as the homeland of paganism and idolatry pitted against Greece as the origin of Reason and Enlightenment. Progress in the study of Hermetism in more recent decades has essentially consisted in correcting these biases on the basis of careful philological and source-critical research. The central importance of Egyptian religion for understanding the Hermetic literature is now no longer in any doubt; and it has become clear that the “philosophical” and “technical” Hermetica are in fact products of one and the same pagan intellectual milieu in Graeco-Roman Egypt, and must therefore be seen as closely connected.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See notably Michael Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; and the entry “Gnosticism I” in this Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> See entry “Gnosticism I” in this Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> W. Scott (ed.), *Hermetica*, I, Oxford, 1924, 1.

<sup>4</sup> See notably Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte* (Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section “Textes”,

In the context of Late Antiquity, and notably in Hellenistic Egypt, we are therefore dealing with a complex type of religiosity based on the pursuit of gnosis or salvific esoteric knowledge. This phenomenon cannot be reduced to either Gnosticism or Hermetism but includes both; and it may manifest itself in pagan, Christian, as well as Jewish contexts. Moreover, with respect neither to Late Antiquity nor to later periods is it possible to study the history of these currents in isolation from that of the so-called *occult sciences*. This fact adds considerable complexity to the domain covered in this Dictionary, since it implies a large overlap between theories and practices focused on “gnosis” and pertaining primarily to the domain of religion, and others pertaining more obviously to that of science. That much attention is given in the present reference work to astrology, alchemy and *magia naturalis* does not reflect any wish to recast these disciplines as essentially religious currents focused primarily on gnosis and spiritual pursuits, or to deny their grounding in natural philosophy and science. On the contrary, the intention is to highlight the complexity of the relations between science, natural philosophy, cosmology and religion in the period from Antiquity through the 17th and even 18th centuries, against the tendency of earlier generations to deny this complexity in the interest of simplifying “religion versus science” oppositions. Thus, for example, the attempt (associated with C.G. Jung and his school) to present alchemy as not a scientific but a spiritual pursuit is no less reductionistic than the tendency of positivist historiography to ignore religious dimensions of alchemical literature as irrelevant. This Dictionary seeks to highlight the importance of the natural sciences for the study of “Gnosis and Western Esotericism” as well as the relevance of the latter to the history of science and philosophy; for only by multi- and interdisciplinary research that is attentive to all the various dimensions of these complex domains will it be possible to correctly assess their importance in Western culture.

Processes of acculturation by means of which a variety of originally “pagan” systems of ideas – such as e.g. those originating in hermetic, neoplatonic, and even aristotelian contexts – became integral parts of Christian culture during the Middle Ages and Renaissance are an obvious focus of interest for the study of “Gnosis and Western Esotericism”. Major examples during the Middle Ages are the reception of Hermetic literature by a range of Christian theologians,<sup>5</sup> the strange phenomenon of ritual magic flourishing in the context of the medieval “clerical underworld”,<sup>6</sup> and the revival of the “occult sciences” during the later Middle Ages as a result of a flood of translations from Arabic into Latin.<sup>7</sup> These developments provided the indispensable foundation for what has been referred to as the *Hermetic tradition* of the Renaissance, starting with Marsilio Ficino’s epoch-making translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in 1463 (published in 1471, and with numerous reprints throughout the 16th century), in the context of his life-long project of recovering the supreme religious philosophy of the “divine Plato” and a long chain of *prisci theologi* who were believed to have preceded him. Since Ficino saw Plato as a religious author and read him through neoplatonic lenses, his new Christian-platonic philosophy was bound to give a new legitimacy to late-antique theurgy and related occult practices, incorrectly but influentially attributed to ancient authorities like Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus. The resulting mixture of hermetic, neoplatonic and occult traditions (all, of course, integrated within a Christian framework) was further enriched by a heady infusion of Jewish traditions: the so-called *Christian kabbalah*, pioneered by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin and many other authors in

3 and 7), 2 vols., Quebec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1978 and 1982; Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the late Pagan Mind*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> See entry “Hermetic Literature II” in this Dictionary.

<sup>6</sup> The term was introduced in the standard textbook by Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 (ch. 7).

<sup>7</sup> Mention should be made here of the pioneering and still indispensable multi-volume work by Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols., New York: MacMillan & Columbia University Press, 1923-1958.

their wake, left an indelible mark on all later developments of the tradition. Thus the 16th century saw the birth of a new type of syncretic religiosity that could make its appearance in various confessional contexts, and was based on Jewish, Christian and pagan components. Traditional disciplines like astrology, *magia* and alchemy now came to be understood as integral parts of a comprehensive religious philosophy and cosmology on neoplatonic, hermetic and kabbalistic foundations, sometimes referred to as *philosophia occulta*. The innovative (al)chemical philosophy based upon the writings (real or spurious) of Paracelsus left a particularly strong mark on subsequent developments, as represented notably by the Rosicrucian current of the early 17th century and its continuations over the next centuries, and the Christian theosophical tradition linked to Jacob Boehme and his followers, that emerged around the same time and found multiple adherents until the early 19th century and beyond.

It is again due to ingrained ideological biases – ultimately grounded in the biblical and theological rejection of paganism as idolatry – rather than for scholarly reasons that this entire domain was severely neglected by academic research until far into the 20th century. In 1938 Paul Oskar Kristeller first called attention to the importance of the Hermetic literature for Renaissance culture, and Italian scholars began to study some of the sources<sup>8</sup> (although specialists still tended to look at the occult dimensions of Renaissance hermetism as an embarrassment which they preferred to ignore as much as possible);<sup>9</sup> but it was only in 1964 that the “Hermetic Tradition” was definitely put on the agenda of scholarly research – particularly in the context of the history of science<sup>10</sup> – due to Frances A. Yates’s extremely influential *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*.<sup>11</sup> In a series of later books, notably *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972) and *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979), she further explored the development of Hermetic philosophy and related traditions such as the “Christian kabbalah” and the Rosicrucian furore of the early 17th century. While Yates’s work has been of the greatest importance in bringing these subjects to the attention of a wide audience, particularly in the anglophone world, her grand narrative of “the Hermetic Tradition” as a coherent and quasi-autonomous counterculture based upon magic and leading to science has been called into question by subsequent research: what is nowadays referred to as *hermeticism* (an umbrella concept that in fact comprises much more, as we have seen, than the hermetic literature only)<sup>12</sup> was by no means limited to some magical

<sup>8</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, “Marsilio Ficino e Lodovico Lazzarelli: Contributo alla diffusione delle idee ermetiche nel rinascimento”, *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Lettere Storia e Filosofia* 2:7 (1938), 237-263, repr. in Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* I, Roma, 1956. See discussion in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Lodovico Lazzarelli and the Hermetic Christ: At the Sources of Renaissance Hermetism”, in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff & Ruud M. Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents*, Phoenix: Arizona Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, “L’état présent des études sur Marsile Ficin”, in: *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance* (XVIIe colloque international de Tours), Paris: J. Vrin, 1976, 63: ‘grâce à l’oeuvre de Thorndike, de Miss Yates et d’autres, nous ne sommes plus épouvantés quand nous rencontrons des idées scientifiques bizarres ou des conceptions astrologiques, alchimique ou magiques chez les penseurs des siècles passés. Si nous découvrons des idées de ce genre dans l’oeuvre de Ficin, nous ne lui en faisons pas reproche, mais nous le plaçons simplement dans une vaste tradition intellectuelle qui avait été négligée et évitée trop longtemps par les historiens, et qui est représentée par une littérature étendue et difficile qui a encore besoin, même après les recherches récentes, d’un grand effort d’étude et d’exploration’.

<sup>10</sup> On this debate about the “Yates thesis” (inspired in particular by Yates’s article “The Hermetic Tradition in Renaissance Science”, in: Charles S. Singleton [ed.], *Art, Science, and History in the Renaissance*, Baltimore & London, 1967, 255-274), see e.g. Brian P. Copenhaver, “Natural Magic, Hermeticism, and Occultism in Early Modern Science”, in: David C. Lindberg & Robert S. Westman (eds.), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge, 1990, and H. Floris Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry*, Chicago & London, 1994, 169-183.

<sup>11</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London & Chicago: Routledge and Kegan Paul & University of Chicago Press, 1964.

<sup>12</sup> Hence the distinction made in this Dictionary between “Hermetism” (as referring to the philosophical Hermetica and their commentaries) and “Hermeticism” (as a concept referring to the entire syncretic mixture that emerged

subculture but was abundantly present in “mainstream” religious, philosophical and scientific discourse as well, and its great representatives were complex thinkers whose perspective can by no means be reduced to hermeticism and magic alone.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the simple and dramatic picture of a quasi-autonomous counter-tradition of “hermeticists” or “Renaissance magi” fighting against the establishment (theologians, rationalists, scientists) has given way to a less romantic but more accurate perception of “hermeticism” as a traditionally underestimated dimension of *general* religious and cultural developments in pre- and early modern Western society.

In a manner very similar to what happened in Late Antiquity, with the reification of “Gnosticism” as a distinct heretical system opposed to Christianity, the concept of a distinct system or tradition of “Hermeticism” (comprising, as we have seen, the entire mixture of hermetic literature, neoplatonic speculation, kabbalah, alchemy, astrology, and magic outlined above) seems to have emerged in the 17th century and to have been taken up especially in Protestant contexts.<sup>14</sup> It is mainly against this background that the proponents of the Enlightenment came to present it as the epitome of unreason and superstition. Once again, the process was one of cementing one’s own identity by construing a negative “other”: the very project of Enlightenment required a wholesale rejection of “the occult”. But in this case, too, careful historical research reveals a much more complex picture. The more we learn about the relationship between the Enlightenment and phenomena such as Freemasonry and related associations (such as the Bavarian Illuminaten or the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer) or the variegated field referred to as 18th-century Illuminism, the clearer it becomes that the boundaries between reason and its “other” were in fact blurred and shifting, with many important figures finding themselves with one foot in each camp. As the historical evidence thus forces us to re-evaluate and problematize traditional concepts of the “Age of Reason”, we also need to reconsider the effects of those concepts on subsequent historiography.<sup>15</sup>

The reification mainly by Protestant and Enlightenment authors of “Hermeticism” as a coherent counterculture of superstition and unreason, followed by its exclusion from acceptable discourse, forced its sympathizers to adopt similar strategies. From the 18th century on and throughout the 19th, as a by-product of secularization and the disenchantment of the world, one sees them engaged in attempts at construing their own identity by means of the “invention of tradition”: essentially adopting the Protestant and Enlightenment concept of a hermetic or magical counterculture, they sought to defend it as based upon a superior worldview with ancient roots, and opposed to religious dogmatism and narrow-minded rationalism. Here, too, the process was a highly complex and ambivalent one, with hermetically-oriented authors making frequent reference to “reason”, “science” or “historical facts” in order to defend the notion of an ancient and

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in the wake of Ficino’s translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and that included many currents and ideas that are not actually derived from Hermetic sources).

<sup>13</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism between Counterculture and New Complexity”, *Aries* 1:1 (2001), 5-37.

<sup>14</sup> See in particular the polemics of Ehregott Daniel Colberg against what he referred to as “platonisch-hermetic Christianity” (*Das Platonisch-Hermetisches* [sic] *Christenthum, Begreifend Die Historische Erzählung vom Ursprung und vielerley Secten der heutigen Fanatische Theologie, unterm Namen der Paracelsisten, Weigelianer, Rosencreutzer, Quäcker, Böhmisten, Wiedertäufer, Bourignisten, Labadisten, und Quietisten*, 2 vols., Frankfurt & Leipzig: M.G. Widmann, 1690-1691), and the defense of the same currents by Gottfried Arnold (*Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie: Vom Anfang des neuen Testaments bis auf das Jahr Christi 1688*, Frankfurt a.M.: Thomas Fritsch, 1700). Note that the Roman Catholic Marin Mersenne already attacked the opinions of the ‘platonists, rabbis and magi’ earlier in the century (*Quaestiones celeberrimae in Genesim*, esp. the separate final section, entitled *Observationes et emendationes ad Francisci Georgii Veneti “Problemata”*, Paris, 1623). Mersenne clearly targets the entire compound (represented for him by authors such as Giorgio da Veneto and Fludd) that eventually came to be referred to as “hermeticism”, but does not yet refer to it as such.

<sup>15</sup> Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (ed.), *Aufklärung und Esoterik* (Studien zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert, 24), Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1999; Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason: Eighteenth-Century Rosicrucianism in Central Europe and its Relationship to the Enlightenment*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992.

superior tradition of “magic and the occult” that had been present since hoary antiquity and had continued through the ages. The term *occultism*, a neologism first attested in 1842, was quickly picked up in these circles as an appropriate label for their own perspectives. Eventually the term has also come to be adopted by scholars, as a historical label for these same 19th-century circles and their 20th-century continuations.<sup>16</sup>

It is likewise in the first half of the 19th century that the term *esotericism* (French: “ésotérisme”) emerged as well, having been coined by the Protestant historian Jacques Matter in his *Histoire critique du gnosticisme et de son influence* published in 1828. The term therefore did not originate as a self-designation by which certain religious authors or currents identified themselves or their own perspectives, but as a scholarly label applied *a posteriori* to certain religious developments in the context of early Christianity. To the present day, the term “esotericism” tends to be used by scholars in two different senses, that should be clearly distinguished: in a typological sense it refers to traditions of secrecy or (mainly among authors inspired by “religionist” agendas) to what is seen as the deeper “inner mysteries of religion” as opposed to merely external or “exoteric” religious observance, but in a strictly historical sense it functions, rather, as a general label for a series of specific currents in Western culture that display certain similarities and are historically related.<sup>17</sup> The term *Western Esotericism* in the title of this Dictionary refers to this second meaning. Particularly in French scholarship, “l’ésotérisme occidental” has long been used by scholars as the preferred umbrella term covering the entirety of currents and traditions that have been sketched above; and since the 1990s this terminological convention has rapidly been gaining ground in international academic discourse.<sup>18</sup> This process has been accompanied by a theoretical and methodological debate about definitions and demarcations, which is still in full development at the time of writing.<sup>19</sup>

Since the eventual outcome of these discussions is as yet far from clear, it would have been unwise to link the present Dictionary too specifically to one particular definition or theoretical approach. Such an attempt would, moreover, have been unnecessary, because – as in the study of “religion” generally – scholars in this domain often strongly disagree about abstract theoretical definitions although they in fact share a broad consensus about the historical phenomena covered by the term. Specialists may quibble about boundary issues, disagreeing about whether this or that specific current or personality should or should not be included under the broad labels “Gnosis” and “Western Esotericism”, but experience shows that by and large they think of the same domain and the same currents when they are using these terms.

The major exception, which therefore needs to be addressed here, concerns the important question of “gnosis” and “esotericism” in the context of Jewish and Islamic culture. As for the Jewish context, it is significant that in his Hebrew publications Gershom Scholem preferred to speak not of Jewish mystics but of *ba’aley sod* (lit. “masters of the secret”, translatable as “esoterics” in the typological sense referred to above);<sup>20</sup> accordingly,

<sup>16</sup> See entry “Occult / Occultism” in this Dictionary.

<sup>17</sup> See entry “Esotericism” in this Dictionary.

<sup>18</sup> See overview in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “The Study of Western Esotericism: New Approaches to Christian and Secular Culture”, in: Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz & Randi Warne (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion* (Series “Religion and Reason”), Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2004, vol. 1, 489–519.

<sup>19</sup> See notably Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, 3–47; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism”, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 7:2 (1995), 99–129; Antoine Faivre, “L’ésotérisme et la recherche universitaire”, in: *Accès de l’ésotérisme occidental*, 2nd revised ed., II, Paris: Gallimard, 1996, 13–42; several contributions in Antoine Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion: Selected Papers presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City 1995*, Louvain: Peeters, 1998; Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, “Esoterik und Christentum vor 1800: Prolegomena zu einer Bestimmung ihrer Differenz”, *Aries* 3:2 (2003), 127–165; Kocku von Stuckrad, *Was ist Esoterik? Kleine Geschichte des geheimen Wissens*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2004, 9–23.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Dan, “In Quest of a Historical Definition of Mysticism: The Contingential Approach”, *Studies in Spirituality* 3 (1993), 62–63.



the English translation of his classic introduction as *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1946) might be considered unfortunate. From both a historical and a theoretical perspective, excellent arguments could be adduced for including the entire domain of “Jewish gnosis and esotericism” within the context of the present Dictionary, and along similar lines one might argue in favour of including the domain of Islamic gnosis and esotericism, which likewise tends to be referred to as “mysticism”.<sup>21</sup> The editors are aware of the cogency of the arguments that can be adduced in favour of a concept of “Gnosis and Western Esotericism” that fully and systematically includes the three great Religions of the Book; and they are acutely conscious of the fact that doing otherwise might be perceived by some readers as reflecting a Christianity-centered bias that incorrectly seeks to exclude Judaism and Islam from the domain of “European history of religions” or from “Western culture” as such. No such exclusion or marginalization is intended here. The decision to discuss the Jewish and Islamic dimensions as “influences upon” rather than as integral parts of Gnosis and Western Esotericism was made not for theoretical but for entirely pragmatic reasons. It reflects the fact that (partly due to linguistic barriers) the disciplines studying Jewish and Islamic “mysticism” have so far developed relatively independently and have already succeeded in achieving a certain degree of academic recognition, at least in comparison to the field here referred to as “Gnosis and Western Esotericism”. With respect to the latter, it is true that many specific currents covered by the present Dictionary (particularly those pertaining to earlier periods) have long been subjects of serious academic study, but only very recently have conditions begun to be created – in the form of e.g. multidisciplinary conferences, academic institutions, monograph series, or academic journals<sup>22</sup> – that allow them to be seen in a larger historical context, so that their numerous historical interconnections are seriously explored and these various currents can be perceived as so many aspects of a much larger domain. Academic research into the later phases of the historical spectrum, from the Renaissance and *a fortiori* from the 18th century on, has been most seriously neglected by earlier generations (mostly due to the influence of the now discredited “secularization thesis” according to which these domains could not be anything more than marginal “survivals” that would eventually succumb to the pressures of rationalization and secularization);<sup>23</sup> and again it is only quite recently that this situation is beginning to improve.<sup>24</sup> By giving equal attention to these later and quite recent historical developments as to those belong-

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Annetmarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975; Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Large and successful symposia on Western esotericism have been organized in the context of the quinquennial congresses of the International Association for the History of Religions (I.A.H.R.) in 1995 (Mexico City), 2000 (Durban) and Tokyo (2005). Since 2001, E.J. Brill publishers brings out an academic journal *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*. Peeters publishers (Louvain) have been publishing a monograph series “Gnostica: Texts & Interpretations” since 1997. An America-based “Association for the Study of Esotericism” was recently established and organized a successful conference in 2004, and a Europe-based counterpart is in the process of being established. Finally, an academic chair for the study of Western Esotericism having existed since 1965 at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne) in Paris, a second chair connected with a complete subdepartment and teaching program (Bachelor and Master) was established at the University of Amsterdam in 1999 (see [www.amsterdamhermetica.com](http://www.amsterdamhermetica.com)).

<sup>23</sup> The decline of the classic secularization thesis, the “return of religion”, and the concomitant emergence of new theoretical frameworks (e.g. rational choice theory) have been much discussed in recent years, and this is hardly the place for an overview of the debate and the pertinent literature. For an application to the study of Western Esotericism, see e.g. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996/Albany: SUNY Press, 1998; and idem, “How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World”, *Religion* 33:4 (2003), 357–380.

<sup>24</sup> A new interest in the relevance of 19th-/20th-century esotericism for understanding processes of modernization is demonstrated by e.g. Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994; Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern*, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004; Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

ing to earlier periods, and thus establishing a “referential corpus” of primary and secondary texts pertaining to the complete historical spectrum, the present Dictionary hopes to contribute to the current academic emancipation of “Gnosis and Western Esotericism” as a comprehensive domain of research. Furthering collaboration with parallel disciplines focused on Jewish and Islamic “mysticism” is part of that development, and may well end up transforming our perception of all of them. As the hoped-for outcome of such a future development, perhaps one day the time will be ripe for a Dictionary even much larger than the present one, and which will fully include the Jewish and Islamic along with the Christian and secular dimensions of “Gnosis and Western Esotericism”.

The above overview is based upon the premise that seemingly innocuous terminological conventions are often the reflection of hidden or implicit ideological agendas. Perhaps no other domain in the study of religion has suffered from such biases as seriously as the one to which this Dictionary is devoted, for it covers more or less all currents and phenomena that have, at one time or another, come to be perceived as problematic (misguided, heretical, irrational, dangerous, evil, or simply ridiculous) from the perspectives of established religion, philosophy, science, and academic research. Often these perceptions have led to serious distortions of the historical evidence, usually in the form of simplified pictures of complex realities and the creation of imaginary “enemies”. The label “Gnosis and Western Esotericism” is proposed here as part of a deliberate attempt at overcoming such biases and moving towards a more neutral, accurate and balanced reading of Western history of religion and culture; but obviously it would be extremely naive to think that any terminology can be entirely free from such problems. The editors are acutely aware of the fact that usage of the terms “Gnosis” and “Western esotericism” is not limited to academic contexts, since both are also used in popular literature to promote various “spiritual” agendas and aspirations. Likewise they are painfully aware of the ironical fact that the very attempt at gathering an enormous variety of currents and personalities under one general umbrella might easily be mistaken, against all their intentions, for just another attempt at reification and simplification, suggesting the presence of some “universal gnosis” or abiding “esoteric truth”.<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, however, the very contents of this Dictionary provide the best antidote against such misperceptions: rather than a repetitive series of variations on the same essential “truths”, the reader will find here a dazzling variety of ideas and practices, reflective of ever-changing historical contexts and testifying to the remarkable creativity of the religious imagination. We hereby offer this reference work to our readers in the hope that it will inspire them not only (if it is permitted here to quote Gene Roddenberry’s Star Trek saga) “to boldly go where no one has gone before”, but also to re-visit seemingly well-charted territories and discover how much we still have to learn about them.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff  
Amsterdam, September 2004.

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<sup>25</sup> See discussion of a number of representative cases in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “On the Construction of ‘Esoteric Traditions’”, in: Faivre & Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, 11-61.





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Abano, Peter of → Peter of Abano

Abellio, Raymond (ps. of Georges Soulès), \* 11.11.1907 Toulouse, † 26.8.1986 Nice

At the end of World War II and a development that had led him from the left wing of the Socialist Party, through Deloncle and Déat's collaborationist parties, to the Resistance Movement, Georges Soulès, a trained engineer, left politics for esotericism. He did so under the influence of Pierre de Combas, a man well versed in esoteric traditions, whom he met in 1943. Considered one of the great French prose writers of his time, Soulès published his works from 1946 until his death under the pseudonym Raymond Abellio; they comprise a play, novels, autobiographical writings and theoretical essays. By means of these various genres he has developed an all-encompassing system for interpreting the world and history, sustained by elements from the various esoteric traditions to which Pierre de Combas had introduced him, and by the Husserlian phenomenology that he encountered in the 1950s.

In 1965 Abellio published his book *La Structure absolue* (The Absolute Structure) which may be considered the key to his philosophical system. The "structure" in question is partly inspired by arithmological traditions [→ Number Symbolism] and "kabbalistic" gematria [→ Jewish Influences V], along with other influences such as the *I Ching*, the → Tarot, and → astrology; and partly it is inspired by Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy. The structure is visually presented as a sphere, similar in some respects to the one presented by → René Guénon in his *Le Symbolisme de la croix* (1931), and which can be described as follows. First, a horizontal cross (four angles of 90 degrees). Second, a vertical line which runs across that cross, passing through its middle. Third, the cross and the line are enclosed within a sphere whose center is the point of intersection between the horizontal cross and the vertical line. By the same token, the sphere has six poles (the four extremities of the cross, and the two extremities of the vertical line); the point of intersection is not a pole proper, but is considered as important as the poles themselves. This three-dimensional figure is supposed to provide important insights into any domain (science, metaphysics, philosophy, psychology, history, etc), and into the relationships between them, provided that whenever one uses it, the poles have been properly "qualified" in accordance with the kind of enquiry one has chosen to carry out (i.e., the terms or

notions one has decided to impart to each of the six poles, whenever one makes use of the sphere, must have been chosen in a pertinent way). Ontologically, as it were, the basic idea that underlies the figure may be summarized as follows. The two lines of the horizontal cross represent two dualities. The extremities of the one line stand respectively for our sense organ(s) and our body; the extremities of the cross's other line stand respectively for the "object" and the global "world" (the object "detaching" itself, in husserlian terms, from the "world"). As a result we have two dualities, which are said to be "turning" or "moving" around; but not only horizontally, for they are also constantly either tending upward toward the upper part of the horizontal line (the "assumption" toward unity) or descending along its lower part (descent toward multiplicity). As for the center of the sphere, it stands for the "transcendental Self".

This structure Abellio claims to be "absolute" because he considers it to be applicable – in the context of a doctrine of "universal interdependence" or universal → correspondences – to all areas of reality, including even history. It is supposed to reveal the "invisible history", or "metahistory", of civilizations, interconnected with psychology, politics, physics, biology, etc., as well as of the transcendental Self of the human being. Two main elements are said to distinguish the Abellian absolute structure from the Husserlian scheme. First, the fact that he considers his notion of "interdependence" and "intersubjectivity" to be the starting point of the gnostic experience to be achieved, not as its end. Second, his notion of "intensifying dialectic", by which he means the dynamic movement to be imparted to the sphere, it being understood that, as already noted, its poles have been properly "qualified".

Abellio's essays, works of fiction and autobiographies all must be understood in the context of this dynamics. They are reflective of an ongoing process whose final term he calls the "assumption" (Abellio readily uses Christian terminology: baptism, communion, assumption, etc.) of the world's multiplicity into the "inner Man". Man is thus supposed to be able to achieve the complete unification of that multiplicity, a unification that will end up providing the subject with a "gnostic consciousness", also called "second memory", by the same token leading to the "transfiguration of the world". History – the real one as well as Abellio's historical fictions – then comes full circle, the past being connected to the future in a present beyond time.

The various literary genres that comprise Abellio's work are closely interconnected. They all tend

toward the same spiritual goal: the emergence of a transcendental Self. The essays proceed analytically and tend to use autobiographical material. The autobiographical work describes the genesis of the novels and of the essays, and integrates various theoretical elements. Abellio considers the novel to be the most complete form of writing, because it is the most synthetic one. It is not strictly analytical like the essay – it shows more than it demonstrates –, and it is not unfinished like the autobiography. This is why Abellio ascribes to his novels, which are meant to be ‘a call to the reader’s active awareness’ (*Visages immobiles*, 111), a particularly potent initiatic value. Due to this primacy given to novelistic fiction and its supposed power of initiation, Abellio’s work occupies a place apart in 20th-century esotericism: it is certainly one of the rare cases where novelistic material is presented as the catalyst for a gnostic “transmutation of consciousness”. Indeed, although Abellio announced the “end of esotericism” through disoccultation (*La fin de l’ésotérisme*, 1973) and systematically distanced himself from the esoteric authorities of the past, his thought presents all the elements typical of Western esotericism: the notion of a transmutation of consciousness, the interdependence of various degrees of reality, a particular interest in natural phenomena, the creative → imagination, symbolic hermeneutics, and so forth. By virtue of this, he remains one of the more interesting figures in French esotericism in the 20th century. In addition to his fame as a writer, he is also noted as an epistemologist whose views continue to be instrumental in fostering interdisciplinary research and reflections.

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JÉRÔME ROUSSE-LACORDAIRE

AE (ps. of George William Russell),  
\* 10.4.1867 Lurgan, † 17.7.1935  
Bournemouth

Theosophist, poet, prose author, artist, journal editor, officer of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, and member of the Irish Convention of 1917. George William Russell is best known by his pen-name AE, which he adopted after a compositor was unable to read more than the first two letters of Æon, the Gnostic word for a higher being with which he signed a letter to the editor of the Theosophical journal *Lucifer* in 1888. Russell was born into a Protestant family in the north of Ireland, and from adolescence onwards he experienced visions of superhuman beings and of scenes from the past and future, visions of which he sought explanations in exoteric and esoteric literature. Soon he came to believe that he possessed memories of previous lives. Around the age of twenty, he was drawn towards the teachings of Madame → Blavatsky, and he joined the Dublin Theosophical Lodge about 1890. Thereupon he embarked on seven years of intense study and systematic meditation. During this period, he made his living as a retail cashier and shared a house, at least intermittently, with other zealous Theosophists. Among these, from 1895, was Violet North, whom he married in 1898. On one wall of the house, he painted a still surviving mural of visionary figures, and in 1894 he published *Homeward: Songs by the Way*, the first of his many collections of poetry. By the following year, having decided that ancient Irish mythology embodied Theosoph-

ical doctrine, he was becoming an enthusiastic patriot. In 1896 he deduced from a vision that there was about to appear in Ireland an avatar who would recreate the nation after the imminent crumbling of the British Empire, and for the rest of his life he hoped to see in the flesh the face that had risen before his inner eye. From 1895 to 1896, he was the student of the visiting American Theosophist James Morgan Pryse (1859-1942), who knew Greek and expounded the esoteric meaning of the New Testament.

In 1897, Russell was persuaded by his intimate friend the poet → W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) to accept employment in the agricultural co-operative movement, which was designed to raise the Irish peasant farmers out of material and mental poverty. Russell believed that, like all human beings, they had fallen from a higher state into the cycle of → reincarnation, and he strove through this work to bring out the buried nobility within them. For more than seven years he persuaded poor men to help themselves by forming credit banks, planned schemes to ameliorate hardship, and shouldered administrative work. But his literary gift was not wasted, for in 1905 he was appointed editor of the *Irish Homestead*, the weekly journal that existed to support the agricultural co-operative movement, and he held the appointment till the paper ceased publication in 1923. Meanwhile, disillusioned with the Theosophical Society, he left it in 1898 to found his own Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies], in which he taught his followers in Dublin at weekly meetings. He continued to publish poetry, assisted other poets, painted landscapes and visionary figures, and helped to found the Irish National Theatre. As a patriot who combined his nationalism with pacificism, he campaigned for complete self-government for a united Ireland within the British Empire. From 1923 to 1930, he edited the *Irish Statesman*, a weekly designed to foster the cultural and political life of the newly independent Irish Free State. In 1930, while lecturing in the U.S.A., he rejoiced in a brief reunion in Los Angeles with James Pryse. His wife died in February 1932, and eighteen months later, unhappy with the narrow-minded provincialism engulfing the Free State, Russell moved to London. He died in a nursing home in Bournemouth in 1935.

Russell's early esoteric writings were published in the *Irish Theosophist* from 1892 through 1897. His principal mystical book is *The Candle of Vision* (1918), which shows that his beliefs were as firmly rooted in his own visionary experiences as in the syncretism of Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*. Towards the end of his life, disappointed that he

had never encountered the Incarnation of his vision of 1896, he described the imagined impact of such a being in his romance *The Avatars* (1933). Even in his editorial articles in the *Irish Homestead*, evidence of his Theosophical world view occasionally peeps out. Thus his reference to 'the guardians of humanity' who will not allow the human race to flee permanently from nature into city life (Notes of the Week, 5.3.1911) refers to the Masters, perfected individuals who have ascended to a higher plane to watch over human life on earth. Similarly 'the secret Ruler of the World', who seems to be guiding farmers all over the earth into the co-operative movement, is the Planetary Spirit of Theosophy (Notes of the Week, 7.1.1911). Russell's recommendation that systematic thought should entail approaching any matter from three viewpoints – its relation to consciousness or the human spirit, to forces or energies, and to material things – is based on the Theosophical trinity of primal emanations from the Deity: the Logos or Divine Mind, the Light of the Logos or the Divine Energy, and the Archæus or that aspect of the Divine from which matter evolves. Russell's poetry contains many comparable allusions couched under such seemingly vague phrases as "the Ancient One" (the Planetary Spirit) and "the Mighty Mother" (the Archæus). In *The Interpreters* (1922), written during the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War, Russell traces socialism, nationalism and imperialism to their roots in the Logos, the Archæus, and the Light of the Logos respectively.

Although Russell sought to spread the spiritual knowledge that he found in Theosophy and the science of penetrating to reality through inward meditation, he probably had more success in promoting the arts in Ireland, and he played a part in the widespread quest in the early 20th century for economic democracy as a means of stemming the rural exodus. Most of his poetry has faded, but his book *The Candle of Vision* continues to impress many readers.

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HENRY SUMMERFIELD

## Agrippa, Heinrich Cornelius, \* 1486 Nettesheim, † 1535 or 1536 Grenoble

German Humanist and theoretician of → magic. Agrippa's family belonged to the middle nobility in Nettesheim, near Cologne. He studied in Cologne from 1499 to 1502, when he received the degree of *magister artium*, and later in Paris. During his studies in the latter city, Agrippa seems to have taken part in a secret circle or self-help society, the members of which were interested in studying *res arcanae*, and with whom he tried to remain in contact in later years. In 1508 he traveled to Spain, where he got involved in an adventurous military campaign to seize a fortified castle near Barcelona. From there he continued traveling, by way of Valencia, the Balears, Sardinia, Naples, Avignon, and Lyon. Agrippa's family was by tradition in the service of the Roman Emperors, and thus in his early years as well as later he served as a captain in the army of Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor, who awarded him the title of *Ritter* or knight. His irregular career as a university professor began at the university of Dôle (Burgundy) in 1509, where he was given the opportunity to lecture on → Johannes Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico*, and wrote his *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminae sexus* (On the Nobility and Excellence of the Feminine Sex), partly no doubt in an attempt to win the

favour of Margaret of Austria. Agrippa's lectures attracted much interest and earned him a doctorate in theology, but he was forced to leave the city in 1510, after having been attacked by the Franciscan prior Jean Catilinet for judaizing heresy. His study of Reuchlin's work first suggested to Agrippa the project of a radical restoration of magic. In the winter of 1509-1510 he discussed this with → Johannes Trithemius, to whom he dedicated the first draft of his *De occulta philosophia* (On the Occult Philosophy), which remained unpublished for the time being. Trithemius – whose own experiences had taught him caution – advised him to persevere with his studies but to 'talk about arcane secrets only with proper friends'.

Having left Dôle, Agrippa went to London, from where he wrote his *Expostulatio super Expositione sua in librum De verbo mirifico* (*Opera* II, 508-518) in an attempt to defend himself against Catilinet's accusations. He repeated his ideas about Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico*, and affirmed that his Christian faith was in no way incompatible with his appreciation for Jewish thought and exegesis: 'I am a Christian, but I do not dislike Jewish Rabbis'. While in England, he met the Humanist and Platonist John Colet, with whom he studied the Epistles of Paul; and we know that in the following years he was working on a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Having returned to his hometown Cologne, at the Faculty of Theology he gave some religious disputations – unfortunately lost – on religious practices in the contemporary church.

From 1511 to 1518 Agrippa lived in northern Italy, and was involved in the conflict between the French and Imperial armies: first in the service of the Emperor Maximilian and later in the circles of William IX Paleologus. In these years he came into contact with Agostino Ricci and perhaps Paolo Ricci, and deepened his knowledge of the writings of → Marsilio Ficino, → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III]. He took part in the schismatic Council of Pisa (1512), but his loyalty to the Roman Church is attested by a letter (Agrippa, *Opera* II, 710) in which Pietro Bembo, the secretary of Pope Leo X, thanks him and acknowledges his orthodox position. Afterwards he lived for several years in Pavia, where he lectured at the University. His first course was probably devoted to Plato's *Symposium* (1512), and in 1515 he lectured on Ficino's *Pimander*. Around the same time he composed the *Dialogus De homine*, which remained unpublished during his lifetime and has survived only in a fragmentary state; based upon Pico della Mirandola's *Heptaplus*, it is full of references to the → Hermetic liter-



ature. Agrippa married his first (Italian) wife in Pavia, and experienced here one of the happiest periods of his life.

As a consequence of the 1515 French victory at Marignano, where the duchy of Milan was reconquered and the imperial army defeated, Agrippa had to flee from Pavia. He had to leave behind many of his manuscripts, which were later recovered by one of his friends. He moved to Casale, where he wrote his *Liber de triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (Book on the triple way of knowing God) dedicated to his protector William Paleologus. As in earlier and later works, he refuted scholastic theology and emphasized faith rather than human reason as the exclusive way to approach God. His *Dehortatio gentilis theologiae*, probably written in this period, was based upon a convivial talk given by Agrippa to some friends a few years after his course on the *Pimander*. He significantly warned them, and all intellectuals, not to go too far in their admiration for the Hermetic writings and neglect the primacy of Christian revelation: ‘if, by taking away secretly, so to speak, the rich spoils from their illegal possessors, the Egyptians, and by elevating yourselves with their riches, you enrich the Church of God, then I no longer advise against pagan literature, but I recommend it to you’. In Turin, his last Italian stay, he lectured on the Epistles of Paul in 1516: it was to be his last appearance in a university context.

After a short intermezzo at the court of Charles III, Duke of Savoy, Agrippa was employed in 1518 as public advocate and defense lawyer in the free imperial city of Metz. On the eve of the Reformation the religious and theological debate was explosive. Agrippa and his humanist friends followed the developments with great interest and often with sympathy for the Reformers, without going as far as supporting the schism. It is worth noting in this context how in *De peccato originale* (1518), as in some other writings, Agrippa addressed the problem of salvation: faith is central, while reason is accorded only a secondary role. Agrippa was quite original, furthermore, in suggesting that original sin had consisted in the act of sexual intercourse, and in holding Adam rather than Eve responsible for the Fall. In this same period he also got into a conflict with the Dominicans, Claude Salin in particular, over his support of → Lefèvre d’Etaples’s *De una ex tribus Maria*. Lefèvre had argued against the popular opinion that Saint Anne had been married three times and had given birth to three daughters: Mary the mother of Jesus, and two other Marys who were considered to be mothers of Apostles. The conflict turned very nasty, with professional

teachers sermonizing against Agrippa from the pulpit.

In his capacity of legal advisor to the magistrate of Metz, Agrippa played a crucial role in a famous witch trial in 1519, where he defended a woman accused of witchcraft and, as a result, got into great trouble with the Inquisition. The woman was accused because her mother was considered a witch, and the pact with the devil was believed to be hereditary; but Agrippa argued that the sacrament of baptism was stronger than the pact with the devil. He implicitly accused the inquisitor not only of acting contrary to human decency, the law, and the spirit of Christianity, but also implied that his implicit denial of baptism as a sacrament was heretical. Although Agrippa succeeded in saving the accused’s life, his conflict with the Dominican authorities made his position in Metz untenable and forced him to leave.

Agrippa moved with his wife and child back to Cologne, where he stayed for a year, apparently without regular employment. Here his wife fell ill, and she died soon after, probably during the travel with her husband to Geneva, where Agrippa became a citizen and worked as a physician. He remarried a few months later, with a woman from Geneva who would bear him six children. They traveled to Fribourg early in 1523, where Agrippa continued to work as a physician and gained increasing recognition as a progressive thinker.

He made the mistake of leaving Fribourg in 1524 and accept a position in Lyon, as physician to Louise of Savoy, Queen Mother of France. Agrippa’s expectations were disappointed, for the Queen forced him to write astrological prognostications – a practice he despised – and suspected him of being a partisan of Charles of Bourbon, who was fighting against the King on the side of the Emperor. The Queen’s treasurers refused to pay him his salary, and the court ridiculed him behind his back; at the end of 1527 Agrippa finally left his employment, but his criticisms of the Queen later caused him to be imprisoned for a time. In spite of his troubles in Lyon, Agrippa managed to remain productive. He wrote a commentary to → Lull’s *Ars Brevis* and a declamation *De sacramento matrimonii* (On the sacrament of marriage); and in september 1526 he completed one of his most important works: the declamation *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium atque excellentia verbi Dei* (On the uncertainty and vanity of sciences and arts, and on the excellence of the word of God). Apart from his financial troubles, his wife was ill as well, and *De incertitudine* certainly reflects his depressed mood at the time.

In 1528 a new and more successful phase in Agrippa's life began, with his appointment in Antwerp as advisor and historiographer to the governor of the low countries, Margaret of Austria. He wrote speeches, historiographical works and a document with instructions about an expedition to the Turks. Among the increasing number of students who sought him out was Johann Wier (1515-1588), who would study with him for four years. At the Imperial Court Agrippa had an influential friend, Eustache Chapuys, an Erasmian humanist (later Charles V's ambassador in England) to whom he later dedicated his *Querela*. The first years in Antwerpen seem to have been relatively peaceful and happy for Agrippa. He was able to devote himself to studies in the occult sciences, and in 1529 managed to publish a volume of collected writings; they contained largely theological writings, but also a text on the treatment of epidemic disease. A second edition published in 1532 also contained treatises on monastic life and on the relics of Saint Antony. In August 1529 Agrippa's peace was interrupted when his wife died of the plague that was sweeping Antwerp. While most of the town physicians fled the city, Agrippa remained on his post, only to be accused by his colleagues later, for illegal practice.

Agrippa had obtained an Imperial Privilege to publish several of his works, including *De incertitudine*; but after it had been published, in 1530, Princess Margaret began to suspect him of heterodoxy and solicited the opinion of the Theology Faculty of Louvain. She died in December, before her suspicions could be confirmed by the theologians, but Agrippa's troubles were not over: Charles V's brother, Ferdinand, detested the contents of *De incertitudine* and wrote about it to the Emperor. The inquiry was continued, and the Louvain theologians judged parts of his work heretical. Agrippa wrote an *Apologia* in his defense, and a *Querela* against those who were attacking his good reputation with the Emperor; but meanwhile the Sorbonne theologians attacked and banned *De Incertitudine* as well, for favouring Lutheranism. As a result of this increasing hostility, including accusations of black magic, Agrippa's position at the court became unstable and he no longer received payment. In August 1531 he was briefly imprisoned for debt in Brussels.

In the same year appeared the first book of his *De occulta philosophia*, dedicated to the progressive Archbishop elector of Cologne, Hermann von Wied, who played an important role in supporting his work in spite of the opposition. However, the

Inquisitor of Cologne, Konrad Köllin, denounced *De occulta* and its author as heretical before the City Council. In his response to the Council, Agrippa accused the theologians of hindering the reform of the Church with their battle against humanists such as Reuchlin and Erasmus (who in a letter to Agrippa praised *De incertitudine*, but did not want to get involved in the controversies). Against the witch-hunters, whom he claimed were more interested in their own profit than in matters of faith, he seems to have issued a pamphlet denouncing the dangerous misdeeds of the Dominicans; but we only know of this work thanks to a reference in Sisto da Siena's *Bibliotheca Santa*. Finally, Agrippa wrote a preface to a work by a Cistercian monk, Godeschalcus Moncordius, in which he opposed the Cisterciansian methods against those of the Dominicans.

According to Johannes Wier, Agrippa married a third time, but his wife (a woman from Malines) betrayed him and he repudiated her in 1535. From 1532 on he seems to have resided mainly in Bonn. In 1533 appeared the final and complete version of *De occulta philosophia*, as well as his commentary on Lull's *Ars Brevis*. Agrippa's last surviving letter dates from the middle of 1533, and for the final years of his life we are dependent on Wier's account. According to him, Agrippa went to Lyon, where he was briefly imprisoned by King Francis, but released thanks to the intercession of friends. He died in Grenoble in 1535 or 1536 and his body is – ironically – buried in a Dominican church.

In spite of his profound religiosity and his deep knowledge, Agrippa was always in danger of being considered a dangerous outsider by the representatives of mainstream Renaissance culture. He lived in an age marked by religious turbulence and never-ending wars. While he liked to adopt an attitude of being "above the parties", Agrippa did not hesitate to criticize Catholics and Lutherans alike. Nominally a Catholic, he appreciated Luther, whose attack against the abuses of the church and initiatives for reformation he claims were never intended to destroy the idea of the Church itself. Agrippa's epistolary reflects his ambiguity in this regard: in a letter to his friend Campeggi (*Opera* II, 1010-1012), he expresses his hope that the Church will soon be reunified and 'freed from the impiety of the heretics and the darkness of the Sophists' (that is to say: the scholastic theologians). The successive letter, dated 17 September 1532, is addressed to Melancthon and is famous because of its reference to 'that unconquered heretic Martin Luther' (a formulation repeated in *De incertitudine*, but in a less

favourable context). Discussing Agrippa's relation to contemporary Reformation currents, Paola Zambelli (1967) has placed him in the context of the radical Reformation and the spiritualists, nicodemism in particular.

In the *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminae sexus* (published in 1529) Agrippa argued, against the traditional misogynic perspective, that women are superior to men, even though the representatives of the public sphere from which they had long been excluded did not accept this point of view. At the beginning of the 15th century a feminist trend had emerged in France, Italy and Spain, contradicting the traditional idea of female inferiority, and the responsibility of woman for original sin; inspired by the Roman de la Rose, it presented women as good, noble and pure. The originality of Agrippa's treatise lies in his use of kabbalistic and neoplatonic sources [→ Neoplatonism], according to which woman is an immediate manifestation of the divine, a principle of original life. For Agrippa all the virtues of Nature were evident in woman, considered superior by him because of her proximity to the divine. The treatise is important for having introduced into France the Platonic and Ficinian cult of beauty, according to which woman is the mediator between the human and the divine. As to the question of why women were excluded, he argued that this had to do with social conditions, education, and the prejudices of the age: obstacles that could be removed.

Agrippa's most notorious work, his masterpiece, and the one which gave rise to his undeserved reputation as a black magician, is his *De occulta philosophia*, whose final version in three books was published in 1533. It is a systematic synthesis of "occult philosophy" or "magic" (Agrippa originally wanted to call it *De magia*): the first book treats of the natural magic relevant to the sublunar or elementary world; the second book discusses → number symbolism, mathematics, → music and → astrology as relevant to the celestial world; and the third book is largely Christian-kabbalistic, focusing on angelology and prophecy as relevant to the highest or intellectual world. Magic emerges from Agrippa's magnum opus as the most perfect science, by means of which one may come to know both nature and God. Prior to the final version of 1533, Agrippa's thinking as reflected in *De occulta philosophia* passed through several stages. The book has been called "a neoplatonic credo": the influence of Ficino and Pico is evident, but less famous authors such as → Lazzarelli play a significant role as well. The first version – an ency-

clopaedic review rather than a treatise – most clearly reveals Agrippa's profound dependence on his predecessors, Reuchlin in particular. The final draft, as pointed out by Perrone Compagni, reveals a more mature grasp of the subject and of his claims about spiritual rebirth as necessary for religious reform. The latter should take place step by step: one must progressively remove one's ties to the blinding theology (scholasticism in particular) that conceals the real meaning of the Holy Scriptures. Through continuous contemplation of divine things, the soul may free itself from the lure of the senses. In his dedicatory letter to Trithemius, Agrippa seeks to explain how magic, which the ancient philosophers considered the highest science, could have fallen into such disrepute; he argues that 'by a certain corruption of times and men', many dangerous errors and superstitions crept in, and false philosophers prefixed the title of "magic" to their heresies and wicked practices. It is now necessary to restore magic to its former state of the purest kind of religion; and from the Third Book one can deduce that Agrippa conceived of the latter largely in terms of Christian kabbalah.

In his other great work, *De incertitudine*, Agrippa seeks to show the relativity of all human knowledge, as compared to God's word as the only foundation of true certainty, by means of an incisive attack on all the sciences and arts. Echoing Erasmus' *Encomium Moriae*, Agrippa satirizes various beliefs, deploring the superstitions that have ruined the original purity of the Christian Church. The work has been incorrectly interpreted as a revival of Greek scepticism; but actually, Agrippa's aim was to build a new concept of faith, based on divine revelation more than on Church interpretation, and to expose the blindness and arrogance of the school-theologians. The Bible should be restored to a leading role in Christian belief and practice. Marc van der Poel has located Agrippa within the Ciceronian tradition, and shows how *De incertitudine* can be considered the culmination of Agrippa's battle against the scholastic theologians.

There has been much scholarly debate about what might seem to be a contradiction between Agrippa's defense of the occult sciences in *De occulta philosophia*, and his description of all human sciences as "vain and uncertain" in *De incertitudine*. However, the contradiction can be largely resolved by recognizing how sharply Agrippa distinguished between reason and faith: he criticized the scholastics for ignoring this distinction and thereby confusing the study of created

things with the study of divine things. The authority of God's revelation in the holy Scriptures 'cannot be grasped by any judgment of our senses, by any reasoning of our mind, by any syllogism delivering proof, by any science, by any speculation, by any contemplation, in short, by any human powers, but only by faith in Jesus Christ, poured into our soul by God the Father through the intermediary of the Holy Spirit' (*De incertitudine*, in *Opera*, 299). Divine matters are not a matter for debate but an object of faith; in contrast, we are permitted 'to philosophize, dispute, and formulate deductions by means of our intellect concerning all created things', as long as we do not put our faith and hope in them (*De originale peccato*, in *Opera*, 553). From that perspective, one understands how the occult sciences can be a legitimate object of study, even though they must be considered "vain and uncertain" as a basis for absolute religious certainty. Accordingly, *De occulta philosophia* ended with a discussion of how to live a religious life that may make one worthy of receiving divine revelations.

Many unsubstantiated rumours began to circulate about Agrippa already during his life. The most influential portrait was presented by Paolo Giovio (1483-1552) in his *Elogia virorum illustrium*, which describes him as a man with a powerful mind, through which he tried to destroy the *République des lettres*. The most enduring part of Giovio's portrayal concerns Agrippa's death and the legend of his black dog. Agrippa's love for animals and his passion for his dog (whom he called "monsieur") was interpreted by the Italian humanist as proof that the dog was no one else than the devil. Two later authors, Andreas Hondorff and André Thevet, accepted the story and contributed to its diffusion. The legend was disputed by Agrippa's pupil Johann Wier, in his *De praestigiis daemonum ac incantationibus* (1563). Wier also attacked the attribution to Agrippa of a magical text known as the "Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy", the contents of which seemed to confirm his reputation as a black magician. A different literary tradition, influenced by several thinkers from Rabelais to Apollinaire and Thomas Mann, and including → Goethe, looks at Agrippa as an archetype of the Faust figure.

As Pierre Bayle wrote in his *Dictionnaire*, despite his great knowledge Agrippa was considered *malheureux* because of his great curiosity, his all too free spirit, and his unstable mood. With his restless journeys, he indeed seems to embody the spirit of the Renaissance. It is regrettable, although perhaps

not surprising, that this outstanding thinker has gone down in history as little more than a magician, for precisely Agrippa's ambivalent position with respect to various religious and intellectual issues central to his time, and the very ambiguity of his combination of magic and skepsis in the search for truth, make him a fascinating representative of Renaissance culture. In any case, his *De occulta philosophia* is considered the standard *summa* of Renaissance magic, and has exerted an incalculable influence on later magical and esoteric traditions.

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**Albertus Magnus, \*** ca. 1200 near Lauingen, † 15.11.1280 Cologne

1. LIFE 2. WORKS 3. WORKS OF QUESTIONABLE AUTHENTICITY 4. SAINT AND MAGICIAN

1. LIFE

German philosopher and theologian, one of the most influential Aristotelian [→ Aristotelianism] synthesizers of the 13th century, Dominican friar, teacher of Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274). Albert was born into a Swabian family of knights and joined the Dominican order when he was a student at Padua, receiving the habit from Jordan of Saxony in 1223. It seems likely that he was sent to Cologne to make his novitiate and study theology from the local *lector*. Later, probably in the early 1240s, he was sent to Paris to lecture on the *Sentences* under the Dominican Master Guéric of St.-Quentin (Dominican Master 1233-1245). In 1245, Albert succeeded Guéric as Dominican Regent Master, a position he held until 1248. During this period Albert met Thomas Aquinas, who arrived in Paris in 1245 during Albert's first year as Regent Master. In 1248 Albert returned to Cologne with Thomas to establish the first Studium Generale in Germany in association with the new Dominican cloister of Heilige Kreuz. He remained in Cologne as Regent Master of the Studium Generale from 1248-1254 (Thomas returned to Paris in the fall of 1252, becoming Regent Master there in 1256).

Among the earliest works certainly known to have come from Albert's hand are public lectures he delivered during this period as Master at Cologne on → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita's *De divinis nominibus* and (although he was engaged to teach theology, not philosophy) on Aristotle's *Ethics*, a work lately made available in translation by Robert Grosseteste (c. 1175-1253). Albert appears to have been unworried by the Parisian bans on Aristotle early in the century and the papal reiteration of the need to purge the Aristotelian corpus of error in 1231. An independent thinker whose interest in the natural sciences and Aristotelian philosophy were lifelong, Albert saw no essential conflict between science and theology, believing that philosophical truth, faithfully sought, could only support, not detract from, the truth of theology. By the mid-1250s, the acceptance of at least some of Aristotle's works into the official Parisian curriculum was likely influenced by the interest shown in the Aristotelian corpus by Albert, Thomas, and others of their contemporaries who

had taught at Paris and shared similar views on the need to maintain a productive relationship between philosophy and revealed truth.

In 1254, Albert was elected Prior Provincial of the Province of Teutonia. The province at that time included something over 50 priories, all of which Albert engaged to visit personally on foot (Dominicans being forbidden the use of horses or wagons). He resigned from this job in June of 1257 in Florence and by 1258 he had returned to Cologne to resume his position as *lector* at Heilige Kreuz. It was not long, however, before another set of arduous administrative duties imposed themselves. In 1259 Albert was requested by the Papal Curia to fill the position of Bishop of Regensburg (also called Ratisbon). Albert had already shown skill as a mediator of conflicts, and a diplomatic touch was needed for this post, since the unpopularity of the previous Bishop had resulted in a forced resignation, and the acephalous diocese was now torn by strife and bankrupt. After consideration Albert decided to accept the position against the advice of the Master General of his order, putting himself under direct obedience to the Pope. Though technically this move released him from obedience to the Master General, it is clear that Albert never ceased to regard himself as a Dominican, obeying the rules of the order so far as it was in his power to do so, and also that the order did not cease to consider him one of their own.

By 1261 the affairs of the Regensburg diocese had been sufficiently organized for Albert to feel able to hand his duties over to a locally chosen bishop. He headed toward Italy to deliver his resignation to the Pope, whose unexpected death resulted in a year's delay before the election of a new bishop could be confirmed under the auspices of the new Pope, Urban IV (1216-1264). Nothing is known with certainty of Albert's activities during the remainder of 1261 and 1262, though it is presumed likely that he remained in Viterbo to wait for the outcome of the election, renewing his acquaintance with Thomas Aquinas and others he had known in Paris. In 1263, Pope Urban IV appointed Albert Preacher of the Crusade in Germany, Bohemia and all German speaking lands. Dutifully undertaking the commission, Albert traveled through Germany and the Netherlands, laying down (one imagines with relief) his peripatetic preaching office on the death of Urban IV in October of 1264.

From 1264-1267 Albert retired to the Dominican cloister in Würzburg. There is evidence that he took part in mediation of local disputes while

working to finish the corpus of Aristotelian paraphrases. In 1268 Albert was in Strasbourg resolving a dispute at the request of Pope Clement IV (Pope 1265-1268), and in 1269 he was called back to Cologne by the Dominican Master to reside there as *lector emeritus*. In the last years of his life in Cologne he worked on his paraphrase of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis* and several late theological works while being called upon at intervals to act as mediator and to consecrate churches and other ecclesiastical structures. The legend that he went to Paris in 1277 to register his protest against the rumored condemnation of the ideas of his disciple Thomas Aquinas (who predeceased him in 1274) is probably unfounded. Albert was over eighty years old when he died in Cologne on November 15th, 1280.

## 2. WORKS

Albert's corpus is substantial (his *Opera omnia* takes up 38 volumes in the Borgnet edition) and contains a roughly equal quantity of theological and philosophical writing, including lectures and commentaries on the Bible, on Lombard's *Sentences*, on the Pseudo-Dionysius, and a large and important body of commentaries on or "paraphrases" of Aristotelian works. In addition to the writings definitely known to belong to Albert, there are several treatises which were attributed to him through the later Middle Ages and Early Modern period, but which are now considered to be of questionable authenticity. The questions surrounding attribution are not straightforward, since in some cases works unlikely to have been composed by Albert still seem to be under his influence. In one case (that of the *Speculum astronomiae*) the attribution to Albert is still a matter of active scholarly debate. These works will be dealt with in a separate section.

Of the authentic works of Albert, the Aristotelian paraphrases are probably the most important, not only to subsequent natural philosophy, but also to the history of Western Esotericism. As Albert explains at the opening of the *Physica*, these works were undertaken at the request of his Dominican brothers who wished to have all of Aristotelian natural philosophy laid out for them in an accessible way. Albert tried to follow the order of Aristotle's works, using the Aristotelian titles but paraphrasing (rather than citing and commenting on) Aristotle's words, presenting additional information at appropriate points to clarify and supplement the Philosopher's ideas, and adding in new material where discussions of topics appeared to be left incomplete. The paraphrases thus ad-

hered to the spirit of Aristotle (as Albert understood it) more than to the letter, not only because Albert freely included new material, but also because he was not shy about contradicting Aristotle's opinions when he felt they were inconsistent either with his personal experience or with facts he had learned from other sources.

In his understanding of the natural sciences, Albert drew on a broad range of material extending from the Church Fathers to the works of Arabic philosophers, and including not only the major commentators on Aristotle, but also anonymous treatises on various natural subjects, works of image → magic, → alchemy, and other medieval Hermetica [→ Hermetic Literature II]. While skeptical of the extraordinary claims of magical and alchemical texts, Albert's quest for information about the natural world included perusal of many such works, and he respected the facts they reported when these seemed consistent with his own general or experiential knowledge. He refers to alchemy and alchemical operations repeatedly in the *De caelo et mundo*, the *Meteora*, and in the *Mineralium libri V*, where Book IV is particularly concerned with alchemical categories, and → Hermes Trismegistus is a frequently cited authority. In Book II of the same work, he discusses sigils and image magic, calling it 'that part of necromancy which is dependent on astrology' (Wyckoff, 127) (here and elsewhere in his philosophical writings Albert uses the word "necromancy" in the benign sense indicated by Charles Burnett). Consistent with the practice of many who compiled herbals and books of remedies, Albert included in his *De vegetabilibus* a final section (part VI) devoted to uses of plants less theoretically plausible, but presumably empirically attested, which contains over a dozen references to magic arts and *incantatores*. Albert's works generally bear the stamp of a wide-ranging mind which enjoyed taxonomy and systems of classification. He rejected no plausible source of information out of hand, and preferred, where he could, to reconcile attractive philosophical systems rather than champion one at the expense of another.

For all these reasons Albert's paraphrases played an important part in putting the Aristotelian cosmos together for subsequent thinkers. He was one of the earliest and most important writers to integrate Arabic Aristotelianism into Christian natural philosophy, and his influence on medieval and Renaissance thinkers following him was profound. Less idiosyncratic than friar → Roger Bacon, less of a rigorous Augustinian than Thomas Aquinas, his natural universe remains wide open to influences

from the heavens. No doubt in part for this reason he is something of a favorite among the medieval *auctoritates* in the Early Modern period, praised by → Ficino, relied upon by Pomponazzi, an Aristotelian cornerstone of → Pico della Mirandola's 900 *Conclusiones*, and cited as an authority in over a dozen places in → Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (where, to give comparative examples, Thomas is cited in six loci and Roger Bacon only in three – not that the influence of any of these thinkers should be considered as strictly confined to loci where they receive citations). It was probably advantageous that Albert's diplomatic gifts, Christian life of service, and reputation for saintliness conspired to make his name eminently citable; there were few other medieval philosophers so friendly to Hermetic thinking whose names could so unimpeachably be used to adorn the esoteric claims of Renaissance philosophers.

### 3. WORKS OF QUESTIONABLE AUTHENTICITY

Works attributed to Albert but of doubtful or questionable authenticity include two Books of Secrets (the *De secretis mulierum* and the *Secreta* or *Experimenta Alberti* also called the *Liber aggregationis*), a *De mirabilibus mundi*, around thirty alchemical treatises, and the important bibliographic work known as the *Speculum astronomiae* which categorizes texts of image magic according to their dependence on astral influence. Some of these works have been shown to be dependent in whole or in part on Albert's authentic writings. Lynn Thorndike demonstrated that the *De secretis mulierum* – a gynecological manual that was used as a medical textbook – is in part a compilation of medical information extracted from Albert's paraphrase the *De animalibus* (possibly by a student or disciple of Albert's), and the *Experimenta Alberti* lifts some of its material from Albert's *Mineralium libri V* in its section on the uses of stones (though other sections of the work do not depend on Albert's authentic writings).

Concerning the treatises on alchemy, the most important both in terms of manuscript count and potential likelihood of correct attribution is the *Semita recta* or *Libellus de alchimia*, a version of which was included in the Borgnet edition of Albert's *Opera*. Concerning its attribution, Pearl Kibre suggests that 'its clear, concise, and well ordered account of the subject resembles Albert's treatment of other topics of natural science in his authentic compositions' (Kibre 1942, 500). It is a feature of all the earliest alchemical texts attributed to Albert (including the *Semita recta*, the *Alkimia*

*minor*, the *De occultis naturae*, and the *Compositum de compositis*), that they show a deference to his style, many of these works putatively composed (like the Aristotelian paraphrases) at the request of Albert's Dominican brothers who wish to have the scientific elements of alchemy explained to them in an accessible way.

The question of attribution of the *Speculum astronomie* is so difficult to resolve with any certainty that it is worth briefly summarizing the issues at stake. While objections have been raised concerning the work's attribution to Albert from the early part of the 20th century, some suggesting that it might have been composed by Roger Bacon, these objections were countered by convincing arguments in favour of Albert's authorship by Lynn Thorndike and subsequently by Paola Zambelli. In brief, the *Speculum* resembles Albert's thinking; it shows the same style of preoccupation with taxonomy; it refers to works he is known to have read. It is impossible to nail the attribution down as firmly as might be wished, however, because the manuscript tradition does not begin to attribute the *Speculum* to Albert until the mid-14th century, nor is it mentioned as Albert's work in any texts dating from prior to that time (though attributions after the mid-14th century are consistent; that is, no manuscripts of any period are known which attribute the text to anyone else). From the earliest period of the controversy it has been pointed out that certain statements in it are inconsistent with Albert's views as expressed elsewhere in his writings, but arguments from attitude can go both ways. As Thorndike pointed out early on, there is considerable inconsistency in any case between Albert's views as expressed in his authentic works; in general he tends to express himself more conservatively in his theological mode than he does in his philosophical mode (Thorndike 1955, 426).

More recently it has been argued by Bruno Roy that the *Speculum* is the work of Richard of Fournival – a suggestion more plausible than the arguments in favor of Roger Bacon (since it is known that the author of the *Speculum* consulted Richard of Fournival's library), but suffering from the same lack of certitude in the area of manuscript attribution as trouble the arguments in favor of Albert's authorship. Roy suggests that if Albert did not write the work, he may well have read it – something which is almost a necessary postulate for those who do not believe that Albert wrote it, given the fact that Albert mentions so many of the works that are listed in it. The debate cannot be conclusively settled except by the discovery of further manuscript evidence, but in the meantime, it

remains as difficult to dismiss the idea of Albertine attribution as to prove it. The *Speculum* was an important touchstone for Renaissance Esotericism; many of the Albertine citations in Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres* are to this work.

#### 4. SAINT AND MAGICIAN

Like other natural philosophers of his era, Albert was the subject of numerous posthumous legends which made him into a magical and alchemical adept. If all that was said of his reputation in this regard was not strictly justified by the facts, nevertheless there is some continuity between his real life and his reputation, just as some continuity is observable between his questionable works and his authentic writings. Albert had perused volumes of magical and hermetic writings as already noted, and had also observed alchemical procedures in laboratory conditions, as he mentions in several places in the *Book of Minerals*, though it is probably not true (as one manuscript suggests) that he was a teacher of alchemy who took Roger Bacon as a disciple. Albert was also known for working miracles of another sort, and in the end the growth of his reputation for sanctity outstripped the growth of his reputation for magic. It is interesting that a *Vita* composed in the mid 1480s with a view to his eventual canonization devotes about a quarter of its pages to the refutation of the exaggerated magical claims laid upon him. In 1484, the Pope gave permission to the Dominicans of Cologne to celebrate Albert's Feast on November 15 – a gesture that was equivalent to beatification, though Albert was not finally canonized until 1931.

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CLAIRE FANGER

## Alchemy I: Introduction

1. FROM ALCHEMY TO ALCHEMIES 2. THE "SPIRITUAL" INTERPRETATION 3. ALCHEMY AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

4. ALCHEMY AND CHEMISTRY

Alchemy is a subject of enormous intrinsic interest but one which has long proven difficult to grasp properly. The last thirty years, however, have witnessed a remarkable florescence of scholarly work on the subject, which has shed much new light on this obscure subject and brought forth significant revisions and advances in our understanding of it.

Whereas it was common just half a century ago for historians of science to dismiss alchemy out-of-hand as a "pseudo-science" or to deploy it merely as a foil against which to set the origins of modern science, the unsuitability of such attitudes has now become apparent among serious scholars, and such prejudiced readings of alchemy are in the process of passing away. An enormous amount of work, nevertheless, remains to be done in the field, for many aspects and developments of alchemy remain very incompletely understood. One important part of the remaining work is the continued dismantling of erroneous views of alchemy promulgated since the Enlightenment which have, despite their dubious qualifications and origins, deeply tinted a major part of the literature on alchemy written during the 19th and 20th centuries. Four interrelated, and now increasingly rejected, features of these earlier treatments are identifiable: first, the notion or assumption that alchemy is a largely monolithic tradition, bearing little significant internal articulation or dynamic development over time or cultures; second, the concept of alchemy as an essentially or primarily spiritual, psychic, or self-transformative

endeavor; third, the idea that alchemy ran counter to, was a non-participant in, or non-contributor to the scientific developments of the period characterized as the Scientific Revolution; and fourth, the belief that alchemy was something clearly distinguishable (in terms of goals, practices, and practitioners) from chemistry prior to the 18th century.

### 1. FROM ALCHEMY TO ALCHEMIES

The idea of alchemy as largely monolithic in character comes partly from the rhetoric of early modern alchemical writers themselves. Oft-repeated mottoes such as “the Sages all say one thing”, the drawing of mythic histories and genealogies of alchemy to stress its supposed antiquity, and the desire of aspiring alchemists to uncover the secret knowledge known to and hidden by their predecessors (for example, preparing the Philosophers’ Stone) conspire to give the impression of a tradition that remained largely constant over time, cultures, and practitioners. The ambiguity of alchemical writings, moreover, allowed for their broad reinterpretation by subsequent alchemists (and others) to create the appearance of a harmony of views among authors who, when treated critically, show very little actual agreement. In fact, the diversity and dynamism within historical alchemy is sufficiently extensive that historians have now begun to group individual authors and practitioners within “schools” and to see the differences among their practices and goals. Many alchemists, for example, were interested predominantly in bringing about metallic transmutation, generally by means of the Philosophers’ Stone. Others, like → Paracelsus or Alexander von Suchten, downplayed this aspect of alchemy in favor of medicinal applications. Some emphasized productive processes of all sorts – distillation, refining, salt or pigment manufacture, etc. – along the lines of an early chemical industry. Some emphasized the theological implications of alchemical work, while others ignored this dimension entirely. Many writers and practitioners pursued several or even all of these goals, and this brief catalogue does not even mention the important intersections of alchemy over its long history with fine art, theatre, literature, religion, political and social movements, and many other areas of culture and society.

Even within any one of just the early modern European groups there exist diversities of theoretical, philosophical, or operational frameworks. We can speak of, for example, Mercurialists, who sought the matter for the Stone in common mercury, and contrast these with Sendivogians who sought for it in some sort of niter. Likewise,

Scholastic → Aristotelianism appealed as a system to some alchemists – like Geber and Gaston Duclou – while Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism] or other notions appealed to others. Some alchemists took a rigidly mechanistic view of their processes, while others adopted non-mechanical or vitalistic views, with yet others falling at all the possible gradations in-between. The critical point is that we cannot blithely extend the example of a single individual or group of individuals to make claims broadly about alchemy as a whole. While this situation renders a comprehensive understanding of alchemy far more difficult, it also makes it a far more interesting subject of study, and in fact, one less alien from other branches of human inquiry.

### 2. THE “SPIRITUAL”

#### INTERPRETATION

The idea of a monolithic, constant, and ancient “tradition” within alchemy received a boost from the development of the spiritual interpretation of alchemy in the 19th century. A key event here was the publication of Mary Anne Atwood’s *Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850). Atwood reduced all “true” alchemy to a quest for spiritual elevation operating through Mesmeric trances, the knowledge of which, along with → animal magnetism, she believed to be a secret tradition dating back at least to the ancient Greeks. Alchemical writers who apparently busied themselves with actual laboratory operations, were, according to Atwood, mere “literal souls” who failed to perceive the hidden truth of alchemy, and were not “real” alchemists at all; they were in fact, in her words, as “blind” as the chemists and other scientists of her day. Such a division – which plays upon a common rhetorical device employed in early modern alchemical texts where the wise author routinely differentiates himself from imposters and false alchemists – helped give rise to a putative division of alchemy into “esoteric” and “exoteric” aspects. These terms are still encountered today, but when they are applied to early modern alchemy their validity is questionable. There is no evidence that a majority, or even a significant fraction of pre-18th century European alchemical writers and practitioners saw their work as anything other than natural philosophical in character, as even the prolific occultist writer → A.E. Waite (1857-1942) was forced to admit toward the end of his career in 1926. Nonetheless, Atwood’s treatise touched off a surge of interest in alchemy within the context of Victorian occultism [→ occult/occultism]. Although Victorian and subsequent alchemy is extremely interesting in its own right, its popularity



has become an obstacle to understanding earlier alchemy because the spiritual interpretation's universal historical claims about the intent and content of pre-18th century alchemy are untenable.

It is important to clarify the distinction between 19th century occultist views of a self-transformative "spiritual" alchemy and the actual religious dimensions of pre-18th century alchemy. Many early modern alchemists stressed how alchemical truths and religious truths support and reveal one another. Likewise, the language of alchemy is full of religious terminology such as death and resurrection, glorification, and extensive parallels with Biblical texts, the life of Christ, and even the sacred liturgy. The power of fire or the Stone to purify metals is sometimes related to Christ's freeing men from sin. And of course, early alchemists frequently stressed the sanctity and divine favor needed for success. Yet such expressions of piety, as well as the synoptic, analogical view of the truths of the universe (whether natural or supernatural) typical of early modern thought (not just of alchemy) and the extensive use of religious imagery as a source of metaphor is widely different from the 19th century's identification of alchemy with Mesmerism, self-illumination, and psychic transformation. Indeed, the majority of alchemists (though not all) were at pains to stress that their art operated naturally upon natural substances. Even if among the broad diversity of alchemists one could identify a few who seem to promote a view more or less akin to the 19th-century interpretation, this feature could not be proposed as characteristic of alchemy since the majority of alchemists clearly did not hold it.

A major (and, in a critical historical sense, deleterious) outgrowth of the Victorian occultist fascination with alchemy is the psychological interpretation put forth by → Carl Gustav Jung. According to Jung, alchemy is not about physical (chemical) processes at all but rather about psychological developments occurring within the practitioner. The metaphorical language and strange phenomena filling alchemical tomes actually record hallucinatory 'irruptions of the unconscious' which are 'projected' from the alchemist's psyche onto the contents of his flasks. Despite the inherently unlikely character of this notion, it has had enormous influence on the understanding of alchemy even among otherwise sober historians of science. Besides the fact that there are few outside the ranks of avowedly Jungian analytical psychologists who continue to assent to Jung's views, recent scholarly investigations of alchemy have undermined Jung's

construct. In the first place, there is now no question that the vast majority of early modern alchemists were deeply involved in practical pursuits, which they carried out and interpreted with clear-headed, conscious thought. Studies of obscure alchemical language show how even some of the most bizarre metaphorical expressions and emblems can be comprehensively "decoded" into chemical operations. Some of these decoded processes have even been reproduced in modern chemical laboratories, providing occasionally evocative visual results – such as the growing of a spectacular "Philosophical Tree" from gold. The physical appearance of such results, taken together with the delight and fertility of early modern culture in drawing analogies and similitudes affords more immediate and more likely explanations for the origins of at least some alchemical imagery than the invocation of so shaky a construct as irruptions of a collective unconscious. Moreover, the inspection of private manuscript materials, for example the laboratory notebooks of George Starkey (1628-1665, alias Eirenaeus Philalethes, a favorite example for Jung), indicate clearly how he consciously encoded laboratory results in extravagant allegorical guise for public view while he maintained clear, precise expressions for private circulation, and even how he went about deciphering the metaphorical texts of his predecessors into chemical operations he could test practically in the laboratory. The affinity of Jung's interpretation with the 19th-century occultists' spiritual interpretation is clear in their common sundering of alchemy from practical chemical processes and their description of alchemical transformation as taking place within the practitioner; neither has withstood critical historical scrutiny.

### 3. ALCHEMY AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

Given the currency of spiritual and psychological interpretations of alchemy, it is not surprising that many in the early generation of 20th-century professional historians of science, especially those most influenced by positivist tendencies, denied to alchemy any place in the history or origins of modern science save perhaps as a counter-example. Their dismissal of alchemy often echoed sentiments voiced against alchemy in the 18th century, e.g. that it was entirely fraudulent, or that it was simply part of the "occult" (a word poorly defined in this context) which was supplanted by the progress of reason. Thus, influential figures like George Sarton cast alchemy into the scorned bin of "pseudo-

sciences” alongside → witchcraft, black → magic, and necromancy, bedfellows alchemy had acquired predominantly by the writings of the 18th-century *philosophes*.

Yet the last three decades of the 20th century have witnessed a major shift in this perception. First, the profound alchemical interests and commitments of several thinkers recognized as key to the development of the physico-mathematical sciences central to master narratives of the Scientific Revolution were revealed. → Isaac Newton, → Robert Boyle, John Locke, and others were shown to have invested enormous time and energy in traditional alchemical pursuits. Other notable scholars such as Daniel Georg Morhof, Pierre Gassendi, and Olaus Borrichius are now known to have taken alchemy seriously and seen it as no less a part of natural philosophy than astronomy or natural history. Second, a closer, more contextualized study of individual alchemists has shown not only the inadequate – indeed, sometimes caricatured – portrayals of them current in the secondary literature, but also the significant contributions which alchemy has brought to the development of early modern science. For example, alchemy brought forth such principles as an emphasis on the determination and conservation of weight in chemical processes, well-developed and explanatory particulate matter theories, analysis and synthesis as tools for understanding nature, the power of human artifice to create new or improved products over natural ones, and perhaps even the notions of force key to Newton’s physics.

#### 4. ALCHEMY AND CHEMISTRY

The last of the obstacles to understanding alchemy which were mentioned at the outset can be seen as a parallel to the segregation of alchemy from the scientific mainstream (both in the 18th and the 19th to 20th centuries). This is the frequent division of alchemy from chemistry as if the two were only marginally contiguous. This division was made quite clearly by the work of Hélène Metzger in the 1920s, with alchemy as vitalistic and inherently “primitive” on the one side, and chemistry as mechanistic and “scientific” on the other. The division was recapitulated in Marie Boas’ studies of Boyle and in quite a bit of historical writing down to the present. Yet until about the end of the 17th century, the terms alchemy and chemistry were used largely interchangeably, and did not carry their modern definitions and distinctions. The division between the two terms dates from around 1700, and is tied up with a number of

issues, including the professionalization and institutionalization of chemistry at this time and the desire to insulate the newly professionalizing field from the criticisms to which earlier transmutational endeavors had been prone. Thus “alchemy” then became equated with gold-making (and generally fraud), while “chemistry” encompassed most everything else which could previously have been called either alchemy or chemistry. The important point is that it is distorting and historically inaccurate to read our current distinction between the terms back into the 17th century and earlier, and thus to imagine the existence of “chemists” and “alchemists” as distinct groups at that time. Use of the archaic (and inclusive) term *chymistry* for speaking comprehensively about the undifferentiated alchemy/chemistry of the early modern period has been suggested as a solution. Likewise, for the sake of greater clarity, a revival of archaic, but more precise, terminology has also been advocated, for example, *chrysopoeia* (gold-making) and less commonly *argyropoeia* (silver-making) to describe metallic transmutational chymistry, *iatrochemistry* or *chemiatria* to describe medicinal applications, *spagyria* to label Paracelsian-inspired attempts to create more potent substances by analysis and resynthesis, and so forth.

Much work is still required (and on-going) to fill out our understanding of so difficult and diverse a field as alchemy. Such fresh understanding will be advanced when we avoid making unnecessarily broad statements about the intent and content of alchemy *as a whole*, and instead carry out studies which adequately localize alchemical thought – of whatever century – in its due context of time and place. In particular, the new understanding now being gained of pre-18th century alchemy (or “chymistry”) requires the recognition and rejection of preconceptions arising from anachronistic and untenable interpretations which date from the 19th and 20th centuries.

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LAWRENCE M. PRINCIPE

## Alchemy II: Antiquity-12th Century

### A. HISTORY

1. INTRODUCTION 2. THE ALCHEMICAL WORK 3. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ELEMENTS 4. ALCHEMICAL PRACTICE 5. ALCHEMICAL IMAGES AND SIGNS 6. ALCHEMY IN MEDIEVAL SCIENCE 7. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ALCHEMY UP TO 1200 (A. THE BEGINNINGS IN HELLENISTIC EGYPT B. ALEXANDRIAN ALCHEMY C. BYZANTINE ALCHEMY D. ARAB ALCHEMY E. WESTERN ALCHEMY UNTIL 1200)

### B. LITERATURE

1. INTRODUCTION 2. ZOSIMOS OF PANOPOLIS 3. ALEXANDRIAN AND BYZANTINE ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE 4. ARAB ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE 5. JABIR AND THE *CORPUS JABIRIANUM* 6. RHAZES 7. AVICENNA 8. THE *TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM* 9. IBN UMAL 10. ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE IN THE LATIN MIDDLE AGES UNTIL THE END OF THE 12TH CENTURY

### A. HISTORY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Alchemy possesses both a practice and a theory. The theory can appear as a speculative nature-philosophy of Greek origin, or as a metaphorical code for processes of purification and initiation occurring both in the alchemical work and in the soul of the alchemist. Such recurrent metaphors of suffering, death and resurrection are rooted in the mysticism of ancient myths and mystery-cults. It is no accident that these stages of the alchemical work are already present in the first available alchemical text from the 3rd century A.D., the *Physika kai Mystika* of Pseudo-Democritus, which derives from Bolos of Mendes in the 3rd century B.C. A further variety of the concept "alchemy" concerns the alchemists' quest for the panacea, which heals both men and metals like a medicine. This medicinal aspect has its origin in Arab alchemy and becomes very significant in Western alchemy, where it influences → Jean de Rocquetaillade (Rupescissa) and then → Paracelsus and the Paracelsians [→ Paracelsianism]. The panacea can be produced from plant or animal matter, or from minerals alone.

One cannot simply speak of "alchemy", but must distinguish its practical, theoretical, nature-philosophical, mystical and medical aspects. Among alchemists there are, correspondingly, scientists, medical men and mystical seekers after truth, and even charlatans.

The West took over the concept of "alchemy" from the Arabic (*al-kimiya*) and its Latin forms include "alkimia", "alquimia", "alchimia" and "alchemia". The prefix "al-" is simply the definite article in Arabic, but the etymological root of "chimia" is controversial. Its attribution to a mythical hero or prophet cannot be taken seriously. Equally untenable is its application to one of the "sons of God" in Genesis 1 and Joshua 2, named as Chemes, Chimes or Chymes in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, as → Zosimos and Olympiodoros report. Even its derivation from the Egyptian word



*keme* (black), denoting the black soil of Egypt and thus a metonym for Egypt itself, whereby alchemy would signify “the Egyptian Art”, has not been widely accepted. Nowadays it is usually traced back to the Greek word *cheo* (to pour). Accordingly, *chymeia* or *chemeia* would mean the craft of pouring molten metal. In view of what we understand by “alchemy” today, it is possible that the Greek word *cheein* (pouring) became confused with the Egyptian *kem* (black) in Hellenistic Egypt.

If one looks for the Greek word *chemeia* in the usage of Hellenistic and Byzantine alchemists, one finds it to be disappointingly rare, for they prefer to speak of a “holy art”. By contrast, the Latin word *chymia* is frequently encountered in the medieval West, moreover synonymously with the introduction of the Arabic term, thus “alchemy” (Lat. *alchimia*). Not until the advent of the modern period is *chymia* used for the more practical art to distinguish it from the more theoretical *alchemey*.

## 2. THE ALCHEMICAL WORK

Alchemy endeavours to produce noble metals, precious stones, the panacea, and above all the Philosopher’s Stone. On the one hand, it seeks to do this by finding the right mixture (*Eukrasia*) of natural substances according to the ancient doctrine of elements and qualities. Alternatively, it adds the Philosopher’s Stone, usually a powder or elixir prepared from an unknown substance, to the base metal. But first of all this unknown substance must be reduced to the *prima materia* (first matter). This occurs in the alchemical process, the “Great Work” (*opus magnum*) which passes through various stages. According to the colours that appear, these are called *nigredo* (black), *albedo* (white), *citrinitas* (yellow), *rubedo* (red) among others. This change of coloration may be observed when an amalgam of copper and mercury is heated. According to the amount of evaporating mercury, white, yellow, red, and with further heat, grey and black colours are seen, described by alchemists as the *cauda pavonis* (“Peacock’s Tail”). These stages are described in various numbers and orders, but most often appear as follows:

1. Calcination, i.e. oxidation by heating. Metal oxides are thus known as “metal calcinates”.
2. Solution, i.e. dissolution in sharp (“mercurial”) liquids.
3. Putrefaction, i.e. decomposition. The solution in the closed vessel is gently heated in warm compost or a warm water bath to induce fermentation and thus stimulate digestion. The resulting black colour (*nigredo*) is seen as death,

depicted as the “black raven”, which is shortly resurrected as the “white dove” (*albedo*).

4. Reduction, i.e. the recovery of the fugitive “spirits” during the calcination process by means of a fluid (“philosophical milk”), whereupon a yellow coloration (*citrinitas*) appears.
5. Sublimation, i.e. by adding the “spiritual” substance the matter in the glass vessel attains a higher level than the *prima materia*. This violent reaction is seen as the raging of the “red dragon”. A red coloration (*rubedo*) occurs.
6. Coagulation or Fixation, i.e. the solidification of the elevated and purified matter according to the principle “solve et coagula”.
7. Fermentation is only rarely mentioned, it means the addition of a small amount of gold (“yeast of gold”) to accelerate the process.
8. *Lapis philosophorum*, i.e. the Philosopher’s Stone, the *prima materia* elevated and purified into *ultima materia* (supreme matter). It is usually described as a heavy, dark red, shining powder. When heated, it acquires a waxy consistency (*ceratio*), but it solidifies again on cooling.
9. Multiplication, i.e. a greater amount of Stone can be made from a little of its residue.
10. Projection, i.e. the throwing or strewing of the Stone powder onto a base metal, which is thereupon allegedly transmuted into gold (silver in the Lesser Work). This process is also called *Tinctura* or “tingeing” (colouring) and is analogous to the application of the panacea or elixir in medicine.

It is thus evident that a base material is supposed to be reduced to *prima materia* and then ennobled. There are parallels for this in the individuation process described by → C.G. Jung as the development of a mature personality, as well as in the myths of Osiris and Isis, mystery-cults, → mysticism, and solar and cosmic symbols of eternity (e.g. the Ouroboros symbol). However, the processes described are only comprehensible against a background of nature-philosophy. Its basis is the nature-philosophy of Aristotle [→ Aristotelianism].

A thing only exists, when the “form” (*eidos*) is added to “matter” (*hyle*). “Matter” is the passive principle in things, “form” the motive, pure activity. One can even say that “matter” is pure potentiality (Gk. *dynamis*; Lat. *potentia*) which is realised through “form” (Gk. *energeia*; Lat. *actus*). Only formed matter is real as an individual thing and reality consists of such individual things making up “substance” (*ousia*). Aristotelian “form” means not just the external shape of things, but its essential form, its type. As an entelechy (*entelécheia*,

something that contains or realises a final cause), it carries its own purpose within itself, which leads to the external form of the thing. In a universal hierarchy of purposes, each thing becomes “matter” again, once it reaches a higher essential form, as the seed becomes the tree. Ascending this hierarchy, the share of “matter” is constantly decreasing, while that of “form” increases, up to the purest, quite immaterial form of God. In this Aristotelian teleology, God is not only the end, but also the cause of the chain of movement, the first unmoved mover, who always maintains movement and in this manner continually shapes the world with a purpose.

The Aristotelian idea that all things are striving teleologically towards more complete forms exercised a fundamental influence in all alchemical theory. The associated notion of a passive *prima materia*, however, does not appear among alchemists as an Aristotelian metaphysical principle, but as a substance as among the Stoics and akin to the *apeiron* of the Pre-Socratic Anaximandros or the primal clay in Plato’s *Timaios*.

Alchemy destroys a base metal by eliminating its specific nature, and then infusing the remaining matter with a new, nobler essence. The oldest Hellenistic literature describes the base metal as being cured of its “sickness” and restored to *prima materia*. Then one adds a tincture (colouring *pneumata*, “spirits”), which produces a white or yellow coloration as in silver and gold. This could be either a serious imitation of nature or mere trickery. Magical interpretations of metallurgical observations underlie these early attempts at transmutation, which went no further than coloration. The early metallurgists making alloys established that the alloy exhibited other properties than the molten metals. Copper and tin have a different colour and are softer than bronze, and likewise golden brass is produced from red copper and earthy zinc oxide.

The idea of a single ennobling agent, the best known being the *Lapis philosophorum*, is a further development in which ideas of natural → magic may have played a role. The production of the Stone through the stages of the Great Work (*opus magnum*) is also based on the notion of reducing an initial substance to *prima materia*, and then giving it a new, more perfect form. A small quantity of the Stone so produced is then projected onto the base metal, so that this loses its “sick” form and is transmuted into the *ultima materia* of the Stone, the latter acting as a yeast in a fermentation process. As a symbol of eternity and the eternal life of the gods among the Egyptians, gold alone among the metals possesses this perfect “form”.

The idea of *prima materia*, summoned into being

by the formative spirit and constituting all material existence implies that everything is one, as is expressed in the famous 11th-century Greek copy of a Hellenistic alchemical manuscript (No. 299, fol. 188 verso, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice). Here one sees the Ouroboros symbol, the snake or dragon consuming its own tail, signifying eternity, endless change and renewal, with the caption *hen to pan* (everything is one). If everything has arisen from the One and is one, then all things must be transmutable into anything.

Alchemical theory was thus based on these early procedures, first in Greek and later in Arab alchemy, together with the Aristotelian notion of being (prime matter being given form). To these ideas were added further theories drawn from Greek nature-philosophy.

### 3. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ELEMENTS

The Ionic nature-philosophers regarded each one of the elements as the primary substance. In his didactic poem *On Nature*, Empedocles of Agrigent (c. 500-430 B.C.) created the classical doctrine of the elements. Adopted by Aristotle, this doctrine dominated the natural sciences and medicine until the late Middle Ages. It holds that all things consist of the “four root powers”, namely the elements Fire, Air, Water and Earth, in a particular mixture. Two basic forces, “conflict” and “love”, separate them and bring them into new combinations. However, these four elements are not identical with the fire, air, water and earth of empirical experience. They are rather invisible basic materials, the principles of solidity (Earth), fluidity (Water), vaporosity (Air) and combustibility (Fire). Only their chief properties (solid, fluid, vaporous, burning), but in a mixed rather than pure form, can be seen in the empirical elements.

Using his basic doctrine of the elements, Empedocles sketched out a theory of matter in which the four philosophical elements were composed of imperceptible small parts, elementary corpuscles, theoretically divisible but immutable. Variations of this theory are found in Anaxagoras of Klazomenai (c. 500-425 B.C.) and Plato (427-348/7 B.C.).

Classical atomic theory is distinct from such corpuscular theories. It is rather a further variant of corpuscular theory, distinguishing itself in that the atoms are indivisible, differing in form and size and scattered through empty space. It derives from Leukippos from Miletus (mid-5th century B.C.) and Democritos from Abdera (c. 460-370 B.C.), who extended the theory.

Aristotle’s criticism of corpuscular theories, especially the mechanistic conception of atoms as

in Democritus, tended to inhibit their acceptance. Nevertheless, corpuscular theory can be seen in Epicurus of Samos (341-270 B.C.), Titus Lucretius Carus (c. 560-633), the leaders of the 12th-century schools of northern France like Adelard of Bath (c. 1070-after 1146), William of Conches (c. 1080-1154), and even Hugo of St. Victor (end of 11th century-1141) and likewise among Salerno doctors like Alfano, archbishop of Salerno (d. 1085) and Urso (second half of 12th century). Scholastics, e.g. → Roger Bacon (c. 1219-c. 1292), even succeeded in deriving a kind of corpuscular theory from Aristotle (*Physics*, Book I, Chap. 4) and spoke of the smallest particles of all things (*minima naturalia*). Above all, corpuscular theory plays a role in the *Summa perfectionis* of the Latin Geber at the end of the 13th century, theoretically the most solid medieval alchemical text, and the one most widely read in this period. The scientific methodology of Aristotle is fundamentally empirical, but unlike the atomists he does not conceive of natural processes in a mechanical and quantitative manner, but as an interaction of principles and qualities. This physics of qualities dominates the theory of alchemy and medicine until the advent of modern science.

Aristotle supplements the fourfold scheme with a fifth element, the *quinta essentia*, “quintessence” or “ether”, which constitutes the heavens and stars. This “ether”, also known as *spiritus*, and as *pneuma* by the Neo-Platonists, regulates the correct mixture of the sublunar elements, when forming terrestrial things from *prima materia*.

The notion of an ideal mixture of elementary qualities is present not only in the preparation of the Philosopher’s Stone but also dominates the Hippocratic and Galenic medicine of the Middle Ages. Ever since Hippocrates of Kos (c. 460-377 B.C.), and also evident in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, rational medical treatment was directed towards the maintenance or restoration of health, conceived as *Eukrasia*, i.e. the correct mixture of the four cardinal bodily humours of blood (*sanguis*), yellow gall (*cholera*), black gall (*melancholia*) and phlegm (*phlegma*). By contrast, sickness was *Dyskrasia*, the wrong mixture. These basic components of humoral pathology, which prevailed during antiquity and the Middle Ages, already appear around 400 B.C. in the text *On the Nature of Man* (Chap. 4), by Polybos, known as the son-in-law of Hippocrates.

The perfect mixture of the elements, qualities and humours plays a prominent role in both the alchemy and medicine of the Middle Ages until Paracelsus’ dethronement of humoral pathology. Both sciences are based on Pre-Socratic and Aris-

totelian nature-philosophy as well as on the fundamental view that everything is a unity. In Aristotle, the ether influences the sublunar world. From its Mesopotamian and Egyptian origins onwards, → astrology seeks to establish relations between the stars – principally the seven ancient planetary gods Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn – and terrestrial events and destinies. It has many connections with alchemy and medicine. Like magic, it sees divine and demonic forces at work everywhere. Such animistic notions are rooted in pre-scientific times and were passed on through the mythologies of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks and others. Based on the idea of → correspondences, even the metals were matched, because of their appearance, to the planets and their powers: gold to the Sun, silver to the Moon, mercury to Mercury, copper to Venus, iron to Mars, tin to Jupiter, and lead to Saturn.

The earth with its “perfect” spherical form stands at the centre of the Aristotelian world-picture. Around it revolve the seven planets and, in a counter-rotation, the sphere of fixed stars. The earth is the primal mother Gaia, constantly giving birth to new things. Aristotle described the origin of the metals in his *Meteorology*, as being formed in the earth’s interior from dry earthy and moist watery evaporations. With the exception of gold, all are imperfect due to an earthy mixture and their solidification without sufficient watery constituents. He attributes the fusibility of metals to the element of water, their solidity to the element of earth. In Arab alchemy, indeed already in the *Liber misericordiae* within the *Corpus Jabirianum* (8th-10th century), the composition of all materials, even metals, is traced back to the two principles of Sulphur and Mercury, which are in turn composed of the four elements. Sulphur, the principle of combustibility, consists of Fire and Air; Mercury, the principle of fusibility, of Water and Earth. These terms do not denote natural sulphur and mercury. From this time on, the Sulphur-Mercury theory dominates alchemy, only being briefly rivalled in the 14th century by the Pure Mercury theory. However, the latter is really only a variant of the Sulphur-Mercury theory, as it assumes that the principle of Sulphur is already contained in that of Mercury. The purest and finest substance of this Mercury gives permanence to the metals (and all things), while Sulphur corrupts them.

Animistic tradition regards everything as alive, as moved by demons and spirits and their energies (*dynameis*). In this view, Sulphur is represented as the Sun, masculine, and linked to the element Fire (hot and dry). Mercury is seen as the Moon,

feminine, and assigned to the element Water. Their mixture is conceived as sexual intercourse. The Arab *Turba philosophorum* (9th-10th century) describes the elixir for producing gold as the union of masculine and feminine.

Through Arab alchemy based on its Greek predecessor, this dualistic conception of matter reaching far back to prehistoric and mythological sources was extended into a triad of body, soul and spirit, which was in turn related to all of creation and applied to the idea of the Philosopher's Stone. In the 16th century the triad appears as Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, denoting the principles of matter, in the work of Paracelsus (1493-1541).

Considered in the context of psychology and mysticism, alchemy expresses in word and image a supreme spiritual endeavour to reach a goal that moves ever further away, the more costly the efforts. Speaking in images, and leading to paradox, alchemy has much in common with mysticism, in respect of this process of endless purification leading towards a goal. In an objective sense, this goal is always receding and can only be perceived subjectively. The mystical search for the hidden god is paralleled by the quest for the hidden Philosopher's Stone or panacea in alchemy. The salvational quests of both mysticism and alchemy lead through purification and illumination by contemplation to the goal of *unio mystica* or the Philosopher's Stone, respectively. This search for salvation fills the greater part of all mystical and alchemical literature. Actual mystical experience, the apprehension of God, is vouchsafed to few. The union with God in female mysticism revolves around constantly new images of the sexual act (*conubium spirituale*). Thus Mechthild of Magdeburg has the Holy Spirit say to God that he should take the soul as a bride to a wedding bed. Similar metaphors are found concerning the combination of Sulphur and Mercury in alchemy.

However, their imagery can only be compared. They both spring from the common root of syncretic Hellenistic soteriology in late antiquity, as recorded in → Gnosticism, → Neoplatonism and the *Corpus Hermeticum*. As formulated in Greek nature-philosophy, alchemy does not recognise the direct spiritual intervention of man on matter, e.g. through spells or incantations, and is thus quite distinct from magic, although its theory shares much with the world-picture of *magia naturalis*. If magic seeks to dominate the material world through spiritual forces, alchemy seeks to understand the inner coherence of matter and, from this insight in the reaction of material substances, proceeds towards the mastery of the material world. But the mystical

path of salvation does not lead to any exercise of power in the material world; rather, it leads out of this world to an unworldly life of spiritual elevation and perfection in the search for God. The common Gnostic legacy in mysticism and alchemy is this spiritual path from material imperfection through purification and illumination to perfection. This is their only point of contact.

Leaving aside fraudulent alchemists, alchemy essentially has two aspects. Besides its theoretical superstructure, it develops its practice.

#### 4. ALCHEMICAL PRACTICE

For the completion of the Great Work through four to twelve stages – preferably seven or twelve in number – instruments were used, known from illustrations in the papyri of late antiquity and medieval manuscripts. Laboratories in the West, where equipment developed by Arab alchemy was in use, were first established alongside the pharmacy in monasteries, as an extension of university pharmacies in the late Middle Ages, and at princely courts. Instruments included mortars (Lat. *mortuarium*, a vessel for pulverization), crucibles (Lat. *tigillum*), scales, scissors, tongs. The vessel for the performance of the Work was the aludel (Arab. *Al-utal*, Gk. *Aithalion*), occasionally known as a cucurbit (Lat. *curcurbita*), a convex vessel with openings above and below made from clay, glass, iron or copper; aludels could be arranged in a series, one upon the other. When it was hermetically sealed with clay to a still-head or alembic (Arab. *Al-anbiq*, Gk. *Ambix*, Lat. *caput mauri*, i.e. Moor's head), the apparatus could be used for sublimation or recurrent distillation. If a separation was performed by distillation, the alembic with its extended spout (Lat. *alembicus rostratus*) was placed upon the vessel containing the matter to be distilled. The distillate streamed through the spout into a receiving vessel (Lat. *receptaculum*). The retort (Lat. *retorta*, *cornus Hermetis* [horn of Hermes], *matrix* [womb]) combined the aludel and alembic in a single vessel. There was further technical development in the apparatus of the Work in the 14th and 15th centuries, demonstrating the practical gains for chemistry later on. The "Pelican" was a still that enables continuous distillation by returning a distillate to its residue for re-distillation. Cooling systems were also constructed.

The raw materials were heated according to requirements in various ways with lamps or candles, but usually with a furnace charged with wood or charcoal. If an even warmth was required, a basin of fermenting horse-manure was advised, occasionally the reflection or refraction of sun-

beams, or a sand-bath (Lat. *balneum arenae*), a steam-bath (Lat. *balneum vaporis*), ash-bath (Greek. *Thermospodion*), or water-bath (Lat. *balneum Mariae*), frequently and wrongly attributed to Mary the Jewess in Egypt, allegedly the sister of → Moses.

The materials used by alchemists remained largely unchanged from the time of Rhazes (865-925) onwards. They were joined in Western alchemy by salpeter, alcohol, nitric acid and sulphuric acid. Rhazes lists the following materials in his major work *Kitab al-Asrar* ("The Book of Secrets"):

- a) Four "Spirits", i.e. volatile substances: i. Mercury, recognised as a metal by the 14th century, ii. Sal ammoniac (ammonium chloride), iii. Auripigment, Arsenic (arsenic sulphide), iv. Sulphur,
- b) Seven Bodies, i.e. the seven metals recognised by Rhazes,
- c) Thirteen Stones,
- d) Six Atraments, see Schneider (1962), 66,
- e) Six kinds of borax (Arab. *Bauraq*, sodium tetraborate),
- f) Eleven Salts,
- g) Nascentia, i.e. ingredients from plants,
- h) Viventia, i.e. ingredients from animals.

#### 5. ALCHEMICAL IMAGES AND SIGNS

Already in Greek alchemical literature signs are found for substances (and even equipment), whose derivation is still largely obscure and which are often ambiguous. They are especially frequent in the later medieval and early modern periods. The use of planetary signs for the seven metals is of course self-evident. Furthermore there are pictograms (e.g. a retort), ideograms (e.g. the Ouroboros as a symbol for the unity and cyclical renewal of the cosmos as well as the cyclicity of the alchemical Work), and logograms (e.g. a death's head, derived from the term *caput mortuum* for the residue of distillation).

There were two channels for passing on the practical and theoretical knowledge of alchemy. On the one hand, there is an open (*aperte*) objective language as with Rhazes, and, on the other, an obscure (*tecte*), image-laden language as with Ibn Umail (c. 900-960). The latter involved cover-names (*Decknamen*) which came from Greek into Arabic and thence into Western alchemy, e.g. for chemical substances: "red rose" for the elixir used to make gold; for chemical properties: "eagle" for the evaporation of volatile substances; for the colours of the alchemical process: "raven" for black. These were useful as codes only as long as they remained

unknown to a broader public. Although polysemy (*aqua* is not only water but every fluid substance) already caused enough confusion for the user, there were further codes, anagrams and acrostics, creating an arcane language accessible only to a small circle of initiates. Not only single terms were veiled in concealed language, but there was also a prolific use of metaphor and allegory. From the 3rd to the 8th century, alchemy made use of many genres, including recipe, revelatory vision, allegory, riddle, didactic poems and letters, dialogue, commentary, and later debate (e.g. *Turba philosophorum*).

Traditional images of the world as a large organism (e.g. conception, birth, growth, maturity and death) were passed on. In addition, there were images based on Christian beliefs (e.g. Christ's Passion and Resurrection in *Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit*) and, in the Renaissance, images from ancient mythology (e.g. → Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens* (1618), plates 23-24, 44-46).

The tendency towards → secrecy has clung to alchemy since its origins. Zosimos of Panopolis (c. 300), whose works represent the earliest alchemical documents, already warns alchemists against the greed of kings and humanity in general. Such demands for secrecy run like a thread through alchemical literature. Nevertheless there were occasional bans, ever since Diocletian (296) (LMA II, 331), which multiplied in the late medieval period, and there were always plenty of opponents. Selfish interests, e.g. commercial monopoly, played their part, and possibly even altruistic efforts to protect humanity from the misuse of dangerous knowledge.

#### 6. ALCHEMY IN MEDIEVAL SCIENCE

Any attempt to classify alchemy among the medieval *artes* is confronted by the problem of its multifaceted nature. In its European beginnings, only → Daniel of Morley (c. 1140-1210) dares to attempt such a classification in his *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum*, moreover as a subdivision of astronomy in the Quadrivium, the four mathematical arts of the seven *artes liberales*. Dominicus Gundisalpinus (12th century), using the Arabic classification of sciences, regards alchemy as *scientia naturalis* in his work *De divisione philosophiae*. Alchemy was never able to establish itself as a discipline at the medieval colleges and universities. However, until around 1300 it was discussed at a university level and had its place in the great encyclopaedias, such as the *Speculum naturale* of Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1190-1264), who not only described its practical merits, but also defined it as a science.



Alchemy could be regarded as a field of philosophy on the basis of its theory and called a liberal art or even a natural science, while its craft practice assigned it to the mechanical arts. To the medieval scholastics, however, it was neither a mechanical art nor a magical art forbidden by the Church.

#### 7. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ALCHEMY UP TO 1200

The following overview summarises some important aspects, facts and specialist works in the development of alchemy.

(a) Its beginnings in Hellenistic Egypt are characterised by the imitation of noble metals and pearls in temple science contained in the recipe literature of the Leiden and Stockholm papyri (c. 3rd century A.D.) and in Bolos of Mendes (3rd century B.C.), and passed on to Pseudo-Democritus (c. 300 A.D.).

(b) Alexandrian alchemy. Greek and Middle Eastern, especially Egyptian influences, combine in a syncretism, to be seen in all areas of knowledge in Alexandria, the greatest cultural centre of the Hellenistic world. Between 100 and 300 Greek nature-philosophy blends with mythology, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism in apocryphal works and such pseudepigraphic authors as → Hermes Trismegistus (although alchemy is least evident in the *Corpus Hermeticum*), Isis, Agathodaimon, Cleopatra, Mary the Jewess, Ostanos, Pammenes, Iamblichus, and Moses. In his major work *Physika kai Mystika*, Pseudo-Democritus (3rd century) not only transmits Bolos of Mendes and gives recipes for tinctures, but also provides a syncretic, mystical alchemy, abundant in metaphor with quotations from Ostanos and Pammenes; there is a commentary on this by Synesius (4th century). Alchemical allegory is first found in Zosimos of Panopolis (4th century), the earliest biographically documented alchemist, whose work found a wide readership, largely in commentaries, especially by Olympiodoros (6th century), and is accessible through Arab quotations.

(c) Byzantine alchemy begins with Olympiodoros, who displays a thorough familiarity with practice and equipment, and is continued by Stephanos of Alexandria (7th century), Heliodoros (8th century), Psellus (11th century) up to Nikephoros (13th century). Early texts of this Byzantine alchemy with its rich symbolism, specialist terminology and illustrations of instruments are collected in the famous Greek Codex 299 (11th century) in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice. This served as a model for later copies. Byzantine alchemy not only develops the full range of its lit-

erary forms, mentioned above, but also elaborates its metaphorical codes.

(d) Arab alchemy derives directly from Alexandrian alchemy through translations from the Greek or Syrian. The doxographical *Turba philosophorum* reflects Greek nature-philosophy, mythology and magic. This is also true of the extensive *Corpus Jabirianum* (8th-10th century), attributed to Jabir (the Arab Geber, not to be confused with the Latin Geber of the 13th century), which first propounds the Sulphur-Mercury theory and also first uses plant and animal matter besides minerals for the production of the elixir. The Jabirian *corpus* is the first to contain the idea that the elixir can cure human diseases as a panacea as well as transforming base metals into noble ones. Although Jabir offers no fully developed system of iatrochemistry for producing remedies by chemical means, his work represents its beginnings. The twofold division of Alexandrian alchemy into a recipe literature and metaphorical, coded texts is now quite evident in an exoteric, pragmatic form of alchemy and its esoteric, image-laden, veiled counterpart. The esoteric literature of alchemy includes the *Tabula Smaragdina*, whose roots reach back to Hellenistic times, the basic esoteric text for all subsequent alchemists; the writings of the “Brethren of Purity from Basra” (10th century), which demonstrate a Gnostic influence; the *Epistola solis ad lunam crescentem* (“Tabula chemica”) of Senior Zadith, i.e. Mohammed ibn Umail (c. 900-960) and others like the astrological-alchemical sections of the *Secretum secretorum* (10th century), a pseud-Aristotelian compendium of considerable influence. The exoteric aspect is initiated by Rhazes (865-925), especially with his *Liber secretorum* (not to be confused with the compendium *Secretum secretorum*), followed by others including al-Farabi (c. 873-950) and the great → Avicenna (c. 980-1037), who denied the possibility of transmutation in his *Book of the Remedy*, and anticipated iatrochemistry, the alchemical preparation of medicines, long before Paracelsus.

(e) Western alchemy until 1200. In early medieval Europe, artisan crafts combine with parts of alchemical practice, as described by Pliny the Elder (c. 24-79) in his *Naturalis historia*. An ennoblement of matter is not intended in any way, nor any forgeries, and there is no theory of transmutation. This is therefore not really alchemy, but rather metallurgy, glass-making, bell-casting, mosaic work and producing colours, as represented in the following works: *Compositiones ad tingenda musiva* (9th century), *Mappae clavicula* (9th-10th century), *Schedula diversarum artium* (or *De diver-*

*sibus artibus*) of Theophilus Presbyter (c. 1100), *De coloribus et artibus Romanorum* of Heraclius (11th century). This is the literature of the *artes mechanicae*, which later extends through other chemical fields to mining, pyrotechnics and distillation by the 15th century.

The history of Western alchemy in the medieval period begins with the reception of Arab alchemy after the 12th century. Its advent is marked by the translation of the alchemical doctrines of Morienus Romanus for the Umayyad prince Khalid (Halid ibn Yazid ibn Mu'awiya) († 704), both pseudepigraphic, by Robertus Castrensis (also Ketenensis), i.e. → Robert of Chester from Ketton in 1144. It bears the title *Liber de Compositione alchemiae quem edidit Morienus Romanus, Calid regi Aegyptiorum: quem Robertus Castrensis de Arabico in Latinum transtulit*. Toledo in Spain became a centre of such translating activity, led by Gerard of Cremona (c. 1114-1187).

Important early translations (12th-13th century) are *De aluminibus et salibus* of Pseudo-Rhazes, both exoteric and esoteric in its symbolism of the Ouroboros, as well as *De congelatione et conglutinatione lapidum* (c. 1200), the geological section on the origin of metals in Avicenna's *Book of the Remedy*, by Alfred of Sarashel. A Latin edition of Rhazes' *Liber secretorum* is available from the 13th century onwards, and also of *Liber lumen luminum* (also known as *Liber claritatis*), pseudepigraphically attributed to Avicenna or Rhazes. The *Tabula smaragdina* is then also translated. Arab alchemy, the *ars nova*, was also available through translations and compilations made in Sicily, like the *Ars alchemiae* of → Michael Scot (c. 1180-1235).

Pseudepigrapha not only circulated under the names of Rhazes and Avicenna but also under those of → Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, ("Of Multiplication"), → Arnau de Vilanova, → Ramon Llull, of whom several were actually opponents of alchemy.

## B. LITERATURE

### I. INTRODUCTION

Founded by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C., Alexandria was the intellectual centre of both Egypt and the whole Hellenistic world, with its Museion and famous library. Here the ancient Egyptian monotheistic religion blended with its thousand-faced personifications of the deity – the One and the Many. Here again ancient Egyptian temple wisdom encountered not only the Greek pantheon, philosophy and science, but also Judaism, Christianity, Gnosticism and Neoplaton-

ism. Myths and cults co-existed, influencing each other and becoming interwoven. This contact between different cultures was not limited to the less educated classes but reached up to the learned elites of the Museion and the library. The ideas of Greek alchemy, which overarched traditional metallurgical practices, grew out of this rich cultural humus. The myth of Isis and Osiris provides an example of this Graeco-Egyptian syncretism, which corresponds with many elements of alchemical imagery and nature-philosophical thought.

The Isis-Osiris mythology essentially consists in a message of salvation known to the mystical tradition of all great world-religions: through the surrender of the temporal self (dismemberment), the inner person attains a higher, eternal life (Horus, Serapis). This idea of purification from the worldly and incomplete is present in the mystery-cults of antiquity, in mysticism and in the "solve et coagula" of alchemy.

Such parallels in the development of alchemical theory in Hellenistic Egypt might lead one to expect corresponding esoteric ideas in the oldest papyri. However, the findings are meagre. The metallurgical skills of ancient Egypt are documented, indeed at a late stage (3rd century), in the formulae of the Leiden (X) and Stockholm papyri. These are chiefly concerned with the counterfeiting of precious stones, pearls, silver and gold through alloys and imitations using colouring, with tinctures playing a major role. There is no trace of the spiritual elevation and clarification found in the mystery-cults and mysticism. Only all-too-human concerns are evident in the temple arts and industry. Here one discerns no philosophical endeavour to discover the innermost constitution of matter, but rather the frank admission of fraudulent tricks.

However, quite similar recipes for the production of gold and silver are found in the first alchemical writer known by name, Bolos of Mendes (3rd century B.C.), transmitted in the fragmentary *Physisika kai Mystika* of Pseudo-Democritus (c. 300). Bolos/Democritus is said to have publicised the secret alchemical temple wisdom of the Egyptian priests, according to Zosimos of Panopolis. Similar recipes surface later on in the Latin *Mappae clavicula*. As our earliest source, Bolos already interprets the processes described in the recipes in terms of natural magic, ideas of sympathy and antipathy in the cosmos. These recipes deal with the imitation and transformation of natural substances based on the simple theory that the cosmos is a unity in which everything must be convertible into everything else. Here speaks a practically oriented alchemy, concerned with the mastery of nature.

Such an imitation of nature, where tinctures play a special role, should be distinguished from purely metallurgical and mineralogical techniques, as described by Pliny the Elder (d. A.D. 79) in his *Naturalis historia*, and which were used in the West for the purposes of casting bells, and producing stained glass and church ornaments in the early Middle Ages up to the 12th century. However, between the 1st and 3rd centuries, Alexandrian alchemy develops a unity of theory and practice by assimilating elements of the most diverse philosophical currents, especially Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, as well as the doctrines of purification and salvation in myths and mystery-cults. The enigmatic language of alchemy with its pseudonymous authors appears at the same time. It is significant that only pseudepigraphic and apocryphal authors, named after figures in Egyptian, Jewish and Greek mythology, religion and magic, feature in these first three centuries of alchemical literature.

Isis reveals the secrets of making gold and silver to her son Horus and gives recipes in the text *Isis the Prophetess to her Son Horus*. To the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, who is also credited with a pharmaceutical-cosmetic work and a gynaecological tract, was attributed the *Chrysopoeia* (Gold Preparation), a rich symbolic and metaphoric text in one of the most important collections of sources for Greek alchemy, the Codex 299 of the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (11th century; Ploss 1970, 18), fol. 188 verso. On a single page the basic axioms of alchemy are combined with practice: three concentric circles form two rings, containing the words: 'One is the All and through it the All and in it the All and if it does not contain the All it is nothing', and 'The Serpent is One, he who has the Venom with two Compositions', beside it an image of the Ouroboros with the caption 'One is the All'. The practice of alchemy, emphasised by Mary the Jewess, is additionally represented by a double-funnelled alembic and a furnace. This Mary the Jewess, known to some alchemists as Miriam, the sister of Moses, known to Muslims as the Coptic Mary, the slave of Mohammed, who bore him a son, is another of these historically unidentifiable authorities. Her name is wrongly attributed to the "Balneum Mariae" (*bain-marie*), a tripod vessel, which is placed in the fire and filled with a mixture of oil, wax and sand in order to produce a higher temperature than boiling water. The *bain-marie* is likewise illustrated in Codex Marcianus 299, fol. 195 verso. Another alchemical author, Ostanes, the Persian magician, is equally intangible from a historical point of view. Bolos/Democritus describes himself as having been a pupil of Ostanes in *Phy-*

*sika kai Mystika*. Even the serpentine god Agathodaimon, literally "good spirit", whose symbol is the Ouroboros, appears as the author of a commentary to the Gnostic "Oracle of Orpheus", in which he discusses tinctures and the whitening and yellowing of metals. All these mythical grandees remain a constituent part of alchemical literature throughout its entire history. But none has attained a greater importance than Hermes Trismegistus, the "Thrice-Greatest Hermes", whose name has clung to the "Hermetic art", and even to such technical terms as the "hermetic seal" of a laboratory vessel in the alchemical work or the *aves hermeticae* for the "volatile", rising vapours in the process of distillation. This deity appears yet again as an exemplary product of Hellenistic syncretism in Egypt. The seventeen tracts of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, however, make no reference to alchemy. This suggests that Hermes Trismegistus entered the theory of alchemy owing to parallels with his cosmic philosophy of purification, redemption and immortality. The *Corpus Hermeticum* proclaims a specific kind of redemption, a liberation of the spirit by knowledge. Besides the theosophical *Hermetica*, there are also medical-scientific treatises, which deal with alchemy among other subjects. The alchemical *Hermetica* are mostly preserved as fragments. A longer one entitled "Anepigraphos", that is "untitled", attributes the preparation of silver, here called the "moon", to Hermes and Agathodaimon.

The influence of the *Hermetica* was enormous. In the first instance, this tradition was fostered in the Middle East, by the Sabaeans of Harran and the Muslims, together with other aspects of Greek philosophy and science. The best-known Hermetic text, the *Tabula Smaragdina* (Emerald Tablet), the "Bible of the alchemists", which began to circulate in the West from the 13th century onwards, is also attributable to Islamic engagement with the alchemical *Hermetica*. Its earliest source is in Arabic versions, for example the final part of the "Book of the Secret of Creation" (also known as "Book of Causes", 9th century) by Balinas, the Pseudo-Apollonios of Tyana. The intellectual world of the *Tabula Smaragdina* derives from the Hermetism of Graeco-Egyptian alchemy.

This condensed *summa* of Graeco-Egyptian alchemy shines like a precious stone imbedded in one of the recurrent legends of discovery. The work bears the motto *hen to pan*, the unity of everything. All things have proceeded from this One, whence it follows that everything can be transformed into anything. Macrocosm and microcosm correspond to each other and turn into each other. The Philosopher's Stone has the Sun (Fire, philosophical Sul-



phur, which bestows a gold colour) for its father, the Moon (Water, philosophical Mercury, which gives a silver colour and is the matrix of the Stone) for its mother. The wind (Air, the “Volatile” that is the rising vapour in a heated distillation still, or aludel, a Hermetic vessel known as the Philosopher’s Egg) carries the Stone aloft like a seed, and the earth (Mother earth, in which the minerals grow, likewise the mercurial humus of the Stone) nourishes the Stone and brings it to maturity. Here are clearly delineated the basic substances of philosophical Sulphur and Mercury according to the Sulphur-Mercury theory, besides the operation of the four elements in the Philosopher’s Stone: Fire, Water, Air and Earth. These individual components are not just listed, but dynamically related to each other according to *theorica*, thus producing a coded description of the alchemical Work, the *opus magnum*. The process of purification is clearly described, from the coarse to the subtle, up to pure fire (Gold), elevated above the earthly. The circular movement up to heaven and back to earth is indicated, just as the alchemical elaboration of the symbol of the unity of the universe in eternal change, the ancient Egyptian Ouroboros, expresses the circular processes of the alchemical *opus*.

After Augustine (354-430) had declared his discord with everything connected with Hermes (*De Civitate Dei* 18.23), interest in this literature was checked in the Christian West, until it was unleashed again by translations from the Arabic in Spain and Southern Italy during the 12th-century Renaissance.

Wolfram von Eschenbach created his epic poem *Parzival* in the first decade of the 13th century under the influence of the School of Chartres. Here Parzival’s wise hermit uncle Trevrizent recalls the mystagogic figure of Hermes Trismegistus. He guides the protagonists towards inner purification, moreover on the Hermetic-Gnostic path of understanding oneself, the microcosm as well as the macrocosm. Wolfram’s Hermetism is combined with alchemical knowledge.

## 2. ZOSIMOS OF PANOPOLIS

The first historical alchemist, Zosimos of Panopolis (Akhmim) in Egypt, who was active around A.D. 300, knew the *Hermetica*. Latin (Western) alchemy calls him Rosinus. The *Suda* (“Souda”, c. 1000), the most important, comprehensive Byzantine encyclopaedia, credits him with an alchemical encyclopaedia in twenty-eight volumes entitled *Cheirokmeta* (“Handles”). Only Greek and Syrian fragments have survived, somewhat distorted in a Christian sense, for Zosimos was not a Christian.

There is also a series of Arabic quotations. We have particular knowledge of Zosimos from the commentary of the Byzantine alchemist Olympiodoros (6th century).

On the one hand, Zosimos was a practical alchemist. Like Mary the Jewess, he places great value on apparatus, e.g. his book *On Apparatus and Furnaces*, and many alchemical recipes of his have survived. On the other hand, he gives the first instance of alchemical allegory and a coded language, because he pleads that the alchemical art be kept secret and charges Bolos of Mendes with having made it public. An example of his enigmatic language would be the following “description” of the Philosophers’ Stone in dichotomous paradoxes: ‘This stone which isn’t a stone, this precious thing which has no value, this polymorphous thing which has no form, this unknown thing which is known to all’. In one of his works, the “Commentary on the Letter Omega” which probably belongs among the twenty-eight books of the alchemical encyclopaedia, he debates with his sister Theosebeia, that a sage who has self-knowledge needs no kind of magic to influence something. In contrast, he allows everything to develop according to the necessity of nature and thus produces permanent “natural tinctures”. Zosimos’ portrait of the true alchemist, e.g. in the book “On the Treatment of Magnesia”, displays obvious Hermetic features. Zosimos introduces not only Hermetism together with reminiscences of current myths and religions to alchemy, but also the allegorical encoding of his ideas concerning the redemption of the corporeal, transient existence, of metals as well as men, into the immaterial realm of the spirit. Zosimos’ endeavours are most clear in his alchemistic “Dream” or “Vision”, the title of his allegory of the alchemical work. In fact, this is neither a dream nor a vision, but Zosimos chooses to use the literary form of an allegorical dream. With his ideas of clarification and *metanoia*, linked to a serial progression through purification to illumination and perfection, Zosimos stands at the beginning of a tradition – at once mythical, mystical, religious, philosophical, scientific, metallurgical and alchemical – which has been repeated a thousandfold by alchemists ever since. Zosimos’ dream allegory presents all these traditions so clearly, that one may speak of a didactic text, artfully divided into three parts, and intentionally written in a coded linguistic form.

## 3. ALEXANDRIAN AND BYZANTINE ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE

After Zosimos of Panopolis, Greek alchemy exhausts itself in the repetition of old theory, in the

elaboration and development of imagery in literary formulations, as well as wearisome descriptions of practical work. However, this has left a valuable legacy. Greek alchemy has been handed down to us in collections of manuscripts, including the already quoted Codex Marcianus 299 (11th century), as well as the Greek Codices 2325 (13th century) and 2327 (15th century) of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. All other Greek survivals derive from these manuscripts. Greek alchemy exhibits the following literary genres: recipe, allegory, riddle, revelatory vision, didactic poem or letter, a tract in dialogue, and commentary. The Greek alchemists of the 4th century, especially Pelagros, Dioscoros, and Synesius are not proven historical figures. Only Synesius, who directs his commentary on Pseudo-Democritus to Dioscoros, can be identified with some probability as the Neoplatonist Synesius of Cyrene (c. 370- c. 414), bishop of Ptolemais in 410-411.

The transition from Alexandrian to Byzantine alchemy took place in the 5th century. Olympiodoros, a pagan historian and alchemist from Thebes in Egypt, inaugurates this process. The work entitled "The philosopher Olympiodoros on Zosimos, Hermes and the Philosophers" is attributed to him. It exhibits Gnostic influence as well as a knowledge of practical alchemy, especially in the description of equipment, but contains nothing new otherwise. He broadly concerns himself with the philosophical bases of alchemy, especially the Greek philosophers of nature, and repeatedly quotes extracts from Zosimos, described as the "Crown of the Philosophers".

The rhetorical and metaphorical expansion of alchemy, already present in Olympiodoros to an unprecedented degree, culminates in Greek alchemy with Stephanos of Alexandria (7th century). During the reign of emperor Herakleios (610-641) he taught philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and → music. Besides a commentary on Aristotle and a work on astronomy, he composed an alchemical tract in nine lectures. In an eclectic fashion, he combined a mystical Christianity with ideas of the Pythagoreans, Platonism and other philosophical currents. He presents alchemy not as practical laboratory work but as an intellectual and spiritual process. He interprets the practice of alchemy in a mystical way as the clarification of the soul, following in Zosimos' tradition. He stylizes the transmutation of base metals into gold as a symbol for the perfection of the human spirit through understanding in a Gnostic sense. He uses the ancient metaphorical tradition, but disguises its sexual symbolism, which occurs overtly in Cleopatra as coitus, pregnancy and birth.

In the ensuing period, Christian ideas and images as well as references to the New Testament become increasingly prominent in the metaphorical usage of Greek alchemy. Overall, the interest in practical laboratory work recedes, while the poetic and allegorical ornament increases. Poems of this "allegorizing" tendency by Heliodoros, Theophrastos, Hierotheos and Archelaos have survived from the 8th and 9th centuries. The old practice of encoding continues, but also basic ideas, e.g. the composition of all things from body, soul and spirit, as in Archelaos.

Now alchemy, ever since Zosimos, manifests in a mythologised and psychologised form. This transmutation was linked with notions of death and reawakening in the oriental mystery-cults, crowned by the Gnostic idea of redemption through knowledge. This combination of practical knowledge and the esoteric formulation of mythological, psychic and soteriological ideas is continued in this period by Salmanas (9th-10th century) and Psellus (11th century), through whom alchemical knowledge reached the Latin West. However, unlike the innovations which Arab alchemy introduced to the Christian West, Byzantine alchemy brought no new theoretical ideas.

#### 4. ARAB ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE

Translations from Greek and Syrian into Arabic made by Syrian-speaking Nestorians in Nisibis and Edessa and the Sabaeans in Harran proliferated under educated rulers like Harun al-Rashid (c. 764-809) and Al-Ma'mun (787-833). Besides these centres of learning, Greek science entered the Islamic world through the Academy of Gondishapur founded during the Sassanid dynasty (224-651) in west Persia and through Egyptian centres, especially Alexandria.

Since the end of the 8th century there were also sufficient numbers of Muslim translators proficient in Greek. As far as alchemical literature is concerned, several Persian and even Babylonian-Assyrian ideas and concepts found in Arabic versions are attributable to their translation in Persian and Mesopotamian locations. The newly developing Arabic literature of alchemy relied on these translations and so transmitted both authentic material, above all Zosimos, as well as pseudepigraphic works, which were not recognised as such. These included, for example, Thales, Pythagoras, Leukippos, Empedocles, Democritus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, but also "Agathodaimon", "Chimes", "Hermes" and Hermetic writings, such as the already cited *Tabula Smaragdina*, which originally stood at the end of "The Book of the Secret of Cre-

ation” by Balinas (Pseudo-Apollonios of Tyana), and further authorities like Cleopatra, Mary the Jewess, Ostanes and others. Such pseudepigrapha in Arabic alchemy have still not been adequately researched.

From the 8th century onwards, Islamic scholars enter the historical stage. Only several of the great number of Muslim alchemists, who produced original and representative work, can be given as examples. Arab historiography is problematic, as legend is not always distinguishable from historical truth. The most important historical source is the “Fihrist” (kitab-al-Fihrist) of Ibn [-Abi-Yakub]-an-Nadim (second half 10th century).

Ibn an-Nadim introduces the Umayyad prince Khalid (Halid b. Yazid b. Mu’awiya) at the turn of the 7th to the 8th century as the first Arab alchemist. He claims to have seen works by him and his alchemical testament to his son. There are similar reports by other Arab historians. It is still an open question whether the historical Khalid is identical with this alchemist. However, Khalid’s principal importance is his legacy to the Christian West, as the dialogue of Khalid with his alchemy teacher Maryanus (i.e. Morienus Romanus) was the first alchemical text to be translated from Arabic into Latin by → Robert of Chester in 1144, later printed under the title *Liber de compositione alchemiae quem edidit Morienus Romanus, Calid regi Aegyptiorum: quem Robertus Castrensis de Arabico in Latinum transtulit*. It is true that Khalid is credited with several alchemical works, among them “The Paradise of Wisdom”, a divan of alchemical didactic poems, which were frequently quoted later.

##### 5. JABIR AND THE CORPUS JABIRIANUM

The reception of Greek learning swiftly led to remarkable achievements in Arab alchemy, first evident in the extremely influential *Corpus Jabirianum*. Evolving from the 8th to the 10th century, its authorship is attributed to Jabir (ibn Hayyan), who is the subject of much scholarly debate owing to scant historical evidence. In any case, this Jabir or Arab Geber must have been succeeded by the Latin Geber of the 13th century, who is credited with a text which was produced in Italy. Jabir provides evidence of himself as a historical personality in the 8th-9th century by repeatedly asserting that he is a pupil of Ja’far as-Sadiq and that he followed the latter in the content and structure of his writings. The Imam ‘Abd Allah Ja’far al-Sadiq (c. 700-765) lived a reclusive life in Medina. He must have enjoyed a high reputation, because a great number of legendary pseudepigrapha have gathered around his name. In one such attributed work, “The Open

Letter of Ja’far as-Sadiq regarding the Science of the Art and of the Noble Stone”, one encounters in Arab alchemical literature the earliest subdivision of the metals as of all things into the triad body, soul and spirit, which plays such an important role in → Paracelsus as “Salt, Sulphur and Mercury”.

The *Corpus Jabirianum* is extremely voluminous and treats of all ancient sciences. Three thousand titles in total are known, of which many relate to chapter-headings. The most important writings of Jabir are the following:

- “The Compassion”, also known as “The Foundation”, appears to be the oldest work in view of its archaic terminology. Ja’far is not named in this work.
- “The Hundred and Twelve Books”, which continue and offer a commentary on “The Compassion” have only survived in fragmentary form (thirty “books” are preserved). The description of the elixir as made not only of mineral but also from organic, that is animal and vegetable substances, is especially significant for the further development of alchemical ideas. Ja’far is named here.
- “The Seventy Books” contain the most uniform and systematic plan of Jabirian alchemy. Greek authorities are frequently quoted. Ja’far is named only once. This general survey of Jabirian alchemy also contains, like “The Compassion”, the Sulphur-Mercury theory, which Jabir probably derived from Balinas (Pseudo-Apollonios of Tyana). Parts of the “Seventy Books” were translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona as *Liber de Septuaginta* and then used widely in the Christian West.
- “The Ten Books of Rectifications” are concerned with improvements in alchemy by specific authorities. Such “rectifications” are written by various alchemical authors under the assumed names of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Democritus among others.
- “The Books of the Balances”, originally one hundred and forty-four in number, of which forty-four survive, deal not only with alchemy but also with → astrology, medicine, logic, physics, metaphysics, arithmetic, music, grammar and prosody. Jabir gleans insights from all these sciences for his special theory of “balance”.
- “The Seven Metals”, whose contents continue the discussion of the theory of “balance”.
- “The Development of the Potential into the Actual” is concerned with the theoretical assumptions of contemporary natural science such as the doctrines of the elements and qualities,

astronomy, meteorology and “klimata”, that is the latitudinal zones of the earth. Here one finds the fundamental questions of all Jabirian texts arising from such fields as medicine, alchemy, sympathetic influences, theurgy, → astrology, the science of balances and the artificial creation of life.

- “The Great Book of Properties” appears disordered in its seventy-one chapters, because in its composition fifty core chapters were supplemented by slightly abridged chapters. This book contains the important innovation of iatrochemistry, that is the alchemical preparation of medicines, so crucial for the further development of Western alchemy (→ Jean de Rocquetaillade, Paracelsus).

Concerning sources, it is evident that Jabir chiefly relies on Arabic translations of Greek pseudographical literature, which he wrongly assumes to be authentic. This is usually the case with Pseudo-Socrates, Plato, Porphyry, Democritus, Agathodaimon and Pseudo-Apollonios of Tyana (Balinas). The only genuine quotations stem exclusively from Aristotle and Galen – Jabir is familiar with the humoral doctrine of medicine – as well as from the only real alchemist, Zosimos. Jabir’s alchemical theory may be sketched as follows:

The foundation and touchstone of all traditional as well as discovered theory is experiment. Aristotle’s doctrine of the elements, which derives from Empedocles of Agrigent, is combined in the *Corpus Jabirianum* with the doctrine of qualities in its early form as in Galen. The alchemist must endeavour to produce a state of equilibrium. The goal of transmutation is to achieve the same composition of the elementary qualities as obtained in gold. Jabir wanted to achieve this with elixirs. When preparing elixirs, the raw material should first be broken down into the four elements, e.g. by dry distillation, which are then added in an appropriate manner to the specific elixir with reference to the “lack” in the material which is to be transmuted. In this way, Jabir considers it possible to “heal” the “sick” matter or metal, by bringing its elementary qualities into the same equilibrium as of gold. For all that, quantitative thought enters alchemical theory here. In Jabir, the elementary qualities are carried by the two philosophical principles Mercury and Sulphur, from which the metals arise under the influence of the planets. Jabir’s Mercury-Sulphur theory may have been prompted by the Arab encyclopaedia of his revered Balinas (Pseudo-Apollonios of Tyana), which was known as “The

Causes”, “The Collector of Things”, but mostly as “The Book of the Secret of Creation”.

Jabir’s basic conviction that natural events are ordered according to measure and purpose leads him to place no limits on the alchemist’s ability to imitate the world-creating demiurge. Everything is possible, even artificial procreation, that is the homunculus. One merely needs to produce the right mixture of elementary qualities through elixirs. The innovation of the *Corpus Jabirianum*, as in “The Seventy Books”, in the preparation of such elixirs for transmutation consists in the use, besides minerals, of organic, animal and plant substances: blood, hair, sperm, bones, lions’ urine, poisonous snakes, foxes, oxen, gazelles, asses, as well as parts of olive, jasmine, onion, ginger, pepper, mustard, pear, anemone and aconite.

A further idea from the *Corpus Jabirianum*, which only blossomed fully in Western alchemy, was the use of the elixir in medicine as a remedy, even as a panacea. In the sixth maqala of “The Great Book of Properties”, Jabir reports that he healed a thousand patients on a single day with the aid of the elixir. He also used it with success against snake bites and poisonings.

The *Corpus Jabirianum* is based on empirical results, but it does not achieve the level of Rhazes, especially regarding alchemical equipment and substances. The *Corpus Jabirianum* divides minerals into the following classes: 1) “spirits”, that is volatile substances like sulphur, arsenic (arsenic sulphide, realgar, auripigment), mercury, camphor and salmiac (Sal ammoniacum), which was scarcely mentioned in earlier Arab alchemical literature, and whose production from organic substances, e.g. hair, is described in the *Corpus*. 2) Metals, namely gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, iron and “khar sini” (“Chinese iron”, still unidentified). 3) Eight further groups of minerals. The empirical aspect of the *Corpus Jabirianum* also demonstrates highly practical techniques, e.g. the production of steel and refinement, dyeing, protection from corrosion, and the making of “gold” ink from marcasite for the illumination of manuscripts.

Apart from the corpuscular theory, Jabirian alchemy contains the principal ideas of all ensuing alchemy. The *Corpus Jabirianum* knows of the esoteric, metaphorical, occult as well as the exoteric aspect of alchemy. It offers both theory and empirical practice.

## 6. RHAZES

The great Persian physician and alchemist Rhazes (865-925) offers the most striking example

of a thoroughly exoteric, sober, and practical alchemy. His full name is Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, that is “the man of Ray” (ancient Rhagae) near Teheran. Together with Jabir, the alchemist Rhazes exercised the greatest influence on Western alchemy. He based his thought largely on Jabir, but did not accept his theory of balance. He compiled his alchemical works in a list called “Pinax”. Towards the end of his life he abridged his major work “The Book of Secrets” (*Kitab al Asrar*) as “The Secret of Secrets” (*K. Sirr al Asrar*) with an almost identical introduction. Here “secret” must be understood in the sense of technical knowledge. A collection of twelve further books belongs to the alchemical corpus of Rhazes, including “The Book of Propaedeutic Introduction” (written c. 900-910), which presents contemporary alchemy in a clear and systematic fashion like a modern introduction to chemistry.

Rhazes was chiefly devoted to practical alchemy and experiment. Although his thinking is far removed from the allegory of Greek alchemy or an Ibn Umail and is reticent in speculation, he follows the theory of Jabir in particular. He accepts the Aristotelian doctrine of elements, also the Mercury-Sulphur theory of Balinas realised by Jabir, regards “Sulphur” as non-inflammable oil and adds to Mercury and Sulphur a third constituent of a salty nature, a triad which is naturally reminiscent of Paracelsus. Like Jabir, he uses plant and animal products for the preparation of elixirs, with which the base, “sick” metals can be “healed” into gold, and furthermore systematically classifies all chemical substances into animal, vegetable and mineral. A corpuscular theory is manifest in Rhazes’ “Book of Secrets”, more sharply defined than its vague beginnings in the *Corpus Jabirianum*: bodies consist of the smallest indivisible parts, that is atoms. These are eternal and have a definite size. The qualities of the perceived elements, lightness, heaviness, colour, softness, hardness, depend on the density of the atoms, that is on the amount of the empty space between them.

Rhazes’ ideas concerning the theory of matter later influenced the corpuscular theory of the Latin Geber towards the end of the 13th century. Armed with this theory, Rhazes describes the alchemical work in precise terms: distillation, calcination, solution, evaporation, crystallisation, sublimation, filtration, amalgamation, ceration, i.e. a process for making substances into a waxy solid. For the transmutation, the substances are purified by distillation and calcination. They are then amalgamated. Following their purification they are next

prepared in a waxen state, without any evolution of fumes. There follows the solution in “sharp waters”, not generally acids (lemon juice, sour milk), but rather alkaline and ammoniacal solutions. Finally, a coagulation or solidification was performed to produce the elixir.

#### 7. AVICENNA

After Rhazes came → Avicenna (980-1037), i.e. Abu ‘Ali al-Husain ibn Abdullah ibn Sina, the supreme medical authority among Islamic doctors. Like Rhazes, he was widely educated in many fields including alchemy – although he wrote no work on the subject and was no alchemist. However, his name was used pseudepigraphically for a number of alchemical books. His most important philosophical work, a kind of Aristotelian encyclopaedia dealing with the sciences of logic, physics, mathematics and metaphysics, bears the title *Book of the Remedy*, which refers to the recovery from ignorance. Here he treated of the natural generation of the metals and thundered his famous invective against the alchemists, which the Latins quote as “Sciant artifices”, i.e. “The alchemists should know . . .” Avicenna took a position contrary to Jabir’s belief in limitless feasibility. The products of nature are better than those produced artificially. Alchemical art never measures up to nature. For this reason, neither can it transmute base into noble metals. Like Jabir, but as an opponent of the art of making gold, Avicenna signposts the purpose of alchemical elixirs as remedies in human medicine, a challenge first fulfilled in the Christian world.

#### 8. THE *TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM*

The *Turba philosophorum* or “Convention of Philosophers” (as adepts called themselves) has enjoyed the greatest favour among alchemists up to modern times, despite or possibly because of its obscure language, which has still not been adequately explained up to the present day. The *Turba* first appears in manuscripts of the 12th century, a Latin edition was first printed at Basle in 1572, and the first German translation by Paul Hildenbrandt appeared at Frankfurt in 1597. Surviving fragments of the lost Arabic original bear the title “The Book of the Convention”. The doxographic work, written in Arabic around 900, is entirely based on Greek alchemy. The *Turba* quotes entire passages from Pseudo-Democritus and Olympiodoros. There are also textual parallels with the first book of the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* by the Church father Hippolytus (3rd century), in which nine of the *Turba* discussions appear. There are no



references to Arab alchemists nor any mention of the Mercury-Sulphur theory. The text is manifestly an Arab edition of an original Greek work.

The Latin edition presents the *Turba* in a fictional narrative framework as the report of Archelaos, called “Arisleus”, on the “Third Pythagorean Synod”, to which Pythagoras allegedly invited his pupils across the world. Pre-Socratic philosophers, their identity masked by gross distortions of their names, speak predominantly in debate with the convention: Anaximandros, Anaximenes, Anaxogoras, Empedocles, Archelaos, Leukippos, Ekphantos, Pythagoras and Xenophanes, besides Socrates and Plato.

There is little in the *Turba* relating to alchemical procedures. The four elements must be mixed. Only then can they combine in new substances. Thus, “our copper” must first be transmuted into silver, before one can proceed with the preparation of gold. Coded names obstruct further interpretation. The author of the *Turba* has clearly not practised alchemy himself, as indicated by his recommendation of alchemical literature instead of experiment – a statement he puts in the mouth of Parmenides in the eleventh chapter. There is a wide gap here with the thought of Jabir and Rhazes, and the scholars of Salerno and Chartres in the 11th and 12th centuries.

#### 9. IBN UMAIL

The most prominent representative of allegorical alchemy is Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad ibn Umail at-Tamimi (c. 900-c. 960), whom the Latin writers called Senior Zarith Filius Hamuel. He wrote two influential major works besides various poems. The first is entitled *The Book of Silvery Water and Starry Earth*, while its Latin translation is known as *Tabula chemica* or *Senioris antiquissimi philosophi libellus*. Both express Ibn Umail’s allegorical and encoded manner of expression. In this book he claims to be interpreting the secrets of alchemy, revealed to him when visiting the temple in Sidr Busir. He particularly enlarges on the alchemical doctrines of ancient, pre-Islamic authorities, including Zosimos, Mary the Jewess and the *Hermetica*, as well as the *Turba philosophorum*. Among Islamic alchemists he quotes only Jabir, occasionally engaging in polemics against him, and appears well acquainted with several books of the *Corpus Jabirianum*. He either knows nothing of Rhazes, which is hardly conceivable, or else he wishes to ignore him as the leading exoteric authority. He is wholly indebted to metaphorical Greek alchemy and closes his eyes to the achievements of Islamic alchemy.

In his introduction he refers to his second major work, “Epistle of the Sun to the Crescent Moon”, in which he gives poetic expression to his alchemical insights at the temple in Sidr Busir. There are ninety strophes and a total of 448 verses of “extraordinary wooden doggerel” about the sun, the great elixir and the half-moon, namely mercury. The first work is presented as a commentary on the poetic, second work.

The “Epistle” also exists in a Latin version under the title *Epistola Solis ad Lunam crescentem*. This second work of Ibn Umail was used in the late medieval period as a source for a widely circulated, anonymous German poem, which was integrated into the Latin and German editions of the *Rosarium philosophorum*. Its contents revolve around the relationship dictated by nature between Sol and Luna, seen in sexual terms as the love-play of cock and hen.

In retrospect it is evident that Arab alchemy knows both theory and practice, the esoteric aspect with its metaphorical language and the exoteric with its struggle to understand matter and experimentation expressed in sober, objective language. There are divergent opinions concerning the possibility of transmutation, with Jabir and Rhazes pro and Avicenna contra. Innovations include the preparation of the elixir from plant and animal substances, the doctrine of the correct mixture of the four elements, the medicinal use of elixirs as remedies, even as a panacea, and the Mercury-Sulphur theory in particular, as well as practical improvements in instruments, especially distillation apparatus.

From the 12th century onwards, Arab alchemy produces only commentators and compilers. The Christian West begins to absorb the greatest and momentous wave of ancient science, in the 11th century in southern Italy, especially at Salerno, and in the 12th century in Spain, notably at Toledo. This was primarily mediated by Arabic sources, and to a lesser extent, especially in southern Italy, by Greek sources. In this way alchemy came to Europe as an *ars nova*.

#### 10. ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE IN THE LATIN MIDDLE AGES UNTIL THE END OF THE 12TH CENTURY

The natural philosophers of the School of Chartres, “physici” as they called themselves, sought to understand God’s corporeal world in a rational manner. Both William of Conches and Adelard of Bath rebuked the ancient scientists, who had neither studied the writings of the *physici*, nor recognised the natural virtues (*vires naturae*), nor trusted

their own reason (*ratio*). William's critique shows that this was not a mere rationalist impulse derived from the *Timaeus*, but reflected a wider receptivity to new knowledge: he implied that there were still hidebound scientists who relied on the elementary doctrine of the old *Timaeus* (of Chalcidius), when Constantinus Africanus was now available as a source.

William of Conches therefore supplements his knowledge of the doctrine of elements, in this case the corpuscular theories, with influences from Salerno, particularly Galen's doctrine of the elements in the *Liber regalis* of 'Ali ibn Al-Abbas al-Magusi (*Lat.* Haly Abbas, d. 994), entitled *Liber pantegni* (The Whole Art) in the translation of Constantinus Africanus (1010-1087). His widely diffused "Philosophia mundi" offers a systematic treatment of all existence based on this corpuscular theory.

Constantinus Africanus, the first major and world-renowned translator of Greek-Arabic science into Latin, is synonymous with Salerno as the oldest university centre of Europe and the foremost centre for the reception of Arabic scientific and medical literature. This leading school of medicine cultivated a tradition of rational scientific thought united with observation and experiment in the spirit of Hippocrates and Galen. At the same time as Constantinus, Alphanus of Salerno (c. 1015-1085) translated the tract *Peri physeos anthropou* of Nemesios of Emesa (5th century) from Greek into Latin under the title *Premnon physicon*. Like Constantinus, he was concerned with establishing a corpuscular theory of matter as the basis of Western medicine, because the text offers one of the most extensive descriptions of the Platonic atomic theory in the Middle Ages. It was widely disseminated.

The networking, from the 10th century onwards, of educational centres, especially of Salerno in southern Italy with those in northern France, was flanked and eventually superseded by the reception and assimilation of translations from the Arabic at Toledo in Spain soon extended throughout Europe.

From the end of the 12th century, Latin writers had access to the leading authors of Arab philosophy, → al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna and al-Ghazali, as well as the giants of medicine like Rhazes with his compendium *Ad Almansorem* and especially Avicenna's *Canon medicinae*. Much was introduced from other fields, including the *Hermetica*, superstitious material, and not least alchemy, presented as the *ars nova* by Robert of Chester. Alchemy therefore owes its existence in the West to this 12th-century wave of reception and assimilation. The gradual Arab-Latin transla-

tion of Aristotle's complete works was especially epoch-making.

Arab science was introduced into the West by the enormous translating activity of Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187) and his circle in Toledo. His pupils compiled a list of 71 of his translations. Among these are three alchemical titles: Jabir (Jabir ibn Hayyan), *Liber divinitatis de LXX* (Berthelot 1906), Pseudo-Rhazes, *De aluminibus et salibus* (Ruska 1935) and Pseudo-Rhazes, *Liber lumen luminum* (Lippmann 1954, III, 27). In addition, there are Rhazes' "Book of Secrets" and pseudepigraphic texts like Pseudo-Avicenna's *De anima in arte alkimie* or the treatises on alchemy in the *Secretum secretorum*, the Arab encyclopaedia of Pseudo-Aristotle.

The reception of Arab alchemy in Europe commences with the same story of Morienus Romanus for the Umayyad prince Khalid, which marked the Islamic reception of Greek alchemy. Robertus Ketensis (Robertus Castrensis), i.e. Robert of Chester (from Ketton) translated it in 1144 as *Liber de compositione alchemiae* and introduced in its foreword "alchymia" as a hitherto unknown art into Europe. He and his friend Hermann of Carinthia were studying alchemy while staying near the Ebro in Spain. Both men were influenced by the School of Chartres.

The number of early translations of alchemical writings from Arabic into Latin was not that great, and the well-received "Book of Alums and Salts" represents the foundation text of alchemy in the West, combining theory, allegory and practice. The Arab original was probably written in Spain in the 11th or 12th century. Its contents are as follows: the unknown author generally follows the line of Jabir and Rhazes, but also quotes from a poem attributed to Khalid and, not unexpectedly, appends the Mercury-Sulphur theory. However, he repeatedly reverts to his own experiments. The work is predominantly practical and treats the basic substances according to Rhazes's classification: sixteen chapters on spirits (mercury, arsenic, sulphur, sal ammoniac), forty-nine on bodies, i.e. metals (gold, silver, iron, lead, tin, copper), eight on stones and twelve on salts. This sober and objective chemical exposition is, however, mixed with the use of cover-names and esoteric, allegorical codes. In his description of mercury, for example, empirical observation initially prevails. But then analogy is invoked to conclude that the mercurial spirit penetrating another metal, which it clearly is able to tincture by giving it a different appearance, may also be able to act as an elixir by clarifying this other metal into silver ("white") and gold ("red").

This description is known as the Pure Mercury

theory, already encountered among other theories of the transmutation of metals in Jabir's *Liber de septuaginta*. But then the language grows more obscure and a series of cover-names ensues ("water of life", "colouring herb"), as found in the *Turba philosophorum*, followed by a list of the properties of mercury deriving from its twofold nature. This twofold nature is conveyed by an image, entirely in the style of Ibn Umail's allegorical alchemy or the *Turba philosophorum*. The snake impregnating itself, giving new birth from itself, when its time has come, unites the opposites of masculine and feminine in itself and renews itself. This is an allegory of the Ouroboros symbol. The toxicity of the mercury vapours is emphasised and then an easily understood representation is given of red mercury oxide being slowly heated. A torrent of cover-names is used, as if to make the point. The ensuing allegorical dialogue between gold and mercury is traditional, as found in Jabir's "Book of Seventy". Once again, mercury is presented as the origin of all metals, even of gold, as well as its hermaphroditic nature. According to whether it is regarded as masculine or feminine, mercury should be wedded to the feminine (sister) or masculine (brother). This idea might appear to favour the Mercury-Sulphur theory rather than the Pure Mercury theory. However, as a hermaphrodite, mercury contains both principles, which can each enter into a new relationship and thus both theories can harmoniously co-exist. By means of arsenic and sulphur, mercury can thus transmute base metals into silver and gold.

The introduction of alchemy to the scholarly world of Europe in the 12th and 13th century immediately provoked controversy. Alfred of Sareshel (Alfredus Anglicus) stirred up opposition against the *ars nova* at the turn of the 12th and 13th century. He was a member of Gerard of Cremona's circle and was responsible for some of the new translations of Aristotelian writings from Arabic. In the fourth book of his translation of Aristotle's *Meteorologica* he added the meteorological section of Avicenna's *Book of the Remedy* under the title *De congelatione et conglutinatione lapidum* ("Concerning the Coagulation and Conglutination of Stones"), without acknowledgement. But this contains the "Sciart artifices", Avicenna's famous rejection of transmutation. With these first translations of the 12th century the entire Arab theory of alchemy together with its imagery and terminology entered the Latin West.

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## Alchemy III: 12th/13th-15th Century

### I. MAIN DEVELOPMENTS 2. LITERATURE

#### I. MAIN DEVELOPMENTS

The transition from Arabic to Western alchemy in the 12th and 13th centuries did not create an abrupt rupture. Its Hellenistic and Arabic foundations were adopted and developed further, leading to new theoretical speculation and more practical knowledge. Research on this period is still developing as the surviving manuscripts have not yet been thoroughly investigated and evaluated. Research is still needed to ascertain attributions and borrowings and to distinguish traditional theories and innovative ideas. Further biographical study would be necessary to investigate putative or legendary medieval authors, such as Basilius Valentinus, Bernhard von der Mark, → Nicolas Flamel, Vincentius Koffshki or Salomon Trismosin.

Medieval alchemy was not a natural science in the modern sense but a doctrine of nature, which tried to discover and apply the laws of nature through theory and experiment. Its fundamental assumption was a holistic concept, which united the macrocosm of the stars and the microcosm of man and nature. The teachings of authentic or legendary authorities such as Aristotle or → Hermes Trismegistos served as theoretical bases. New discoveries had to be harmonised with traditional teachings and this was a slow process. Speculation and practical experience formed a unity. Theory set the context and determined the direction of the

work. Experiment either confirmed theory or occasioned new considerations.

The goal of the medieval alchemists was not just the exploration but the perfection of nature, regarded as a divine task or duty. This applied chiefly to the base metals which were classified as ill, impure or immature. They had to be purified and perfected into silver or gold, a goal achieved by stages of a longer process (*opus magnum*). They had to be destroyed in their outer form and reduced to a common prime matter (*prima materia*) from which they would arise renewed through the proper treatment and the favourable influence of the stars. The Philosophers' Stone (*lapis philosophorum*) played a varied role: it was either the additional ingredient which accelerated and brought about transmutation or it was the result of the process, and was then applied to other metals. It was not only ascribed healing powers towards inanimate nature but was regarded as an elixir, which could heal human diseases and prolong life. The desire to produce gold or silver was not the pre-eminent goal of serious alchemy and the intentional forgery of precious metals was opposed to it. The boundary between alchemy and related sciences such as astrology, medicine, or pharmacy was not a sharp one. Because the constellation of planets was allegedly responsible for the growth of metals and their properties, astrological knowledge was important for the alchemist. The link to medicine and pharmacy followed on a theoretical level, which set up an analogy between the alchemical process and the healing of the human body, or in practice, in which alchemy contributed towards the preparation of medicines.

Western alchemy began in the middle of the 12th century with translations from Arabic into Latin. The centres of this translation activity were Toledo in Spain, and the territories of Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen in southern Italy and Sicily. The most important translated works included the pseudo-Aristotelian book *Secretum secretorum*, the *Liber de Septuaginta* attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan, the *Liber de Secretorum* of Rhazes, and a text entitled *De aluminibus et salibus*, also allegedly by Rhazes.

The development of alchemy was greatly influenced by the interest of two eminent 13th-century scholars. → Albertus Magnus also dealt with the growth of metals in his work *De mineralibus*. He evaluated alchemy as an activity, capable of changing the colour, weight or smell of matter. But he regarded this only as an apparent transmutation because its fundamental nature was immutable. → Roger Bacon came to a different conclusion, distinguishing between speculative and operative al-

chemy in his *Opus minus* and *Opus tertium*. While speculative reason could be given to explain the growth of matter from the elements, Bacon considered the principal task of operative alchemy as the preparation of medicines for the prolongation of life. Alchemy thereby became an established part of medieval knowledge, as represented in the encyclopaedias of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (*De proprietatibus rerum*, c. 1230), Thomas von Cantimpré (*De rerum natura*, c. 1240) or Vincenz von Beauvais (*Speculum maius*, c. 1250).

At this time, the first independent Latin monographs were written, but their authors are mostly unknown. These texts frequently appeared under the name of a famous scholar such as Thomas Aquinas (1224/25-1274), → Arnau de Vilanova (c. 1230-1311) and → Ramon Llull. The authors and their readers were evidently untroubled by the fact that these pseudepigraphic authors had written critically on alchemy or even been its determined opponents.

One work stands out within this growing literature, namely the *Summa perfectionis magisterii* (c. 1300), attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan. Its author, whom scholarship knows as Latin Geber, may be identical with the Italian Franciscan Paulus de Tarento. His text dealt with applied alchemy but also provided new theoretical approaches. According to the Latin Geber, matter is composed of small and separate individual corpuscles. Even the four elements are composed of such corpuscles, but they exist in the elements as identical components. Quicksilver (mercury) and sulphur are composed from these elementary particles which then form the bases of other metals. Geber explained the variable chemical properties of individual substances by the size and density of the corpuscles. The possibility of an authentic transmutation of metals was supposed to result from the purification of the fundamental substances quicksilver and sulphur. Quicksilver or mercury thus acquired a special significance and Geber equated it with the *Lapis philosophorum*. Further texts bearing Geber's name were not necessarily written by the same author.

Among the authors influenced by the Latin Geber was Petrus Bonus (Pietro Bono or Buono), a physician and alchemist who probably came from Ferrara. The most important of his works is the text *Margarita pretiosa novella* (c. 1330). He aimed at creating a theoretical basis by presenting arguments for and against alchemy. He thereby distinguished between scientific knowledge in alchemy and divine illumination, which he equated with religion. This association was perhaps the reason for religious analogies with the alchemical process.

An important theoretical contribution came from the French Franciscan → Jean de Rocquetaillade (Johannes de Rupescissa), who is historically identifiable and also the author of prophetic books. In his *Liber de consideratione quintae essentiae omnium rerum*, he described the preparation of the quintessence of various substances which transcended the properties of the four elements. Through solution and multiple distillation, the substances were supposed to be separated and purified whereby their effectiveness was greatly increased. According to Rupescissa, this quintessence could be produced from minerals as well as from organic matter. He considered the preparation of alcohol through the distillation of wine as particularly important. This newly-won substance, liquid and flammable, united the contrary properties of the elements water and fire. Alcohol was moreover useful for preservation purposes and for the extraction of active ingredients from plants. The *Liber de consideratione quintae essentiae omnium rerum*, preserved in some hundred manuscripts, belongs to the most widespread alchemical works of the Middle Ages.

Western alchemy underwent an important expansion through its involvement with Christianity through several phases. It began with comparisons and analogies between the chemical process and the content of Christian doctrine. Alchemy thereby gained credibility and meaning, and confirmed Christian beliefs. A further stage involved the alchemical interpretation of Biblical passages, in which → Moses or Solomon were regarded as authorities, and Genesis, the Song of Solomon or the Apocalypse of St John were construed as alchemical allegories. This development began in the 14th century with Petrus Bonus and in the writings attributed to Thomas Aquinas (*Aurora consurgens*) and Arnau de Vilanova (*De secretis naturae, Exempla de arte philosophorum*). In these works the alchemical process was identified with the Passion and Resurrection of Christ and expounded in great detail. Later works like the *Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* continue these parallels between Christ and the Stone, which appears as an alchemical interpretation of the Christian Mass in the Hungarian Melchior Szebeni (*Processus sub forma missa*, before 1530). The close link with religion became an essential component of esoteric and theosophical alchemy in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The 15th century brought a further expansion of alchemy, evident in the growing number of manuscripts and the increasing use of vernacular languages. Latin still dominated, but works were

translated into national languages and increasingly composed in the latter. The introduction of printing in the 15th century had actually not much impact, a fact that may be explicable by the persistence of secrecy concerning alchemical knowledge. Not until the 16th century did alchemical writings appear in print.

The focus of practical work was the alchemical process which was presented as a work of several stages in many and varied versions. The most frequently occurring numbers seven or twelve and details regarding the length of the process had more symbolic or astrological than practical significance. In principle any substance could serve as a starting point but metals were preferred and quicksilver or gold used frequently. According to the simplified principle of “Solve et coagula”, the process began with the regression of the materials to their prime matter, which was supposed to be achieved through solution or combustion (“Solutio”, “Calcinatio”, “Putrefactio”). Next individual components had to be combined anew in several stages (“Coagulatio”, “Coniunctio”, “Fixatio”). The result was an improved substance, as a rule a precious metal. Changes of colouration corresponded to the individual stages, which passed through black (“Nigredo”) through white (“Albedo”) to red (“Rubedo”), using pictorial images as well as metaphors (raven, dragon, peacock, queen, king).

Even if the process never led to the desired goal, the work led to a continual growth of chemical knowledge through the countless experiments necessitating precise observation and notes. The vessels inherited from the Arabs were developed further, above all distillation apparatus. The alembic or aludel (“Cucurbit”), which served as a receiving vessel, was a broad full-bellied vessel made of clay or glass, later also of copper or iron. For distillation purposes, it acquired a helmet (“alembic”) for collecting the distillate which was then conducted into a further vessel (“Rezipient”, “Receptaculum”) through a long, beak-shaped extension. This apparatus was gradually improved whereby the helmet was increased in surface area to assist cooling (“Rose Hat”) or an arrangement for condensation (“Moor’s Head”), before this was replaced by a cooling coil. Special distillation apparatus included retorts with a curved neck (“Pelican”), an arrangement with two reversionary tubes, permitting a continual circulation during distillation. An airtight (“hermetic”) seal on the vessels by a special substance (“lutum sapientiae”) prevented the escape of the distillate. Distillation required an even temperature for which one usually employed an air, water sand, or ash bath, but also sun beams,



or the warmth produced by the fermentation of horse dung. The most important result of distillation was the extraction of alcohol from wine.

Another discovery was the preparation of alum from aluminous minerals, which was used for tanning leather and the blanching of wool before dyeing. Acids and alkalis were investigated and their properties thoroughly explored, leading to far-reaching improvements in pharmacy and metallurgy. It was first possible to separate gold and silver with the help of nitric acid. The most significant innovation of Western medieval alchemy was the preparation of gunpowder, already known in China.

Berthold Schwarz, a monk and gunsmith at Freiburg, first succeeded about 1370/75 in discovering the correct proportions for the explosive mixture of sulphur, salpêtre and charcoal and using it in a weapon. This invention revolutionised weaponry for the next two hundred years. The production of canons and later firearms required a complete transformation in the equipment of armies, new military tactics and defensive fortifications. Chivalry lost its military significance, leading to major social changes.

The social and professional status of individual alchemists is difficult to establish owing to scant biographical data. However their circle must have been limited, considering the preconditions necessary for alchemy. These included literacy, proficiency in Latin, and access to manuscripts. Financial means were also necessary in order to acquire manuscripts, apparatus and chemicals, a room in which a laboratory could be set up, and a regular income to pursue the "Great Work" exclusively for months or even years. These preconditions were chiefly available at two locations: monasteries and princely courts.

There are biographical data for alchemists in both settings. Monks included Jean de Rocquetailade, Ulmannus, the author of *Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit*, Berthold Schwarz and perhaps the Latin Geber. Manuscripts and rooms were available and the monastic community provided board and lodging. Alchemists were also active at the medieval princely courts, and several princes were themselves alchemists. These include Friedrich I, Margrave of Brandenburg, Johann "the Alchemist", and Albrecht Achilles, but also Barbara von Cilli, the wife of Emperor Sigismund. It is debatable whether monarchs pursued alchemy as a result of philosophical and religious interests or with a view to riches. Alchemists first appear among the urban middle class in the course of the 15th century.

As alchemy spread, so did its criticism. This was directed less against its theoretical foundations,

which were hardly doubted, but rather against particular alchemists, who surfaced as "gold-makers" or deceived others with forged precious metals. The papal bull "Spontent quos non exhibent" (c. 1317) of Pope John XXII is one of the earliest bans, through which he possibly wished to restrict monastic alchemy. Over the next two hundred years bans followed from such princes as King Charles V of France (1380) and Kings Henry IV (1403/04) and Henry VI of England (1452), and from the cities of Venice (1488) and Nuremberg (1493). The town council of Nuremberg did not doubt alchemy itself but forbade its practice because people were deceived by it and injured by its practice. Many poets expressed criticism. In the *Divine Comedy* (1307-21) → Dante included the alchemists among the deceivers who must remain in the lowest circle of Hell and in Sebastian Brant's *Narrenscheyff* (Ship of Fools, 1494), they appear as fools who deceive themselves. Brant quoted Aristotle as an authority who regarded the transmutation of metals as impossible. Neither bans nor criticism had any enduring effect.

The end of the Middle Ages represents a profound shift for alchemy as indeed for other sciences. The Renaissance interest in → Neoplatonism and → Hermetism had a positive influence on alchemy but there was a simultaneous but critical approach to traditional sciences. The work of → Agrippa von Nettesheim chiefly shows this. In his first great work *De occulta philosophia* (written 1510, revised and printed 1531) he advanced the doctrine that occult sciences such as alchemy → Astrology, Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and → Number Symbolism could make an important contribution to knowledge of the world. But later he rejected all sciences, including alchemy, on account of their contradictions in his book *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium*.

→ Paracelsus is a representative figure of this scientific upheaval. He adopted the Mercury-Sulphur doctrine of Arabic alchemy and complemented these principles with the principle of Salt, identified as the incombustible, non-volatile residue of the alchemical process. He distinguished between the "Alchemia transmutatoria", which he rejected and the "Alchemia medica" which he considered valid. He saw its real task as the preparation and application of medicine. In this process, "chemiatriy" separated from alchemy and developed into pharmaceutical chemistry.

Other fields, previously part of alchemy, now became independent and practical sciences. These included the "Ars destillatoria", on which numerous printed books on distillation soon appeared.

Michael Schrick published the text *Nützliche Materie von mancherlay ausgeprannten Wässern* (1480). This was followed by the Strasbourg physician Hieronymus Brunschwig's *Liber de arte Distillandi de Compositis* and Philipp Ulstadt's distillation book *Coelum philosophorum* (1525), which foresook theoretical speculation despite its alchemical title.

One can observe a parallel development in books on pyrotechnics and mining and prospecting. They also omitted alchemical theories, limiting themselves to experiment and experience. Fundamental works in this respect were the books *De la piro-technia* of Vannoccio Biringuccio (Venice 1540) and *Alchimi und Bergwerck* of Peter Kertzenmacher (1534). A complete compendium of chemistry and metallurgy was written by Georg Agricola in his posthumous work *De re metallica libri XII* (Basle 1556). This signalled the emergence of chemistry as an independent exact science. In 1597, the first chemistry textbook was published by Andreas Libavius, which still bore the title *Alchemia*, and in 1609 Markgrave Moritz of Hesse-Cassel established a "laboratorium chymicum publicum" at Marburg University, where the mathematician Johannes Hartmann taught the subject of "Chymiatric".

Even if alchemy and chemistry separated from the 16th century onwards, medieval alchemy remained a vital tradition in numerous ways and formed the basis for the next three hundred years. The works written between the 12th and 15th centuries were distributed as manuscripts or as printed books, either as monographs or in collections such as the *Theatrum Chemicum* (1659-61), which comprised more than 200 texts. Medieval authors had an enduring influence and were frequently quoted in later works. The high estimate of medieval alchemy can be seen not least in the works of the 16th and 17th century being issued as those of legendary alchemists.

## 2. LITERATURE

The alchemical literature of the 12th to 15th centuries was largely written in Latin. It began with translations from Arabic, soon followed by independent monographs. An analogous process occurred two centuries later with translations from Latin into the vernacular languages. Vernacular language works ensued, often in collective volumes of manuscripts together with Latin texts. Latin was most important for the development of a professional vocabulary, as the vernacular adopted its words, concepts and translated terms. Individual survivals included words from the Greek (chem-

istry, elixir, theriac) or from the Arabic (alembic, amalgam).

Alchemical language is peculiar inasmuch as it has two forms of expression. Many procedures in the experimental field were expressed in an objective and sober language, so making them comprehensible and easy to perform. These related to the special operations, substances and apparatus used in alchemical work. This discourse is scarcely distinguishable from the professional languages of other medieval sciences such as medicine or pharmacy. An arcane language prevails in other writings, with statements that are intentionally obscure and incomprehensible. Their use is paramount in theoretical and speculative alchemy but also in practice. The arcane language is typified by the polysemantic use of words like "water", which could simply mean water, but also an acid or quicksilver. An abundance of synonyms are also used for the same object, for instance, the Philosophers' Stone which has more than several dozen names. They extend from the names of substances (e.g. "Antimonium") to symbols ("Phoenix") and code names ("Rex regum", "Philosophical Gold").

The use of metaphors, personifications and allegories involving concepts and actions was particularly favoured. There were borrowings from the plant and animal world (dragon, wolf, serpent, rose, lily) and also from the correspondence of metals, planets and their deities, from ancient mythology and Christian symbolism. Texts in this arcane language often used an ecstatic tone, which approached the language of → mysticism. They were not only concerned with veiling alchemy and keeping its results secret. Whatever had to remain incomprehensible or meaningless to an uninitiated reader could give an expert in alchemy important information. The term "dragon" for quicksilver was not just a codename but also referred to the reactivity and toxicity of the metal.

The arcane language was also characterised by Number Symbolism, often expressed in geometrical forms. Every number and its corresponding form had a meaning. The number 1 (circle) embodied the Philosophers' Stone as the whole purpose of the Work. The number 2 signified polar opposites (male-female, solid-liquid). The favourite was number 3 (triangle) on account of its religious reference to the Trinity. This could stand for the fundamental Principles (Sulphur-Mercury-Salt), for the natural kingdoms (mineral-vegetable-animal), or for the progression of colours (black-white-red). The number 4 (square) stood for the four elements and their properties, the number 5 (pentagon) for the "Quintessence" as an elaboration of the four

elements. The number 7 signified the seven planets, the seven metals, or the seven stages of the Work. The phrase “squaring the circle” stems from this number symbolism.

A further characteristic of alchemical language is the use of signs for processes, substances, and apparatus. The oldest signs were the planetary symbols for gold and silver, followed by those for the other metals. Further signs developed as logograms or pictograms, made of letters and tironic notes. In contrast to modern usage, these signs were ambiguous as various signs could be used for specific concepts and the same signs did not always express the same content. There were more than 40 signs in use for quicksilver alone and over 30 for antimony, arsenic, gold, borax or *Weinstein* (tartar).

In terms of literary genres, medieval alchemy used recipes, prayers and riddles for shorter works, and tracts, allegories and didactic poems for longer works. The recipe was closely associated with the recipe literature of other sciences. Its title usually repeated the content in the form of a caption (“A recipe . . . to make”). The necessary ingredients often with their quantities are listed and the method of preparation is described briefly. The result is named at the end, followed by a prayer, formula, or exclamation (“Deo gratias”). Simple recipes were expanded into a description of the Work, its individual stages and observable changes of colour. They represent an attempt to describe a scientific event with some precision and resemble the tract.

The prayer was a special form of alchemical literature. It not only served to rebut charges of godlessness or heresy but showed the close connection between alchemy and the Christian faith. Most alchemists saw the collaboration of God as a precondition for the success of their work. Even riddles, often in rhyme, occur frequently in alchemy. The obscure statements of the arcane language, paraphrases or pictures provided sufficient material. It is probable that the cyphers using code-names, metaphors or secret scripts were understood as riddles.

Besides the recipe, the tract was the important genre of alchemical literature. It served the objective and discursive treatment of the theme but could also contain reflections and speculations. The simple treatise was accompanied by a letter containing a didactic conversation between two or more persons or giving answers to fictitious questions, a favourite device of scholastic philosophers.

Distinct from the tract, the allegory clothed alchemical theories or the course of the Work in a story which was understood as a simile or para-

ble. These stories often possessed the features of a tale and followed a similar pattern. They began with the death of a person or a couple (man and woman), who are then awakened through several stages to a new and better life.

A theme could also be handled in rhyme. Short and important statements were made more impressive through verse. Longer poems employed metric forms, even if the literary quality was often poor. The content of such a poem might be a synopsis of alchemical doctrines or a description of an alchemical process. The poetic form was particularly favoured in allegories, often fashioned as pictorial poems where verse and pictures accompanied each other.

While the illustration of Greek and Arabic manuscripts was limited to simple symbols and apparatus, the 14th century witnessed an increasingly elaborate illustration of alchemical writings. These images represented the practical work or the interior of a laboratory, a theme continued in painting from the 16th century onwards. They chiefly served to make the theory of alchemy and the Work more graphic. It was but a small step to transform the metaphors, personifications or allegories of the arcane language into images, reflecting the colourful phenomena of the alchemical Work.

To begin with, individual pictures had little connection with the text, but they developed further into pictorial sequences in which the alchemical process was reproduced in all its stages. Some examples are the poem *Sol und Luna*, and the prose text *Donum Dei*. *Sol und Luna* was a short German-language poem, probably dating from the 14th century and bound with the collective manuscript *Rosarium philosophorum* which was first printed in 1550. In its original form there were 78 verses and 20 pictures, which complemented one another. They tell the story of Sun and Moon as King and Queen who unite in a bath to form an Hermaphrodite, before they die and their soul leaves the body. After a heavenly dew has washed the corpse, the soul returns. A winged Hemaphrodite arises and the process repeats. S/he is reborn and finally appears as a crowned and enthroned royal couple.

The pictorial series *Donum Dei* was also composed around 1400. Despite many similarities with *Sol und Luna*, it is an independent work. Here again the pictures are the main focus while the text derives chiefly from quotations in ancient writings and simply forms the commentary. The process is represented in twelve stages, which occur in a glass flask and are additionally explained with flowers and colours. *Donum Dei* depicts the union of a

King and Queen, who are reborn after a phase of immolation and death.

The German-language didactic text *Splendor solis* was another favorite pictorial series composed of seven tracts with 20 pictures and longer text quotations. The author is named Salomon Trismosin about whom nothing certain is known. His traditional biography making him the teacher of Paracelsus is fictional. Most of the pictures have decorated borders displaying themes or concepts, for instance, alchemy is compared with “women’s work” or “child’s play” and appeared in 16th-century manuscripts as splendid folio miniatures. Meanwhile a picture sequence is interposed showing the alchemical Work passing through seven stages in the glass flask. Every stage is ruled by a planet and the pictures portray the character and professions of the “children” born under the corresponding planetary sign.

The breadth and literary variety of medieval alchemical literature is exemplified by four German-language works of the 15th century. The most remarkable work is the *Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit*, which survives in numerous manuscripts, although it was never printed. The author was a Franciscan, who called himself a “virgin” and is named Ulmannus in several manuscripts. He wrote his book between 1410 and 1419 and dedicated it to Friedrich von Hohenzollern, later Margrave of Brandenburg, whom he probably met at the Council of Constance. He prepared a copy or an abridgement for Emperor Sigismund. The author possessed remarkably good chemical knowledge, perhaps from personal experience. The illustrated manuscripts show chemical vessels and furnaces. The *Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* offers an example of the Christ-Stone correspondence, represented in numerous pictures. The symbols of the Evangelists are used for the four elements; the Passion of Christ, his Resurrection and the Crowning of Mary are analogous to the alchemical Work. The book is also a religious document written in a passionate, evocative, and even ecstatic language where prose often gives way to verse. Ulmannus called his work a heavenly gift, that he wrote at God’s command and which the Devil tried to hinder. He attributed incredible properties to the Philosophers’ Stone: it is said to heal all diseases, give invisibility, and lend its owner the ability to float in the air and land again safely. Finally the book is related to prophetic and eschatological writings of the Reformation such as the *Reformatio Sigismundi*, which also indicates a relationship between the author and Emperor Sigismund. He clearly imagined that alchemy would produce the necessary financial and

political resources to enable the Emperor to carry out a reform of Church and Empire.

The “Lamspring Figures” are among the great pictorial poems of the Middle Ages. The hitherto unidentified author probably lived in the second half of the 15th century in North Germany. His *Tractatus de lapide philosophorum* consists of 15 pictures explained in verse. The fundamental idea derives from Arabic alchemy, according to which the volatile components of a substance (“Spiritus” or “Anima”) must be separated from the solids (“Corpus”), purified and then recombined as a new substance. Lamspring described this doctrine in two cycles. The first cycle consists of 10 pictures in which the separation of matter is portrayed by a pair of animals (fishes, lions, birds, wolf and dog, stag and unicorn) in a loose sequence. The crowned King and the fire-dwelling salamander represent the climax of this cycle. The last five pictures return to an allegory derived from the Arabic alchemist Alphidius. It describes how a father obtains for his son a guide who is to show him the whole world. Both climb a great mountain and from its peak contemplate Heaven and Earth. But the son yearns to return to his father, who consumes him in sheer joy. A divine shower of rain transforms the father first into water and then into earth, whence father and son arise anew. They have now become immortal and rule a great kingdom together with the guide. The final image resembles Christian representations of the Trinity. Lamspring’s work became widely known through a printed Latin translation, published at Leiden in 1599, followed by further editions. The pictures can be found in several collections of the 17th century.

The cathedral dean and notary Johann Sternhals resident at Bamberg between 1459 and 1488 chose another literary form to present alchemical knowledge. His prose work *Ritterkrieg*, surviving as a manuscript and in printed editions (Erfurt 1595, Hamburg 1680), used a court case as the narrative frame for his tract, containing his alchemical experience over twenty years. In the trial, Gold (“Sol”) appears before Mercury (“God and Judge”) to accuse Iron as the “child of a whore” because it is of base descent. However, Iron can defend itself cleverly by proving that Gold is impure and listing many of its own advantages and achievements. Through the iron nails on the Cross, it had its own share in redemption. The Judge wants to pass no verdict but delegates the decision to the “Virgin Nature”. But even she gives no metal preference, but admonishes both to modesty and harmony.

A more sober example is the manuscript didactic poem entitled *Der Stein der Weisen*, written by



Hans Folz, a Meistersinger resident in Nürnberg. Folz had acquired knowledge in many fields and repeats them in rhyme form as well as a plague regime and a balneological booklet. His poem on alchemy comprising 600 verses displays well-founded knowledge, but probably did not stem from personal experience. He appears to have studied specialist literature and quotes it extensively. The poem gives a survey of the theory and practice of alchemy, in which the various kinds of distillation and furnaces are described, even if the author considers one furnace and one vessel sufficient. The poem ends with directions for the preparation of the Philosophers' Stone.

Poetry as well as alchemical writings evidence the widespread and increasing interest in alchemy from the 14th century onwards. Already at the beginning of the 13th century there are occasional echoes in Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gottfried von Straßburg, although they indicate no precise knowledge of alchemy. The works of John Gower (1330-1408), William Langland (1332-1400) and Johann von Tepl (c. 1330-1414) contain brief references to alchemy, showing it to be a controversial part of contemporary knowledge.

Alchemy appears extensively in the continuation of *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1275/80), of Jean Chopinel (Jean de Meun). In his reflections on the relationship between art and nature, the poet also dilates on alchemy, saying that it is a real science only pursued properly by a few masters. He compares the transmutation of metals with the production of glass, in which potash produced by burning fern was used.

The role of alchemy is even more important in the work of the court poet Heinrich von Mügeln (c. 1320-1372). In his poem *Der meide kranz* (c. 1355) he describes a contest of the liberal arts in which "Alchemia" enters. She describes her special abilities, namely the production of colours and the transmutation of metals. However the Emperor-Judge does not give her the desired prize with the justification that he has seldom met a rich alchemist. Heinrich von Mügeln also deals with alchemy in one of his shorter poems, and quotes Geber as his authority.

A critical satire occurs in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1480). In "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" the pilgrims meet a canon and his servant. While the cleric remains silent and soon leaves the group, the servant speaks at length about their alchemical activities. He says he has worked seven years for his master, but the unsuccessful experiments have cost him his health and fortune. Alchemists can be recognised by their

shabby clothing and the "pungent brimstone smell".

He readily reveals the results of the Work and their treatment. In a second Tale he reports how a canon won over a cleric to alchemy through lies and deception and ruined him. At the end he refers to the statements of ancient alchemists, who stress that the "Great Work" may only be performed by divine grace.

Jean Chopinel, Heinrich von Mügeln and Geoffrey Chaucer describe alchemy so precisely, that they were soon themselves quoted as alchemical authorities, while their verse – disconnected from the original work – enters specialist alchemical literature.

The works of medieval alchemy start to appear in print with few exceptions from the 16th century on, several as independent monographs but most as part of multi-volume collections such as *Theatrum chemicum* (6 vols, Strasbourg 1659-61), Jean-Jacques Mangets *Bibliotheca chemica curiosa* (2 vols., Geneva 1702) or *Eröffnete Geheimnisse des Steins der Weisen oder Schatzkammer der Alchymie* (Hamburg 1718). The pictures were often published separately. The two best-known works are → Michael Maier's *Atalanta fugiens* (Oppenheim 1618) and Daniel Stoltzius von Stoltzenberg's *Chymisches Lustgärtlein* (Frankfurt 1624). In both collections the pictures are explained by new verses, and in Maier's case by melodies and longer commentaries. By these means alchemical literature survived the Middle Ages and influenced authors from the 16th to the 18th century and also poets from the age of Baroque to the present.

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## Alchemy IV: 16th-18th Century

1. ALCHEMICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE
2. FROM ALCHEMY TO CHEMISTRY
3. SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY 4. ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE

Not enough is yet known to write a complete history of alchemy in the early modern period. What can be said is that there was, at that time, an explosion of interest in the subject marked by the publication of an enormous number of alchemical texts. A relatively marginal pursuit in the Middle Ages, alchemy became more and more, over the 17th and 18th centuries, a mainstream occupation, influencing many scientists and philosophers as well as artists, poets, mystics, freemasons, theosophers, and spiritualists. Although scholars generally agree that alchemists contributed to the origins of early modern science, more work needs to be done to establish the precise nature of their contributions.

Up to the beginning of the 18th century the terms “alchemy” and “chemistry” were used interchangeably to describe activities ranging from practical laboratory experiments to mystical and psychological speculation. During the 18th century, however, the two words increasingly assumed their modern meaning in terms of two developments: first, metallic transmutation and gold-making (*chrysopoieia*) were identified as the distinctive goals of alchemy and dismissed by many as fraudulent activities, while “chemistry” was defined in broader terms as the science of analyzing and synthesizing substances; second, the mystical and spiritual aspects of alchemy flourished as never before, but they became increasingly separated from practical laboratory work. A clear distinction consequently emerged between gold-making and theosophical alchemy, on the one hand, and the science of chemistry on the other.

### 1. ALCHEMICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

The traditional view that alchemy gave way to chemistry once occult, vitalistic theories of matter were replaced by the “mechanical philosophy” has been qualified by scholars who emphasize the existence and variety of both corpuscular and vitalistic theories throughout the medieval and early modern period and the difficulty of making a clear-cut distinction between the two. Like their ancient and medieval predecessors early modern alchemists accepted transmutation as an observable fact of life, and a diversity of alchemical schools arose with a wide variety of theories derived from Greek,

Arabic, and medieval sources to explain why it occurs and how the process could be duplicated in the laboratory. Although much more work on the theories of individual alchemists needs to be done before a complete picture of early modern alchemy will emerge, it is clear that from the 16th to the 18th centuries alchemists had at their disposal an array of theories that ranged from a view of matter as inanimate corpuscles moved by external forces to various vitalistic corpuscular theories in which non-material forces played decisive roles. Aristotle provided alchemists with a number of models to explain transmutation. The notion that matter was composed of the four elements – earth, air, fire, and water – convinced some alchemists that transmutation involved varying the proportions of the constituent elements in a base metal to emulate the proportions in gold. This could be accomplished through a potent transmuting agent known as the philosopher’s stone. Aristotle expressed the same theory in another way. Each substance consisted of prime matter and a specific “form” that determined the characteristics of the substance, including the proportions of the elements it contained. Changing one substance into another on this model involved reducing a substance to prime matter and converting this into gold by means of the philosopher’s stone.

Early modern alchemists also accepted the theory of Arabic alchemists from the school of Jabir ibn Hayyan (b. 721/2) that metals and minerals were formed from an “ideal” sulfur and mercury, sulfur accounting for flammability and mercury for the fusibility and volatility of substances. This theory originated in Aristotle’s suggestion that the immediate constituents of minerals and metals were two “exhalations” formed below the surface of the earth, an “earthy smoke”, which was later identified with sulfur, and a “watery vapor”, identified with mercury (*Meteorologica*, III, 6 378a). The 13th century author writing under the name Geber and mistakenly identified with Jabir viewed sulfur and mercury as complex, inanimate corpuscles, which united to produce different minerals and metals. Geber’s corpuscular theory was also indebted to the notion of “least parts” in Aristotle’s *Physics and Meteorologica*, an idea developed in scholastic physics with the concept of *minima naturalia*. In his *Summa perfectionis* Geber claimed that the philosopher’s stone was composed of “philosophical mercury”, the tiny corpuscles of which were able to penetrate the pores of a base metal, transmuting it into gold. Diverse alchemical schools developed to explain the nature, preparation, and use of this mercury. The so-called “Mercurialist”

school was the most popular of these during the 17th century and led → Boyle and → Newton, among others, to undertake experiments with mercury that may have contributed to their ill health. Geber's corpuscular theory influenced the later theories of Andreas Libavius (1540-1616), Daniel Sennert (1572-1637), and Gaston DuClo (c. 1630-?).

During the 16th century the sulfur/mercury theory was modified by → Paracelsus (1493/4-1541), who added a third element, salt. The salt, sulfur, mercury theory became characteristic of Paracelsians [→ Paracelsianism], who identified the tripartite nature of substances with the body, spirit, and soul and the Trinity. The vitalism and religious element inherent in Paracelsianism was not a novel aspect of alchemy. The tendency to view chemical processes in organic terms was characteristic of alchemy from its origin, but biological models became more prevalent from the Renaissance onwards as stoic, hermetic, neoplatonic, and kabbalistic influences became increasingly dominant. According to the Stoics each material entity contained its own specific "pneuma" or "seminal principle" (*logos spermatikos*), which molded formless matter in predictable ways. The idea that metals grow from seminal elements, or seeds, was reinforced by the neoplatonic concept of "seminal reasons" (*rationes seminales*), which contained blue-prints, so to speak, for constructing specific bodies from elementary matter. Augustine had posited that seminal principles existed in matter and germinated to produce different species of corporeal beings (*De Genesi ad litteram*). Paracelsians were particularly receptive to the idea that active forces, variously described as *archei* (from the Greek *archeus*, beginning, origin, first cause) or *semina* existed in bodies. The Danish Paracelsian physician Petrus Severinus and the Belgian Paracelsian → J.B. van Helmont accepted this idea, and their work influenced the corpuscular philosophy of Pierre Gassendi and Robert Boyle. This realization has led historians to appreciate the vitalistic elements persisting in 17th century "mechanical", "atomistic", or "corpuscular" philosophy. A notable example is the acknowledgment of the way Newton's alchemical studies contributed vitalistic elements to his concept of the forces of attraction, cohesion, and repulsion between material particles.

The obvious discrepancies between these various alchemical theories about exactly what and how many elements constituted matter was compounded by those like Etienne de Clave, Thomas Willis and Nicholas Lemery who postulated the existence of five elements: salt, sulfur, mercury, phlegm or water, and earth. Far from dismaying

most alchemists, however, this apparent confusion fit nicely with the ancient and basic alchemical doctrine of *έν το παν*, "One in all and all in one", derived from the neoplatonic conviction that every created substance developed from one divine source. This was the message of the *Emerald Table* (*Tabula Smaragdina*), a series of oracular precepts of unknown date attributed to the legendary founder of alchemy in the West, Hermes Trismegistus: 'As all things were produced by the one word of one Being, so all things were produced from this one thing by adaptation'. This text had enormous influence in the medieval and early modern period. The phrase "one in all" and "all in one" became an alchemical mantra. → Elias Ashmole's (1619-1692) heraldic motto was "ex uno omnia".

The practical operations necessary to produce the philosopher's stone and transmute base metal into gold were as varied as the theories upon which they were based. The enigmatic and secret nature of alchemical writing compounded the difficulty of knowing exactly what ingredients, procedures, and methods early modern alchemists employed. Although at odds about what to transmute and how to do it, they generally agreed that their work must follow a sequence of color changes from black to white to red, with occasional colors in between. The final red stage symbolized the advent of royalty, "the young king", or the philosopher's stone. Alchemists disagreed, however, about the nature and number of chemical processes necessary to produce these color changes. The most optimistic claimed the stone was made from one substance, in one vessel, in one operation, but this was a minority view. Salomon Trismosin describes seven processes in his *Splendor Solis* (16th century). George Ripley expanded this to twelve in his *Compound of Alchemy* (1591). In his *Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermétique* (1758), Dom → Antoine-Joseph Pernety associates each process with a sign of the zodiac.

## 2. FROM ALCHEMY TO CHEMISTRY

The traditional view that chemistry experienced a "postponed scientific revolution" (Butterfield) until the 18th century when Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier (1743-1794) overthrew the phlogiston theory has been questioned by historians who stress the evolutionary nature of developments in chemistry during the early modern period. According to this latter view, the transition from alchemy to chemistry extended over the course of two and a half centuries and occurred in two broad stages. During the first stage (c. 1500-1700) alchemists/chemists made considerable progress in identifying

and classifying substances and reactions. In addition to making gold alchemists became increasingly interested in discovering medicines and commercial and manufacturing processes. During the second stage (c. 1700-1800), chemists like Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738) and Georg Ernst Stahl (1659-1734) distinguished between the chemical and physical properties of matter, focusing attention on the chemical molecule and its composition. Lavoisier built on the work of these predecessors. Nevertheless, his work was revolutionary inasmuch as he established new concepts (e.g. oxidation, vaporization) and new quantitative methods to determine chemical composition, all of which fragmented the scientific community.

During the 16th century the tradition of practical, laboratory alchemy can be found in the many works dealing with mining, metallurgy, smelting, glass making, distilling, dyeing, pharmacology, and other arts and crafts (H. Brunschwig, *Liber de arte distillandi*, 1500; G. Agricola, *De re metallica*, 1556; V. Biringuccio, *Pirotechnia*, 1540; P. Kertzenmacher, *Alchimia*, 1534). Andreas Libavius's *Alchemia* (1597) emerged from this tradition and has been described as the first systematic textbook of chemistry. These works are particularly useful for their detailed descriptions of the preparation and analysis of chemical substances and for illustrations of the variety of equipment used: alembics flasks, crucibles, baths, burners, bellows, and various kinds of furnaces producing different degrees of heat. Alchemical genre painting (H. Weiditz, D. Teniers, J. Steen, Rembrandt, A. van Ostade, G. Metsu) gives a clear indication of the array of apparatus in alchemical laboratories.

Somewhat akin to these works were treatises devoted to the so-called "secrets of nature", which were extremely popular in the 16th and 17th centuries. These offered procedures for such diverse things as transmuting metals, producing exotic plants and animals through grafting and cross-breeding, cutting, conserving, and cooking food, staving off baldness, eliminating wrinkles, and engendering beautiful children (J.B. della Porta, → C. Agrippa, A. Mizaldus, J.J. Wecker). Although these works described many processes of dubious worth, they were important inasmuch as their publication provided readers with information that could be tested.

Paracelsus was an important figure in the transition of alchemy to chemistry. Paracelsus and his followers broadened the scope of alchemy to encompass investigations of the composition, structure, properties, and reactions of matter. They were particularly interested in chemical medicines. As

experimenters, text-book writers, and systematizers, Paracelsians such as Daniel Sennert (1572-1637), Michael Sendigovius (1566-1636), and J.B. van Helmont (1579-1644) had a significant impact on medicine, pharmacy, and chemistry. Their interest in medicine led to the establishment of a school of "iatrochemistry", or medical chemistry that became an accepted part of the curriculum of medical schools during the 17th century.

While the idea that alchemy could shape and improve nature for human benefit had been an aspect of medieval alchemy, it gained greater prominence in the early modern period. From the second half of the 16th century the theme of restoration and renewal was an important component in the thought of an emerging number of Paracelsians and Pansophists, who combined alchemy, → magic, and the Kabbalah with Renaissance Hermeticism. Characteristic of this genre were the *Rosicrucian Manifestos* (*Fama Fratemitatis*, 1614; *Confessio Fratemitatis*, 1615), which mix hermetic, neoplatonic, and alchemical themes into a potent proclamation of the dawning of a new age. While highly critical of alchemists whose only goal is gold-making, they emphasized the role of alchemy in prolonging life and health and employed alchemical symbolism to describe the spiritual and political regeneration of society. The conviction that scientific knowledge could restore man and the world to something approaching prelapsarian perfection is a common theme in the 17th century. → Francis Bacon (1561-1626) made this claim in *The Advancement of Learning*. In *The New Atlantis*, he envisioned a vast and well equipped scientific complex called "Solomon's House", which was dedicated to the investigation of nature for 'the relief of man's estate'. Bacon's ideas were championed by a number of English and continental millenarians and reformers who practiced alchemy. By emphasizing the crucial role played by human beings in improving and transforming nature, early modern alchemists contributed to the Enlightenment idea of scientific progress.

17th century alchemists/chemists such as J.R. Glauber (1604-70), Robert Boyle (1627-1691), J.J. Becher (1635-82), J.F. Helvetius (1625-1709), Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1738), and G.E. Stahl (1659-1734) made significant progress in understanding chemical reactions through experimentation and quantitative analysis. Although they continued to attempt transmutation, their work contributed to the growing fissure between alchemy and chemistry and illustrated the practical contributions alchemists made to manufacturing and commerce. Becher's career is instructive. He

was one of many alchemists to enjoy the patronage of rulers and nobles (such as → Rudolf II, Elizabeth I, Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Landgraf Moritz of Hessen Kassel), who employed alchemists to shore up their power both symbolically and financially. Appointed by Leopold I as “Imperial Commercial Advisor”, Becher proposed a variety of moneymaking schemes involving the manufacture of porcelain and chemicals, silk and wool weaving, wine and glass making, and the production of medicines. He also designed laboratories for testing alchemical claims and processes. A major factor in the transition of alchemy to chemistry was this kind of testing and the accumulation of negative evidence. Boerhaave, for example, performed an experiment in which he heated mercury at 100 degrees Fahrenheit continuously for fifteen years and six months. At the end of this period he rejected the sulfur/mercury theory, concluding that it was neither possible to transform ordinary mercury into the mercury of the philosophers by heat alone nor to fix mercury into anything approaching gold and silver. As more refined laboratory techniques and apparatus were developed in the 18th century, the testing of alchemical claims continued and they were increasingly found to be dead ends.

While there were notable advances in chemistry during the first half of the 18th century in terms of mineral analysis, metallurgical techniques, and the isolation of new substances such as phosphorus, there was still no clear idea of exactly what the elementary constituents of matter were. In investigating this question, the phenomenon of combustion received considerable attention. Alchemists had generally explained the transformations produced by heating and burning as a separation of bodies into the four elements of Aristotle, the three Paracelsian principles, or the five elements of Willis and others. Van Helmont was the first to challenge this assumption. He was followed by Boyle. Both discovered that different substances were produced during combustion and that many of these did not preexist in the material burnt. These observations were not correctly interpreted until Lavoisier. For the intervening hundred years the phlogiston theory suggested by Becher (*Physica subterranea*, 1669) and elaborated by his pupil Stahl provided the most popular explanation for combustion. Stahl maintained that when anything burned, phlogiston (“burning” in Greek) was released. The original substance could be restored if the lost phlogiston was recombined with the burnt residue. Stahl had the actual order of events backwards. What he described as a loss of phlogiston was actually a gain in oxygen, while the addition of phlo-

giston was in reality a loss of oxygen. Although mistaken, Stahl’s suggested a plausible theory linking together a large number of facts, which suggested new experiments and led to new discoveries. These culminated in Lavoisier’s experiments with mercury and his discovery of the role of oxygen in combustion. Lavoisier’s work was made possible by the earlier discoveries of Joseph Black (1728-1799), Henry Cavendish (1731-1810), and Joseph Priestly (1733-1804), but he synthesized their findings into coherent theories that put chemistry on a firm quantitative basis. However, it was not until the elaboration of atomic theory in the following century by John Dalton (1766-1844) that alchemy and chemistry reached a final parting of the ways. The realization that each element had a specific atomic weight reflecting its structure and ability to react opened the way for modern theoretical chemistry.

Despite the denunciation of alchemy by such figures as Fontenelle (*Histoire de l’Académie des Sciences*, année 1722), Etienne-Francois Geoffroy (*Des supercheres concernant la pierre philosophale*, 1722), and Chevalier de Jaucourt (“Pierre philosophale”, *Encyclopédie*, 1765), enthusiasm for alchemy continued in the 18th century. Reports of successful transmutation were given by such people as by James Price (1752-1783), a fellow of the Royal Society, and the respected German theologian J.S. Semler (1725-1791). Alchemy was studied and practiced especially in Germany, where it was closely connected to some forms of → Pietism and to the resurgence of Paracelsianism and → Rosicrucianism. Alchemical imagery and symbolism (combined with elements of → Freemasonry, → Hermeticism, Kabbalah, and pietistic Christianity) played a central role in the philosophy and rituals of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuz*, whose members were expected to engage in laboratory work in the hope of finding the quintessence or vital essence of the universe. Such a goal was clearly at odds with the rational, experimental, and essentially secular chemistry practiced by Lavoisier and his colleagues. This Rosicrucian order attracted a strong following throughout the German-speaking world as well as in Poland and Russia. It reached the height of its influence in the Prussia of King Frederick William II (1786-97), who was a member of the order, but by the end of the century it had all but disappeared. Leading figures of the late German Enlightenment such as the Marburg Professor of medicine F.J.W. Schröder (1733-1778), the anatomist S.T. von Sömmering (1755-1830), and his friend the naturalist Georg Forster (1754-1794) were drawn to alchemy and Rosicrucianism,



although Sömmering and Foster eventually became disenchanted with both. → Goethe's "Pflanzenlehre" drew partly on alchemical ideas. During his pietistic period (1768/69) he read Paracelsus, Basil Valentine, J.B. van Helmont, Eirenaeus Philalethes (George Starkey), and A.J. Kirchweger's *Aurea catena Homeri* (1723). Among the more flamboyant alchemists of the period were the Count of → Saint-Germain (1701-1784), Giuseppe Balsamo, better known as → Cagliostro (1743-1795), and his teacher, the enigmatic kabbalist, magician, and alchemist, → Samuel Jacob Chayyim Falk (c. 1710-1782). General Charles R. Rainsford (1728-1809), a member of the Royal Society who was involved with Falk, left hundreds of texts in five languages dealing with alchemy, Kabbalah, magic, medicine, and → astrology. Ebenezer Sibly (1751-99), who received a medical degree from Aberdeen Medical College, read Newton, Priestly, Lavoisier, Aristotle, → Hermes Trismegistus, → Khunrath, and Paracelsus and attempted to combine them in *A Key to Physic and the Occult Sciences* (1792).

Although Alain Mothu has demonstrated that Paracelsian naturalism appealed to some libertine authors of clandestine literature in their fight against religion, for the most part the resurgence of alchemy in the 18th century constituted a backlash against aspects of the Enlightenment, especially the emphasis on reason to the exclusion of human spiritual and emotional needs. It was a backlash that appealed increasingly to philosophers and theosophers rather than scientists. While the attempt to transmute base metal and produce the elixir remained legitimate laboratory objectives for some people, alchemy became increasingly detached from practical chemistry and more closely associated with spiritual, theosophical, and philosophical currents.

### 3. SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY

The tendency to interpret physical change in spiritual terms was part of alchemy from its inception in the ancient world. Beginning in the Middle Ages and well into the 18th century parallels were drawn between alchemical processes and the mysteries of Christianity (see e.g. George Ripley in the prologue to his *The Compound of Alchemy*: 'O Unity in the substance, and Trinity in the Godhead . . . As thou didst make all things out of one chaos, so let me be skilled to evolve our microcosm out of one substance in its three aspects of Magnesia, Sulphur, and Mercury'). The preparation of the philosopher's stone was described in terms of death and resurrection and equated with the death and resurrection of Christ; the constituents of the stone,

for example, the salt, sulfur, and mercury of the Paracelsians, were identified with spirit, soul, and body as well as the Trinity. The religious nature of many alchemical texts makes it difficult at times to distinguish those that describe actual laboratory processes from those employing alchemical language for purely spiritual ends. Nevertheless, there was a clear tendency among "spiritual" alchemists to distinguish themselves from those they disparagingly described as "puffers" or "sooty empirics". The English physician, alchemist, and Rosicrucian sympathizer → Robert Fludd (1574-1637) dismissed the work of practical alchemists as "chymia vulgaris". Only their imagery and symbolism kept these alchemists in touch with the fire and the furnace.

The upsurge in spiritual alchemy coincided with the breakdown of religious unity during the Reformation. Alchemical symbolism provided an ideal framework for individuals seeking new schemes of salvation both for themselves and the world at large. The books written by → Jacob Boehme illustrate how well alchemical symbolism served spiritual and theosophical ends. Boehme's writings fuse alchemical, Paracelsian, hermetic, and kabbalistic themes into a theosophical exhortation to spiritual rebirth. His collected works were republished six times between 1677 and 1769, and they influenced 18th and 19th century Romantics, philosophers, spiritualists, and theosophers.

Much of the spiritual side of western alchemy was rooted in the notion that the world was a battle ground, in which the forces of evil (matter) battled the forces of good (spirit). This idea came from a variety of sources, neoplatonic, kabbalistic, and Christian. Alchemists were sometimes presented as quasi-Gods in their laboratories, as saviors redeeming base matter, equating the philosopher's stone with Christ and identifying themselves with both (see e.g. Agrippa's discussion of Geber in *De Occ. Phil.* III, 36). One of the most daring appropriations of Christian symbolism appears in the alchemical mass devised by Nicholas Melchior of Hermanstadt (*Theatrum Chemicum*, vol. 3). Abbot → Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), → Valentin Weigel (1533-1588), A. von Franckenberg (1593-1652), → John Pordage (1608-1681), → Thomas Vaughan (1621-65), Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), Q. Kuhlmann (1651-1689), and → J.G. Gichtel (1638-1710) were among the 17th century authors who employed alchemical symbolism to describe spiritual transformations.

Although many alchemists were members of the clergy, their ventures into theology affronted a number of orthodox Catholics and Protestants.

There was a potential conflict between alchemy and mainstream Christianity that arose from the hermetic elements inherent in alchemy. Many alchemists believed that man not only has the power to become divine himself, but because he is a microcosm representative of the macrocosm, or world at large, he has the power to redeem matter as well. Not all alchemists embraced such extreme and heretical views. → Michael Maier (1568-1622), for example, was a committed Lutheran who believed the philosopher's stone was a gift of faith. But alchemy and alchemical symbolism could and did have unorthodox, even heretical implications. For example, the Catholic librarian and skeptic Gabriel Naudé (1600-53) criticized alchemy for both its impiety and obscurity. The Minim Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) and his friend Father Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) accused alchemists of proposing a "chemical" religion in opposition to true Christianity. In 1625 the Sorbonne condemned Khunrath's *Amphitheatrum sapientiae* on the same basis, and the Inquisition initiated proceedings against J.B. van Helmont for attributing the healing powers of holy relics to magnetic virtues, akin to the lodestone and weapon-salve. Luther was one of the few Churchmen to praise alchemy both for its practical uses and its verification of Christian doctrine, but the bitter condemnation of Andreas Osiander (1498-1552) for his 'new alchemistic theology' reveals the hostile view of alchemy among many Lutherans. In 1690/91 the Lutheran theologian E.D. Colberg wrote a diatribe against the fanatical and unorthodox beliefs of those he derisively labeled "Alchymistery" (*Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christenthum*).

Spiritual alchemy proliferated in the 18th century. Alchemical themes and symbols were integrated into Masonic and Roscrucian rituals, among such groups as the → Asiatic Brethren, the Lodge of the Amis Réunis, the → Illuminés d'Avignon, and various Rosicrucian orders in Germany. In *L'Étoile flamboyante* (1766) Baron de Tschoudy claimed that the goal of masonry and alchemy was identical. Among the most widely read works of spiritual alchemy were the collected works of Jakob Boehme, which were republished in Germany and England; J.P. Maul, *Medicina theologia, chymico-irenica et christiano-cabbalistica* (1713); the anonymous *Die edelgeborne Jungfrau Alchymia* (1730) of J.C. Creilung; → G. von Welling's *Opus mago-cabalisticum et theosophicum* (1735); A.J. Kirchweger, *Aurea Catena Homeri* (1723), which was translated into Frech in 1772 and reissued by the *Gold- und Rosenkreuz* as *Annulus Pla-*

*tonis oder physicklich-chymische Erklärung der Natur* (1781) and the *Compaß der Weisen* (1779). Scholars have noted the influence of alchemical ideas on → Romanticism, 18th-century philosophies of nature and history, and a wide variety of theosophical societies and organizations. → Novalis (1772-1801) read extensively in alchemical as well as theosophical literature. J.G. Herder's (1774-1803) philosophy of history was influenced by hermetic ideas. The vision of a golden age of social equality, political justice, and moral integrity characterizing the thought of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) and his pupil → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-82) was fostered by alchemical expectations of universal restoration and renewal. Their work, along with that of Boehme, had a decisive influence on → F.W.J. Schelling's (1775-1854) "Naturphilosophie" as well as on G.W.F. Hegel's (1770-1831) philosophy. Hegel's friend → Franz van Baader (1765-1841), known as "Böhme redivivus", also utilized alchemical themes in his eclectic theosophy. → Martinez de Pasqually (1727-1774) founded the freemasonry rite of the → Elus-Coëns, which combined elements of alchemy and theosophy. He introduced → Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-68) to the alchemical and theosophical idea of the God-man, who works in concert with God to restore humanity to its prelapsarian perfection. John L. Brooke has documented the widespread interest in alchemy in 18th century America and the influence alchemical ideas had in the later development of Mormon cosmology and theology.

#### 4. ALCHEMICAL LITERATURE

The demand for alchemical literature reached its height during the early modern period and is reflected in the publication of numerous individual tracts and substantial collections of alchemical treatises such as *De alchemia opuscula* (1550), published by Cyriacus Jakob; G. Gratarolo, *Verae Alchemiae . . .* (1561); *Theatrum Chemicum* (1659-1661), published by L. Zetzner; the *Musaeum Hermeticum Reformatum et Amplificatum* (1678); Elias Ashmole, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1652); J.J. Manget, *Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa* (1702); Friedrich Roth-Scholtz, *Deutsches Theatrum Chemicum* (1728), and F.J.W. Schröder, *Neue Alchymistische Bibliothek* (1771-1774) and *Neue Sammlung der Bibliothek für die höhere Naturwissenschaft und Chemie* (1775-1780). The Benedictine Antoine Joseph Pernety (1716-1801) published a key to alchemical symbolism in his *Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermétique* (1758). With *Les Fables Egyptiennes et Grecques dévoilées et réduites*

*au même principe* he followed in the tradition of G.A. Augurelli (1454-c. 1537), Salomon Trismosin (16th century), and Michel Maier (1568-1622), interpreting Greek and Egyptian myths in terms of operative alchemy. Alchemy was so popular in the early modern period that a new genre of literature emerged, the “transmutation history”, which provided detailed eye-witness accounts of successful transmutations. Robert Boyle witnessed one such event and was afterwards so convinced of the possibility of transmutation that he was instrumental in obtaining the repeal of the English law against Multipliers (Henry IV, 1404) in 1689.

Reflecting its dual nature as both a laboratory science and a spiritual quest, alchemical literature appeared in a variety of forms ranging from straight forward descriptions of laboratory procedures to poems, autobiographies, dialogues, reports of alchemical meetings, catechisms, romances, parables, visions, prayers, and even the occasional play emphasizing its spiritual aspects (Knorr von Rosenroth’s alchemical masque *Conjugium Phoebii et Palladis* [1677]) or ridiculing it as fraudulent (Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist*). Before the early modern period most alchemical texts were in Latin and restricted to the educated. The growth of vernacular alchemical literature made it accessible to a broader segment of society and helps to explain the proliferation of texts.

One of the major ways historians traditionally distinguished between alchemy and chemistry was on the basis of language. Alchemical texts were identified by their obscure, metaphorical style, chemical texts by their plain descriptions of chemical processes. However, more recent discussions have shown that it is not always possible to make such a sharp distinction. Many alchemical authors employed secret codes, anagrams, paradoxes, and allegories and deliberately confused readers by leaving out important words, including misleading information, employing exotic synonyms for the materials and processes discussed, and breaking off or changing the subject at crucial points to resume it in a seemingly unrelated place. Nonetheless, esoteric texts of this nature have been successfully decoded to reveal descriptions of actual chemical processes, and even in those instances when laboratory chemistry is clearly the subject of discussion alchemists tended to hide their message and even themselves under a veil of inscrutability. The works of Basil Valentine are a case in point. Whoever wrote these treatises hid under the pseudonym “mighty” or “valiant king” and tried to pass himself off as a monk living in the 15th century rather than someone (probably Johann Thölde) living in

the 17th. The use of pseudonyms and claims to belong to an earlier age are typical of alchemical authors. Both practices underline the claim that alchemy embodied a powerful secret wisdom originating in a divine revelation granted solely to the spiritually worthy. The texts attributed to Basil Valentine contain a mix of spiritual admonitions and obscure allegorical statements together with good laboratory directions for preparing such things as metallic antimony, hydrochloric acid, solutions of caustic alkali, acetates of lead and copper, gold fulminate, and many other salts. The author was also interested in the medicinal uses of compounds of antimony and mercury. Secrecy and obscurity is therefore not the hallmark of alchemical texts. Even Robert Boyle condoned secrecy in certain cases and purposely obscured reports of some of his alchemical experiments.

The propensity of alchemists to conceal their message was partly due to prudence. In an age before patents they were anxious to protect their chemical secrets and thus enhance their worth in the eyes of potential patrons. Alchemists were also cautious about expressing themselves too freely lest they be held hostage by avaricious men. Alchemical literature is filled with stories of imprisoned alchemists or those disguised to elude potential captors.

In addition to trying to protect themselves, many alchemists expressed themselves in ways that are obscure to the modern mind because they subscribed to what has been labeled “an emblematic worldview”. They viewed the universe holistically: everything was related through a system of symbolic → correspondences linking the heavens to human beings, animals, plants, minerals, and metals. A prime example of this way of thinking appears in → John Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica*. Dee considered this symbol a talisman embodying all the powers of the universe. By contemplating it, men would simultaneously absorb these powers and experience a spiritual transformation. For Dee, as for many alchemists, symbols offer direct access to hidden knowledge and a way to harness this knowledge for human advantage. In alchemy, a picture is literally worth a thousand words, which explains the popularity of alchemical emblem books, such as *Aurora consurgens* (15th century), *Splendor solis* (16th century), *Rosarium philosophorum* (1550), *Mutus liber* (1702), and the works of Michael Maier (1568-1622) and J.D. Mylius (1585-1628).

Alchemical emblem books reveal a worldview in which nature is alive, and human beings supply the model by which everything is measured. The cre-



ation of the philosopher's stone is envisioned as a birth resulting from the sexual union of male and female "seeds", depicted in the form of a King and Queen. Alchemical vessels are "wombs", inside of which the "Royal Child" develops. The chemical wedding and sexual union of the King and Queen are therefore central motifs in many alchemical texts. The beautiful sequence of illustrations in the *Splendor Solis* (16th century) depicts the drama of this carefully orchestrated birth. The conception and birth of the philosopher's stone is not, however, a straightforward affair. The chemical wedding requires the sacrifice, death, and rebirth of the couple, who are an extraordinary pair, for not only are they husband and wife, they are also mother and son, brother and sister, or father and daughter. This apparent endorsement of incest underscores the great alchemical truth that every created thing emanates from a single, divine soul-substance. This truth was illustrated by one of the most popular alchemical symbols, the *ouroboros*, or tail-eating serpent.

In the course of the 17th and 18th century the kind of symbolism characteristic of an emblematic worldview gradually gave way to less emotive and metaphorical descriptions of laboratory reactions for a variety of reasons. The great interest in alchemy encouraged the publication of an increasing number of textbooks in which laboratory operations were classified and substances and alchemical terms more clearly defined (for example, J. Beguin, *Tyrocinium chymicum* [1612]; N. Le Febvre, *Traicté de la Chymie* [1660]; C. Glaser, *Traité de la Chymie* [1663]; N. Lemery, *Cours de Chimie* [1675]). The defense of esotericism and secrecy became less useful and profitable as new career opportunities developed for court alchemists, textbook writers, university teachers, private tutors, public lecturers, and purveyors of chemical medicines, all of whom had an economic incentive to make their knowledge public. A new rhetoric of clarity and openness arose, and even though it was not always practiced, it reinforced the idea that knowledge of chemistry should be available to the educated public.

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## Alchemy V: 19th-20th Century

1. SURVIVALS INTO THE 19TH CENTURY
2. EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF "SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY"
3. THE LATE-19TH CENTURY REVIVAL
4. THE 20TH CENTURY

### 1. SURVIVALS INTO THE 19TH CENTURY

The decline of alchemy, already underway in the 18th century, reached its low point in the 19th, as testified by the minuscule number of treatises published throughout the latter period. Several factors explain this. The scientific revolution of the end of the 18th century had definitively separated chem-

istry from alchemy, to which it denied any scientific validity. Alchemical treatises were consequently given no serious consideration. Secondly, the end of the 18th century saw the death of several figures prominent in alchemy: Touzay-Duchanteau († 1788), → Etteilla (=Jean-Baptiste Alliette, 1738-1791), → Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo, 1743-1795), Johann Daniel Müller (ps. Elias Artista, 1716-after 1786), → Dom A.-J. Pernety (1716-1796), J.-L. Salverte de Toux († 1797), Ebenezer Sibly (1751-1799), etc. General Charles Rainsford († 1809), Marie-Daniel Bourrée de Corberon (1748-1810), and → Francis Barrett († ca. 1810/15?) did not survive much longer. Typically, after a leader dies, the members of his group lose their enthusiasm for their object of study – in this case, practical alchemy. The dispersion of the members of the → Illuminés d'Avignon after the death of Pernety is a perfect example.

With the exception of a few isolated “adepts”, most of whom published nothing in their lifetime, alchemy’s survival at least up to the 1890s depended on its integration within larger bodies of doctrine. Around 1760, → Freemasonry had incorporated alchemical symbols and teachings into some of its high degrees. Rosicrucian currents [→ Rosicrucianism] (in the broad sense), from → Michael Maier to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, had always been closely related to alchemy. The theosophic current that started with → Jacob Boehme contained the seeds of a “spiritual” alchemy that was destined to play a major role in Western esoteric traditions; but with such diversity of conceptions that one should speak rather of “spiritual alchemies”. Lastly, the current of → *Naturphilosophie*, limited to Germany, included elements and reflections of an alchemical nature.

During the transitional period (from the 19th to the 20th century), one short item among the events recorded in the press raised quite a stir. It was the announcement, in 1796, in the journal *Reichsanzeiger* (published in Gotha), of a secret society (the “Hermetische Gesellschaft” [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies]) entirely devoted to the study of alchemical practice. The Hermetische Gesellschaft encouraged the readers to communicate with it, and among themselves, about the results of their alchemical experiments. The journal received many responses, so much so, that in 1799 both founders of the Hermetische Gesellschaft (Karl Arnold Kortum [1745-1824] and Friedrich Bährens [1765-1831]) withdrew from the *Reichsanzeiger* and created their own periodical, the *Hermetisches Journal*. Apparently, only two issues were published, in 1799 and 1802 respectively.

Notwithstanding, Kortum et Bährens remained very active, keeping up a lengthy correspondence with many people. They even granted diplomas, one of them to the theosopher and alchemist → Karl Von Eckartshausen, who had approached the Hermetische Gesellschaft in 1799. Kortum left the Society and was replaced in 1805 by a certain L.F. von Sternhayn, about whom little is known. Henceforth, the activities of the Hermetische Gesellschaft took on a more discreet character, but they seem to have continued up to 1810.

Apart from very general treatments such as → Barrett’s *The Magus* (1801), the 19th century opened with Louis Gassot’s publication in 1803 of *La Philosophie Céleste* (Bordeaux, An XI). He writes there of Unity, God, analogy, and alchemy in practical terms, also calling it “natural Philosophy”, resulting in an interesting and original *summa* marked by borrowings from theosophy [→ Christian theosophy]. In England, *The Lives of the Alchemical Philosophers* appeared anonymously in 1818. It is generally attributed to Barrett, though according to Francis King, John P. Kellerman (1779-18?) was probably the author.

A French alchemist, Cyliani, published *Hermès dévoilé* in 1832: a very short text written in romantic style. The anonymous author presents himself as an operative alchemist who attained the Great Work in 1831 ‘after spending 37 years at it’, and states definitively ‘that there are two ways, the dry way and the wet way’ (see below, a propos Fulcanelli). If he himself followed the wet way, it was ‘by preference’ and ‘by duty’, although he was familiar with the dry way. In the 1960s, Bernard Husson revealed an unpublished manuscript (*Récréations hermétiques*, written after 1815) preserved in the Chevreul Collection (Paris, Musée d’Histoire Naturelle), which was ‘very likely the most important source of *Hermès dévoilé*’.

In general, those who worked at alchemy and wrote about it were reluctant to offer the fruits of their labor for publication, with the result that several treatises of this period are known only in manuscript form (no census of them exists). One such is *L’alchimie du Maçon* (The mason’s alchemy) by François-Nicolas Noël (1761-18?), dated 1813, of which Jean-Pierre Laurant writes that it is the work ‘of an entire life of reflection, or the contribution of a group under the single name of Noël’. Other reasons, however, may have caused it to remain unpublished, along with the rest of Noël’s work which includes the manuscripts *Géométrie du Maçon* (The mason’s [plane] geometry), *Physique du Maçon* (The mason’s physics), and *Stéréométrie du Maçon* (The mason’s solid geometry).

The same case obtains with the *Compendium Hermeticum* (Hermetic compendium) by the theosopher Friedrich Herbart (1764-1833), who signs it with his initiatic name *Theodore a Silva*. This remained in manuscript until 1988. It belongs at the junction of several influences: theosophy (→ Saint-Martin was an important discovery in Herbart's life), Rosicrucianism (the society that Herbart founded in 1812, *Les Pèlerins de Salem* [The pilgrims of Salem], had both masonic and Rosicrucian roots), Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III] and → mysticism (as a good theosopher, Herbart regarded the Bible as the authoritative Book). Herbart was a disciple of → Eckartshausen – himself the author of an alchemical treatise, *Chimische Versuche* (Regensburg 1801), and of a *Katechismus der Höheren Chemie*, published posthumously in 1819 – and very close to → Johann Friedrich von Meyer (1772-1849), with whom he corresponded for many years. Von Meyer himself left a small alchemical manuscript dated 1801, discovered and published by Jacques Fabry in 1988, which is in fact an exposition of the doctrine of his own master, Louis Schmid – of whom nothing further is known.

Another manuscript, dated Amiens, 1832 and now in the Biblioteca dei Lincei, Rome, is *Les arcanes ou secrets de la philosophie hermétique dévoilé . . . revu et corrigé par Lenain* (The arcana, or secrets of the Hermetic philosophy unveiled . . . revised and corrected by Lenain). Lazare Républicain Lenain (1793-ca. 1874) was also the author of *La Science Cabalistique* (Amiens 1823) and of a *Hommage à la Vierge Marie* (Homage to the Virgin Mary, Amiens, 1874).

The last important treatise of practical alchemy from the earlier 19th century was the work of Louis-Paul-François Cambriel (1764-ca. 1850), published in 1843 in the form of a *Cours de philosophie hermétique ou d'alchimie en dix-neuf leçons* (Course of Hermetic or alchemical philosophy in 19 lessons). Cambriel examines the sculptures and bas-reliefs of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, which he says represent 'as clearly as possible all the work and the whole product or result of the Philosopher's stone'. In this, he was the successor of the alchemist Esprit Gobineau de Montluisant, the 17th century author of *Explications très curieuses des énigmes de Notre-Dame de Paris* (Very interesting explanations of the enigmas of Notre Dame of Paris).

## 2. EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF "SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY"

At mid-century, two works appeared almost simultaneously which would strongly influence the

whole Western esoteric current. The first was *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850) by Mary Ann Atwood née South (1817-1910), daughter of Thomas South (ca. 1785-ca. 1855). Father and daughter, as joint authors, recall the main traits of alchemical history and develop their own vision, which is purely spiritual and greatly influenced by Boehme. They state that 'the Hermetic Philosophy is a process of experimentation into the Universal Spirit through man'. The method of experimentation, discreetly hinted at in Atwood's book and confirmed from other sources, was in fact the Mesmeric trance [→ Animal Magnetism]. Some additional documents, preserved by Atwood's friend Isabelle de Steiger (1836-1927), were incorporated into the second edition (1918), edited by Walter Leslie Wilmshurst (1867-1939).

The second seminal work was *Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists . . .* (1857) by Ethan Allen Hitchcock (1798-1870). General Hitchcock was a graduate of West Point and a professional army officer until 1855, when he retired to devote himself to writing (though he returned to service for the Civil War and became President Lincoln's military advisor). He wrote that the previous year he had come across an old alchemical volume in a New York bookshop. It was a revelation to him: he continued to collect alchemical books and manuscripts, ancient and modern, often ordering them from London. He quickly became aware of modern European works, citing Hermann Kopp's *Geschichte der Chemie* (History of chemistry, 4 vols., Braunschweig 1843-1847), Louis Figuier's *L'Alchimie et les alchimistes* (Alchemy and the alchemists, Paris 1854), and the 2nd edition of Grove's *Correlation of Physical Forces* (London 1855). Hitchcock stated his theory briefly thus: 'My proposition is, that the *subject* of Alchemy was *Man*; while the *object* was the perfection of Man'.

The path opened by Atwood and Hitchcock had a powerful impact on the esotericism of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The key to alchemy that they offered accorded with the Theosophical and Spiritualist [→ Spiritualism] doctrines so popular at this time. → A.E. Waite discussed it, cautiously at first, then in 1926 declared that the hypothesis was invalid. It entered the milieu of the → Theosophical Society through Dr. Alexander Wilder (1823-1908), who early on discovered Hitchcock's works on alchemy and → Swedenborg. Wilder was mostly responsible for writing the preface 'Beyond the Veil' for → H.P. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877), which mentions the alchemists. The theory also influenced the Viennese psychiatrist Herbert Silberer (1882-1922).



### 3. THE LATE 19TH-CENTURY REVIVAL

Alchemy revived at the end of the 19th century, most of all in France. Theoretical or spiritual alchemy played an important part in the groups founded by → Papius (Gérard Encausse, 1865-1916), but among his associates only → Stanislas de Guaita seems to have practiced it. In the *fin-de-siècle* period, the man who most answered to the traditional image of the alchemist was Albert Poisson (1865?-1894). He abandoned his medical studies at quite a late stage in order to pursue alchemical research, and worked in the laboratories of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris. He devoted his leisure to seeking out alchemical books and manuscripts (of which some reappeared years later in the collection of Lionel Hauser), experimentation, writing, and editing ancient texts (→ Ramon Llull, → Albertus Magnus, → Roger Bacon, → Arnau de Vilanova, and → Nicolas Flamel, whose legend Poisson faithfully believed). By the end of his short life, Poisson had laid the foundation for a vast encyclopedia of alchemy, divided into several volumes of which four appeared. Beside *Cinq traités d'alchimie* (Five treatises on alchemy, 1893) and *Histoire de l'alchimie au XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (History of alchemy in the 14th century, 1893), his conceptions were most clearly explained in *Théories et symboles des alchimistes* (Theories and symbols of the alchemists, 1891). He writes: 'The matter of the Great Work was Gold and Silver, united to Mercury and prepared in a special fashion'. These materials, being respectively a Sulfur, a Mercury, and a Salt, prepared 'according to certain procedures', were placed in a glass vessel or Athanor. Then, Poisson explains, the cooking could begin; the matter's color changed in conformity with the length of cooking, and the appearance of red indicated the end of the experiment. One had then to 'communicate' to the matter thus obtained a greater 'power of transmutation', through an operation called 'fermentation'. The result, in theory, was the Philosopher's Stone.

This idea that gold and silver must form the prime matter, or components of it, was taken over by Poisson's successor and in a way his disciple, François Jollivet-Castelot (1874-1937) in his first major work, *Comment on devient alchimiste* (How to become an alchemist, 1897). This book, strongly influenced by contemporary occultism [→ occult / occultism], defended some fantastic theses, e.g. that alchemy 'came from the Temples of Chaldaean-Egyptian antiquity, and before that from the initiatic Colleges of Atlantis, of Lemuria, and of the Aryans (which takes us more than 40.000 years

into the past!)'. Jollivet-Castelot's exposition essentially followed Poisson's work, but included ideas from Tiffereau and did not disdain the scientific (or pseudo-scientific) discoveries of its time. Jollivet-Castelot worked tirelessly from the end of the 19th century until the 1930s, and edited several journals originating from a 'Société alchimique Française' (SAF) which he founded on Poisson's principles.

In Venice, Eduardo Frosine founded a "Società Alchemica Italiana" in 1909 on the model of the SAF. In London, the Alchemical Society was founded in 1912 'for the Study of the Works and theories of the Alchemists in all their aspects, philosophical, historical and scientific, and of all matters relating thereto'. Its presidents were John Ferguson and Herbert Stanley Redgrove (1887-1943). A.E. Waite, Isabel de Steiger, and J.B. Craven were among the vice-presidents, and published several articles in its *Journal of the Alchemical Society*; but both journal and society ceased all activity after two years, in 1914.

Some of the members of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn showed a genuine interest in alchemy. The Reverend William Alexander Ayton (1816-1908) joined the Order together with his wife in 1888; he was also a Freemason (1866) and a member of the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. A passionate devotee of alchemy, which he had practiced since about the 1850s, he was continually pursuing alchemical books and manuscripts, some of which he translated. Ayton corresponded with Frederick Leigh Gardner (1857-ca. 1930), author of a *Catalogue raisonné of Rosicrucian Books* (1903), and with Julius Kohn (ca. 1850-?), an Austrian émigré with whom Ayton exchanged or lent manuscripts, both for his personal use and for including elements in the Golden Dawn rituals.

Apart from W.A. Ayton, → A.E. Waite stands out as the other major representative of the Golden Dawn who took an interest in alchemy. He made many translations and editions of ancient texts (→ B. Valentine, → Paracelsus, E. Kelley, etc.), the publication of which was paid for by another devotee of alchemy, Lord Stafford. Waite's *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy* (1926) is still in print. An interest in alchemy is also evident in the works of the poet → William B. Yeats, likewise a member of the Golden Dawn (see e.g. *Rosa alchemica*, 1897).

In the 1920s, another Golden Dawn member, E.J. Langford Garstin (ca. 1893-1955), developed the principles of a spiritual alchemy in two books, *Theurgy* (1930) and *The Secret Fire* (1932), while in Italy → Julius Evola also expounded an exclusively spiritual conception of alchemy in his *La*

*Tradizione Ermetica* (1931), under the dual influence of → Arturo Reghini (1878-1946) and → René Guénon.

#### 4. THE 20TH CENTURY

After World War I, alchemy experienced a resurgence, especially in the practical field, first in Europe then in the United States. An idiosyncratic English laboratory alchemist was Archibald Cockren (ca. 1880?-after 1960), a medical practitioner and author of *Alchemy Rediscovered and Restored* (1940). In this work he describes his alchemical procedures, including the making of ‘philosophic gold’, in semi-scientific terms, but without disclosing vital details such as the nature of the prime matter.

In France, the publication in 1926 of *Le Mystère des cathédrales* (The mystery of the cathedrals) first made known the name of → Fulcanelli, though to a fairly small public, since the book appeared in only 300 copies. The title announces the main theme: that the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages were the vehicles for a Hermetic or overtly alchemical message, carved in stone by anonymous artisans. Fulcanelli treats the cathedrals of Paris and Amiens, and also two buildings in Bourges: the Palais Jacques-Coeur and the Hôtel Lallemand. Following Cyliani, he describes the two ways leading to the Great Work: one wet, also called ‘long’, which uses the ‘vase of the art’, requires ‘uninterrupted work for 12 to 18 months’, and starts from ‘prepared natural gold, dissolved in philosophic mercury, which is then cooked in the glass vessel’. Fulcanelli writes that this is the way most often described in the treatises, and the most noble because of the rich materials it employs. The second way, called ‘dry’, is reduced to ‘a single matter, a single vessel, a single furnace’, in which one uses a crucible. It is considerably shorter, lasting one week, according to Basil Valentine, Salomon Trismosin, Philalethes, and Cyliani, among others.

Fulcanelli’s disciple, → Eugène Canseliet (1899-1982), discovered alchemy in his adolescence through Cyliani’s treatise. He supposedly met Fulcanelli in Marseille in 1915, and between 1921 and 1928 rewrote the texts given him for publication by Fulcanelli – or, as is widely believed, by the alchemist and artist Jean Julien Champagne (1877-1932). After the latter’s death, Canseliet began to write independently, first in the form of articles for journals (1934 onwards), then his first book, *Deux logis alchimiques* (1945), which he began around 1935. For him, the alchemist responds to a divine call or ‘vocation’. The Philosopher’s Stone, crown of the alchemist’s labors, is itself a ‘gift of God’

(probably a reminiscence of the 15th century treatise *Donum Dei* attributed to George Aurach). Till the end of his life, Canseliet considered it his mission to maintain the tradition of practical alchemy. This he did with conviction, giving many interviews and devoting much time to answering innumerable enquiries, to the detriment of his own work and alchemical advancement.

Canseliet was friends with other alchemists, including André Savoret (1898-1977), author of an attempt to define alchemy (*Qu’est-ce que l’alchimie?* [What is alchemy?]) Paris 1948) which is regarded today as the most concise introduction; José Gifreda, known as ‘Magus Gifreda’, doctor and engineer, who died in his native Barcelona in 1980, leaving a superb library; and, around 1948/1950, René Alleau and Bernard Husson († 1997).

In Germany, the writer, poet, and translator Baron Alexander von Bernus (1880-1965) discovered alchemy at the beginning of the 1910s. In 1912 he met → Rudolf Steiner. During World War I, through → Gustav Meyrink’s agency, Bernus came into possession of a chest of alchemical texts including Christian August Becker’s *Der Geheime Weingeist der Adepten (Spiritus Vini Lulliani s. Philosophici) und seine Medizinische Anwendung für Ärzte und Chemiker* (The secret wine-spirit of the adepts . . . and its medicinal usage for doctors and chemists, Mühlhausen 1865). Already a rare book when Bernus discovered it, this guided him to an understanding of the mystery of Salt. In 1921, after several years of studying ancient treatises, he founded the Soluna laboratories and gradually developed about 30 tinctures. In 1936 he published the first edition of *Alchymie und Heilkunst* (Alchemy and the healing art), dedicated to the medicinal applications of alchemy. Other alchemists visited Bernus at Donaumünster, including Henri Hunwald (1908-1961) and René Alleau. The French writer Michel Butor, in *Portrait de l’artiste en jeune singe* (Portrait of the artist as a young monkey, Paris 1967), has written of his travels in Germany on the eve of World War II, and of his visit to Bernus, to whom he gave several books including those of Fulcanelli.

Following Canseliet, René Alleau (b. 1917) promoted alchemy within the Surrealist movement, to which he remained attached from 1946 to the present. In 1952 he gave lectures on alchemy and alchemical texts at the Geographical Society in Paris, attended first by André Breton (1896-1966) alone, then by many of the surrealists, brought there by Breton, who became his most assiduous auditors. In 1953 Alleau published an inspired work in the Fulcanellian tradition: *Aspects de*



*l'alchimie traditionnelle* (Aspects of traditional alchemy). There he defended the idea of an alchemical theory that has remained essentially the same from antiquity to the present. The techniques of encoding and, in general, all the procedures of phonetic kabbalah, were intended to be incomprehensible except to those alchemists who possessed the keys. For Alleau, 'it is beyond doubt that the alchemical manipulations used material supports for an inner ascesis'. And he adds that 'the "mystico-moral" interpretations familiar from authors such as → Eliphas Lévi, → Péladan, → Guaita, and Oswald Wirth' make no sense, because 'if one wants to reconstitute the mental chessboard of alchemical thought, one must admit . . . that this thought corresponds to an autonomous discipline, and that outside its framework no interpretation of its symbols can have any coherent sense'.

A very different path was followed by Armand Barbault (b. 1906), brother of the astrologer André Barbault and himself an astrologer as well. He was attracted as early as 1948 to plant alchemy – the elixir of life drawn from plants – although he was familiar with the principles of a more traditional alchemy that used only minerals and metals. Twenty years later he published the result of his experiments in *L'or du millième matin* (The gold of the thousandth morning, 1969). Barbault's plant elixir has been used successfully in the treatment of various illnesses and infections.

In the United States, especially from the 1940s onwards, Orval Graves († 1996), a member and librarian of the AMORC [Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rose Cross] and the Rose+Cross University, directed experiments for small-scale seminars, and published articles on alchemy and transmutation in *The Rosicrucian Digest*. One of the students at these seminars, Albert Richard Riedel (1911-1984), went on to play a prominent role in promoting alchemy in the USA under the pseudonym of 'Frater Albertus'. Born in Dresden, Riedel emigrated to the USA shortly after publishing *Drei Novellen* (Three short stories, 1932), and followed Graves's courses before developing his personal vision. In 1960 he published *The Alchemist's Handbook*, and simultaneously founded the Paracelsus Research Society. The activities of this group from 1960 to 1984 were enormous: the training of hundreds of pupils, most of whom were members of the AMORC or the Golden Dawn; the preparation of tinctures, publishing of numerous bulletins reserved for members (*Alchemical Bulletin Codex* 1960-1972; *Parachemy* 1973-1979; *Essentia* 1980-1984); and the publication by

Albertus of several ancient and modern texts, including *The Hermetic Art: The Teaching concerning Atomic Transmutation* (c. 1948), which was given to Albertus during a seminar in Austria in 1971. This very short treatise was by V.L. Volpierre (alias Nikolaus Burtschell, 1892-1952), an alchemist who had been in contact with Surya Demeter Georgiewitz-Weitzer, 1873-1949) and who apparently published nothing else during his lifetime. The authorities to which Albertus largely refers are Basil Valentine (especially *Triumph Wagen Antimonii*, Leipzig 1604), Cockren's *Alchemy Rediscovered*, and Richard Ingalese (1863-ca. 1934).

Albertus had a surprising influence on Israel Regardie (1907-1985), who in *The Philosopher's Stone* (1938), under the influence of → C.G. Jung, had attributed a purely spiritual value to alchemy. His view of alchemy changed during the 1970s, when he frequented Albertus and other alchemists of the Paracelsus Research Society. The same years saw the emergence of the Scotsman Adam McLean (b. 1948), whose activities explicitly included the three realms of spiritual, soul, and physical alchemy. McLean's *Hermetic Journal* (1978-1992) and series of texts 'Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks' (23 vols.) gathered contributions from former Golden Dawn members and from younger scholars and practitioners throughout the English-speaking world.

The FAR+C (Frères Aînés de la Rose Croix), led by Roger Caro (1911-1992) offered an "initiatic" teaching from the end of the 1960s through the next decade. Here Rosicrucianism and alchemy were closely associated with theology, notably in Kamala-Jnana's works: *Dictionnaire de philosophie alchimique* (Dictionary of alchemical philosophy, 1961), *Pléiade alchimique* (Alchemical Pleiad, 1967), and *Tout le Grand Oeuvre photographié* (The whole Great Work photographed, 1968).

Among Canseliet's many readers, after 1970 several took the plunge into practical alchemy combined with writing: Michel Binda (*La Vierge alchimique de Reims* [The alchemical Virgin of Reims], 1996), Jean Laplace († 1997), Séverin Batfroi (b. 1946, *Alchimie et révélation chrétienne* [Alchemy and Christian revelation], Paris 1976; *Alchimiques métamorphoses du mercure universel* [Alchemical metamorphoses of the universal mercury], 1977); Guy Béatrice (*Sainte Anne d'alchimie* [Saint Anne of alchemy], 1978; *Des mages alchimistes à Nostradamus* [From the alchemical magi to Nostradamus], 1982), Bernard Biebel, and Patrick Rivière (*Alchimie et spagyrie* [Alchemy and spagyrics], 1988).

Shortly after Canseliet's death in 1982, some works appeared under the name "Solazareff" (see Bibl.), advocating a practical alchemy following the 'dry way' of Fulcanelli and Canseliet, and devotion to the Virgin Mary. In the mid-1980s the Solazareff movement counted as many as 500 members or sympathizers, but no publication seems to have appeared since the mid-1990s. While the Fulcanelli-Canseliet school has been dominant in France and especially visible through publications, other schools exist, though in a more confidential fashion. This is the case with the "Philosophes de la Nature" (Philosophers of Nature), founded by Jean Dubuis in 1979, which also defends practical alchemy with a strong contribution from kabbalah. An American branch was founded, independent of the French one, which has ceased its activity in 1995.

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RICHARD CARON

### Al-Kindī, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq, \* 800? Kufa or Basra, † 866

Al-Kindī is considered the first Arabian philosopher. We know little about his life. He was born maybe at Kufa, maybe at Basra; in any case, it was in Basra that he studied languages and theology before moving to Baghdad, where he took active part in the rich cultural life of the city, under the protection of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833) and his successor, al-Mu'ta'īm (833-842). The 'Abbāsīd dynasty encouraged interest in the arts, science and philosophy, and the caliph al-Ma'mūn had founded the *bayt al-ḥikma* ("house of knowledge") in Baghdad in 830 A.D., where the first translations from the Greek were accomplished. It was in this centre that al-Kindī played an important role as chief translator of Greek philosophical works into Arabic and as an author of original philosophical works.

Greek writings provide one of the richest sources

of al-Kindī's own work. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in Arabic translation, was to become one of the major influences on his thinking. Al-Kindī himself worked on the translation of the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle but actually a summary of the *Enneads* IV-VI by Plotinus. Some of Proclus' works, amongst which the *Elements of Theology*, were translated into Arabic in al-Kindī's circle; and furthermore the writings of Hippocrates, Galen and above all Ptolemy are among the sources of al-Kindī's thought. In addition to Greek philosophy, the philosopher appears to have been influenced by that of India and Persia as well. Moreover the hermetic sect of the Sabāeans of Ḥarrān appears also to have had an impact on our philosopher, who sought to integrate astrolatrical and ceremonial elements of harranian origin within a scientific vision of reality.

Al-Kindī lived in an age of conflicting ideas in the Muslim world: the Ash'arite school of thought represented orthodox Sunnite Islām in opposition to the Mu'tazilite, and the *Kalām*, theological science, was stimulated by the newly-available Greek philosophy. Al-Kindī accepted the fundamental elements of Muslim religion such as divine unity, prophetic wisdom, the creation of the world, and the oneness of God. Elements of Mu'tazilite doctrine are found in some aspects of al-Kindī's thought, for example concerning the relationship between philosophical truth and truth revealed by prophetic wisdom. Although al-Kindī underlined the importance of pure reason in knowledge of the "unique truth", he never gave priority to reason over revelation. Rather, he showed that the different methods by means of which one could reach philosophical truth require painstaking research, whereas revealed truth comes as a divine gift that requires neither effort nor time and is a quality peculiar to the prophets. That al-Kindī tended towards the Mu'tazilite doctrine is shown by his friendship with the caliphs al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim and likewise by his conflict with al-Mutawakkil (847-861), an opponent of the Mu'tazilites. This conflict caused al-Kindī to end up in a situation of political isolation, which would last until the end of his life.

Al-Kindī's interests were wide-ranging and varied: from natural to metaphysical philosophy, from medicine to → astrology and astronomy, from → music to → alchemy, from precious stones to meteorology. More than 260 works are attributed to al-Kindī in the *Fihrist*, the basic catalogue of Arabic works (written in the 10th century). Of these only a small part are still extant; for example the *Book on the first philosophy*, the *Epistle on the intellect*, the *Epistle on the substance of sleep and dream*, the

*Discourse on the soul*, the *Epistle on the reason why the ancients correlated the five geometric shapes to the element*, the essay *On the cause of the azure colour that is seen in the air towards the sky and is thought to be the colour of the sky*, the essay on *The true, first, perfect agent and the imperfect agent that is metaphorically so*, the essay *On definitions and descriptions of things*, the *Epistle on the difference of perspectives*, the *Epistle on the rays*, the *Book on the introduction to the science of the stars*, the *Epistle on knowledge of the strengths of compound medicaments*, and the *Book on the chemistry of perfume and distillation*.

The sheer quantity of al-Kindī's writings, the multiplicity of their sources, and his attempts to reconcile them with the dictates of the Islamic faith certainly do not make it easy to follow the development of his personal opinions. However, in his doctrine of rays, known in Latin Medieval culture by his treatise *De radiis*, the originality of al-Kindī's thought fully emerges. According to this theory, the four elements together with composite bodies and the planets make up a unified reality, in which all parts seem to be constituted by the very act of their continuous relationship: every object projects its own nature outwards, by means of "rays" which transmit that nature to other objects. According to al-Kindī, absolutely everything (elements, bodies, objects, planets, images, words, musical notes, souls, etc.) transmits rays. Thus the relationships between the stars, the elements and the composite bodies derive from and express the causal interactions which exist between the various levels of being; such relationships are made possible by the continuous radial flux which passes between them, for it is only by means of this flux that stars, elements and bodies can mutually connect. While accepting some aspects of Aristotelian cosmology, al-Kindī thus integrates them within a generalized context based upon the radical interconnectedness of all parts of the universe. Thus elements of → magic derived from the hermetic tradition (talismans, invocations and magical formulae, emblems and magical characters, animal sacrifices) are placed in a philosophical context based upon the concept of universal cosmic rays: the magician can use his knowledge of their relationships in order to attain a specific purpose.

Al-Kindī is also considered to have been the first to develop a doctrine of the "acquisition of the intellect", which was to have an enormous impact on the Islamic world and heavily influenced the philosophers al-Fārābī and → Avicenna. Al-Kindī believed that perfect knowledge occurred at the moment when the human faculty of reason joined

the active intellect that originates from God: a theme which has continued to preoccupy Arab philosophers up to Averroes. Important works of al-Kindī were translated into Latin during the 12th century by Gerardo of Cremona, John of Seville, Robert of Ketton and Hugo of Santalla. In the Renaissance, al-Kindī was well known as a mathematician and physician. The *De Radiis* influenced the cosmologies of → Marsilio Ficino and → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola; and Gerolamo Cardano listed al-Kindī among the twelve greatest spirits. In Medieval and Renaissance culture, the doctrine of rays was interpreted as a rationale for magic.

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## Amulets

1. INTRODUCTION 2. PAPYRUS (A. INSTRUCTIONS FROM FORMULARIES B. ACTUAL PAPYRUS AMULETS)
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5. OTHER INSCRIBED MATERIALS
6. UNINSCRIBED MATERIALS 7. AMULETIC BUNDLES 8. AMULETS, GNOSTICISM AND THEURGY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Amulets (Lat. *amuletum*; Gk. *phylaktērion*) are small devices usually worn on or attached to the body for protection and a variety of other purposes. In the ancient Mediterranean world, particularly during the later Roman Empire (ca. 2nd-5th cent. C.E.), a widespread industry of amulets proliferated. Amulets were comprised largely of inscribed texts written on a number of more or less permanent media (papyrus, metal strips, semi-precious gemstones, and occasionally organic materials). They display a great diversity as to type and manufacture, although a considerable stylistic uniformity in the industry is evident. Our major source for the use of amulets comes from the preserved collections of the Greek Magical Papyri, principally the longer formularies, or manuals, that give specific instructions for performing various magical rituals (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*<sup>2</sup> = PGM, with supplements in *Supplementum Magicum* = SM). Ancient Christian magical texts, mostly in Coptic (Meyer-Smith 1994), represent a natural development out of the older pagan traditions. Actual finds of amulets on papyrus, metal phylacteries (*lamellae*), gemstones, and other materials provide a resourceful supplement to our under-



standing of the interrelationship between the “theoretical” formulas of the handbooks and the “applied” magic itself (cf. “Applied Magic”: *SM* I, nos. 1-51; *SM* II nos. 52-66; “Formularies”: *SM* II, nos. 70-100).

In addition to inscribed magical amulets (Kotansky 1991[a]), the manuals presuppose an extended tradition of “unlettered” amulets, organic or mineral-based periapts (Gk. *peripton*, “tied onto; fastened on” [as an amulet]) used for healing and protection. Based on universal principles of sympathetic and antipathetic magic, these kinds of amulets have not usually survived, or when they have, are difficult to identify. Still, the side-by-side use of “uninscribed” versus “inscribed” amulets has continued unabated from antiquity down through the Middle Ages and even into modern times. Why amulets were required to be made or written on certain materials is in most cases unclear, although it is widely recognized that gold and silver, for example, was reserved for writing protective phylacteries, whereas lead was used for curses (gold and silver were popularly believed to be astral elements related to the sun [Helios] and moon [Selene], respectively; lead was the metal of Saturn). Distinctions were also made with certain gemstone materials. Hematite, for instance, the sesquioxide ore of iron (Fe 2 O<sub>3</sub>), was commonly used for uterine amulets (Hanson 1995:290). Understandably, some cross-overs exist in ambiguously defined arenas of magic (e.g., with victory spells where subjection of one’s enemies is concerned [Kotansky 1991 (b)]). Numerous written rituals, too, are described in the magical papyri that do not involve the making of amulets, per se (written curses, divinatory spells, invocations, and so on). Here, the definition of what an amulet is can become blurred. Conversely, spoken charms to heal, and so on, are also commonly mentioned in the papyri without any specific mention of the ritual act of engraving a text (cf. *PGM* LXXIX, LXXX, LXXXI, for example; see further, below).

Important precursors to the written or “lettered” type of amulet in the magical papyri can be identified in extant ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern sources. The texts of the papyri, although combining elements from Egyptian, Babylonian (Persian), Greek, Jewish, and Roman beliefs, remain largely *sui generis*. Although any taxonomy is wrought with difficulties, extant magical texts, with few exceptions, can be readily identified as belonging to that class of text commonly referred to as “Graeco-Egyptian”.

The primary function of amulets is both therapeutic (healing) and apotropaic (protective). Speci-

fic problems addressed may include the healing and curing of named diseases and medical complaints, as well as the warding off of danger and the general prophylaxis against harm. Ancillary roles of amulets may be subsumed under a number of acquisitional, or “talismanic” functions: the procurement of love, popularity, and favor (in virtually all areas of life); the winning of victory in legal and agonistic contests; and the requisition of all-around good luck. Sometimes within the papyrus record it is difficult to identify a written prescription as being “amuletic” in function. Spells for use in divination, incubation, and memory, for instance, would aim to acquire a kind of supernatural relationship (*charis*) with a numinous power, or god, rather than serve to protect the body. Related to this are amulets prescribed for a number of more esoteric rituals, including special meetings with one’s personal *daimōn*, or “spirit-guide”, to adopt the apropos → New Age terminology. Here the amulets procure the god’s presence or otherwise protect the practitioner from any untoward presence of power. How all these “higher”-type rituals relate to the use of → magic in the late antique traditions of → Neoplatonism, theurgy, and → Gnosticism remains a desideratum. Little of this more “theurgic” use of amulets is detectable in the preserved amulets.

In the following survey, we shall examine each major categories of amuletic material – papyrus, metal phylacteries, and gemstones – and see first what the magic handbooks have to say about their use. Next we give an overview of the actual objects as the archaeological record has preserved them. A supplementary category of the organic amulets is also surveyed, including both *inscribed* and *uninscribed* organic materials. This survey is intended to be representational and makes no claim at being comprehensive. The various corpora of magical texts are continually being expanded, and many pieces, both published and unpublished, have not been consulted. Comparatively poorly represented categories of materials (e.g., parchment, ostraka, engraved nails, etc.) are also not included and would require a separate study.

## 2. PAPYRUS

The ancient Greek magical formularies often detail the manufacture of actual amulets on papyrus and other materials. Before the Daniel-Maltoni editions, it was not always distinguished whether a published papyrus represented an example of an actual spell or amulet (“applied magic”) or was merely a fragment from a handbook (“formularies”). With the larger codices (e.g., *PGM* IV, XII, XIII, XXXVI, etc.) this is seldom an issue;

however, with the smaller preserved fragments, one must be careful to differentiate between fragments of a handbook, however small, and actual amulets worn as personal objects. The telltale signs, of course, are whether the standard “personalized” formulas have been filled in or not (e.g. “so-and-so [NN] whom so-and-so bore” versus “Sophia whom Calpurnia bore”). Sometimes such distinctions were not carried out in actual practice. Many “applied” texts preserve fragments from formulary instructions, as if erroneously copied from their models by their scribes, a fact that proves that formularies were indeed used.

## 2. A. INSTRUCTIONS FROM FORMULARIES

The following spells specify a text to be written on a piece of “hieratic” or “new” papyrus, or the like. The formularies themselves often carry incipits or rubrics that name the medical complaint; otherwise, the nature of the written spell identifies the disease, using any variety of standard formulas. In some cases, a set of incantatory verses is recorded, but no mention of the actual writing of an amulet is specified. Here, it is entirely possible that the incantation is merely spoken, although the purpose still remains “amuletic”. In the PGM citations below, the context of the entire spell is given, not the precise reference to the amulet itself.

a. *Medical complaints*: discharge from the eyes (PGM VII. 197-98: magic word); breasts and uterus pain (PGM XXIIa. 9-10: Homer verse); a contraceptive (PGM XXIIa. 11-14: Homer verse, tied with hairs of mule); easy child birth (SM II. 94: written formula, on papyrus?); elephantiasis (PGM XXIIa. 15-17: Homer verse); fever (PGM VII. 218-21: magic names in “wing-formation”; SM II. 94: written formula, on papyrus?; SM II. 96: a magic formula for shivering); flux of blood (PGM XXIIa. 2-9: Homer verse); headache (PGM XX. 1-4; 13-19: Greek metrical verses; PGM LXV. 4-7 [migraine]: symbols; *Suppl.Mag.* II. 72: verses [written?]; cf. *Suppl.Mag.* II. 94); inflammation (PGM XX. 4-12: verses [written?]); scorpion sting (PGM VII. 193-96: inscribed “characters”; PGM XXVIIIa-c: set of three invocations; from a formulary? Cf. SM II. 89, but with no actual written amulet); uncertain (SM II. 80: formula to be worn around the neck: ‘Protect so-and-so . . .’ [frag.]; SM II. 84: fragmentary formulary for making amulets for various diseases [demons, epilepsy, prolapse of the uterus?], with no mention of writing). Similarly, SM II. 88 (against *erysipelas* and various skin eruptions) seems to preserve only spoken, not written, formulas.

b. *Favor and victory charms*: An invocation to

Helios (no instructions for writing) preserves a standard formula for favor (PGM XXIIa. 18-27). Similarly, a magic name with a prayer for protection is called a ‘Favor charm, a charm to dissolve a spell, a phylactery, and a victory charm’ (PGM LXX. 1-4). This spell serves as an incipit for another, the ‘Charm of Hekate Ereschigal against fear of punishment’ (see Betz, 1980). Oddly, a ‘Charm to restrain anger and Charm for Success’ mentions inscribing a papyrus ‘to augment the words’, but in fact invokes certain angels and magic names ‘to protect me from every bad situation that comes upon me’ (PGM XXXVI. 161-77). For a similar blurring of distinctions, another “phylactery”, apparently to be written on papyrus but with no specifics, asks that ‘favor’ be granted from Ablanathanalba, but requests only protection from ‘every evil thing’ (PGM LXXI. 1-8).

c. *Other, Miscellaneous, and Uncertain Rituals*: The 100-lettered name of Typhon, inscribed for use in the powerful “Bear Charm”, accomplishes any matter; it is used along with a phylactery of the plaited hairs from a bear (see below) (PGM IV. 1331-89); an inscribed papyrus strip is also used in a love divination (PGM IV. 1872-1927); the *hide* of an ass, a *leaf of flax*, along with an inscribed papyrus strip, are used in “Pity’s Spell of Attraction” – in truth, a form of skull cup enquiry (PGM IV. 2006-2125); a *hieratic papyrus*, inscribed with a spell for protection against every evil demon(!), is used in a dream revelation as part of a larger spell of attraction (PGM IV. 2441-2621); the *blood* from the foot or hand of a pregnant woman is used to inscribe magic names on clean papyrus and tied to the left arm with *linen* as a phylactery in a rite to summon a god (PGM IV. 52-85); a papyrus strip engraved with magic names is washed off in water from seven springs and drunk in a memory spell (PGM I. 232-247); further, in a form of dream divination, requiring memory, a strip of papyrus inscribed with the Headless God is placed beside the head, with engraved laurel leaves (PGM II. 1-64); a phylactery against demons is presumably to be written on papyrus (PGM IV. 86-87); a new sheet of papyrus inscribed with a spell that subjugates demons, enchantments, and ‘scourge which is from God’ is used in the so-called “Stele of Jeu”, apparently a type of ritual against demonic forces, perhaps those afflicting the Ascent of the Soul (PGM V. 96-172); an inscribed piece of lead (the usual material for *defixios* and other binding spells) is used to break a spell (PGM XXXVI. 178-87). Similarly, a triangular sherd found at the fork of a road is to be engraved with ‘dissolve every enchantment’ (PGM XXXVI. 256-64); a figure drawn

on *papyrus* serves an uncertain purpose (PGM XXXVI. 264-74); a piece of *papyrus* with which a spotted lizard (?) has been picked up is engraved with five magic characters and placed under a table, for an unstated purpose (PGM LXIII. 21-24). Additional phylacteries, for which no writing material is mentioned, include a spell against nightmares and air-demons (PGM VII. 311-16), with an apparent variant (PGM VII. 317-18). Similarly, seven magical characters are used (written?) for protection in a “dismissal” formula in a revelation invoking Light; the bearer is to be ‘healthy, free from terror and free from demonic attacks’ (PGM LXII. 24-46). Noteworthy is the fact that a number of the preserved formulas above, although written against demons, appear in contexts other than healing or exorcisms. A recently published formulary, *P. Oxy.* LXV. 4468 (late 1st century C.E.) contains rites for a phylactery ‘probably intended to protect from bad encounters (men or evil spirits?)’ (Maltomini 1998:121). For rites combining *papyrus* and other materials, see, further, section 5.

## 2. B. ACTUAL PAPYRUS AMULETS

a. *Medical complaints*: discharge (SM I. 26, 32); exorcism (SM I.24); discharge from the eyes (SM I. 26); fever (and shivering) of various kinds (PGM XVIIIv. 1-7; PGM XXXIII. 1-25; SM I. 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 31, 34, 35); fever and headache (SM I. 14, 22; II. 92 [formulary?]); headache (migraine) (PGM XVI-IIa. 1-4; SM I. 32 [with discharge]); scorpion sting (SM I. 16); inflammation of the uvula (SM I. 1); healing (general) (SM I. 20, 30, 33, 36 [?]). It is clear from the actual *papyrus* amulets that fever-amulets predominate.

b. *Favor and victory charms, etc.*: a long Jewish invocation of six heavens, etc. for favor, influence, victory, and strength is an actual amuletic text in that it preserves the name of its bearer, Paulus Julianus (PGM XXXV. 1-42). Another favor charm (*charitēsion*) invokes a number of desirable attributes associated with Jewish (Solomon, etc.) and mythic Greek figures (Adonis, Kypris); it seeks favor, success, repute, beauty, love, charm, for the bearer (SM II. 63). Although it is non-personalized, its format suggests an “applied” amulet.

c. *Other, miscellaneous, and uncertain rituals*: An amulet with magic names and the formula ‘protect the bearer’ ostensibly serves for general protection (SM I. 15; general deliverance for Artemidora is also requested in an amulet naming Lord Serapis as “victor”, SM I. 7); salvation is addressed in a non-specific formula (SM I. 27); another asks protection of a grave and mummified

body belonging to Phtheious alias Saioneis (PGM LIX: no writing mentioned [the text is fragmentary]). An image of Kronos, obtained from a vision of a star, is used for protection in a rite involving Isis/Providence (PGM LVII: to be copied on *papyrus*?). Finally, some *papyrus* slips are inscribed with magic names and/or symbols only (cf. PGM XVIIIc. 1-14; PGM XXV. a-d; PGM LX).

## 3. PHYLACTERIES (METAL AMULETS, LAMELLAE)

Gold (Au), silver (Ag), tin (Sn), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), and lead (Pb) are all media described in the magical *papyri* for engraving amulets. Lead, and sometimes tin, are often used for a variety of non-protective rituals. These include *defixios* (curses), spells to arrest anger, restraining spells, and certain aggressive love-charms (cf. PGM VII. 411-16). Tin is also used in aggressive magic (cf. PGM VII. 459-61; 462-66). Although no actual amulets of tin have been recorded, it is important to recognize that many metals remain unanalyzed. Furthermore, most cases of leaden phylacteries turn out to be silver that has tarnished black. Similarly, copper is almost always mistaken for bronze (cf. GMA I. 32) because it oxidizes to a greenish patina. Generally speaking bronze, being an alloy of tin, copper, and other metals, is unsuitable for amulets, which require the use of only the “pure” metals and *papyrus*.

### 3. A. INSTRUCTIONS FROM FORMULARIES

a. *Medical complaints*: an inscribed *tin lamella* is used ‘For Ascent of the Uterus’ (PGM VII. 260-71: to be ‘clothed in 7 colors’); a *tin* tablet is also used for sciatica (SM II. 74: engraved with *Iaeô*-formula and prayer for deliverance from pain in tendons, sinews, and bones); another is used for strangury (SM II. 94: magic name?), and possibly a second, as well (SM II. 96).

b. *Favor and victory charms*: A *gold* or *silver lamella* is engraved with a design of magic names and symbols for use in a charm to restrain anger; it works against ‘enemies, accusers, brigands, phobias, and nightmares’ (PGM X. 24-35: diagram of symbols and names); a *gold* leaf is inscribed with angel-names for good luck in part of the ritual called the “Sword of Dardanos”, in truth a spell to attract the soul of another (PGM IV. 1716-1870); a *gold lamella* is also required for popularity and love (PGM IV. 2145-2240); and a “solar” (*gold*) amulet is inscribed with symbols and prayer in “Hermes’ Wondrous Victory Charm” (PGM VII. 919-24). A *silver* leaf is required for favor and crowds and works for demons (PGM XXXVI. 275-83: names and symbols, used with frankincense); a

strip of *tin*, inscribed in “Stele of Aphrodite” is to be used for friendship, favor, success, and friends (PGM VII. 215-18).

c. *Demon possession and the Evil Eye*: A gold, silver, tin, or piece of *hieratic papyrus* is needed for a phylactery against demons, phantasms, sickness, and suffering (PGM VII. 579-90: a “protective” formula). A tin tablet, inscribed with magic names and a spell of protection, is to be worn on a demoniac, following the exorcism (PGM IV. 1227-1264); a phylactery of tin, inscribed with magic names, is also used in the “Tested Charm of Pibechis for those possessed by demons” (PGM IV. 3007-86); and fragmentary rituals on a formulary against demoniacs includes the possible writing of a Solomonic formula, but no actual writing material is preserved (SM II. 94 [frag.]). A tin lamella is also inscribed for wrecking chariots (PGM IV. 2145-2240), but this genre belongs to the arena of aggressive magic.

d. *Other, miscellaneous, and uncertain rituals*: For divination, an inscribed gold, silver or tin leaf is needed in a foreknowledge spell (PGM III. 282-409: magic symbols only); an inscribed strip of tin-foil, crowned with myrtle, fumigated, and placed under the pillow secures a dream oracle (PGM VII. 740-55: magic names); both a gold and silver lamella, inscribed with vowels, are used in an initiation performed to the sun, in the “Book of Moses” (PGM XIII, see below); a strip of tin inscribed with a protective spell anticipates the visitation of a personal angelic being (PGM VII. 478-90); and a gold tablet, written as a “stele”, delivers from death (PGM IV. 1167-1226). For general protection, a silver leaf is required (PGM III. 410-423: for memory); another silver one is used against a divine encounter (PGM IV. 154-285: inscribed with 100 letters with bronze stylus and strung with thong from ass-hide); again, a silver leaf in the “Slander Spell to Selene” gains protection against the deity (PGM IV. 2622-2707: magic characters). For victory (in courts, etc.) and for use in various favor and victory contexts a silver lamella is to be worn in one’s garments (PGM XXXVI. 35-68). A “leaf” tied with linen and enclosed in a capsule with some substance of a black wolf is also mentioned in a fragmentary papyrus formulary (SM II. 81). Finally, an iron lamella is inscribed with Homeric verses for a variety of purposes (for runaways, as a counter-charm, in court, for favor, and various protective measures) (PGM IV. 2145-2240).

### 3. B. ACTUAL METAL PHYLACTERIES (LAMELLAE)

a. *Medical complaints*. The following examples represent what kinds of medical complaints and

issues are addressed on the actual inscribed amulets of gold, silver, and copper (Kotansky 1994 = GMA I; et al.). Their texts preserve a host of different prayers and formulas (see Kotansky: 1991a): 1) *Medical Complaints*: “elephantiasis” (GMA I. 18: silver. Graeco-Latin); eye complaints (GMA I. 31: gold, Latin; GMA I. 53: gold, for ophthalmia); epilepsy (with headache: GMA I. 57: gold, from Syria, 4th-5th cent. C.E.; Kotansky 1980; cf. Bevilacqua 1999: 18-27: silver); feet complaints (Jordan-Kotansky 1997: no. 339: silver); fever, using various types of formulas (GMA I. 56: copper, Hebrew-Greek. From near Kibbutz ‘Evron, Israel; GMA I. 59: silver, from Oxyrhynchus, 3rd cent. C.E.) (see also the “Phylactery of Moses”, below); headache (migraine) (GMA I. 13: silver, “Antaura” *historiola*); “wandering” of the uterus Beirut (GMA I. 51: gold, adjuration/exorcism formula), for which a rare Latin parallel on a lead sheet comes from Roman Britain (Tomlin 1997; see Aubert 1989; Hanson 1995; Betz 1998 for general studies). For health, see the gold plaque under “Favor and Victory Charms”, and for sickness related to demons, see the section “Demonic Possession and the Evil Eye”.

Multiple complaints: The so-called “Phylactery of Moses” (GMA I. 32: copper?), with its new fragment of Aquila (Deut. 32: 1-3), is a remarkable, albeit fragmentary, text that seems to preserve an initiatory rite for protection against all kinds of sorcery, binding-spells, evil spirits, as well as fever, the evil eye, and any apparition (*phantasia*). Similarly, a remarkably long Greek invocation of angelic spheres and realms (GMA I. 52: silver, Beirut), seems to be liturgical in nature. It seeks protection for Alexandra whom Zoe bore, from demons, compulsion of demons, sorcery, binding-spells, and various forms of love-magic. A kindred example seeks to protect the body, soul, and limb of Thomas, whom Maxima bore from all witchcraft (*goēteia*), sorcery (*pharmakeia*), curses, those who have died untimely and violently, and from every evil matter (Heintz 1996: silver). The so-called “Basilidian” lamella describes deliverance from ‘the spirit of fever, all epilepsy, all hydrophobia, every evil eye, every violent sending of spirits, all poisoning’ (Bonner 1950:100; et al.). A silver Greek-Aramaic bilingual text from Egypt preserves a lengthy incantation against a variety of demonic afflictions plaguing John, son of Benenata. The text preserves angelic invocations, fragments of various Biblical stories (*historiolae*) and citations to rid the bearer of every evil spirit, demon, dead person, and evil sorcery, along with quotidian fever and hectic fever (Kotansky-Naveh-Shaked 1992).



b. *Favor and victory charms*: A gold *lamella* from Thessalonika (2nd cent. C.E.) invokes “Aphrodite’s Name” for favor and success (GMA I. 40); an Oxyrhynchus *silver* amulet requests ‘favor, friendship, success, loveliness to him who bears the amulet’ (GMA I. 60; 2nd-3rd cent. C.E.). Another, a long spell invoking a host of angel-names on a kind of house-amulet (from Phthiotis in Thessaly, 4th-5th cent. C.E.) requests victory and grace (*charis*); however, the context also mentions driving out demons, protecting ‘the house and souls of John and Georgia’, and ‘turning away all harm from this house’ (GMA I. 41: *gold*); an early *gold* amulet from Rome (ca. 1st cent. C.E.), found near the tomb of the Scipios, carries the formula ‘give a victory over the names written below’ (GMA I. 28); a Christian *gold* plaque from Syria (5th-6th cent. C.E.) is written for ‘health and favor’ (GMA I. 45); finally, a long spell on a *gold* leaf seeks protection for Proclus in a lawsuit before Diogenianus, the *dux* of Bostra in Arabia, and before Pelagius, the *assessor* (GMA I. 58; Kotansky 1991: 41-60); furthermore, an unedited phylactery in the former Amati collection appears to be a favor and victory charm (Bevilacqua 1989).

A relatively early *silver lamella* from Emesa, Syria (possibly, 1st cent. B.C.E.), cites a list of names related to that found in I Enoch, “Book of the Watchers”. The spell requests that the divine names be “propitious” to the wearer (whether male or female) (GMA I. 48). Related to favor-magic is a *gold* spell from Nubia containing an invocation of Isis, Queen of Denderah, for fertility and conception (GMA I. 61). Similarly, a gold leaf from Zian (Tunisia, 2nd-3rd cent. C.E.) depicts a sword surrounded by magic names; it appears to invoke a kind of angel of “sexual frenzy” to drive a woman mad with love (GMA I. 62).

c. *Demon Possession and the Evil Eye*: A liturgical exorcism against the spirit named Phōathphro is preserved on a *silver* piece from Antioch in Pisidia (GMA I. 35); a *gold* amulet from Amphipolis in Thrace includes magic formulas for protection against “every male and female demon” (GMA I. 38); the “Phylactery of Moses,” mentioned above, protects against an evil spirit (*pneuma ponēron*), among other things a *bronze* (*copper?*) phylactery from Sicily (GMA I. 33), with its angelology, seems to also protect from an evil demon; a demon sent to ‘menace’ a named victim occurs on an unusual *gold* amulet from Rumania (GMA I. 24, Latin); a spell ‘to drive away (*apelaunein*) every harmful and destructive spirit’ occurs on a now lost *gold* amulet from Rome (GMA I. 25; cf. Bevilacqua 1991: 37f.). The same

verb is found on a *silver* phylactery from Xanthos, using the formula, ‘drive away every wicked demon, occurrence, happening, encounter, or evil eye, drive and chase them away’ (Jordan-Kotansky 1996: addressed to the ‘Holy Elements; Holy Characters’); a second, Christian, adjuration of Solomon and angels found at Xanthos (Jordan-Kotansky 1996) is probably *copper*, not *bronze*, and is contemporary with the piece mentioned above, despite the printed dates (III-IV? / IV-VI? Both are probably 4th cent. C.E.). A very difficult, fragmentary reading on a *gold* leaf found at Epiphania in Syria (4th-5th cent. C.E.), seems to preserve an adjuration of Pantokrator (GMA I. 47); a pair of phylacteries, one called a “Phylactery of the Living God” (*gold*), and the other “A Phylactery for every disease and sicknesses” (*silver*) were found together in the tomb of Abbagaza in Theodosia in the Crimea (GMA I. 65-66; 2nd-3rd cent. C.E.); similarly, from the Sea of Azov region of the Crimean Peninsula comes a *silver* “exorcism” of ‘every spirit, *phantasma* (apparition), and every beast from the soul of this woman’ (GMA I. 67); finally, a fragmentary *silver* leaf from Cyprus (4th cent. C.E.) invokes Jesus the Nazorean, his angels, and holy apostles in an apparent exorcism. In the later magic of the Byzantine period, lead seems to have become the standard material on which Christian exorcisms were copied (Manganaro 1994; cf. GMA, p. xvi).

d. *Other, miscellaneous, and uncertain rituals*: A list of magic names and “sovereign angels” are invoked to ‘Save the one whom Atalante bore, Euphiletos’ (GMA I. 39). This could be an amulet for protection in the afterlife (see below). General protection, too, is suggested by various formulas found on a number of phylacteries: ‘Protect me, Alphanus’ (GMA I. 2: *gold*, Segontium, Wales, 1st-2nd C.E.); a *silver* leaf from Badenweiler with mention of protection from “all danger” (*omni periculo*), perhaps written for a group (of litigants? GMA I. 7); a Greco-Latin *silver* charm for ‘strength and life’ writes to ‘protect Justina whom Sarra bore’ from unstated problems (GMA I. 8; near Poitiers, 4th cent. C.E.). A *silver lamella* from Amisos in Pontus may have been written for a lawsuit or unstated “matter” (*hypothesis*); it also guards against poison or witchcraft (*pharmakon*, GMA I. 36). A pair of *bronze* hailstorm amulets (GMA I. 11) represent types of amulets that were not worn on the body but set up in fields.

A large percentage of the published magical *lamellae* preserve enigmatic texts with no indication of their specific purpose. These, for the most part carry nothing other than magical “characterēs”,

vowels, and/or divine-names and angels: *GMA I.* 1; 3; 4; 5; 6; 9; 10; 12; 14; 15; 16; 17; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 26; 29; 30; 34; 37; 42; 43; 44; 49; 55; 63; 64; cf. Parca 1997; Phillips 1997, etc. (*GMA I.* 54 seems to preserve some sort of unidentifiable astro-magical fragment). Some of these more puzzling texts with magic names or symbols may have been written specifically for protection in the afterlife, much like the spells of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, Coffin Texts, and Pyramid Texts which helped the deceased Pharaoh navigate specific perils in the next world. Oblique references to Egyptian deities like Osiris Khentamenthes (in *GMA I.* 30), for example, may force us to rethink the thanatological context of many of these amulets. The epithet of Osiris as Khentamenthes points to his rulership of the “Western Half”, the Realm of the Dead in the Egyptian afterlife. In this respect, the phylacteries may be continuing the tradition of the “Orphic” gold leaves, texts deposited in late Classical-Hellenistic graves to assist the departed soul in the next world. Among the corpus of phylacteries, there comes from Rome a late example of an Orphic leaf used specifically as an “afterlife” talisman (*GMA I.* 27).

#### 4. ENGRAVED GEMSTONES

Magical gems of semi-precious material (quartzes, jaspers, chalcedonies, hematites, among many others) represent a special category of amulets that owes its flowering to the early centuries of the Common Era. The literature is quite extensive, but the principal corpora include Bonner 1950; Delatte-Derchain 1964; Philipp 1986. By the 2nd century C.E., the manufacture of magic gemstones began to increase exponentially. Magical intaglios, unlike seal-rings, were written orthographically and not in retrograde; hence, they were usually worn openly so that their designs and lettering could be read and interpreted. Although there is some disparity between what the papyrus instructions inform us about the gemstone types, the difference has been overstated (e.g. in Smith 1979). It is remarkable enough that the papyri describe, in several instances, actual gemstone types, not that every type known needs to be recorded in the extant manuals.

In a number of cases, it appears that texts normally intended for writing on papyrus have also been recorded on gemstone surfaces. There are also longer spells, evidently copied from papyrus formularies, that address magic operations not falling under the strict category of protective, healing magic (i.e., they are not amulets). Examples are discussed in Bonner 1950, chapter VIII, and include

Spells to Restrain Wrath (*thymokatocha*), a Spell to Cause a Separation (*diakopos*), Spells to Fetch a Lover (*agogai*), and various spells intended to harm.

#### 4. A. INSTRUCTIONS FROM FORMULARIES

The papyrus formularies describe magic gemstones in a variety of procedures, mostly ritualistic rather than therapeutic. A full study is given in Smith 1979, who suggests there may have existed separate manuals just for gemstone magic. In *PGM IV.* 1596-1715, in particular, the consecration and empowerment of a phylactery or amulet (of stone or other material), is described in detail. Other examples of the use of engraved magic stones include the following: A pebble numbered 3663 (the isopsephic value of the god Bainchōōōch) is required in a direct vision spell (*PGM IV.* 930-1114); a *magnet*, cut in form of a heart and engraved with Hekate and vowels, is used in the “Slander Spell to Selene” *PGM IV.* 2622-2707; a *lodestone* carved with three-faced Hekate and properly consecrated with natron, water, and blood, is used in the “Prayer to Selene” (*PGM IV.* 2785-2890); a detailed description of how to carve, consecrate, and use a scarab of ‘costly green stone’ is provided in a rite to empower the practitioner with powerful divinatory abilities (*PGM V.* 213-303); similarly, a jasperlike agate, engraved with Sarapis is used in some form of dream-divination (*PGM V.* 447-58). For the “oblong” stone of Heliorus, see section 5, below.

#### 4. B. ACTUAL GEMSTONES

The preserved magic gems are characterized by a rather canonical inventory of widespread designs: the Anguipede-figure (“snake-legged cock-headed” soldier), Chnoubis, Pantheos-deity, Harpocrates, Reaper-figure, and so on. Although these are studied in the standard corpora, more thorough-going treatments are also available (Post 1979: Anguipede). Scores of other minor types and variations proliferate, as well, so that each stone, in a sense, is unique. The gems types often carry more or less standardized “undecipherable” magical words, names, alphabetic series, using the Greek alphabet alongside the strange system of magical *caractères* – a traditional magic “hieroglyphic” system of entirely unknown origin and derivation.

a. *Medical complaints*: Inscriptions on a variety of gemstones address the following representative examples of medical complaints: colic (Bonner 1950: 62f. Delatte-Derchain 1964: 206); digestive and stomach problems (Delatte-Derchain 1964: 67; 72; 149; Bonner 1950: 51-62, with reference to certain ancient writers on stomach amulets and



the Chnoubis gems); fever (Bonner 1950: 67-68; Kotansky 1980); inflammation (Bonner 1950: 68); eye complaints (Bonner 1950: 69-71); liver-pain (Bonner 1950: 66; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 317); gout, or feet-problems (Bonner 1950: 75-76); hydrophobia (demonic) (Bonner 1950: 78); sciatica ("Reaper"-design gems with 'for the hips': Bonner 1950: 71-75; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 196-200: 'I work but don't strain'); scorpion sting (Bonner 1950: 77); wasting disease (*phthisis*: Bonner 1950: 78); uterine and related problems (Bonner 1950: 81-94, 183; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 245-258, of which the most common is the "Ororiouth"-type); and even inflammation of the uvula (Daniel-Maltomini 1989). Some types, of course, such as the Chnoubis-gems and certain "womb"-gems, rely more upon the glyptic design for their interpretation, although occasionally inscriptions support the interpretation. A more complete survey of all the gemstone literature for additional iatromagical inscriptions would make a useful study.

b. *Favor and victory charms (including "Good-luck" charms)*: Inscribed gems regularly request *charis* ("grace"/"favor") for the bearer, ostensibly for business, law-court, or other social settings, often on gems depicting Horus-Harpocrates (Bonner 1950: 48; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 97, 105, 153, with an example of a longer formula: "Give grace, beauty, victory to Sphyridas whom Thinousiris bore"). Some examples cross over into the arena of love and sexual magic (Delatte-Derchain 1964: 239, 242), but in all respects apply to social settings.

Perhaps related, though less social, are general requests for good luck, fortune, or that the god be "propitious," or "merciful," to the wearer (Neverov 1978: no. 47; Bonner 1950: 46f.; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 218). It is unclear whether the divine favor in these instances applies to everyday life, the afterlife, or both. In this respect, the widely attested formula 'protect (me)', written with various forms of (*dia*)*phylassō* (e.g., Bonner 1950: 45-47), 'protect me from all harm' (e.g. Delatte-Derchain 1964:137), or less often, 'help me' (e.g. Delatte-Derchain 1964: 144, 312), appear on the surface to be banal "good-luck" charms for day-to-day life; they may in fact have served, as well, as post-mortem amulets to be buried with the deceased.

Gems that carry commonplace religious slogans, acclamations, and epithets such as 'One God', 'One God Iao', 'One god who conquers all', 'Isis conquers', 'Serapis conquers all', 'Great is the name of Serapis', 'Great is Nemesis', and so on (Bonner 1950: 46; 167-85; Delatte-Derchain

1964: 101, 160, 162, 287; 266, this last with a longer, liturgical formula) represent prayer-like requests for divine favor that may function apart from social contexts (victory over demons, bad planetary influences, etc.), or they may serve as abbreviated victory charms against human adversaries. A more careful study of these types would be useful. Various healing and protective formulas are also commonly found on Byzantine bronze pendants that carry similar slogans (Barb 1972). Included here should be the widespread proliferation of the "Seal of Solomon"/"Seal of God" types, depicting a militant figure mounted on horseback (Spier 1993; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 261-264; etc.).

c. *The Evil Eye and demonic possession*: Deliverance on gems from Envy (*Phthonos* or *Baskosynē*) and the 'much-suffering eye' is common (Bonner 1950: 96-99). Specific mention of protection from an evil demon is relatively rare on gems (cf. Bonner 1950: 95f.; Mastrocinque 1998; Kotansky 1991; 1995). The text of a long exorcistic formula, liturgical in nature, is preserved on a carnelian (Delatte-Derchain 1964: 316).

d. *Other, miscellaneous, and uncertain rituals*: A divination formula on a basalt tablet with vowels and magic names (*Mauar-/Mar*-permutations) and the formula 'reveal to me this very night, with truthfulness and remembrance' represents a rare example of a papyrus-type text written on a gem material (Tomassetti-Wuensch 1899). The warding off of drugs/poison, as well as health, headache, neckpains, and toothache on an agate marble provides another example of longer, papyrus-text spells written on stone (Neverov 1978: no. 50, p. 848). To this one may compare a hematite falcon amulet inscribed against evil (harm), the wrath of gods and demons, and sorcerers (SM I. 6).

Liturgical material from various more literary contexts, including hymnic or invocational fragments, are also found on gems and require independent analysis as a genre (Keil 1940; Bonner 1950: 181-185; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 98, 119, 140, 188, 381; Philipp 1986: 119; Bevilacqua 1991: 32 [for healing?]; Kotansky 1995; Kotansky-Spier 1995). Long inscriptions, too, written with Greek letters but preserving unintelligible sequences of text may indeed preserve known foreign texts, liturgical in nature, such as Egyptian or Hebrew. Some, too, may be corrupted forms of Greek (cf. Delatte-Derchain 1964: 337-342). The phenomenon of actual "fragments" of magic formularies being accidentally copied onto various amulets requires a systematic study (Blanchet 1934-1937 = Bonner & Youtie 1953 [1982]; Delatte-Derchain 1964: 98, 317; Philipp 1986: 119).

## 5. OTHER INSCRIBED MATERIALS

Here the use of ritual and amulet are sometimes indistinguishable. Small offerings or rituals involving organic and amuletic materials may be burned as protective gestures. In this sense the whole ritual of sacrifice and offering is prophylactic in nature.

*Instructions from Formularies:* A circle, on which one stands, is engraved with magic characters, while one is crowned with the *tail of a cat*, in a spell to acquire the “Shadow of the Sun” (PGM VII. 846-61); *eggs*, two “male”, inscribed with myrrh ink, are used in a protective rite in a ‘Meeting with your own daimon’ (PGM VII. 505-28; cf. XII. 100); inscribed *eggs*, one placed in a latrine, the other buried in a house are also used in a favor charm (SM II. 97); a *Gothic ring* is inscribed with a formula to cure the eyes (SM II. 94); a *grape-vine leaf*, inscribed, for tumors (?), is boiled, etc. (SM II. 94); the *hide* of a *sheep*, one black, one white, one for the right and one for left arm, respectively, are each inscribed with magic names and Homeric verses in myrrh ink (PGM IV. 475-829: “Mithras Liturgy”). The *hide* of an *ass* is also inscribed in a love-spell of attraction (PGM XXXVI. 361-71), although this is not an amuletic function, per se; the *hoofs* of a horse are inscribed with a spell in a “Victory charm for the races” (PGM VII. 390-93); the *hide* of a *hyena* is inscribed for coughs (PGM VII. 203-5; VII. 206-7); a seven-leaved *laurel* sprig is engraved with seven characters ‘for deliverance’ (from death?) in an Apollonian invocation (PGM I. 262-347); leaves of *laurel*, inscribed and held in the hand in an invocation serves for divine protection (PGM II. 1-64); a second garland of laurel, inscribed with magic names is also used for protection (*ibid.*); an alternative procedure (PGM II. 64-184) requires a twelve-leaf sprig, inscribed, along with a wool garland; a 12-leaf branch of *laurel* crown is inscribed with signs of the zodiac for protection in a dream divination (PGM VII. 795-845). Furthermore, for insomnia a leaf of *laurel* is inscribed with a magic names and placed under a pillow or mattress (SM II. 74); another *laurel* leaf is inscribed for insomnia (SM. II. 96). The leaf of a *Persea tree*, engraved with vowels protects against the manifestation of a god (PGM IV. 475-829: “Mithras Liturgy”). An *olive* leaf, inscribed on either side with a symbol for the sun and moon, heals fever (PGM VII. 213-14); an *olive* leaf is also used in a spell for *fever with shivering* (SM II. 81). *Linen*, the sacred fabric used for mummification, is required in several recipes instead of papyrus: In a certain “Charm for a Direct Vision”, a piece of *linen* taken from a statue of Harpocrates is inscribed with a protective prayer, enclosed with an

“everliving” plant, and entwined with Anubian thread (PGM IV. 930-1114); a *linen* rag, inscribed with characters, is used for hardening of the breasts (PGM VII. 208-9); a *linen* cloth is also used in a “Charm for a Direct Vision” (PGM VII. 335-47) and in a “Request for a Dream Oracle” (PGM VII. 359-69); these do not appear to serve amuletic functions. A *linen* strip, inscribed, and placed on the left side of the head while asleep obtains a Dream Revelation (PGM VII. 664-85).

Additional engraved materials from the recipes include the following: *mud* smeared on doorposts of a bedchamber, of which the right is then inscribed with a stylus with magic names and characters, is used in the form of an Apollonian divination (PGM II. 64-183); lime wood – inscribed with ink of vermilion with magic names and a prayer against aerial demons, angels, phantoms, ghostly visitations, and enchantments, and then enclosed in a purple skin and worn around the neck – protects the wearer against Selene (!) in a “slander spell” (PGM IV. 2622-2707); *oil*, invoked, and smeared on the body, is used for fever (PGM VII. 211-12); an *ostrakon* inscribed with a Christian *historiola* and placed on the right thigh, eases labor (SM II. 96); a *golden scepter* in a metrical “Prayer to Selene” is mentioned in an *historiola* of Kronos (PGM IV. 2785-2890: for steadfastness); a *scarlet parchment*, inscribed and plastered onto the side of the head, heals migraine headache (PGM VII. 201-2); the *rib of a young pig*, inscribed with a figure of Zeus and a magic name, is used to protect against a deity in the “Oracle of Kronos” (PGM IV. 3086-3124); a *seashell* is inscribed with a love charm (PGM VII. 300a-310), and another is used in a love-charm “to induce insomnia” (PGM VII. 374-76); these, properly speaking, are not amulets. A previously buried *skull of an ass*, inscribed with characters and a magic name (using the blood of a black dog) is used along with an *ass’s tooth* (fastened with *silver*) and an *old lady’s tooth* (fastened with *gold*) to protect the practitioner against the power of the goddess invoked (PGM XI.a 1-40); a *tassel*, attached to a garment, and invoked directly, is used as an amulet ‘Against every wild animal, aquatic creature, and robbers’ (PGM VII. 370-73); a *wick*, inscribed and used in ‘another (Charm to induce insomnia)’ (PGM VII. 376-84) is non-amuletic.

## 6. UNINSCRIBED MATERIALS

(ORGANIC AMULETS: PLANTS, MINERALS, ANIMAL MATERIALS, ETC.)

The use of root- and other vegetal iatromagical remedies presumably goes back to prehistoric

times. The following inventory of organic materials used as amulets stands in the same tradition of herbal remedies as that found in Theophrastus, Pliny, Dioscorides, Aelian, Aelius Promotus, Alexander Trallianus, the *Cyranides*, and many others.

The *eye of an ape* (or the *eye of a corpse* died violently), mixed with peony (Rose) and oil of lily, is required for an "Invisibility Spell" (PGM I. 247-262); a *bean*, with a small bug in it, can be worn as a contraceptive (PGM LXIII. 24-25); another contraceptive requires a *pierced bean* tied with *mule hide* (PGM LXIII. 26-28; cf. also PGM LXV. 1-4); the hairs of a *bear*, plaited into a cord and worn as a diadem, serves as a protective amulet in a "Powerful Spell of the Bear" (PGM IV. 1331-89); a *bee* is used as an amulet for illness; (SM II. 78); the *whiskers* of a *cat* are used as a phylactery (!) while making a curse-spell using inscribed *lamellae* (PGM III. 1-164); a *falcon*, drowned in a honey-milk mixture and wrapped in a cloth along with one's fingernails, hair, and an inscribed *papyrus* strip, is formed into a plaster of frankincense and old wine and then set up in a little juniper wood shrine in a rite to acquire one's own spirit-*daimon* (PGM I. 1-42); a rite involving a *falcon's head*, held in the right hand along with a black Isis band over the eyes, causes a real falcon to drop an oblong stone from the sky (PGM I. 42-195). This, in turn, is to be engraved as an amulet (with a lion-faced figure, Heliorus, and magic names) for protection in the use of another rite to acquire an assistant "spirit" guide; a *gecko* is used in a "Favor and Victory Charm" (PGM VII. 186-90); the eye of a *lizard* placed in a *goat* (?) *skin* may be used for eye affliction (SM II. 78: fragmentary); the *fat* of an *owl*, or the *eye* of a *nightowl*, along with the *ball* of a *dungbeetle* in unripe *olive oil*, is to be smeared on the entire body for protection in an "Invisibility Spell" (PGM I. 222-231); the heart of an *owl* may be used for eye affliction (SM II. 78: as above, fragmentary); *palm*, *palm fiber*, and male *date of palm* are used as a protective amulet in the "Charm of Solomon" (PGM IV. 850-929); three *peonies* wrapped around the left arm are used for general protection in a lamp spell to attract a woman (PGM LXII. 1-24); a white *rooster*, held in the hand with *twelve pinecones*, is used in an Invocation to the Sun (PGM III. 633-731); a *red rag* is possibly used for eye affliction (SM II. 78: as above); similarly, a *tick* from a black cow, in *goat* (?) *skin*, is used for eye affliction (SM II. 78: fragmentary, as above); a garland of *wool*, with alternating red and white strands is used in an Apollonian divination rite (PGM II. 64-184: as above, with mud); the *tooth of a hyena* is used in a

victory charm (SM II. 96); *wormwood*, ground up with *sun opal*, a *magnet-stone*, *heart of hoopoe*, and *honey*, aids memory in a divinatory rite (PGM II. 1-64); finally, in the rite above, requiring the white rooster, *wormwood* is held protectively in the right hand with a *snakeskin* held in the left as one invokes the sun (PGM III.633-731).

#### 7. AMULETIC BUNDLES

In addition to these uninscribed, "organic" amulets, several passages in the papyri describe more complex amulets that involve a number of different operations, including the inscribing of papyrus texts and other objects. These can be largely described as "amuletic bundles" or "packets". For example, for business, a phylactery to be placed in one's shop is made up of a three-headed statuette of *Etruscan wax* that has been molded into a *sea falcon*, *baboon* and *ibis*; each of these figures is given certain divine attributes. This figure is then wrapped as an Osirian mummy, with a "heart" of *magnetite* and an inscribed hieratic *papyrus* placed inside. The whole is then set up onto an *iron* base, is installed in a miniature temple of *juniper* (at moonrise on the third lunar day), is given sacrifice and libation, is crowned with olive, and, finally, is invoked with the names written on the papyrus strip (PGM IV. 3125-71). Similarly, in PGM VIII. 1-63 a *baboon* figurine is carved of *olive wood* with the attributes of Hermes (= Thoth) and enclosed with an inscribed papyrus for good business and set up in a workshop; another such fetish is found in SM II. 97 (cf. further, the *skin of a mouse* kept in a workshop, for business, in the fragmentary SM II. 99). See further, PGM IV. 3172-3208; PGM V. 370-446. Related is the so-called Eighth Book of Moses (PGM XIII), a complex set of rites that obtains from the god a secret name that can be used in a variety of subsidiary magical rituals of the standard kind (healing, casting our demons, breaking spells, restraining anger, and so on).

#### 8. AMULETS, GnosticISM, AND THEURGY

Although early collectors and savants often referred to the magic gemstones and *lamellae* as "Gnostic", such a designation has long fallen out of favor (cf. Bonner 1950: 1f.). No enduring connection between specific Gnostic groups and our preserved corpora of amulets has been conclusively established. An exception seem to be the amulets found among the ruins of the Manichaean houses at Kellis (Mirecki, et al. 1997), and this may point to a more widespread practice. Owing to the fact that many of the deities, angels, vowels, and magical

*charaktēres* preserved in Gnostic documents (e.g., the Nag Hammadi texts) are the same as those found in the magical texts, the subject needs to be revisited (cf. Jackson 1989). Plotinus – disinterested in matters pertaining to theurgy – was one of those who complained that Gnostics composed magic incantations, presumably for the elevation of the soul past menacing demonic forces (*Enneads* II, 9, 14). In the *Books of Jeu* (ed. Schmidt-MacDermot), adherents seal themselves with magic “characters” and invoke mystic names while holding an especially designed numerical pebble (*psēphos*) for just such protection in the higher dimensional realms (cf. Iamblichus, *De myster.* III, 14, 41, on the use of magic *charaktēres*). Further, among the Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC) there is persistent evidence of the use of magic names, symbols (*charaktēres*), angel-names, and vowels in common with the magical amulets (e.g. *Iaō*, *Sabaōth*, *Abrasax*, *Sesengenbarpharangēs*, *Akrammachamari*, etc.); cf. the *Apocryphon of John*, esp. NHC II, 15, 30-19, 10; *Gospel of the Egyptians*, NHC III, 52, 9-26, IV, 64, 2-23; the *Hermetic Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*, NHC VI, 56, 17-22 (a “magic” prayer; cf. 61, 10-15). Also, the *Pistis Sophia*, esp. Book IV, presents the wholesale use of papyri incantations, presumably borrowed directly from magical handbooks. All this suggests that Gnostic groups would have written amulets to be used along with their magically invoked hymns (cf. *Gospel of the Egyptians* NHC III, 43, 20-44, 9; IV, 53, 17-54, 13, for mention of a secret name written on a tablet). It is also possible that they used amulets for specific healing rites (cf. the fever-amulets in *P.Kell.G.* 85-88).

Conversely, some of our preserved amulets may actually derive from Gnostic groups. The occurrence of some names and ideas peculiar to Gnosticism rather than to magic identifies the talismans as specifically Gnostic. The *Ialdabaōth*-gem discussed by Bonner (1950: 135-138) is certainly a Gnostic amulet, as he himself admits (see further, Kotansky-Spier 1995; Kotansky 1980, on *Elēlēth*, the principal Gnostic ‘Light-Aeon’, on a gold *lamella*; cf. Heintz 1996, on the *Pisandraptēs*, etc. on a silver *lamella* – a name found elsewhere only in the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*, NHC II, 17, 16).

The issue of the mystic union (*systasis*) of the practitioner with his personal deity involves a kind of ritual common to both the “higher” forms of magical operations of the papyri and to specific theurgic undertakings (Eitrem 1942); however, what requires further study – contingent, of course, upon future discoveries in the field – is to what

extent the amulets used for these rites by either group would have looked the same. Additional research, therefore, may yield closer correlations between practitioners of magic and late antique philosophical schools, whether they be Gnostic, Neoplatonic, Hermetic, or Theurgic. Marinus of Neapolis, the successor of Proclus († 485), attributes to him the use of magic operations to control the weather, including the depositing of amulets (*phylaktēria*) for earthquakes (*Vita Procli*, 28; Eitrem 1942, 73). To what extent this kind of practice penetrated Neoplatonism is difficult to say, but it is indicative of the sort of overlap among competing philosophical systems common in late antiquity.

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**Andreae, Johann Valentin**, \* 17.8.1586 Herrenberg (Württemberg), † 27.6.1654 Stuttgart

Johann Valentin Andreae was the fifth son of a dean of the Lutheran Church. His grandfather was Jakob Andreae, Chancellor of the University of Tübingen and one of the principal authors of the Formula of Concord, which was to become the doctrinal basis of Lutheran orthodoxy. After losing his father at age 15, the young Andreae began a brilliant career as a student at Tübingen, became *Magister artium* in 1605, and following in his ancestors' footsteps, studied theology. During this time his career as a writer began, with two plays (*Esther* and *Hyacinth*), some writings on politics and → astrology, and the novel *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz* (The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz; see below) whose success has lasted to this day.

However, these brilliant beginnings were darkened in 1607 as Andreae entered an *atra tempestas* (somber tempest). It seems that his critical disposition incited him to write a lampoon against one of the close advisers to the Prince of Württemberg, which led to a judiciary inquest, interrupted his studies, and resulted in his being rejected as a candidate for ecclesiastical office. Between 1609 and 1611 he went on a long journey to Strasbourg, Lyon, Paris, and then Switzerland, where the Calvinist organization of the city of Geneva made a strong impression on him, and where he seems to have drafted the *Fama Fraternitatis* (Fame of the [Rosicrucian] Brotherhood) and the remarkable comedy entitled *Turbo* (Whirlpool). In fact, this Latin title evokes the turmoil or the vortex in which the young Andreae found himself swept away. In 1613, after a long trip to Italy, he was at last able to recommence his studies of theology. The following year he obtained a post as deacon (adjunct pastor) at Vaihingen; this was the same year of his marriage, and of the beginning of his correspondence with Johann Arndt.

During the Thirty Years War, his ecclesiastical and diplomatic career took on new impetus: he was named Dean at Calw and went on a mission in Austria to defend the positions of Lutheranism there. Also at Calw, he created the *Färberstift* (Dyers' Foundation), a charitable association whose goals included helping the poor and sick, giving grants to young students, creating a library, promoting the learning of foreign languages, financing apprenticeships, paying for the education of children from insolvent families, and supporting aid for the mentally and physically handicapped. This foundation

lasted until 1979. However, after the Battle of Nördlingen in 1634, Imperial troops completely devastated the town of Calw, leaving numerous casualties and causing grave epidemics. Andreae related this drama in *Threni Calvenses* (Calvian Lamentations), published in 1635. After the devastation, Johann Valentin Andreae's two daughters married notables of Calw and had so many offspring that an inquiry has established that in 1936, ten percent of Calw's high-school students were descended from the Andreae line.

After 1614, continuing his pastoral, social, and diplomatic activities, Andreae published a number of important literary and theological works, mostly written in Latin. Their common denominator was the desire to combat three principal scourges of his era in Württemberg: the blind rigor and sterile theological disputes of the Lutheran orthodoxy; the interference of temporal power in the life of the church; and the profound moral decadence of Christian society in his time. To fight these problems, and to propose a more authentic Christianity to his contemporaries, Andreae found a model in the *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (Four Books of True Christianity), published between 1605 and 1610 by the theologian Johann Arndt, who became Superintendent General of the Principality of Lüneburg in 1611. These "four books" were the Book of Scripture (the Bible), the Book of Life (Christ), the Book of Conscience, and the "Grand Universal Book of Nature". Arndt, whose texts contained extracts from mystics such as Tauler and Angela di Foligno, can be considered the pioneer of Protestant → Pietism, and he exercised a strong influence over Andreae. In Strasbourg, around 1615, Andreae published some extracts from Arndt's "Four Books" translated into Latin. In an apologue of his *Mythologia christiana* (Christian Mythology; 1619), Andreae applauded Arndt's emphasis on the necessity for Christians to actually lead their lives in accord with the faith they professed. The same year, Andreae dedicated his *Reipublicae Christianopolitanae descriptio* (Description of the Republic of Christianopolis) to Johann Arndt. In a hundred chapters, this work describes an ideal Christian society called *Caphar Salama* (in Hebrew, "village of peace"), built on a triangular island symbolizing the Holy Trinity. The inhabitants have realized in themselves the mystery of regeneration; in fact, they constitute the *Ecclesia in hac vita occulta* (Church concealed in this life) of which Luther wrote. Thus *Christianopolis* is a portrait of a city of regenerated Christians as Andreae, under Arndt's influence, imagined it. He continued to describe this city in the alchemical allegory of



Rosicrucian myth, in the *Invitatio Fraternitatis Christi* (Invitation of the Brotherhood of Christ; 1617-1618), in *Civis christianus* (Christian City; 1619), in *Christenburg* (1620), and in *Christianæ Societatis Imago* (Picture of Christian Society; 1620). In *Theophilus*, written in 1622 but not published until 1649, Andreae proposed the means of establishing the actual Christian City whose image he had so often portrayed. Three conditions were necessary: temporal authority must be favorable to its birth; education must develop moral integrity as well as culture; and each citizen must be *renatus* (born again). But Andreae did not delude himself; in *De Christiani Cosmoxeni genitura iudicium* (Judgment on the Nativity of Christian Cosmoxenus), which appeared around 1615, he had presented this ideal citizen as a purely imaginary being.

To emphasize this contrast between the ideal city and the real world, Andreae was not content with presenting his readers with the image of an ideal Christian society. An important part of his work, beginning with the myth of the Rose-Cross [→ Rosicrucianism], is a satire on the oddities of his era. In 1617, he published in the fictitious place of *Helicone juxta Parnassum* ("Helicon on Parnassus", but in fact Strasbourg) about a hundred satirical dialogues under the title of *Menippus*, recalling the famous pamphlet of the *Satyre Ménippée* (Menippean Satire), published in France in 1594, paving the way for the triumph of Henri IV over the League. Menippus was a famous Greek Satirist of the 1st century B.C.E., who was imitated by Meleager, Varro, and Lucian, among others. Andreae situated himself in this tradition, criticizing the various orders of society of his time, and his satire created such a stir that one professor of philosophy at Tübingen, Caspar Bucher immediately published an *Antimenippus*, while Andreae himself resolved to have an expurgated version of his *Menippus* printed the following year.

One of the targets of Andreae's satire was the pretentious erudition of the savants of his era, the hollow eloquence of professors in need of more sense and less arrogance, who were nothing but *asimocreatores*, "donkey-makers" who did not know how to teach dialectic or rhetoric, while their pupils discovered Aristotle's Heavens, but not God's.

In the domain of religion, Andreae estimated in *Menippus* that the "Reformation" was nothing but a "Deformation" which had replaced a Pope with "papelli" (popelets), diminished the power of Peter's Keys, and made the Church dependent on a temporal power that preached the doctrine of Christ, maybe, but not the imitation of Christ or the cultivation of a pious life.

As an appendix to *Menippus*, Andreae published *Institutio magica pro curiosis* (Magical Institute for the Curious), which stated his position vis-à-vis the fantastic commentaries inspired by the Rosicrucian writings, notably the novel mentioned above, *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz*. It is a dialog between Curiosus, who hopes to be initiated into the secrets of → magic, and Christianus, who reveals to him that magic resides in the grand Temple of Nature illuminated by three torches: that of divine Providence, that of society, and that of the anatomy of the world. This satire, once again, is aimed at the false erudites of his time, imbued with Latin, theology, and abstract formulae. In retaliation, Andreae praised those who worked with matter, architects, geographers, and astronomers, astounding the young enquirer who longed for nonexistent mysteries.

Along with this satire, Andreae used a less scurrying and more subtle method for opposing the follies of his era and the calumnies he had suffered, namely the literary device of fables and fiction. Such was the object of the work entitled *Mythologia christianæ sive Virtutum et Vitiorem vitæ humanæ imaginum Libri tres* (Three Books of Christian Mythology, or Image of the Virtues and Vices of Human Life), which appeared at Strasbourg in 1619. After the manner of Trajano Boccalini (1556-1613), who published the *Raguagli di Parnaso* (Reports from Parnassus) in 1612, Andreae presented his critique of society in the form of myths and fairy-tales. His goal was to better the people of his time with fables. In an apologue entitled *Lusus* (Manipulus V, 27), he imagines a dialog between Scurrilitas (Scurrility) and Lusus (Play). The first is negative, impudent, and mocking, while Play (to whom Andreae defers) only mocks religion, the state, and erudition when they display imposture and barbarity, 'in order to make it clear that one writes satires not for pleasure or from a taste for carping, but out of necessity, indicating a religious, honest, moderate, intelligent spirit, concerned for the future of society'.

As a supplement to the *Mythologia christiana*, Andreae published a dialogue entitled *Alethea exul* (The Exile of Truth), in which Alethea, interrogated by Philalethes about the mystery of the Rose-Cross, says that she has observed 'not without pleasure [*non sine voluptate*] a somewhat spiritual game [*lusum quendam ingeniosiore*]', but that she has thereafter eclipsed herself so as to not be involved in an 'uncertain and dangerous affair [*rei incertæ et lubricæ*]'. This dialogue reveals Andreae's position in regard to the myth that he had at least helped to create. The character Christian

Rosenkreuz takes his name from the escutcheons both of Luther and of the Andreae family. Two later autobiographical writings by Andreae place the creation of the *Chymische Hochzeit* between 1603 and 1605. With an incontestable literary talent, the author describes the extraordinary dream-like adventure of Christian Rosenkreuz, witness to the alchemical reincarnation and union of *sponsus* and *sponsa* (bridegroom and bride), whom → Carl Gustav Jung later named the *animus* and *anima*. However, the text does not have any of the technical aspects of an alchemical treatise; it is a vivid account, punctuated with enigmas, mysterious episodes, and erotic allusions. But this is only what they appear to be, inasmuch as Christian, braving the ban against entering the basements of the royal palace, discovers Venus naked, for in fact she symbolizes the new invisible body of the soul. Spiritualized matter also appears in the description of the fountain of Hermes, at which the chosen ones drink. The water of Hermes is Mercury, the substance of all transformation, all redemption, both in man and in nature. This is why Christian Rosenkreuz, after having lived the regeneration of *sponsus* and *sponsa*, is called *Eques aurei Lapidis* (Knight of the Golden Stone). And if at the end of the novel he is supposedly condemned to become a gate-keeper at the royal palace, it is for the purpose of announcing to those who are worthy the re-descent of the soul into transformed nature.

The *Fama Fraternalitatis*, which circulated across Europe in the form of manuscripts around 1610 and was printed in 1614 at Kassel, also magnifies the grandeur of the human-microcosm and cites → Paracelsus. Christian Rosenkreuz appears in this work as the heroic founder of an omniscient brotherhood capable of redeeming all of nature. Given Andreae's ambiguous declarations, the *Fama Fraternalitatis* cannot be totally attributed to him. In the funeral oration for his friend Tobias Hess, who died in 1614, he evoked the deceased's liking for secret societies. As for the *Confessio Fraternalitatis* (Confession of the Brotherhood), published at Kassel in 1615 in Latin and in German translation, its genesis is equally linked to Tobias Hess, for reasons that follow. A collection of essays entitled *Theca gladii spiritus* (Scabbard of the Sword of the Spirit) and published at Strasbourg in 1616 was attributed in the preface to Hess, whereas Andreae, twenty-six years later, admitted to having been its author. No fewer than twenty-eight sentences from the *Confessio Fraternalitatis* figure in this collection beside extracts of other works of Andreae, such as *Invitatio Fraternalitatis Christi* and *Bonæ Causæ Fiducia* (Trust in a Good Cause). From these docu-

mented elements we can conclude that the *Chemical Wedding* was authored by Andreae and that the *Confessio* resulted from Andreae's cooperation with Tobias Hess, whereas the *Fama Fraternalitatis* is a collective work written by more than two authors. In the last chapter of the *Turris Babel* (Tower of Babel), a pamphlet published by Andreae in 1619, the author writes about numerous texts released under the name of the Rose-Cross: '... there are those which are ... jokes ...; some are poor ones, ... some are pious and devout. ... While I certainly repudiate even the company of the Brotherhood, you will never make me renounce the true Christian Brotherhood, that which under the cross exhales a perfume of roses'.

Andreae had attempted to realize this "true Christian Brotherhood" in many repeated efforts, and his vision of the Rosicrucian myth had been its literary and utopian translation, just as many other writings including *Christianopolis* (1619), *Christenburger Schlacht* (The Battle of Christenburg; 1620), *Christianæ Societatis Imago* (1620), and *Christiani Amoris Dexteræ porrecta* (The Extended Right Hand of Christian Love; 1620). These were no longer a matter of simple literary fiction, for Andreae had long dreamed of founding this Christian brotherhood under the patronage of Duke August of Brunswick (1579-1666). We recall that Johann Arndt, whose influence on Andreae has been emphasized above, exercised his pastoral activity in the Principality of Brunswick-Lüneburg. Moreover, at Tübingen Andreae had met a student related to the Lüneburg nobility, Wilhelm von Wense, born like him in 1586, but who died in an accident in 1641. In 1642, Andreae expressed his sorrow in a funerary oration in the honor of this friend. It was at Wense's instigation that August of Brunswick had been chosen as protector of the *Societas Christiana*.

Andreae had met Duke August for the first time in 1630. An important correspondence between the two men began in 1640, each one writing about 600 letters to the other. In one letter dated June 17, 1642, Andreae announced to August of Brunswick the arrival of the *Christianæ Societatis Imago* and the *Christiani Amoris Dexteræ porrecta*, and on July 26, the Duke acknowledged receipt of these 'lovely little treatises'. Scholars of Andreae had long thought that these works had disappeared, and as late as 1973 one specialist questioned whether the two treatises had truly been published, until the present author discovered the actual copies received and read by the Duke. The Christian society that they describe was placed under the protection of this nobleman, 'vir Pietate, Probitate et Litte-

ratura Illustrissimus' (a man illustrious in piety, uprightness, and letters); its goal was to develop knowledge in the different domains of religion, the sciences, and society, which would then be concretized by the publication of an encyclopedia in the vernacular. Thus Andreae belonged in the line of learned societies such as the French Academy, the Royal Society, and the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft (Fruit-Bearing Society) to which he was admitted in 1646, thanks to the recommendation of the Duke of Brunswick. By then in his sixties, he was admitted with the pseudonym of "Fracidus", a Latin adjective used to designate an overripe olive; the German version, "der Mürbe" (the Ripe One), was no more complimentary. However, the emblem that he was given, a tree covered in moss, and the motto "etiamnum viret" (he is still green), may have consoled him. Andreae declared to Philippe Heinhofer, a patrician of Augsburg and intermediary between him and Duke August, that he felt neither old nor weary. In 1650 he became Abbot and Prelate of Bebenhausen, the next year he was named Superintendent General (the equivalent of an archbishop), and he died in 1654 at Stuttgart.

Thanks to his brilliant invention of the Rosicrucian myth, Andreae's name is still cited in numerous contemporary works, from the United States to Europe and even Japan. Paradoxically, he seems to be less well known in the Christian milieu, except in the microcosm of Lutheran theologians. However, his writings played an important role in the evolution of Christianity after the Reformation. Whereas Luther, especially in *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit* (On Worldly Authority), established the so-called "theory of two realms", affirming that the Christian is simultaneously subject to two totally separate kingdoms, the spiritual in his religious life and the temporal in his societal life, and in consequence the notion of the ideal city was completely foreign to him, we have seen that Andreae never ceased to work in favor of a *respublica christiana*. Certainly he did not hesitate to castigate the princes whom he named idolaters, and in a satire entitled *Apap proditus*, he mercilessly criticized Caesaro-papism. On the other hand, he praised in his *Theophilus* the sovereign who acted for the furthering of public religion in his state. That which he valued above all was the free manifestation of the *praxis pietatis* (devotional practice) within a Christian society. In this sense, he anticipated the first generation of Pietists, who, with Jakob Spener (1635-1705), reconciled the ecclesiastical structure with the *collegium pietatis* (college of devotion) and worked for the formation of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* (small churches within the Church). Finally, as the

present author has shown in many studies dedicated to Andreae's work, his beautiful narrative of the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* is articulated around three axes: God, Man, and Nature. According to Antoine Faivre, it is to this triangle that theosophic thought applies itself. Theosophy, as taught in the lecture-halls of *Christianopolis*, is a school of humility and obedience, docile receptivity, a revelation directly infused by God. The itinerary of Christian Rosenkreuz, like those of Christian Cosmoxenus and the elect of *Christianopolis*, is the theosophic miracle of salvation.

*Gesammelte Schriften*, Stuttgart, 1995 sqq. (20 vols.), in process of publication ♦ *Christianopolis* (Ger. & Lat.), Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1972 ♦ *Theophilus*, Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1973 ♦ *Fama Fraternitatis – Confessio Fraternitatis – Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreuz Anno 1459* (R. van Dülmen, ed.), Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1976 ♦ *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* (J. Godwin, trans.), Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1991 ♦ *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz Anno 1459* (E. Foxcroft, trans.), Montana: Kessinger Repr. n.d. ♦ *Rosicrucian Primer*, Edmonds WA: J.D. Holmes, 1994 ♦ *The Rosicrucian Manuscripts*, Woodbridge: Invisible College Press, 2002.

*Lit.:* Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London/Boston, 1972, chs. 3-5 ♦ John Warwick Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible: Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654)*, *Phoenix of the Theologians*, 2 vols., The Hague, 1973 ♦ Richard Van Dülmen, *Die Utopie einer christlichen Gesellschaft: Johann Valentin Andreae*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, 1978 ♦ Roland Edighoffer, *Rose-Croix et société idéale selon Johann Valentin Andreae*, 2 vols., Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1982/Paris, 1987 ♦ idem, *Die Rosenkreuzer*, Munich, 1995 ♦ idem, *Les Rose-Croix et la crise de la conscience européenne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1998 ♦ idem, "Johann Valentin Andreae, précurseur du piétisme", *Positions luthériennes* 3 (2002) ♦ Christoph Neeb, *Christlicher Haß gegen die Welt: Philosophie und Staatstheorie des Johann Valentin Andreae*, Frankfurt/M., 1999 ♦ Martin Brecht, *J.V. Andreae und Herzog August zu Braunschweig-Lüneburg*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, 2002 ♦ Bernard Gorceix, "Introduction", in: *La Bible des Rose-Croix*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970, I-LXIV.

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## Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism

1. FRANZ ANTON MESMER 2. PUYSGÉUR  
3. FRANCE 4. ENGLAND 5. UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA 6. HYPNOSIS 7. ESOTERICISM  
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The cultural movements covered by the terms “mesmerism” and “animal magnetism” are so complex that a long treatise would be required to cover them fully. Here we shall only outline the main cultural currents, and describe the directions they have taken in France, Germany, the British Isles, and the United States of America.

#### I. FRANZ ANTON MESMER

Mesmer's major accomplishments are fairly well known. He was born on May 23, 1734 in Iznang, near Lake Constance. He studied theology and medicine, and in 1766 defended a thesis in which he asserted the influence of the planets on human maladies, which earned him the title of Doctor of Medicine. In 1767 he settled in Vienna to begin his career as a doctor, and the following year married Maria Anna von Posch, a rich widow from an influential family.

During 1773-1774 he first tried using magnets for medical purposes (an idea that came from England) in an attempt to cure one of his patients, Miss Österlin. The sick woman felt a sensation like a strange current passing through her, and her symptoms vanished. From this experience, Mesmer began to draw the first outlines of his theory. He believed that the magnets themselves were not solely responsible for the effect obtained, but that they had served to amplify and channel a “fluid” accumulated within his own body, which he had transferred to his patient through an act of will. He named this discovery “animal magnetism” (*Tiermagnetismus* or *tierischer Magnetismus*), a term that would soon become part of the current vocabulary. The theory he deduced from his discovery amounted to these principles: an impalpable fluid permeates the entire universe and connects human beings to animals, plants, objects, and to each other. All human maladies are caused solely by poor circulation of this fluid within the human organism. For healing, it is necessary to re-establish the equilibrium of the cosmic fluid. This is what the magnetizer does, as he projects his fluid by means of passes over the organism of the sufferer. However, the concept of animal magnetism is much more complex than one might think from this brief summary. It comprises: (1) a psychological, anthropological, and cosmological theory describing the intricate relationship between man and the universe; (2) the techniques practiced by the magnetizer to relieve his fellows; (3) the phenomena of magnetic somnambulism, described later; and (4) the cultural currents set in motion by Mesmer that would continue throughout the 19th century.

Mesmer's reputation as a doctor and healer soon

began to grow. In 1775, Prince Elector Max Joseph of Bavaria invited him to assist in an investigation of séances of exorcism held near Constance by Father Johann Joseph Gassner, a priest who was attracting crowds and performing what appeared to be miraculous healings, laying on his hands to expel evil spirits. On November 23, 1775, after observing Gassner, Mesmer undertook to reproduce the same phenomena. He found that he could produce seizures in an epileptic patient merely by a touch of the finger, and could cause the sick to have apparent convulsions. On the strength of this, he concluded that Gassner was sincere, but did not understand what he was doing; his cures were real, but explainable by the effect of a mysterious agent, hitherto unknown: the “animal magnetism” that he, Mesmer, had just discovered. Thus mesmerism was born from an unlikely combination of efforts: the attempt to interpret exorcism from a rational standpoint; experimentation in magnetic medicine; and the first tentative theories of electricity and magnetism. What Mesmer did not admit was that he had found himself, in a way, in the same situation as Gassner. Essentially, while Gassner, as a religious healer, validated his power of suggestion using liturgical décor and the symbolic system that accompanied it, Mesmer drew on the prestige of science and the aura of mystery that always surrounds new discoveries.

Mesmer's reputation grew, but it also attracted difficulties that forced him to leave Vienna. In February 1777, he moved to Paris to promote his grand discovery there. He settled in a private mansion in the Place Vendôme, where he received patients from high society and charged them exorbitant fees for his services. A few initial successes in curing the maladies of influential people assured a continued influx of distinguished clients. He also gained the devotion of some zealous but self-seeking disciples, such as Dr. d'Eslon, personal physician to the Comte d'Artois (one of the King's brothers), and author of *Observations sur le magnétisme animal* (Observations on Animal Magnetism, 1780). Mesmer's residence became a fashionable haunt; ailing great ladies swooned there, and were seized by spectacular convulsions. Numerous healings were reported. But fashion became tinged with scandal. In 1784, on the demand of the King, an official committee was formed with the purpose of throwing light on Mesmer's controversial methods of treatment. The committee included several renowned experts, such as the chemist Antoine Laurent de Lavoisier, the astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly, and the American statesman Benjamin Franklin. The committee's

verdict was paradoxical. Essentially, it affirmed that while the members could not objectively detect the fluid, some of the alleged cures were genuine. However, it did not encourage the practice, because in its view, Mesmer's success must be due only to the deceptive powers of the → imagination, which constituted a bad method of healing, especially in this era, when medicine was undergoing a complete revision at the hands of scientists. A confidential report was even given to the King, concerning the possible sexual undertones of magnetism.

Laurent de Jussieu, one of the committee members, challenged the commission's conclusions, writing a personal memorandum in which he asserted that the phenomena observed could not all be attributed to mere power of imagination, and suggested the action of an unknown power, which he called "*chaleur animale*" (animal warmth). 1784 was a year of apotheosis for Mesmer, but also the beginning of the end. Challenged by the official savants, he faced a revolt among his disciples. In 1785 he left Paris for an unknown destination. He spent his last years forgotten, and died in seclusion in 1815.

## 2. PUY SÉGUR

No sooner had the royal committee given its ambiguous verdict than the emergence of new, even stranger phenomena rekindled the debate. In April 1784 Armand Marie Jacques Chastenet, Marquis de Puységur, Colonel of Artillery and a prominent landowner, began to spend his spare time healing his employees by magnetizing them according to the principles of Mesmer's doctrine. He was called to the bedside of a young peasant suffering from an inflammation of the lungs. Suddenly and unexpectedly, he plunged his patient into a mysterious state of unconsciousness. The Marquis, along with his two brothers, had been among the first to subscribe to Mesmer's lessons, and while performing magnetic healing on this young man, he anticipated the effects that Mesmerian magnetism was known to produce – yawning, sweating, and convulsions, followed by an improvement of the state of health. But things did not develop in the way he expected. The patient's personality changed; a new self emerged, which seemed to overhang his waking consciousness. Furthermore, the young man appeared to be able to predict the course of his malady, to establish its stages, and to read the thoughts of his healer, even before they were fully formed.

Such a state of consciousness had not been reported by Mesmer, but it seems probable that he had encountered it. If he had not reported its existence, it was probably because it contradicted his

materialistic assumptions. Be that as it may, Puységur established, in repeating the experiment upon more patients, that this state of consciousness could be reproduced fairly regularly, and that other somnambulists were equally capable of diagnosing maladies, reading thoughts, and perceiving events outside normal consciousness. By way of contrast with natural somnambulism (sleepwalking) known since antiquity, he named this new state "magnetic" or "artificial" somnambulism. The following year he published his observations in Paris and London, in a memoir that sparked an explosive chain of events. Magnetic somnambulists emerged all over France, and a vast argument on the subject began, which would occupy the educated world for most of the 19th century.

## 3. FRANCE

During the French Revolution and the First Empire, interest in magnetism entered a latent phase. Many of the aristocrats were forced into exile, and the public's attention was preoccupied by more pressing things. However, with the Restoration in 1815 and the return of many of the nobles, magnetism arose from its ashes. Puységur himself, who had stayed in France, resumed his studies and published some new works. In October 1825, Dr. Foisac, at the request of some medical students, directed a petition to the Academy of Medicine pleading for a re-examination of magnetism. He was not heard, but one of his colleagues, Dr. Husson, chief doctor of the Hôtel-Dieu, went to plead the cause before the Academy. When the report came that judgment had already been passed, Husson argued that it had been Mesmer's practices that had been judged – not somnambulism, of which Mesmer had been ignorant. The argument hit home, and in February 1826, Husson was made director of a new official commission. After five years of work, in June 1831, this commission produced an astonishing verdict, recognizing as genuine most of the somnambulistic phenomena alleged by the magnetizers.

The scandal surrounding the issue was such that the commission's report was printed but never distributed, and the anti-magnetists regained the lead. In 1837 Frédéric Dubois d'Amiens was chosen to head a new commission. Dubois was a young doctor who had become known four years earlier for a violent pamphlet in which he declared war on magnetism. Didier Berna, a physician and magnetizer, was chosen by the committee to coordinate its efforts, but the tension between him and Dubois was such that no agreement on protocols could be reached, and most planned experiments could not



be performed. The committee gave a completely negative verdict in August 1837: none of the phenomena alleged by the magnetizers could be observed, and everything amounted either to trickery or to effects of the imagination.

In October of the same year, the conflict came to a head around a twelve-year-old girl from Montpellier, Léonide Pigeaire. Léonide, the daughter of a local physician, was reputed to be able to see through opaque objects. Her abilities had been attested to by many doctors, including Dr. Lordat, a well-known Montpellier physician, and her father had brought her to Paris to present her to the commission, which had defiantly offered a prize of 3,000 francs to anyone who could read text through an opaque object. Unfortunately, the protagonists could not even reach an agreement on the best method of hiding the text from the reader (a cowl or velvet blindfold fastened at the edges with sticky paper), and the test could not take place. Dr. Pigeaire lost by default, and Dubois d'Amiens' friends seized the opportunity to do away with magnetism in general. On June 15, 1842, after a turbulent session, the Academy of Medicine decided to have nothing further to do with animal magnetism, and not to accept any more papers on the subject.

But magnetism, defeated on the institutional level, continued to flourish in the culture. The doctors had retired from the scene, leaving the stage to writers, judges, theologians, and philosophers, who continued to think about and experiment with magnetism. Among their subjects was Alexis Didier, the famous somnambulist and most marvelous clairvoyant of the 19th century.

#### 4. ENGLAND

During these times, the movement was spreading outside of France. In 1837, the magnetizer Dupotet, who had conducted the experiments for the Husson commission, exported magnetism for the first time to England, which had hitherto been preserved from the Mesmerian craze. After a brief period of mistrust, crowds flocked to his demonstrations. In 1840, he was joined by Charles Lafontaine, another renowned magnetizer. Soon the English developed a passion for mesmerism, and what had happened in France repeated itself, but more quickly. Dr. John Elliotson, a professor at University College in London and a rising star of British medicine, undertook with the aid of Dupotet to perform some public experiments upon two somnambulist women, which unleashed passions and scandals. After a dazzling ascent, Elliotson suffered a brutal fall due to suspi-

cions of fraud on the part of his somnambulist subjects. Dropped by a number of his fellow magnetizers, he was forced to resign from his official functions. However, he continued to pursue the subject, later founding a high-level journal, *The Zoist*, which became the European authority on the subject of mesmerism.

Thus magnetism was expelled from the temples of the British Establishment, but, unlike in France, no official decree was issued to impede or limit its practice. And, just as in France, the subject impassioned writers and intellectuals, and gave rise to intense debates.

#### 5. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Also in 1837, the Frenchman Charles Poyen left for the United States to propagate magnetism there. In this country, the resources of institutional protectionism were still in the embryonic stage, and therefore did not hinder the development of mesmerism as they had in France. Many reasons might explain its rapid success. For a nation with a mentality still firmly structured by religion, animal magnetism offered an understanding of the human spirit that was detached from theology but at the same time open to pneumatology. To a mentality obsessed with the concept of liberty, it offered the idea of an autonomous somnambulism. For a population disoriented by industrialization, it offered a method for mending social bonds.

Few official stumbling blocks hindered the spread of magnetism. Unlike in France, scientific hypnology did not set itself up to control magnetism and reject materials that could not be assimilated. Ultimately, it was the materialistic and utilitarian society, rather than institutional barriers, that stopped the spread of magnetism in America. The movement died out at the end of the 19th century.

#### 6. HYPNOSIS

In 1843, James Braid, a Scottish doctor, proposed the term "hypnosis" to define a practice inspired by magnetism, but more limited in its effects and different in its conception. Braid had been inspired by Lafontaine's public demonstrations. According to the theorists of magnetism, it was the influence of the magnetizer that put the patient into a magnetic sleep. Braid, however, believed that the subject entered this state independently by means of auto-suggestion; there was no fluid, no occult influence of one human being on another; and consequently it did not matter by what method the sleep was attained. Braid remained reserved about the "higher magnetic phenomena" that the magnetizers claimed to produce,

but he did not reject them, as is often thought. He contented himself with saying that he had not produced these results with his particular method. At first his method had little success, but after 1878, when the French medical institution decided to lift the decades-old academic taboo and accept the phenomena formerly called “magnetic”, it became the obligatory reference. After its English reform, a change of terminology, a selection of phenomena deemed acceptable, and a materialistic remodeling of its phenomenology, what was formerly known as magnetism was accepted by so-called official medicine.

Around 1860, a few young doctors, including Eugène Azam and Paul Broca, had attempted to promote Braid’s theory in France, but their attempts had remained isolated and without consequences. It was in 1878 that, under Charcot’s leadership, hypnotism rocketed to success. First considered a useful tool for studying hysterics, the practice posed so many questions to psychology and medicine that it became, in the space of a decade, one of the biggest areas of research in the sciences of the mind. The medical establishment now began to embrace a part of what it had condemned fifty years before. Psychiatry, psychology, philosophy, and theories of art and education all found themselves appealed to by the question of hypnosis. Nevertheless, the phenomena that triggered this enthusiasm were nothing but an expurgated and attenuated version of the old magnetic phenomena. In Charcot’s wake, though, physicians such as Julian Ochorowicz and philosophers such as Emile Boirac came to doubt the claim that hypnotism could completely explain away the phenomena produced by the old magnetizers.

At the end of the 19th century, under the impulse of these authors, animal magnetism made a new return to learned discourse, now colored by the scientific and materialistic orientation of that period. With this return was born the research program that the English named “psychical research” and the French, *métapsychique*: a problematic and controversial area of study, but one which aroused great theoretical hopes. Psychical research in Britain began around 1876 at Trinity College in Cambridge, thanks to the initiative of the philosopher Henry Sidgwick, an eminent professor of moral and political philosophy. *Métapsychique*, in France, was thus named in 1919 by the Nobel Prize-winning physiologist Charles Richet. Two decades of theoretical and experimental abundance followed, before the discipline gave way to the incoming tide of new ideologies that followed the Second World War.

## 7. ESOTERICISM AND MAGNETISM

This broad historical outline should not lead one to think that we are faced with a uniform current. In reality, the magnetic movement, in France, Germany, Britain, and America, has always contained multiple, and sometimes conflicting, schools of thought. In France, before the Revolution, the way mesmerism developed reflected the political and social instability of the era. In the years following the discovery of somnambulism by the Marquis de Puységur, the movement developed three principal divisions: on the “left” were the materialists, on the “center” the psycho-fluidists (Puységur’s disciples), and on the “right” the esoterically oriented magnetizers. The materialists were disciples of Mesmer or of doctors who, like Dr. Jacques Pétélin, wanted to rid themselves of the mesmerian “fluid” and preferred to talk of “vital electricity”. In explaining the somnambulist state, they emphasized the importance of this material vehicle that they thought produced it. The psycho-fluidists, disciples of Puységur and Deleuze, maintained that somnambulism revealed a hidden self and, although they were spiritualists, rejected all reference to entities outside of human consciousness; they saw the fluid only as a vehicle, and emphasized the *will* that set it in motion. The third category, finally, split into several branches. The importance of this last current, esoteric in nature, should not be underestimated.

The study of esoteric magnetism had its nucleus in the city of Lyon – rightly or wrongly reputed to be the esoteric capital of France. Its aristocratic adepts mixed the idea of progress with eschatological expectations, → mysticism, science, Christian esotericism, Jewish Kabbala [→ Jewish Influences], and → alchemy. The writings that they have left recall how simplistic our modern ideas of the Age of Enlightenment often are. They themselves were divided into several schools of thought. Some, like the Chevalier de Barberin, did not envisage entities external to human consciousness, but claimed to act directly upon the patient by will and prayer, without the mediation of any material fluid. Others, such as the famous Jeanne Rochette (whose “sleeps” were recorded by → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz), reported having contact with angelic entities during their trances.

If the esoteric branch of magnetism was born in France, it was in Germany that the movement reached its greatest development. The German mystics, philosophers, and writers carried magnetism to new metaphysical heights. It had an ideal terrain upon which to unfurl: the pre-romantic theologies of light and electricity, developed as early as 1765 by Prokop Divisch, → Friedrich

Christoph Oetinger, and Johann Ludwig Fricker. Most of the promoters of → *Naturphilosophie* (the “philosophy of nature”) integrated magnetism into their theories and dedicated many studies to it, believing in the existence of a “universal connector” – the “inner sense” that, during the magnetic trance, put the somnambulist in communication with the whole of nature. One major example is → Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, with his *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (1808, Views from the Night Side of Natural Science) and *Die Symbolik der Träume* (1814, The Symbolism of Dreams).

Other theorists sought to anchor the mysteries of somnambulism in physiology, in terms of theoretical oppositions between the cerebro-spinal system, the organ of diurnal thought and rationality supposedly dominant in men, and the ganglion system, the support of the nocturnal forms of life, that they believed to predominate in women. Around 1779, Eberhard Gmelin discussed his views in *Neue Untersuchungen bei den thierischen Magnetismus* (New Studies in Animal Magnetism, 1789). His views have caused many authors, such as Ricarda Huch, to affirm that most somnambulists were women or effeminate men.

There were many great German theorists of animal magnetism in the Romantic Era – for example, Dietrich Georg Kieser and Carl August von Eschenmayer, co-directors of the review *Archiv für den thierischen Magnetismus* (Archive for Animal Magnetism, 1817-1824). Kieser also wrote the important *System des Tellurismus oder thierischen Magnetismus* (System of Tellurism, or Animal Magnetism, 1826). Among the writings of Eschenmayer figures *Mysterien des inneren Lebens, erklärt aus der Geschichte der Seherin von Prevorst* (Mysteries of the Inner Life, Explained by the Story of the Seeress of Prevorst, 1830). There were also Friedrich Hufeland, who tried to understand the sympathy between beings (*Über Sympathie; On Sympathy*, 1811); Johann Carl Passavant (*Untersuchungen bei dem Lebensmagnetismus und das Hellsehen; Researches in Animal Magnetism and Clairvoyance*, 1821); and Karl Friedrich Burdach, who in *Zeitrechnung des menschlichen Lebens* (Chronology of Human Life, 1829) maintained the existence of a transpersonal mental space to which the magnetic trance provided access.

The Swabian physician and poet → Justinus Kerner has a special place here; his name is bound up with that of the famous somnambulist Friederike Hauffe, the Seeress of Prevorst. This young woman is the archetype of the somnambule who, beset by various bodily ills, draws mystics,

writers, and doctors to her bedside. Living in a semi-permanent state of somnambulistic trance, Hauffe presented the whole gamut of magnetic endowments: the gifts of second sight and of precognition, predicting deaths, revealing maladies, prescribing remedies, and being extremely sensitive to certain substances. She even saw spirits of the dead and maintained a semi-permanent communication with them. The speeches she made during her altered states of consciousness included many ideas of a clearly theosophic character. They were recorded by Justinus Kerner in his book *Die Seherin von Prevorst* (The Seeress of Prevorst, 1829), which had a great impact, notably thanks to its publication in English in a translation by Catherine Crowe (*The Seeress of Prevorst*, 1845). But of all the Germans of this era, it was certainly → Franz von Baader who authored the most noteworthy writings devoted to the connection between animal magnetism and theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy] (cf. inter alia: *Über die Extase oder das Verzücktsein der magnetischen Schlafredner; On Ecstasy, or the Rapture of Magnetized Sleepwalkers*; 1817-1818). Compared with facts accumulated in France in the same era, the German magnetic body of work presents a striking and instructive difference. In effect, most of the French somnambulists famous for their clairvoyant gifts (notably Alexis Didier), exercised their second sight directly, without using supernatural entities as a relay. Their discourse while in a trance was turned towards earthly reality more than towards the celestial spheres or theosophical speculation, as tended to be the case in Germany.

## 8. RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

Connections between magnetism and spiritualism were drawn in the English-speaking world as well, although in this somewhat more materialistic culture the dominant approach was marked by positivism and a careful attention to scientific fact. In England, around 1838, Dr. Herbert Mayo, professor at King's College, London, experimented with magnetic somnambulists in the hope of counteracting the growth of materialism through proof of the existence of the soul and its independence from organic life. Around 1850, the experiments performed over distance with the famous Alexis Didier convinced him that the spirit was truly able to detach itself from the body. The Rev. Chauncy Townshend, a writer, painter, poet, and a friend of Dickens, also experimented with Alexis and published the result of his personal studies in *Facts in Mesmerism* (1844 – a work that would later inspire Edgar Allen Poe). Finally, in the United States of

America, the development of magnetism was marked by the exaltation of the individual typical of this young nation. Henceforth the somnambulists had no more need of magnetizers, but magnetized themselves. The American version of the “Magnetic Heroes” represented in France by Alexis Didier or in Germany by Friederike Hauffe appeared in figures like → Andrew Jackson Davis (*The Great Harmonia*, 1852) and Phineas P. Quimby, whose new interpretation of magnetic healing was at the basis of the movement of “mind cure” (→ New Thought).

#### 9. CONCLUSION

For mainstream Western culture, animal magnetism was a shock and a challenge whose magnitude and effects are too often forgotten today. For the participants it brought great hopes, not only for a scientific breakthrough, but for a moral and social renovation and a deepening of spiritualist philosophy. For the movement’s adversaries, it threatened to subvert reason and to pervert the social order; therefore it must be combated in every possible way. The result was a cultural battle that led to the repression of magnetism, and its eventual oblivion. While the phenomena of somnambulism have never been completely objectified or explained in a satisfying manner, they have certainly stimulated and/or disquieted all aspects of culture. Psychiatry, psychoanalysis, the psychology of altered states of consciousness, philosophy, the history of religion, ethnology, art, literature, and theories of education – all have been affected by this current and still bear its mark. And the questions posed by magnetism do not belong only to a movement that died out long ago; they remain highly pertinent even today.

The bibliography of animal magnetism is immense. It consists of a series of very diverse writings: brochures, pamphlets, theoretical studies, case studies, and accounts of séances. There are certainly over 5,000 titles in English, French, and German alone. The most complete bibliography is that of Adam Crabtree: *Animal Magnetism, Early Hypnotism, and Psychical Research, 1766 to 1925: An Annotated Bibliography* (Kraus International Publishers: New York 1988), but it is still far from covering all the relevant literature. The works mentioned below concern the essential episodes in the history of magnetism, but are meant only to serve the reader as a first orientation in this labyrinth.

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BERTRAND MEHEUST

## Anthroposophy

1. OCCULT PHYSIOLOGY
2. CHRISTOLOGY
3. PLANETARY EVOLUTION
4. REINCARNATION AND KARMA
5. THE SPIRITUAL PATH
6. THE ANTHROPOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

The term anthroposophy has been used by various hermetic and philosophical authors in the modern era, the earliest one being the English alchemist → Thomas Vaughan (1622-1666). In the 19th century the title was used by, among others, the philosopher Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797-1879), son of the famous Johann Gottlob Fichte, and Robert Zimmermann (1824-1898), professor of philosophy at the university of Vienna. One of his students was → Rudolf Steiner, with whom the term anthroposophy is now usually associated. Steiner used the term to refer to his own esoteric doctrine, as distinguished from the older theosophy of the → Theosophical Society with which he broke in 1913. According to one of the definitions that Steiner has given of anthroposophy, it is 'a path of knowledge that connects the spiritual in man with the spiritual in the cosmos'. Steiner claimed that anthroposophy is not a matter of revealed religious doctrine, but of 'spiritual science' that one has to develop oneself: it does not teach 'the wisdom of man' but tries to awaken the 'consciousness of one's own humanity', not only as a key to understanding the macrocosmos but especially as a means of bringing about a spiritual transformation of daily life. This article gives a thematic survey of key topics in Steiner's anthroposophy. For information about Steiner's biography and the development of anthroposophy, see the article on Steiner.

### 1. OCCULT PHYSIOLOGY

One of the key elements of Steiner's anthroposophy is a spiritual or occult [→ occult/occultism] physiology of man. Steiner did not have one single physiological system, but developed several versions over the course of time. These different perspectives serve different purposes and for the most part they overlap only partially. They have their basis in the concept, provided in his book *Theosophy* (1904) and elsewhere, of a tripartition of body, soul and spirit. The human soul mediates between the eternal spirit or Self and the perishable physical body. In *Theosophy* and elsewhere, however, this tripartition is transformed into a four-fold distinction between physical body, etheric body, astral body and I, which is reminiscent of



Paracelsian medicine [→ Paracelsianism]. Macrocosmically, the physical body is what links us humans to the mineral world, while the etheric body links us to the plant world, the astral body to the animal world, and the I is uniquely human. The etheric body is roughly equivalent to what Aristotle calls the organic soul: it is responsible for growth and life, and is the bearer of heredity. As such it is essentially plastic, endowing the physical body with a specific form and shape. The astral body is sometimes simply referred to as “the soul” and is roughly equivalent to Aristotle’s sensitive soul. It is the basis for interiority and subjectivity, giving rise to the whole range of emotions and desires, but also of unconscious impulses. Whereas the etheric body has a natural tendency towards unity and wholeness, the astral body is the principle of differentiation and specialization. Steiner sometimes compares the relation between these two “bodies” as that between the convex and the concave: the etheric body has the task of harmonizing and unifying the body, whereas the astral body carves out inner spaces, providing room for interiority. The I is Steiner’s equivalent of the Aristotelian intellectual soul. It is the eternal, imperishable Self that reincarnates in a new physical body and is the bearer of karma. It is not just our spiritual core which is added to the other “bodies”, but in a quite Aristotelian fashion also functions as an entelechy, unifying, organizing and harmonizing our physiology, and giving our lives purpose and direction. In this connection Steiner speaks of the “I-organization”, referring to the relation of the I to the several “bodies”, as distinct from the I taken as an entity in itself. For instance, with respect to the physical body the I’s activity can be seen in two typically human activities, namely speech and erect movement. In the case of the etheric body, the strength of the I and its grasp of the etheric body can be gathered from the way a child grows: harmonious growth is evidence for a strong grasp by the I, whereas irregular growth points to a weak one. The I can also pacify and harmonize the astral body, creating emotional stability and a sense of direction and purpose. From these examples it becomes clear that Steiner’s I combines Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s unconscious will and the Cartesian *cogito*. Clear and distinct awareness of the self is but one of the many functions exerted by the I, albeit a crucial one.

The human soul, according to Steiner, consists of several further subdivisions, the sentient soul (*Empfindungsseele*), the intellectual soul (*Verstandesseele*) and the spiritual soul (*Bewusstseinsseele*). These souls are the products of the I’s transforma-

tion of, respectively, the astral body, the etheric body and the physical body. The sentient soul is the first stage of sentient and emotional life, in which the soul is completely absorbed by outer impressions and inner sentiments. The intellectual soul exhibits the first vestiges of thought activity by which we can turn outer impressions into clear perceptions and concepts, and can bring structure to our inner life. Thus, we create room for emotions such as sympathy, which go beyond the mere egoistic sense of self-preservation. This is why Steiner also refers to this soul as the sensitive-emotive soul (*Verstands-Gemütsseele*). The intellectual soul still has a sense of immediately belonging to the external world, without experiencing any ruptures. The spiritual soul, by contrast, emancipates itself from the external world. In this case, the I turns to sense perception coming from the physical body, experiencing a kind of alienation that can be remedied only by finding its spiritual core within itself. The spiritual soul, in other words, develops a high sense of self-consciousness that not only stands in opposition to the external world but also individualizes itself with respect to fellow human beings, loosening the collective ties of family, nation, religious community etc. Through self-consciousness, the spiritual soul is also able to take a more objective and less emotional stance towards external events, determining our actions by objective judgments rather than by sympathy and antipathy. In Steiner’s view not only each human life but, as will become clear below, human culture as a whole as well, pass through these different stages.

Next to these three souls that present human beings have developed, Steiner also mentions three soul organs that will be cultivated in a distant future, but on which we can already partially work in our present stage of evolution, by means of spiritual exercises and moral conduct. Using theosophical vocabulary, Steiner calls these souls Manas or Spirit self (*Geistselbst*), Budhi or Life spirit (*Lebensgeist*) and Atman or Spirit man (*Geistes-mensch*), which represent, respectively, the full transformation by the I of the astral body, the etheric body and the physical body. Steiner devoted special attention to the Spirit self, which can help us overcome the potential materialism and anti-social tendencies of the spiritual soul.

Next to his four-fold physiology, Steiner propounded a tripartition of soul activities, which also have an organic basis. Steiner divided the human organism into the region of the head or nervous-sense system (seat of the activity of thought), the heart-lung region or rhythmic system (seat of the activity of feeling) and the metabolic

system (seat of the activity of will). This partition also has a macrocosmic counterpart, consisting in the three persons of the Trinity: Father (will), Son (feeling) and Holy Spirit (thought). This brings us to Steiner's Christology.

## 2. CHRISTOLOGY

Steiner vehemently campaigned against Adolf Harnack, David Friedrich Strauss and other representatives of contemporary Protestant *Leben Jesu Forschung* for robbing Jesus Christ of his divine status and reducing him to a mere prophet. For Steiner, Jesus Christ was essentially the divine Logos incarnate. Christ is the spirit of the sun who descended to the earth in order to redeem not only mankind but the earth in general. According to Steiner, mankind has fallen prey to the forces of evil, that have made him mortal and have thrown his diverse "bodies" into decadence. In order to revitalize humankind, Christ had to taste death himself and bring the ultimate sacrifice, thus becoming the "inner sun" or spirit of the earth and restoring its sense and purpose. According to Steiner, through the blood of Christ after the Crucifixion the whole earth began to shine. Though Steiner's emphasis on Jesus Christ's divine character could be called Gnostic [→ Gnosticism], he avoided docetism by affirming that Jesus Christ had really died in human shape and had risen from the dead. Nevertheless, he made a distinction between the human person Jesus, and Christ as the divine Logos. In fact, according to Steiner we can only legitimately speak of Jesus Christ from the Baptism in the Jordan onwards, which he sees as the moment in which Christ truly descended into Jesus and became man. Jesus' corporeal nature was a vessel which had been prepared over thousands of years. In an attempt to square the gospel according to Luke with the gospel according to Matthew, Steiner speaks of two children with the name Jesus and two pairs of parents called Joseph and Mary. He refers to the child of the gospel according to Luke as the Nathanic Jesus, after one of the sons of David, in whose bloodline he stood. He describes this child as Adam-Kadmon, the human nature that had not gone through the Fall; his very being was therefore complete innocence, which was only reinforced by the fact that Buddha had reunited himself with its astral body. On the other hand, the Solomonian Jesus – named after David's other son – had inherited the I of Zarathustra [→ Zoroaster]. When these children were twelve, the I of this second child merged with the other bodies of the first child, an event which according to Steiner is evi-

denced by the biblical story of Jesus teaching in the temple. The fact that his parents did not recognize him is explained by Steiner in the sense that the innocent child all of a sudden had turned into one of the wisest persons on earth. At birth, the first child was venerated by the shepherds who received Buddha's message of peace, while the second child was venerated by the three Magi, former pupils of Zarathustra who recognized their Master, offering him the results of his teachings: gold (transformed thought), incense (transformed feeling) and myrrh (transformed will). In this sense, Jesus reunited the two currents of shepherds or priests (descendants of Abel) and that of the kings (descendants of Cain).

Christ's task is to help man overcome evil, which according to Steiner has the two-fold character of Lucifer and Ahriman (after the Persian Ahura-Mazdao). Lucifer stands for the forces that try to lift man from the earth by accelerating normal development. He works through the powers of phantasy, → imagination, enthusiasm and sympathy. Lucifer is the devil who was responsible for the Fall, bringing us not only death and egoism, but also a sense of the self and of liberty, the possibility of taking decisions without the consent of God. Ahriman, by contrast, stands for the forces that fetter man to the earth by retarding normal development. Ahriman works through the powers of cold, materialist intellect, the will for power and domination, and antipathy. Whereas Lucifer tries to change men into bird-like, pseudo-angelic entities without any real connection to and concern for the earth, Ahriman attempts to change the earth into a machine, killing all vegetal, animal and individual human life. In a quite manichaeistic manner [→ Manichaeism], Steiner describes Christ's task as consisting not in eradicating this two-fold evil, but in transforming and redeeming it. Christ is the world-I that can find the balance and harmony between these two powers, using them for a good purpose. Steiner expressed this character in a huge wooden statue, the Representative of Mankind (*Menschheitsrepräsentant*), meant for the first Goetheanum and still on display in the present Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. Christ there holds a middle position between the Luciferic and Ahrimanic forces. This explains why in some contexts, Steiner gives a very positive account of Lucifer as the light-bringer who has brought us knowledge and science, who presided over all pre-Christian initiation, the guide of the soul through the planetary spheres after death etc. Thanks to Lucifer man has become free, but thanks to Christ

he can use this freedom in order to voluntarily do good, transcending the egoism that forms the shadow side of Lucifer's gift of freedom.

In this context, Steiner also developed his version of the distinction between higher and lower Self or "I". The lower self is the product of Lucifer, who is responsible for the ego-centred, daily consciousness that is tied to our blood. Christ inhabits our higher I; He is the universal I that purifies the egoistic forces of the blood and reunites humankind as a whole. Nevertheless, Christ is above all our example to emulate. With his help we humans can transform the earth into a "cosmos of love", restoring the gross, material earth to its original spirituality, freed of all gravity, decay and opaqueness. Thus we can create the new Heavenly Jerusalem of the Apocalypse. In this sense, Steiner was close to the Pelagianism of early modern spiritual → alchemy and to → Rosicrucianism.

Not unlike → Jacob Boehme, Steiner stressed the different characters and tasks of the three Persons of the Trinity, that not only pervades the natural world and human physiology (thought being connected to the Sprit, feeling to Christ, will to the Father) but is also reflected in the Celestial Hierarchies Steiner adopted from → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. The first Hierarchy (Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones) reflects the Father, the second (Dunameis, Kyriotetes, Exousiai) the Son, and the third (Angels, Archangels and Archai) the Holy Spirit. Steiner devoted special attention to the third Hierarchy, the "Hierarchies of personality" which stand closest to the human spirit. The Angels guide the individual person in accordance with his personal destiny, the Archangels are the leaders of nations and historical periods, while the Archai direct humankind as a whole. Among the Archangels, Michael occupies a central place. Steiner calls anthroposophy "Michaelic", referring to Michael's apocalyptic battle with the dragon. According to Steiner, St. Michael is the keeper of cosmic intelligence, which is formed by the diverse mutual relations between the planets, stars and Hierarchies. In order for us to become free, this cosmic intelligence has been bequeathed to man, who from the Greek period onwards has been able to develop human science and wisdom. Ahriman, the dragon that has been chased out of the heavens by Michael, tries to seduce us to use this intelligence for his own materialist, anti-human purposes. In answer, Michael challenges us to transform terrestrial intelligence into a new cosmic, Christianized intelligence that employs the powers of clear thinking in order to build a more just and harmo-

nized world. He does not do so by direct inspiration but by appealing to our I that has to find an independent spiritual and moral path. Michael is the archangel guiding the present epoch, that according to Steiner started in 1879, the end of the so-called Kali Yuga or dark period, in which human kind could only with great difficulty gain access to the spiritual world.

### 3. PLANETARY EVOLUTION

Steiner obviously had a very essentialist view of history, which, according to him, not only has well-defined periods, but also a clear sense and purpose. In fact, human physiology developed over eons in which the earth and our planetary system as a whole went through several phases, which Steiner calls Saturn-phase, Sun-phase, Moon-phase, the present Earth-phase and the future Jupiter-, Venus- and Vulcan-phases. Not only these names but also the description of the earth's planetary evolution itself have much in common with previous theosophical literature, especially the writings of → Mme Blavatsky. Steiner's description of the first three epochs of the earth phase owe a lot to theosophy as well. According to Steiner, Saturn, Sun and Moon are recapitulated during the respective phases of that he calls the Polarian, Hyperborean, Lemurian and Atlantean epoch. Steiner situates the biblical story of the Fall in the Lemurian epoch, in which Lucifer seduces the ancestors of man into using their I for their own, selfish purposes. They were thus able to cause enormous fires in their environment, which ultimately destroyed the mythical continent of Lemuria. Only a very small group was able to escape to the continent of Atlantis, where they became the ancestors of the fourth "root-race" of humankind, as Steiner refers to it, using theosophical vocabulary. Atlantis had planetary Oracles, places of initiation where a few chosen ones were taught about the evolution of the Cosmos and the importance of Christ therein. However, a few initiates became corrupt through the influence of Ahriman. They used their "mystery knowledge" in order to exploit and abuse the forces of nature for their own pleasure, which ultimately led to another gigantic backlash: according to Steiner the biblical story of the Flood is a legendary account of what really happened to Atlantis around the 10th millennium BC. Again, a small group of initiates were saved from the flood. Under the leadership of Manu, the great sun-hierophant, they founded the culture of the present 5th, post-Atlantean epoch of the earth phase. This epoch itself is again subdivided into several so-called

“culture-epochs”, namely the ancient Indian culture-epoch, the ancient Persian epoch, the ancient Egyptian epoch, the Greco-Roman epoch and the present spiritual soul epoch that started in the middle of the 15th century. Steiner situates the ancient Indian epoch before the origins of Vedanta philosophy, which is but a shadow of the wisdom of the Rishi’s (the Indian masters described in theosophical literature). The Persian epoch is also situated well before the documented history of Zoroastrianism, which again is a reflection of the original wisdom of this period, in which man became more attached to the earth, inventing agriculture and founding cities. The Egyptian epoch is described by Steiner as the period in which the sentient soul was developed, for Egyptian culture was guided by its founding myths, spiritual images that pervaded daily life, and especially the sphere of life, death and the life after death. By contrast, the Greco-Roman epoch found its way out of the images of mythology into the clear thoughts of philosophy, marking the beginning of the epoch of the intellectual soul. Our present epoch, that of the spiritual soul, is determined above all by the development of natural science, by means of which we have been able to conquer and command nature, thereby alienating ourselves from the spiritual world. It is also the period in which old social, national and religious structures crumble, creating a void that has to be filled by the human I that acts in accordance with Christ.

The Death and Resurrection of Christ in the Greco-Roman culture epoch is thus the “mid-point” of planetary evolution, providing a remedy for the decay that had set in through Luciferic and Ahrimanic influences. From that moment on, humanity and earth in general have been able to make a U-turn, finding a new way up towards the New Jerusalem. Although this “U-shape” version of evolution going from original purity through decay and back again to a new form of purity is common to many forms of esotericism and especially prominent in modern theosophy, the central place accorded to the coming of Christ in the planetary evolution makes anthroposophy different from older theosophical accounts of planetary evolution, with which Steiner otherwise has a lot in common. In fact, apart from his esoteric perspective on the history of Persians, Egyptians, Greeks etc., Steiner also outlined an esoteric history of Christianity. Not unlike his theosophical predecessors Steiner more or less included all the known spiritual “Masters” in this history. For instance, he speaks about a “Council” taking place in the 4th

century, in which participated the great esoteric leaders of the West: Manes, representing the I, Zarathustra, representing the astral body, Buddha, representing the etheric body, and Skythianos, representing the physical body. These four Masters mapped out the future development of Christianity from the perspective of the old initiatory knowledge of the Egyptian and Greek mysteries, that had prepared Christ’s coming. The basic question during this meeting was how the ancient secret knowledge could be saved and transformed in the light of Christ’s redemptive act. These masters thus founded “esoteric Christianity”, which according to Steiner appeared on earth in the form of the grail current (under the leadership of Percival) [→ Grail traditions in Western esotericism] and, subsequently, → Rosicrucianism under the leadership of Christian Rosencreutz.

Steiner thus showed himself as obsessed with the concept of evolution as all other members of the cultural elite in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In this connection he has often been accused of implicit or even explicit racism. His evolutionary logic, which is quite reminiscent of Hegel’s philosophy of world history, implies that some “culture epochs”, and also some races, are higher – closer to the nucleus of contemporary world development – than others. The vanguard of the present evolutionary epoch, for instance, is mainly to be found in Middle Europe, other nations being seen as less relevant or even as “decadent” survivals from earlier periods. Steiner’s opponents point to a few very unfortunate passages which, for instance, speak of native Americans being decadent and more or less “ready” for the mass murder committed by the Europeans. Furthermore, Steiner speaks of the Jewish people as having fulfilled its mission and facing no other choice than either complete assimilation or extinction. This is not the place to draw a final conclusion about Steiner’s alleged racism, but a full discussion should take into account some additional factors: his explicit rejection of social Darwinism, his philosophy of freedom that speaks of the moral person acting on the strength of individual moral intuitions and breaking away from the collective morality of nation and religion, and his emphasis on the notion that we live in the epoch of the spiritual soul, in which the human I – which is common to all humankind – more and more comes to dominate the forces of race and religion that divide human beings. Moreover, Steiner actively combated anti-semitism in his Berlin years and opened the newly founded Anthroposophical Society in 1923/24 for everyone, regardless of sex, race or religion.

#### 4. REINCARNATION AND KARMA

In order for us to be able to experience planetary evolution and, above all, to further it, Steiner thought we need more than one life, in other words, we need to reincarnate. The theme of → reincarnation and karma is a central ingredient of Steiner's teachings, and underwent a fair degree of metamorphosis over the years. In fact, the last great lecture series before his death was devoted to yet another revision of his original conceptions. Karma, the law of cause and effects that connects our present life with previous ones is formed in the life between death and the new incarnation, to which Steiner devoted a lot of attention. His descriptions of the path of the soul through the diverse regions of the spiritual world has similarities with theosophical doctrines and pre-modern Western sources such as Macrobius and other Platonists. Again, however, Steiner's doctrine stands out not only for its highly systematic character but also for its attempt to integrate ideas about reincarnation and Karma within a Christian framework.

After death, the first body that we lose is the etheric one, which contains the memories of the past life. During the first three days after death, while this body is shed off, the soul re-experiences all the events of the past life in reverse order. Next, the soul enters the world to which Steiner refers by the theosophical term Kamaloka. Here, it is the astral body that is purged from its experiences in the past life. The Kamaloka confronts us with everything we have done out of egoism; it is the sphere of guilt, spite and retribution, showing us all the emotional and other damage we have caused in other people's souls. However, this almost Old Testament notion of tit for tat (in fact, Steiner says that the soul experiences → Moses as a kind of Guardian of this region) has been substantially transformed by Christ's Resurrection. The more we have lived our life with Christian love, the shorter this period will be. Moreover, Christ does not so much punish us for our failures as that he looks at them from the perspective of moral improvement.

Then, the I enters the lower and subsequently the higher Devachan – yet another theosophical term. The lower Devachan is basically the Platonic world of Archetypes, whereas the higher Devachan contains the cosmic intentions or thoughts behind these Archetypes. The higher Devachan stretches out over the Zodiac. Here we experience the “Sun at Midnight”, the point between the upward movement after death and the downward movement towards a new incarnation. In this region Karma is formed in conjunction with the Celestial Hierar-

chies. Having worked through all of its past in the way up to the Sun at Midnight the I now goes back through the planetary spheres, forming its new bodies that contain the karmic consequences of the past life. In this connection, Steiner speaks about a three-fold karma: the karma of events that is linked with the physical body, the natural karma linked with the etheric body, and the karma of sympathy and antipathy linked with the astral body. The natural karma encompasses everything that has to do with health and disease, but also with the specific family or nation one has chosen to be born into etc.; sympathy and antipathy refer to our professional and other interests or affinities; whereas the karma of events refer to crucial experiences that shape or change our lives. In this context, Steiner does not tire of stressing that everything that happens to us has sense or purpose. Steiner essentially depicted a symbolic cosmos in which the Hierarchies continuously emit signs that gives us guidance for our actions, provided of course that we are able to read these signs. For instance, anthroposophists are supposed not to curse a train that gets broken on one's way to a highly important job interview, but to see it as a wake-up call by the Hierarchies, suggesting reflection on the question whether this particular job is really what one should be doing in life. This example also makes clear that karma according to Steiner is not just a matter of Leibnizian pre-established harmony, concocted in heaven, but is also the outcome of direct intervention by the Hierarchies in our daily lives.

Steiner urged anthroposophists to look for certain red threads running through a person's biography (including our own), with respect to the various forms of karma that in a next step can be explained in terms of karmic laws. For instance, in regard to natural karma, a certain susceptibility to smallpox is the result of one's past life's tendency to act without love or real interest. Actually, most of the many karmic laws that Steiner describes stretch out over various lives. Nevertheless, Steiner had anything but a deterministic or pessimistic outlook on karma. Again, the crucial fact here is the presence of Christ, whom Steiner calls “Lord of the Karma”. Thanks to Christ, karma is no longer a deterministic cycle, from which we can only strive to escape as soon as possible. Karma and reincarnation are seen in the light of moral and spiritual perfectibility. Humans reincarnate in order to work on their own purification and especially on that of the earth. Christ thus transforms the karmic laws from laws of retribution for past sins, into possibilities for moral improvement. For instance, one may



be confronted with a strong antipathy or open enmity by a certain person, which is the result of a negative act one has oneself committed against this person in a previous life. By trying not to respond by giving in to antipathy, fear or other negative emotions, but rather, by using the I to find common ground, one makes up for past sins. In this connection, Steiner also speaks of old or “moon”-karma and “new” or sun-karma. Thanks to Christ’s presence in our I we can take the initiative to step beyond old karmic laws, creating a new and more positive karma that also extends to persons one has never met in previous lives.

Steiner tried to harmonize the doctrine of reincarnation and karma with the traditional theological doctrines concerning God’s Grace and the forgiveness of sins. What Christ forgives or remedies is the objective consequences of our immoral acts: by committing sin, we not only hurt fellow human beings but also the spiritual sphere of the earth. Christ ensures that we are confronted with the subjective karmic consequences of our actions, in view of improvement, thereby preventing us from facing the objective effects that we would never be able to manage.

#### 5. THE SPIRITUAL PATH

According to Steiner himself, all the doctrines discussed so far are the outcome of independent spiritual research, based on his innate clairvoyant capacities. In fact, Steiner emphasizes that he has found e.g. all the information concerning the dual biography of Jesus in the Akasha-Chronicle, the earth’s planetary record in the spiritual world. Although Steiner taught all these doctrines to his followers, he certainly did not think that spiritual knowledge was confined to a few initiates or Masters. Quite on the contrary, scholars have described Steiner’s esoteric doctrine as a “democratization” of spiritual experience as compared to older theosophy, even paving the way in this particular respect for the do-it-yourself-spirituality of the → New Age Movement. In many places in his work, Steiner gave indications for a systematic personal spiritual path that would lead to knowledge of the higher worlds. He gave particular meditations or mantras (especially in the form of the meditations intended for the First Class of his School of Spiritual Science) that could be used in order to develop the higher spiritual organs: imagination, inspiration and intuition. Imagination stands for a transmuted thought process, the so-called “vivid thinking” (*lebendiges Denken*) that transforms abstract thinking into dynamic spiritual images. Inspiration arises when we erase all imaginative elements and start “hear-

ing” spiritually the spiritual forces that stand behind these images. It consists in a spiritualized process of feeling. Intuition, finally, leads to direct knowledge of spiritual entities and is brought about by a transformation of the will.

However, it is quite typical for Steiner that his concrete indications concerning the development of higher knowledge are outweighed by his consistent stress on the *conditions* for obtaining this knowledge. In works such as *Theosophy*, Steiner gives a whole series of so-called “side-exercises” (*Nebenübungen*) that are all geared to stimulating emotional and moral stability. Steiner never tired of emphasizing that meditation should not lead us away from our daily life, but is meant to give more depth to daily life itself. The basis of any meditative practice is our faculty of objective thinking, which prevents us from drifting off into a mystical fog of vague spiritual feelings. In his anthroposophical, post-philosophical career, Steiner stated that his own *Philosophy of Freedom* could and even should be used as a meditative text. He claimed that by developing imaginative, spiritual thought or *lebendiges Denken*, one should be able to gain independent confirmation of all the doctrines he had revealed to his followers.

Steiner thus had the same ambiguous attitude towards modern science as many other occultists of the 19th and early 20th century. On the one hand, science was viewed as a materialist threat to true humanity. On the other hand, there is the claim that anthroposophy is a spiritual science (*Geisteswissenschaft*), meeting scientific standards of objectivity, lack of prejudice etc. Nevertheless, there is an inherent tension within anthroposophy between Steiner’s demand that one develop one’s own spiritual capacities and conduct independent spiritual scientific research, on the one hand, and the need to come to terms with his revelations contained in the ca. 400 volumes of his *Gesamtausgabe*, on the other hand. Steiner frequently warned his followers that his texts should not be venerated as revelations, but should be used as heuristic tools in dealing with everyday experience. His occult physiology for instance, should be employed in categorizing empirical observation of a person’s posture, way of walking etc.

#### 6. THE ANTHROPOSOPICAL MOVEMENT

The present Anthroposophical Society was founded under the Presidency of Steiner at the so-called Christmas Conference (*Weihnachtstagung*) of 1923/1924, as the successor of the earlier Society which Steiner did not lead himself (see →

Steiner). This Conference is still very important to contemporary anthroposophists, as Steiner not only laid the factual foundation of the Society but also the spiritual one; he did this in the form of the so-called Foundation Stone Meditation (*Grundsteinspruch*), which links tripartite man with the macrocosmos of the Hierarchies and the Trinity, and contains Steiner's version of the Rosicrucian Motto *Ex Deo nascimur, in Christo morimur, ex Spiritu Sancto reviviscimus* (we are born from God, we die in Christ and we are resurrected in the Holy Spirit). After Steiner's death in 1925, the Society soon became the scene of tremendous personal conflicts and disputes about the Society's future course. Moreover, very early on the Society was forbidden by the Nazis. Nevertheless, it survived all of this, resolved past conflicts, and witnessed a new period of growth in the 1970s and 1980s, especially thanks to the practical applications of anthroposophy such as Waldorf Schools, biodynamic farming, anthroposophical medicine, curative pedagogy (for the mentally handicapped) and various kinds of social initiatives, such as shops, enterprises and "green" and social banks. In this sense, what anthroposophists refer to as the Anthroposophical Movement is much wider than the membership of the Anthroposophical Society. Especially since the break with the Theosophical Society in 1913, anthroposophy and the later Anthroposophical Society have had a strongly – though not exclusively – Middle European, German-speaking character. In recent years, the Anthroposophical Society and Movement have had a wider international expansion, with more room for English-language conferences at the Society's headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland, official publications in English and a stronger presence in North- and South America and Asia. For more information on the Anthroposophical society, one may consult [www.goetheanum.ch](http://www.goetheanum.ch).

*Lit.* Geoffrey Ahern, *Sun at Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and the Western Esoteric Tradition*, Wellingborough, 1984 ♦ Daniel van Egmond, "Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", in: Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, 311-346 ♦ Harald Lamprecht, *Neue Rosenkreuzer: Ein Handbuch*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004, 191-205 ♦ Christoph Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, Stuttgart, 1997 ♦ Renata von Maydell, "Anthroposophy in Russia", in: Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997, 153-167 ♦ Helmut Zander, "Friedrich Rittelmeyer: Eine Konversion vom liberalen

Protestantismus zur anthroposophischen Christengemeinschaft", in: F.W. Graf & H.M. Müller, *Der deutsche Protestantismus um 1900*, Gütersloh, 1996, 238-297 ♦ idem, "Anthroposophische Rassentheorie: Der Geist auf dem Weg durch die Geschichte", in: Stefanie von Schnurbein & Justus H. Ulbricht (eds.), *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne: Entwürfe 'arteigener' Glaubenssysteme seit der Jahrhundertwende*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001, 292-341 ♦ idem, "Die Anthroposophie: Eine Religion?", *Hairesis: Festschrift für Karl Hobeisel zum 65. Geburtstag* (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 34), Münster Westfalen: Aschendorff Verlag, 2002, 525-538.

CEES LEIJENHORST

## Archontics

The Archontics were adherents of a Christian Gnostic sect [→ Gnosticism] of the 4th century, named after the archons, the rulers of the seven heavens, who played an important role in their system. The sect is only known through the refutation by its staunch opponent from the beginning, bishop Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion*, 40, to which the references below refer), from whom all information in later authors derives. Since it is not likely that these Gnostics called themselves after the evil planetary rulers they abhorred, their name may have been invented by Epiphanius himself, because of the great variety of names they used for the archons (40, 8, 7).

The founder of the sect was a certain Peter, a former Palestinian priest, who had been excommunicated because of his heterodox views, then lived for a long time in Arabia, and finally returned to Palestine where he, unrecognized, lived the life of a hermit. Epiphanius, however, who was head of a monastery in Eleutheropolis (ca. 335-ca. 365), discovered Peter's true identity from his secret teachings and expelled him from the church. But Peter remained in his cave and attracted many people. One of them was a certain Euktaktos from Armenia Minor (eastern Turkey). On his way home from a pilgrimage to Egypt he visited Peter and was converted to his Gnostic views, which happened to the end of Constantius' reign († 361). Back in Armenia, he succeeded in winning over many Armenians, especially rich dignitaries, to his heretical ideas (40, 1-8).

The Archontics made use of many books, of which they themselves had compiled two, the *Lesser Harmony* and the *Greater Harmony*. The former may have been no more than an abstract from the latter, since in 40, 2, 3 Epiphanius simply

speaks of 'the book entitled *Harmony*'. They also used books that already circulated in heterodox circles, for instance the apocryphal *Ascension of Isaiah* and a work called *Strangers (Allogeneis)* (40, 2, 1-2). The latter certainly belonged to a special kind of literature of which they also had other specimens in their possession: works written in the name of Seth, or of Seth and his seven sons, who were called 'strangers' (*allogeneis*) (40, 7, 4). This is strongly reminiscent of the book *Allogenes* ("Stranger") which was used by Plotinus' Gnostics (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 16) and recovered in Cod. XI, 3 of the Nag Hammadi Library. The Archontics also held two prophets in high esteem, Martiades and Marsianos, who had been caught up into the heavens and had come down after three days. The name Marsianos may be no more than a variant of the name Marsanes, known, *inter alia*, from the title of another Nag Hammadi writing, *Marsanes* (Cod. X, 1). The books *Allogenes* and *Marsanes*, together with the *Three Steles of Seth* and *Zostrianus* (NHC VII, 5 and VIII, 1), form a group of late Gnostic works which combined traditional elements of Sethian gnosticism with Neoplatonic ideas [→ Neoplatonism], in particular those of Iamblichus. The Gnostics behind these books were no longer interested primarily in the origin of the bad material world and the soul's deliverance from evil but in the soul's experience of the divine through a ritual for heavenly ascent.

There are strong indications that the Archontics shared the same ideas and, therefore, were not an independent Gnostic group but a special Palestinian and Armenian brand of later Sethian Gnosticism [→ Sethians]. Their mythology and their interpretation of the first chapters of the Bible have much in common with Sethian writings such as the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1; III, 1; IV, 1; BG 8502, 2) and, in particular, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 4). The *Harmony* explained that there are seven heavens, each ruled by a special archon and his band of angels. The soul has its origin in the eighth heaven, the abode of the high, good God, called the Father of All, and the Mother on high, also called the Luminous Mother, whence it descended into this world (40, 2, 3 and 8). The Archontics held that the soul is the indispensable food of the planetary rulers and their retinue: they cannot live without it since it comes from the moisture on high and provides them with power (40, 2, 7). The highest archon, Sabaoth, rules over the seventh heaven and is said to be the father of the devil (40, 5, 1). This feature of the myth might be due, however, to a misunderstanding of Epiphanius. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 95,

13-26), Sabaoth is the son of the devil who rebelled against his father and received authority over the seventh heaven as a reward. Just as the *Hypostasis*, the Archontics taught that Sabaoth was not as evil as the devil but far below the goodness of the highest God. He is identified with the God of the Jews and the non-Gnostic Christians (40, 5, 2).

Just as in the *Apocryphon of John*, the birth of Cain and Abel is due to the sexual union of the devil and Eve. In support of this view the Archontics cited John 8:44. They taught that both brothers desired their sister and that it was for that reason that Cain slew Abel. Seth, however, was born from the union of Adam and Eve, whereupon the power and the ministers of the good God caught him up lest he be killed too. After a long time he was brought down again, i.e. he was reincarnated, in such a state that neither Sabaoth, nor the authorities and principalities of the creator-god could prevail over him. On the contrary, he exposed their evil nature and solely recognized the unnameable power and the good God on high (40, 7, 1-3). In this way, Seth, the "Stranger" *par excellence*, became the Gnostic revealer and saviour.

The Archontics rejected the sacraments of the church in general and baptism in particular, as being instituted in the name of Sabaoth (40, 2, 6). They denied the resurrection of the flesh and only taught a resurrection of the soul by means of its heavenly ascent (40, 2, 5). If the soul has attained a state of Gnosis and has separated itself from the baptism of the church and the lawgiver Sabaoth, it is able to ascend to the eighth heaven of the Mother on high and the Father of All. It passes unharmed through the seven heavens, by virtue of its knowledge of the necessary passwords or words of defence to be said to the planetary rulers, a feature well known from other Gnostic texts (40, 2, 8). This was the core and kernel of the Archontics' doctrine of salvation. Their negative view of the material world led them to a docetic Christology, i.e. the doctrine that Jesus had only a carnal body in appearance (40, 8, 2). In accordance with their depreciation of the body, many Archontics practised sexual abstinence. Epiphanius had to admit this, but he immediately added that this was all feigned in order to deceive the simpler folk; according to him other Archontics 'polluted their bodies by licentiousness' (40, 2, 4).

The Armenian Archontics may have had some influence on the ideas of the Paulicians and other heterodox groups in Armenia and the Balkans and, through their intermediary, on those of the medieval Bogomils [→ Bogomilism] and the Cathars [→ Catharism] (dualism, rejection of water-

baptism, use of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the ascent of the soul to its heavenly origin, *et al.*)

K. Holl (ed.), *Epiphanius II: Panarion haer. 34-64*, 2nd. rev. ed. by J. Dummer, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980 ♦ Engl. trans. with notes in F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book 1 (Sects 1-46)*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987; and B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1987, 191-198.

Lit.: H.-Ch. Puech, "Archontiker", *RACI* (1950), 633-643 ♦ M.E. Stone, "An Armenian Pilgrim to the Holy Land in the Early Byzantine Era", *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 18 (1984), 173-178.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

## Areopagite, Pseudo-Dionysius the → Dionysius Areopagita (Pseudo-)

## Ariosophy

1. LANZ VON LIEBENFELS'S SYSTEM
2. THE ORDO NOVI TEMPLI 3. RUDOLF JOHN GORSLEBEN 4. HERBERT REICHSTEIN
5. ARIOSOPHY AND THE THIRD REICH

A dualistic-gnostic racial religion which attracted followers in Austria and Germany during the first half of the 20th century. The term "Ariosophy", meaning esoteric wisdom of the Aryan race, was first coined by → Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels in 1915. He earlier used the terms "theozoology" and "Ario-Christianity" and founded the Ordo Novi Templi (ONT) at Vienna in 1900 as a Christian gnostic order to celebrate an Aryan cult of pure race. → Guido von List, whose ideas on the occult heritage of the Aryans supplied further inspiration for Ariosophy, actually called his own doctrine "Wotanism" or "Armanism". During the 1920s and 1930s Ariosophy embraced the expanded ONT under the leadership of Lanz von Liebenfels, and an associated group of writers who combined theories of Aryan supremacy and racial purity with → astrology, numerology [→ Number Symbolism], kabbalism [→ Jewish Influences], graphology and palmistry.

Ariosophy elaborated a gnostic form of Christianity based on the divinity of the Aryans, supported by 19th-century anthropology, zoology and archaeology. Its doctrine also embraced ideas taken from the Theosophy of → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Ariosophy described a golden age (both prehistoric and medieval), when religious orders had

governed racially pure Aryan societies on the basis of a racial gnosis. The Ariosophists claimed that an evil conspiracy of anti-Aryan agents (variously identified as inferior non-Aryan races of bestial origin, the Jews, or even the Church) had sought to undermine and ruin this pristine Aryan race by emancipating the non-German inferiors in the name of a spurious egalitarianism. The resulting racial confusion gave birth to the modern world with its wars, economic conflict, political uncertainty and the frustration of German world-power. The Ariosophists cultivated the esoteric knowledge and racial virtue of the ancient Aryans, in order to oppose the modern world and so prepare the way for a new pan-Aryan world order.

### 1. LANZ VON LIEBENFELS'S SYSTEM

The doctrine of Ariosophy was first formulated by Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, who entered the Cistercian novitiate as Frater Georg at Heiligenkreuz Abbey near Vienna in 1893. Here Lanz made good progress, taking his solemn vows in 1897 and assuming teaching duties in the seminary in 1898. However, Lanz harboured heretical ideas concerning the literally bestial nature of sin, an idea suggested to him by a tombstone relief showing a knight treading on a strange animal. Convinced that Christianity had betrayed its original racial doctrines, he left the order in 1899 and immersed himself in contemporary anthropological studies relating to the Aryan race, such as Carl Penka, *Origines Ariacae* (1883), Matthäus Much, *Die Heimat der Indogermanen* (1902), and Ludwig Wilser, *Die Germanen* (1904).

In 1903 Lanz published a long article 'Anthropozoon biblicum' in a periodical for biblical research. From his analysis of mystery cults described by Herodotus, Euhemerus, Plutarch, Strabo and Pliny, Lanz concluded that the ancient civilisations had practised an orgiastic cult involving sexual intercourse with small beasts or pygmies. Reliefs excavated at Nimrud in 1848 by the British orientalist Sir Austen Henry Layard showed such beasts (*pagatu, baziati, udumi*) being sent as tribute to the Assyrians. According to Lanz, the writings of the ancients, the findings of modern archaeology, and substantial sections of the Old Testament corroborated this terrible practice of miscegenation. He articulated a theology in which the Fall denoted the racial compromise of the divine Aryans due to wicked interbreeding with lower animal species, deriving from an earlier primitive branch of animal evolution. These persistent sins, institutionalized as satanic cults, led to the creation of several mixed races, which threatened the sacred and legitimate

authority of the Aryans throughout the world, especially in Germany, where the Aryans were still most numerous. In 1905 Lanz published his fundamental statement of gnostic doctrine as *Theozoologie oder die Kunde von den Sodoms-Äfflingen und dem Götterelektron*, which again combined traditional Judaeo-Christian sources with the new life-sciences: hence theo-zoology. The first section of the book presented the evil realm by examining the origin and nature of the pygmies. The first pygmy, called Adam, spawned a race of beast-men (*Anthropozoa*), which gave rise to the various species of apes in the world. Quite distinct in origin were the earlier and superior god-men (*Theozoa*). Following Euhemerus and Saxo Grammaticus, Lanz believed that these superior forms of life were gods. Impressed by current scientific discoveries in electronics and radiology, Lanz saw electricity as a form of divine revelation and inspiration and attributed to *Theozoa* extraordinary sensory organs for the reception and transmission of electrical signals. These organs bestowed powers of telepathy and omniscience upon the *Theozoa*. True religion in Lanz's view consisted in endogamous cults of racial purity in order to maintain these divine powers and to counter the temptations of lecherous acts with the bestial apelings, pygmies and their cross-breeds.

Lanz's exegesis of the Old Testament led him to conclude that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was just such a prehistoric electrical being, who regularly manifested as a cloud, fire and lightning. The electrical nature of the Ark of the Covenant was evident, while 'God has both properties of electrical rays, he enlivens and he kills, he heals and he makes ill' (*Theozoologie*, p. 97). By contrast, the heathen deities of Israel were all throwbacks to the evil cults of bestiality. Moving on to the New Testament, Lanz also identified Christ as an electrical being, who came to redeem a fallen mankind from bestial miscegenation through a revival of the gnostic racial religion. According to Lanz, Christ was one of the last god-men but not God. Christ's miracles and magical powers and the transfiguration confirmed his electronic nature. Lanz substantiated this view with quotations from the apocryphal Acts of John and the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*. Lanz interpreted the Crucifixion as the attempted rape of Christ by pygmies urged on by adherents of the bestial cults devoted to interbreeding.

In place of the originally distinct species of *Theozoa* and apes, there had developed several mixed races, of which the Aryans were the least corrupt. The marvellous electrical organs of the *Theozoa* had atrophied into the supposedly superfluous

pituitary and pineal glands in modern man owing to miscegenation. Throughout all recorded history, the apelings and pygmies had sought to destroy the Aryans by dragging them down the evolutionary ladder by means of their promiscuity. The history of religion recorded a constant struggle between the bestial and endogamous cults. Besides Lanz's citation of Gnostic sources, his racial religion also betrays gnostic features. '[The gods] once walked physically on earth. Today they live on in man. The gods slumber in the racially degraded bodies of men, but the day will come when they arise once more' (*Theozoology*, p. 91). The entrapment of the divine electrical spark within racially inferior bodies transposes gnostic ideas into the modern discourse of physical anthropology and eugenics. Lanz claimed that a universal programme of segregation and breeding could restore these divine powers to the Aryans as the closest descendants of the god-men.

Lanz's radical interpretation of Scripture logically embraced the Judaeo-Christian notions of linear history, apocalypse and salvation. At the end of this manichaeic temporal scheme stood the promise of final redemption. Lanz painted a grim portrait of modernity characterised by racial confusion, the decline of traditional elites, the emancipation and promotion of inferiors, and the rule of money. 'Why do you seek a hell in the next world! Is the hell in which we live and which burns inside us [the stigma of corrupt blood] not dreadful enough?' (*Theozoology*, p. 133). These "messianic woes" were the apocalyptic prelude to the millennium, when the ascendancy of the inferior races both in Europe and its colonial orbit would be reversed. Lanz fulminated against the (false) Christian tradition of compassion and social welfare and demanded that the state deal ruthlessly with the indigent. Women in particular were regarded as a special problem as they were supposedly more prone to the sexual attraction of racial inferiors. Socialism, democracy and feminism were the downfall of a racially pure world.

Lanz's millennium was a pan-German world-empire ruled by the aristocracy. As the original Aryan homeland, Germany had always been the nation of kings and heroes, while its Latin, Slav and Byzantine neighbours had fostered racial degeneration. Lanz claimed that traces of the holy electronic power still prevailed in the old princely dynasties of Germany. Provided their pedigree remained thoroughly noble, these aristocratic families were the closest living descendants of the former god-men. The princes had always cultivated genius, innovation and art at their castles and



courts. In the modern age the racial inferiors constantly sought to compromise this progress by intermarriage and demands for a share in power. Lanz prophesied a millennium of aristocratic rule, underpinned by an aggressive programme of German imperialism to reconquer the world and vanquish the racial inferiors.

Lanz's religious ideas were strongly influenced by the political circumstances of Habsburg Austria at the turn of the century. Representative government had been introduced in 1867 under constitutional changes whereby the emperor shared power with a bicameral legislature, elected by a restricted franchise under which about 6% of the population voted. The franchise was widened in 1897 and universal male suffrage was introduced in 1907. The advance of representative democracy challenged traditional German dominance in the multinational empire of Germans, Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians and Slovenes. Lanz's hostility towards other races, his condemnation of democracy and call for the subjection of all nationalities in the empire to German aristocratic rule indicate his profound reaction to the political developments of his time. His political concerns were evident in his own journal *Ostara* (named after the pagan Germanic goddess of spring), which he began publishing in 1905. *Ostara*, subtitled "Library for Blonds and Fighters for Men's Rights", initially addressed the political and economic problems of the Habsburg empire from a racial and pan-German perspective. From 1908 until 1918 Lanz wrote seventy-one issues himself. Their stock themes were racial somatology, anti-feminism, anti-parliamentarianism, and the spiritual differences between the blond (higher) and dark (lower) races in sexual behaviour, art, philosophy, commerce, politics and warfare. The First World War was documented as an eschatological struggle between the blonds and the darks.

Theosophy was a further ingredient of Lanz's early doctrine. One of Lanz's contributors was the Theosophist, Harald Grävell van Jostenode (1856-1932), who wrote two *Ostara* issues outlining a pan-German empire and a programme for the restoration of Aryan authority in the world. Lanz also made direct use of Theosophy in his *Bibel-dokumente* series (1907-1908). The second number of the series, *Die Theosophie und die assyrischen "Menschentiere"*, gave an selective exegesis of → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's major text *The Secret Doctrine*, newly translated into German between 1897 and 1901. He compared her occult anthropology favourably with the findings of modern palaeontology, incorporated the sunken continents of Lemuria and Atlantis in his own view of prehis-

tory, and recognised his *pagatu, baziati, udumi* of Assyrian lore in her account of prehistoric monsters. In Blavatsky's eighth stanza of *Dzyan*, verses 30-32, the early Lemurians first developed into two sexes but interbred with attractive, inferior females to produce monsters and demons. Lanz validated Blavatsky's scheme of five root-races (to date), concluding that the fourth root-race of Atlanteans had divided into pure and bestial sub-species, corresponding to the anthropoids and the anthropomorphic apes. The fatal sin of the former's descendants, the fifth root-race of the Aryans, had been persistent interbreeding with the latter's descendants.

## 2. THE ORDO NOVI TEMPLI

In 1900 Lanz founded the *Ordo Novi Templi* (ONT) to propagate his ideas of "theozoology" and "Ario-Christianity". His decision to organise his sect as a chivalrous male order in the Templar tradition [→ Neo-Templar Traditions] drew on his own monastic experience and the contemporary vogue of the grail-knight figure in neo-romantic music and literature (Richard Wagner, Erwin Kolbenheyer, Friedrich Lienhard). The Templars were closely associated with the Cistercian order. St Bernard of Clairvaux, the Cistercian founder, had composed the Templar rule in 1128 and later addressed a laudation to the knights for their martial championship of Christianity in the Holy Land. Lanz believed that the Templars represented a pan-Aryan initiative to create a 'Greater Germanic order-state, which would encompass the entire Mediterranean area and extend its influence deep into the Middle East'. The trial and brutal suppression of the Templars in 1312 signified to Lanz the triumph of the racial inferiors who were determined to undermine the racial cult. Armed with his gnostic-racial interpretation of Scripture, supposedly suppressed since the 14th century, Lanz refounded the lapsed military order for a new racial crusade.

The ONT combined Christian piety with modern notions of racial eugenics and pan-Aryanism in a gnostic religion of redemption through pure blood. In 1907 Lanz purchased Burg Werfenstein, a small medieval castle on the River Danube near Grein in Upper Austria, as the priory of the ONT, and developed a liturgy and ceremonial. The order rule described the ONT as a racial-religious association, which could be joined only by (male) persons of predominantly pure blood, who were blond-haired, blue-eyed and possessed of an "ario-heroic" figure according to Aryan racial somatology outlined in *Ostara*. Brothers were admitted to

the ONT in a hierarchy of orders, according to their degree of racial purity: Servers (SNT), persons less than 50% racially pure, or persons under twenty-four years who had not undergone a racial test; Novices (NNT) included all members aged over twenty-four years and being more than 50% racially pure, who had not yet been tested for advancement to the superior orders; these were Masters (MONT) and Canons (CONT) who possessed respectively 50-75% and 75-100% degrees of racial purity. The two highest orders of the hierarchy were Presbyter (pONT) and Prior (PONT). Any Master or Canon was eligible for promotion to Presbyter once he had founded a new house for the ONT. His rights included the saying of office and celebration of mass, but excluded the reception and investiture of brothers. A Presbyter whose chapter exceeded five Masters or Canons was eligible for installation as a Prior. Lanz devised vestments and heraldic devices for each order of the hierarchy, while brothers assumed an order-name upon reception, e.g. Fra Asmund MONT ad Werfenstein.

Order ceremonial was developed from 1908 onwards. Lanz composed devotional songs and verse and had the Werfenstein priory decorated with votive paintings of Hugo de Payns, founder and first Grand Master of the Templars, St Bernard embracing the suffering Christ, and images of the apelings or pygmies. In 1915-1916 Lanz published a New Templar breviary in two parts containing "Ario-Christian" psalms and canticles written by himself and other brothers. While based on traditional Christian texts, these texts reflected the dualist gnostic-racial doctrine with supplications to Christ-Frauja (a Gothic name for Jesus) for racial salvation and the sacrifice and extermination of the inferior races. Lanz also composed several ritual books. The basic text was the *Hebdomadarium*, which contained the three offices of matins, prime and compline for each day of the week. Each office had a space for readings relating to "Ario-Christian" doctrine from the *Festivarium NT*. This book of festival readings comprised three volumes: the *Legendarium* provided readings describing the historical and cultural traditions of the racial religion for matins on each day of the year. The materials for its 1400 pages were drawn from orthodox Christianity, modern science and the acts of the New Templars. The other volumes, the *Evangelarium* and the *Visionarium*, performed the same function in the prime and compline offices. These ritual books were supplemented by a hymnal (*Cantuarium*), a book of psalms, and an *Imaginarium NT* of devotional pictures. ONT liturgy fused the

forms and beliefs of Catholicism with the racial gnosis.

The defeat of the Central Powers and the disintegration of the Habsburg empire in November 1918 confirmed Lanz's fears about the ascendancy of racial inferiors over the Aryans. In his view, the abdication of monarchs, revolutions, new national states, and inflation signalled the destruction of historic political entities and aristocratic elites, and the demoralisation of the upper and middle classes throughout Europe. Henceforth, anti-Semitism and a belief in a "Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik" conspiracy underpinned his "Ario-Christian" religion. In the late 1920s he articulated a millenarianism based on cosmic periods of approximately 730 years within the Platonic Year. In the period 480-1210 society had been ruled by "spiritual-chivalrous orders" (Benedictines, Cistercians, Templars and Teutonic Knights). In the period 1210-1920 aristocratic rule was eclipsed by the rise of the masses. The Turks and Jews weakened the European polity and the spread of towns, capitalism, and the ideologies of nationalism and democracy encouraged the ascendancy of racial inferiors and the proletariat, culminating in Bolshevism and revolution. Lanz foretold that the period 1920-2640 would see the revival of hierarchies, patricians, and secret orders. He hailed the right-wing dictatorships of Spain, Italy and Hungary in the 1920s as precursors of the global counter-revolution.

During the late 1920s and 1930s Lanz continued to elaborate the doctrine of Ariosophy with numerous volumes of scripture and extensive booklet-series. His ten-volume *Bibiomystikon oder Die Geheimbibel der Eingeweihten* (1930-1935) was a major re-interpretation of the Bible in the light of the racial gnosis. In the booklets of his *Ariomantische Bücherei* and *Elektrotheologische Handschriften* series, Lanz outlined an "electrotheology" according to which divine "electrotheonic" beings (angels, grail-doves, muses, valkyries and norns) had physically represented the eucharist as a form of sexual sacrifice to breed up the "ario-heroic" race in prehistoric times. The bread and wine of the Christian mass symbolised the "electrotheonic" nature of Christ-Frauja, while the Holy Grail was actually a grail-dove. Lanz assimilated Orpheus, Moses, Pythagoras, Plato, Brahma and Apollonius of Tyana into his mystery-religion of electricity and race. He also wrote an esoteric key to the Gothic Bible of Ulfilas (c. 311-383), having identified Ariosophy with the Arian heresy which had flourished among the Germanic tribes during the great migrations.

Lanz's "History of Ariosophy" traced the racial

religion from Atlantis to the ancient world, through → neoplatonism and → gnosticism, to the reformed monastic and military orders of the Middle Ages, which represented a final climax of “Ario-Christian” civilization. The Moors in Spain, the Mongol invasions and the rise of the Ottoman Turks represented external racial challenges to the “Ario-Christian” domain of medieval Europe, which were matched by internal enemies. Lanz condemned the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans) for their plebeian spirit, intolerant dogmatism and hostility to the old monastic orders. By contrast with the “ario-heroic” culture of the Middle Ages, Lanz dismissed the Renaissance as a period of decline, characterised by increasing Jewish economic, political and cultural influence. The former strict ariosophical morality of Christianity was superseded by a universal doctrine of humanity which accelerated the rise of lower castes. Lanz regarded both the Jesuits and the Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] as revolutionary agents committed to cosmopolitanism, equality and liberalism, which favoured the dominance of racial inferiors.

In order to posit the underground continuity of Ariosophy, Lanz’s “Ario-Christian” mystical tradition included → Hildegard of Bingen, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Meister Eckhart, Jan van Ruysbroeck and Thomas à Kempis. In the early modern period, these mystics were succeeded by → Jakob Boehme, Angelus Silesius, Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, and → Emanuel Swedenborg. In the 19th century, Lanz’s roll of Ariosophical initiates included J.B. Kerning, the mystical Freemason; Carl von Reichenbach, the Viennese investigator of → animal magnetism; the French occultists → Eliphas Lévi, Gerard Encausse [→ Papus], and → Edouard Schuré; and the Theosophists Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, → Franz Hartmann, → Annie Besant and → Charles Webster Leadbeater. The tradition finally led to Guido von List, Rudolf John Gorsleben, and the contemporary mythologists of an Aryan Atlantis, Karl Georg Zschaetzsch, and Hermann Wieland.

Before 1914 ONT activity revolved around Lanz and some fifty brothers in Vienna and Werfenstein, but during the interwar years further order-houses were founded in Germany and Hungary, where Lanz resided after 1918. Wickeloh (near Uelzen, Germany) was established by Georg Hauerstein Jr. in 1925; Marienkamp-Szt. Balázs (near Lake Balaton, Hungary) founded by Lanz in 1926; Hertenburg (on the Darß peninsula, Germany), also founded by Hauerstein in 1927; Staufen (near Sigmaringen, Germany) founded by Friedrich Franz von Hochberg (1875-1954); Petena (near Waging

am See, Germany), also founded by Hauerstein in 1935; Pilisszentkereszt (northern Hungary) in 1937. According to *Tabularium O.N.T.*, the regular order newsletter detailing receptions, chapters and donations, ONT activity reached its peak between 1925 and 1935, having established at least seven sites and received some three to four hundred brothers. In 1942 Hauerstein and Lanz founded the Vitalis New Templars (NT Vit) with Petena as its seat and archpriory. In contrast to the ONT, the NT Vit accepted female members. Order activity at Petena continued until 1973.

Besides providing the basis of ONT doctrine and liturgy, Ariosophy was also publicized during the 1920s by German esotericists interested in characterology and divination [→ Divinatory Arts]. In October 1925 Lanz began collaborating with the publisher Herbert Reichstein (1892-1944) on a new periodical devoted to Ariosophy initially entitled *Zeitschrift für Menschenkenntnis und Menschen-schicksal* at Düsseldorf. Here Lanz summarized Ariosophy as a emanationist doctrine of “pan-psy- chic” energy, which animated the whole universe but found its most perfect manifestation in the microcosm of the blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryan. Ariosophy was concerned with the scientific study of the differences between the blonds and the darks with the aid of the esoteric sciences of palmistry, astrology, numerology, phrenology, kabbalism and heraldry (an idea taken from his colleague Guido von List). Lanz claimed that heraldic devices and names were hieroglyphs, in which the Aryan ancestors had recorded the history and karma of their families. Lanz thereby linked Ariosophy with the burgeoning interest in characterology and divination which had arisen in response to the anxieties and disruptions of postwar Germany. The chief contributors to the magazine were a Berlin group of esotericists known as the “Swastika Circle” and included Ernst Issberner-Haldane (1886-1966), a palmist; Frodi Ingolfson Wehrmann (1889-1945), an astrologer and ardent supporter of Guido von List’s ideas about an ancient Germanic priesthood, who was also versed in numerology and the study of karma; Robert H. Brotz, a graphologist; and Wilhelm Wulff, an astrologer, whom Heinrich Himmler consulted during the last weeks of the Second World War.

### 3. RUDOLF JOHN GORSLEBEN

Rudolf John Gorsleben (1883-1930), also an ONT brother, made further contributions to Ariosophy. He had long been fascinated by the Edda and other secret survivals of the Aryan heritage, while his doctrine was also indebted to → occultism and

Theosophy. From 1920 Gorsleben published his own periodical *Deutsche Freiheit*, in 1927 re-named *Arische Freiheit*, which featured articles on the runes, crystals, number-mysticism and the Cheops pyramid. In 1928 this periodical amalgamated with Reichstein's characterological magazine under the new title of *Zeitschrift für Geistes- und Wissenschaftsreform* (entitled *Ariosophie* from September 1929). Through astrology, kabbalism and → magic, Gorsleben thought it possible to reactivate the occult powers inherent in each Aryan individual, thus enabling him to master the natural world. Gorsleben envisaged the advent of a new age, in which the Aryan would regain his former splendour and authority in the world. His major work *Hoch-Zeit der Menschheit* (1930) presented Atlantis, the megalithic stone circles of Europe, archaeological finds, astrology and mathematical theorems as evidence of the high civilisation of the Aryans. Their wisdom was held to have survived in a wide variety of cultural forms, including the runic shape of beams in half-timbered houses, coats-of-arms, countless symbols and words. These ideas of secret survival owed their inspiration to Guido von List and Philipp Stauff.

#### 4. HERBERT REICHSTEIN

In December 1925 Herbert Reichstein began to publish a book-series, *Ariosophische Bibliothek*, to publicize Lanz's theories on subjects ranging from astrology to heraldry. By early 1926 Reichstein changed the name of his characterological institute to the Ariosophical Society, which fostered esoteric Aryan sciences of characterology and divination for the benefit of Aryans. Ariosophical characterologists were identified as heirs of the ancient Germanic priest-kings (*Armanenschaft*), rediscovered by Guido von List. Lecture-tours to major German cities were organized between 1928 and 1931, when Reichstein moved his operations to Preßbaum near Vienna to open an Ariosophical School as a conference centre for retreats and courses. Lanz von Liebenfels remained the intellectual leader of the Ariosophical movement throughout this whole period. Like Lanz, Reichstein practised name-kabbalism, based upon the Chaldean-Jewish notion of correspondences between letters and numbers: the sum of the numerical equivalents of the letters in a person's name disclosed information regarding his nature and destiny. After the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, Reichstein moved in April 1933 to Berlin, in order 'to be at the centre of the revival of a nationally awakened Germany'. There he published *Arische Rundschau*, a weekly newspaper which professed the struggle against

Judah, Rome, and Freemasonry in the context of ariosophical racism and occult predictions.

#### 5. ARIOSOPHY AND THE THIRD REICH

Despite its esoteric and sectarian nature, Ariosophy had some influence on National Socialism in Germany. Philipp Stauff, a close friend of Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels, held high office in the Germanenorden, a secret quasi-masonic racist society founded in 1912 to counter Jewish influence in Germany. In 1917 the Bavarian chapter of the Germanenorden was taken over by Rudolf von Sebottendorff (1875-1945), who was also an admirer of List, Lanz von Liebenfels and Stauff. Under Sebottendorff's leadership the Germanenorden in Munich assumed the cover-name of the Thule Society and played a significant role in the Bavarian counter-revolution of April 1919. As early as autumn 1918 the Thule Society had fostered a political workers' circle. In January 1919 members of this group founded the German Workers' Party (DAP), which was renamed the German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP) in February 1920. While the Thule Society and Germanenorden remained conspiratorial esoteric groups, the DAP embraced mass political activity. The use of the swastika as a Nazi party symbol may be traced back to the Germanenorden, Lanz von Liebenfels and Guido von List before 1914.

There is some evidence that the young Adolf Hitler read and collected Lanz's *Ostara* magazine while living in Vienna between 1908 and 1913. It is likely that he was impressed by Lanz's empirical studies of racial differences between the blonds and the darks, and the harmful influence of non-German races within the multinational Habsburg empire. Lanz's preoccupation with women as race-defilers, feminism and sexuality was mirrored by Hitler's concern that the Jews were seducing Aryan girls and drawing them into prostitution. Given his lifelong enthusiasm for Wagner's operas, especially *Parsifal*, Hitler would have identified with Lanz's notion of a knightly order committed to the holy grail of pure Germanic blood. Lanz's dualist-manichaeic fantasy of a millenarian struggle between the blonds and the darks for racial and political world-supremacy could have laid the "granite foundation" of Hitler's own racist outlook for life.

Ariosophical ideas of a secret gnosis of the blood and occult survivals made a stronger impression on Heinrich Himmler and the SS, which cultivated the Aryan-Nordic heritage as an instrument of Nazi cultural policy. Karl Maria Wiligut [pseud. Karl



Weisthor, Jarl Widar] (1866-1946), an officer in the Habsburg army, had some contact with ONT brothers in Vienna around 1908, a link that was renewed in 1920-1921. Wiligut claimed to be descended from prehistoric Germanic sages of the Irminist religion. His purported ancestral-clairvoyant memory enabled him to recall the history of his tribe over thousands of years back to 78,000 BC. Richard Anders, an ONT brother and SS officer, introduced Wiligut to Heinrich Himmler, who decided to exploit this unique source on ancient Germanic religion and traditions. Wiligut's interest in the runes, symbols and other cryptic survivals of ancient Germanic priest-kings place him in List's tradition of the *Armanenschaft*. Wiligut was given officer rank in the SS, where he supplied rune-poetry and studies of cosmology and prehistory based on his family traditions. He also undertook land surveys of ancient Germanic sanctuaries, and was instrumental in the design of the SS *Totenkopfring* and the elaboration of Irminist wedding, spring, harvest and solstice rituals at the SS Staff College of Wewelsburg Castle. He also influenced Himmler's conception of the Wewelsburg as a SS vatican in a future revival of pagan Germanic religion.

During the Third Reich, Ariosophy was discouraged by the Nazis in common with other secret societies and lodge-like organisations. The ONT was suspended at Werfenstein and Vienna in December 1938, but activity continued at ONT houses in Germany and Hungary. Lanz continued to publish ONT material privately until his death in 1954. He was succeeded as Prior of the ONT by Theodor Czepl, who died in 1978. Czepl was succeeded by Walther Krenn who died in 1979, and Rudolf J. Mund held the office of PONT from 1979 until his own death in 1985. Owing to its racial and anti-Semitic content, Ariosophy remained a minute movement in postwar Austria. However, since the 1990s neo-Nazi groups have discovered an interest in List, Lanz von Liebenfels and the Thule Society.

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NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE

## Aristotelianism

From the second half of the 12th century the Latin West witnessed an enormous wave of translations of Aristotle's works from Arabic and Greek,



which reached its peak around the middle of the 13th century with William of Moerbeke. As a consequence, philosophers and theologians were faced with the formidable task of reconciling this new influx of pagan wisdom with Christian faith. They did so in the institutional context of one of the most enduring inventions of the Middle Ages, namely the university. These new institutions developed curricula dominated by the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. Just like medieval Platonism [→ Neoplatonism: Middle Ages], however, Aristotelianism is a complex historiographic category. The *Corpus Aristotelicum* not only comprised genuine works such as the *Categories*, the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but also a wide range of pseudo-Aristotelica, among which the *Theologia Aristotelis*, the *Liber de Causis*, and the *Secretum Secretorum*. Moreover, a number of commentaries carried almost the same authority as Aristotle's own text, such as those by Greek commentators like Simplicius. By far the most prestigious of all commentators was the Andalusian Arab Averroës, whom the medievals simply referred to as *the Commentator*, analogous to Aristotle himself who was known as *the Philosopher* (*Philosophus*). Aristotelianism not only determined the content of medieval learning, but also the formal models by which the teaching was structured. The boundaries between the various disciplines, such as physics, metaphysics, ethics and medicine, but especially those between theology and philosophy, were settled using the criteria of Aristotelian philosophy of science. Aristotle had defined science in terms of a deduction of causal demonstrations on the basis of self-evident principles that could only be intuited and not demonstrated within each separate discipline. This proved to be an excellent model in safeguarding the disciplinary autonomy of theology, while at the same time strengthening its rational, scientific profile. The principles of theology were a matter of revealed truth which could not be scientifically demonstrated but had to be accepted on faith. Just like any other science, theology thus had to work with indemonstrable first truths that could not be provided by any other science. Equally, however, theology made use of Aristotelian logical procedures in order to deduce scientific truths from these first principles. Medieval theology and philosophy employed what is known as the scholastic method of determining questions by means of a complex of *pro* and *contra* argumentations. This method was put to use in the commentary tradition on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the main textbook of scholastic theology. In this model, philosophy, the discipline that was taught at the medieval Arts

faculties, was subservient to theology, which together with medicine, canon and civil law constituted the so-called higher faculties. However, not all Masters of Arts were prepared to accept this subordinate role of philosophy as *ancilla theologiae* (handmaid of theology). For instance, a group of 13th century Parisian Masters known under the collective name of Latin Averroists claimed full autonomy for philosophy, even to the extent of allowing philosophy to reach conclusions that were not in conformity with faith.

The disciplinary framework of medieval Aristotelianism might be one of the explanations for why it had relatively few points of contact with → Hermetism. In the 12th century, Hermetism had mainly been associated with Platonism, which did not make a sharp distinction between theology and philosophy, especially metaphysics. → Hermes Trismegistus was seen as part of a tradition of pagan learning that had adumbrated important elements of Christian faith, especially the dogma of the Trinity. It is probably no coincidence that Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), one of the champions of medieval Aristotelianism, not only insisted on the distinction between philosophy and theology (on whose collaboration he nevertheless insisted as well), but also vehemently rejected the claim, expressed by Alan of Lille and others, that Hermes had intuited the Trinity. With regard to the definition of God in (pseudo-)Hermes' *Liber XXIV Philosophorum* as the monad that generates a monad in itself, Aquinas says that this statement only pertains to the relation between God and His creation (*Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 32, Article 1, ad 1). Natural reason can prove that the world has been created by God, but we need the revealed truth of Scripture in order to enlighten us on what God is, most notably with respect to His tri-une character. Parallel to this denial of Hermes' prophetic gifts was the acceptance by Thomas Aquinas and the majority of post-12th century theologians and philosophers of → Augustine's condemnation of Hermes' idolatry in *De Civitate Dei* rather than Quodvultdeus' more positive account. Finally, the very fact that Aristotle replaced Plato as the great authority in philosophy may also explain why many post-12th century philosophers and theologians were less attracted to Hermes, who had been so closely associated with Platonism. It is therefore no surprise that we find a large-scale acceptance of Hermetic tenets only in philosophers with overt Platonic or even anti-Aristotelian tendencies, such as Berthold of Moosburg. It seems that the only philosopher who consistently tried to reunite Aristotelianism, Platonism and Hermetism

was → Albertus Magnus. Obviously, there was one area in which Aristotelianism and Hermetism did meet, namely → alchemy. Alchemical literature of the Middle Ages made abundant use of the basic concepts of Aristotelian natural philosophy, such as hylemorfism, the potency-act distinction, and Aristotelian mineralogy. It is therefore no surprise that many alchemical tracts were attributed to (pseudo-)Aristotle. The connection between Aristotelianism and Hermetism can thus mainly be found outside the formal framework of the academic disciplines at the medieval universities.

In some handbooks we still find the once popular image that the philosophical innovations of the Renaissance were due to → Marsilio Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Platonicum*, while the Aristotelianism of the universities sank away into moribund sterility. Paul Oskar Kristeller, Charles Schmitt, Charles Lohr and others have shown that this conception is thoroughly misguided. To begin with, Aristotelianism was anything but moribund. Charles Lohr has established that (thanks to the invention of the printing press) the 16th century not only produced more translations of Aristotle's works than all the previous centuries taken together but also composed an immense amount of new commentaries. Moreover, recent studies have demonstrated that the Renaissance commentary tradition on Aristotle displayed a diversity and innovative potential that in certain of its aspects formed the bridge to the new philosophy and science of the 17th century.

One of the most interesting phenomena of the late 15th and 16th century is the Aristotelianism cultivated at the university of Padua. Since Padua did not have a theological faculty, the faculty of Arts was not constrained by any theological considerations and developed a secular Aristotelianism with a strong emphasis on natural philosophy, which among other things prepared the students for higher studies in medicine. The best known representative of this tradition was Pietro Pomponazzi (1462-1525). In his *De naturalium effectuum causis sive de incantationibus* of 1520 (published 1567), Pomponazzi accepts miracles and other wondrous events as long as witness reports were reliable. His main point is to develop a scientific explanation of these events along the lines of Aristotelian philosophy, which he combines with a strong version of Stoic determinism. Pomponazzi is prepared to accept the agency of angels and demons as an article of faith. Nevertheless, he argued, Aristotelian *philosophy* has to rule such agencies out, since angels and demons on account of their being immaterial do not have contact with

physical objects, while all physical action must occur by direct contact. What does count as a viable explanation is, by contrast, the influence of the stars which determine completely the sublunar realm and in so doing also produce miracles and other wondrous events. In this context, Pomponazzi makes use of the Aristotelian notion of occult quality [→ occult/occultism], which designates an imperceptible, but nonetheless perfectly natural cause, such as stellar influence, the power of the imagination and hidden qualities of minerals and other natural objects. In so doing, Pomponazzi famously raised the scientific status of → astrology in the same way as the Bolognese philosopher Alessandro Achillini – who had briefly been his colleague at Padua – had raised the status of physiognomy and chiromancy in his *Quaestio de subiecto physionomiae et chiromantiae* (1503).

Nor was the philosophy that developed outside of the schools in all respects anti- or even un-aristotelian. True, when Ficino speaks of the venerable tradition of *pia philosophia* or *philosophia perennis* [→ Tradition] he is primarily thinking of the current that he takes to have been inaugurated by Hermes and so admirably continued by Plato. Nevertheless, Aristotle also had an – albeit modest – place in this typically Renaissance harmony model. Following the schemes of the ancient Neoplatonist commentators on Aristotle, Ficino depicts Aristotle as the best of the *physici*. As far as metaphysics is concerned, he recommends that one had better consult the Neoplatonists. However, for the lower realm of being Aristotle's physics is an excellent guide. Echoing humanist attacks on Peripatetic philosophy, Ficino states that his issue is not with Aristotle, but with his contemporary scholastic disciples, whose two competing sects, the Alexandrists (following Alexander of Aphrodisias) and Averroists haunt the universities (*Opera Omnia*, Basel 1576; reprint Torino, 1959, p. 1537). Albeit in opposite ways, both sects denied personal immortality, the very cornerstone of Ficino's philosophical speculation. There is, however, an undeniable presence of scholastic philosophy in Ficino's own philosophy, especially in his *opus magnum*, the *Theologia Platonica* (1469-1474). During his study at the university of Florence, Ficino must have imbibed quite a lot of Aristotelianism, especially in its Thomist form. Thomas Aquinas provided the building blocks of Ficino's metaphysical structure in the form of his dialectics of being and non-being, his distinction between matter and form, his view of causality and other central topics. But even more remarkable is the presence of Aristotelianism in Ficino's works on → magic, especially

his *De vita libri tres* (1489). In the absence of an elaborated Hermetic or Platonist natural philosophy and in line with his appreciation of Aristotle's physics, Ficino uses the basic concepts of Aristotelian hylemorphism in order to explain the powers of → amulets and other magical devices. It has to be remarked, though, that he seems to be particularly dependent on Neoplatonic doctrines he found in → Avicenna's and Albertus Magnus's works. Brian Copenhaver has established that Ficino integrates the doctrine of substantial form as the imperceptible carrier of occult qualities, the notion of dispositive cause to account for the preparation of matter for the eduction of a form which is ultimately drawn from the celestial bodies, and other central tenets of Aristotelian hylemorphism.

An even greater presence of Aristotelianism can be discerned in Ficino's young friend, → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, whom Ficino praises as one of the few who are still able to interpret Aristotle in the right, pious, way (*Opera Omnia*, p. 1537). Pico's *Conclusiones* were part of his grand project to reconcile all pagan and Christian learning. Though recent scholarship has established that Pico was far less unorthodox than his traditional portrayal, the fact remains that the Church of Rome was not particularly amused by the enthusiasm of this brilliant young man. In the *Apologia* (1487), which Pico wrote against accusations by Church authorities, he defended his conclusions regarding the eucharist and other theological topics by means of a wide display of scholastic theology and philosophy. In fact, it seems that Pico soon gave up on his attempt to integrate all available learning and limited himself to the less ambitious plan of reuniting Plato and Aristotle. The first result was his *De Ente et Uno* (1492), an exercise in metaphysical speculation about the convertibility of the terms "being" (the highest genus for the Aristotelians) and "oneness" (the highest genus for the Platonists). This limitation also explains why Hermetism (to which in fact only nine out of the nine hundred *Conclusiones* had been devoted) disappeared increasingly from his works, and eventually gave way to an outspoken rejection in the unfinished *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*. Here, Pico presents the wisdom of the Egyptians, which includes Hermetism, as a practical discipline of worship and not as theoretical science. Hermetism is at best a first inadequate sketch of the superior physics and metaphysics of Plato and especially Aristotle, since it lacks the defining characteristic of true science, namely rational argument (*Disputatio adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, in *Opera Omnia*, Basel 1557;

reprint Hildesheim 1969, pp. 721-722). Interestingly, Pico thus seems to make room for scientific progress, contrary to the retrograde *ad fontes* of his mentor Ficino. In any case, Pico's *Disputationes* contain a scathing attack on astrology, which is based on an anti-determinist version of Aristotelian philosophy. In line with Aristotle, Pico does admit stellar influence, but limits it to the lower faculties of the human soul. Stellar influence explains the behaviour of prophets, whose imagination is particularly susceptible. It cannot, however, determine man's free will, which is linked to the superior part of our soul.

With → Francesco Patrizi (1529-1597) Renaissance Neoplatonism gets a vehemently anti-Aristotelian twist. Like Ficino, Patrizi laments the spectacle of the division of academic Aristotelianism into two competing sects of which both deny the immortality of the human soul. In order to restore the unity of reason and faith, Patrizi presented a three-fold Hermetic-Platonist project. First, Patrizi developed a new edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Chaldaean Oracles* and other *Hermetica*, which he attached to the second part of his enterprise, namely the *Nova de Universis Philosophia* (1591). In this all-encompassing philosophical system, he tried to explain the Hermetic "revelation" by means of philosophical, especially Platonist, arguments. Thirdly, the *Discussiones Peripateticae* (1581) takes up Ficino's idea of a philosophical concord and the tradition of *prisca sapientia*. Patrizi thoroughly revolutionized this notion. Usually, the idea of a basic philosophical concord was made plausible by showing the fundamental harmony of Aristotle's and Plato's philosophy. The *Discussiones* elaborate this programme in a radically polemical, anti-Aristotelian way. Patrizi attempts to demonstrate that everything valuable in Aristotle is downright plagiarism, whereas all his original contributions are mere humbug. Aristotle adopts all important themes of *philosophia perennis* in general, and of Plato in particular. By leaving his source unmentioned while at the same time explicitly criticizing Plato, Aristotle tried to achieve fame at the expense of his preceptor. The *Discussiones* condemn virtually all aspects of Aristotle's life and work. Among the allegations is that Aristotle was involved in a plot to kill Alexander the Great. Interestingly, Patrizi excludes Aristotle's logic and natural philosophy from his devastating criticisms. In fact, the first part of the *Nova de Universis Philosophia*, entitled *Panaugia* (All-encompassing Light) makes use of an "Aristotelian method". Here Patrizi points to the Aristotelian methodological *adagium* that in

natural philosophy we should begin with experiential phenomena, which constitute the *primum quoad nos*, in order to gain knowledge of nature's causes, principles and elements, the *primum quoad natura*. The *Panaugia* is "Aristotelian" in the sense that it tries to develop an alternative to Aristotle's inference of the existence of the Immovable Mover on the basis of perceptible motion. This part of the *Nova de Universis Philosophia*, however, starts with perceptible *light* and gradually climbs to the source of all corporeal as well as incorporeal light, God. It unfolds a wide-ranging Neoplatonist light metaphysics, culled from traditional sources like Philo, Grosseteste and Ficino. In this sense the *Panaugia* exemplifies Patrizi's attitude towards Aristotelian philosophy, especially his physics and metaphysics: rather than a wholesale alternative, Patrizi propounds a complete reinterpretation of the traditional Aristotelian doctrines and their vocabulary along Platonist-Hermetic lines.

A final offshoot of Renaissance Aristotelianism blossomed at the German universities at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century. After the Reformation the universities in the German lands had been reorganized according to confessional lines, i.e. following the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Roman-Catholic (mainly Jesuit) creeds. Paradoxically the strong confessional emphasis led to a much more liberal, very eclectic attitude towards Aristotle, whose philosophy always had to be measured against the canons of the diverse confessions. Hermetism was just one of the many elements that entered in the eclectic mixture that was taught at Protestant, especially Calvinist, universities and *Hohe Schulen*. The best-known representative of this tradition is Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638), professor of theology and philosophy at the Academy of Herborn. Alsted combined solid Aristotelianism with Lullism, Hermetism and alchemy in his grand encyclopedic project that was aimed at restoring man's original dignity. This optimistic variety of Calvinism was to receive a devastating blow at the Council of Dordt and in the Thirty Years War which in most cases meant the closure of the more liberal universities. Alsted's eclectic and conciliatory programme can already be fathomed from his early *Physica Harmonica* (1616), which tries to reunite a number of different physics, in particular Mosaic physics (i.e. the account of the book of Genesis), Peripatetic physics and Hermetic physics (especially alchemy). The touchstone of this conciliatory programme is Mosaic physics: Alsted only accepts those elements of Peripateticism and Hermetism that can be squared with the biblical account. But the most impressive

synthesis of Aristotelianism and Hermetism can be found in his enormous *Encyclopaedia* (1630), which recalls the common Renaissance idea of a tradition of *prisca sapientia*, which according to Alsted includes the Indian Brahmins and Egyptian prophets, such as Hermes Trismegistus (*Encyclopaedia*; Herborn, 1630, p. 110). The *Encyclopaedia* not only lists a whole range of "Hermetic" disciplines such as astrology and the art of memory [→ Mnemonics], but also fuses Hermetism and Aristotelianism in its discussion of specific themes. An example is his description of prime matter, which Alsted deals with in the part devoted to physics. Alsted borrows the notion of matter as a *non-ens* from the Aristotelian tradition, combines it with the "Mosaic" idea of a primordial chaos, the notion of a vivifying world soul taken from the *Asclepius*, and a whole range of alchemical descriptions of matter which Alsted explicitly attributes to Hermes (*Encyclopaedia*; Herborn, 1630, p. 673). Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* is certainly not the only example of a synthesis between Aristotelianism and Hermetism at German universities. Other examples include Heinrich Nollius, professor of philosophy and medicine at the *Gymnasium Arnoldinum* at Steinfurt from 1616 to 1621. Given the influence of the textbooks by Alsted and others on modern philosophers such as Leibniz, we are forced to rethink the relations between Aristotelianism, Hermetism and modern philosophy.

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CEES LEIJENHORST

## Arithmology → Number Symbolism

**Arnau de Vilanova**, \* ca. 1240 Daroca (Lower Aragon), † 6.9.1311 Genoa

Vilanova was one of the most extraordinary figures of the Latin Middle Ages. Many questions on his personality remain unanswered even today, so much has legend and hearsay intermingled with reality. Arnau de Vilanova was born in Lower Aragon toward 1240. He became a Master of medicine and married in the 1260s. He then entered into the service of Peter III of Aragon as a doctor. During his years of intellectual formation, he took courses in Christian exegesis from the Dominicans of Barcelona and Brother Raymond Marti introduced him to Hebrew and rabbinical literature. His knowledge of Arabic was such that he translated several medical works by → Avicenna, Galen, and Albuzale into Latin. From 1289 to 1299, Arnau de Vilanova was the master regent of medical studies at the University of Montpellier. It was during this period that he composed most of his books on medicine. Besides his teaching, marked by Galenism, Arnau de Vilanova continued to assist, as a doctor and a counselor, princes (James II of Aragon, Frederick III of Sicily) and popes (Boniface VIII, Clement V). Although he enjoyed indisputable authority as a doctor, his religious and philosophical ideas were another matter, and they brought him many disappointments.

In 1292, he wrote a short work in which he set

forth some of his key ideas. It was called *Introductio in librum Joaquin de semine Scripturarum*, and is a commentary on a book falsely attributed to Joachim de Flore. In particular, Arnau there defends the idea that any form of knowledge expresses a *mysterium* and consequently falls within the domain of prophecy as much as of knowledge itself. The mission of a doctor or an astrologer is not only restricted to giving treatments or designing horoscopes but also includes the task of truly working as a prophet in the exercise of his profession. Arnau de Vilanova had a reputation for spectacular healings. It is easy to imagine that in the eyes of some he was a perfect incarnation of that noble soul of whom Avicenna speaks in *De anima*, endowed with prophetic powers and whose gift is to heal the sick and transmute the elements. In his *Medicationis parabola*, Arnau de Vilanova states that an effective remedy, a medicine, always proceeds from the Supreme Good. The doctor, he adds, who has received the grace of dispensing care, uses a symbolic language to arrive at the *occulta* from the *sensibilia*. The goal of medicine, indeed, is to start from observation of the *sensibilia* in order to rise to the government of the Almighty; but the *sensibilia* alone are no substitute for the intelligible and universal principles. Whence the introduction of mathematical calculations that helped Arnau build some of his medical theories; as in *Aphorismi de gradibus*, where, using the mathematical solutions put down by → al-Kindi, he tries to resolve the delicate question of the dosage of qualities in the composition of medicines. He repeated this approach in *De dosi tyriacalium*, in relation to dosing the simples that the doctors used to make theriac.

His ideas on the necessity of a symbolic language and the permanence of the *occulta* (defined as the unexplained properties of natural objects, known either by chance or by revelation) are also basic to his views on → astrology. Astrology is basic to both a chemico-medical work such as *De aqua vitae simplicis*, and a well-known therapeutic cure effectuated on the very person of Pope Boniface VIII. In *De parte operativa*, he declares that knowing the characteristics and arrangements of the Zodiac in order to liberate the astral influences makes it possible to accomplish marvels here on earth. Arnau strictly distinguishes such knowledge from magical practices, related to demons, which are misleading and ineffectual. Similar ideas (in particular the recourse to symbolic language) also underlie an alchemical text such as the *Tractatus parabolicus*, attributed to him, and from which → Jean de Roquetaillade drew inspiration in his *Liber lucis*. It



remains unknown though whether Arnau himself practiced alchemy, and we do not know whether he personally composed treatises such as the *Tractatus parabolicus*, the *Defloratio philosophorum*, and the *Epistola super alchimia*; suffice it to say that some of them must have emanated from his secretariat. Arnau also composed an *Allocutio super significatione nominis Tetragrammaton* that consists of a reflection on the letters of *Yahweh* with the aim of proving the truth of the Holy Trinity by a method close to that of the Jewish Kabbalists. He states that the secrets of Holy Scripture are contained in Hebrew and Latin script. Such notions are supported by his views about the economy of dynamic salvation: he saw it as an active process in which, beginning with the Father and moving on through the Son, the Christian revelation is fulfilled in the age of the Holy Spirit, when all the enigmas of the Book will be resolved and the *renovatio* of the world will be accomplished. Here he is influenced by Joachim da Fiori and, even more pregnantly, by an abundant apocalyptic sublitterature including, among others, the *Sermo sancti Methodi de regno gentium et in novissimis temporibus certa demonstratio*, the *Epistola ad Cyrillum*, the *Vaticinium Sybillae Erithraeae*, and so on. The reading and study of such contemporaries as → Roger Bacon, → Ramon Llull and especially Pierre Dejean Olieu, the spiritual master of the Franciscans, complete his educational background – even if he mostly took his distance from them and followed his own path. Arnau de Vilanova was certain of the imminent manifestation of the Antichrist. Turning his personal revelations to advantage, with varying success he divulged his convictions, in the hope of being recognized as a theologian and prophet as much as a doctor. No doubt he sometimes succeeded in this. Frederick III of Sicily, for instance, disturbed by a dream, consulted Arnau to enlighten him and relieve him of his doubts and distress. Criticized, attacked by the Dominicans, and suspected of heresy, he was imprisoned and finally, unwilling to compromise his boldest concepts, was repudiated by his protectors. He found refuge with Frederick of Sicily, and died on 6 September 1311 off Genoa.

To most modern scholars, Arnau de Vilanova remains the exemplary representative of medieval Galenism. However, he was much more than that. If he never wastes an opportunity to vilify the enchanters and magicians, Arnau nevertheless refuses to consign the domain of knowledge to reason alone. His whole work pleads for the recognition of the intimate and illuminating revelations that experience (whether of a healing or a trans-

mutation) brings to light. For him, in the words of → Clement of Alexandria, ‘without faith there is no gnosis’. A counselor to princes and popes, an ambassador, a traveling companion of the Spiritu-als, an exegete and theologian, a dream interpreter and active mystic, he is remembered as a sage versed in many areas of knowledge, closer to the magus and the heresiarch than to the philosopher, but also a friend of the poor, and a partisan of evangelical frenzy. An important corpus of alchemical, astrological, magical and medical works is generously attributed to him. Many have seen in him one of those high and mysterious medieval figures prefiguring Renaissance humanists such as → Marsilio Ficino.

*Arnaldi Villanovani summi philosophi et medici excellentissimi Praxis Medicinalis*, Lyon: Jean Stratius and Antoine Tardif, 1586 ♦ *Arnaldi di Villanova: Opera omnia* (Luis Garcia-Ballester, Juan A. Paniagua, Michael R. Mac Vaugh, eds.), Barcelona, 1975-1996 [8 vols. published] ♦ *Arnau de Vilanova, Obres catalanes*, I-II (Miquel Batllori, ed.), Barcelona: Barcino, 1947 ♦ Josep Perarnau i Espelt, “El text primitiu del *De mysterio cymbalorum Ecclesiae* d’Arnau de Vilanova, en appendix, el seu *Tractatus de tempore adventus Antichristi*”, *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics* 7/8 (1988-1989), 7-169.

*Lit.*: Juan A. Paniagua, *Studia arnaldiana, trabajos en torno a la obra mèdica de Arnau de Vilanova*, c. 1240-1311, Barcelona: Fundacion Uriach, 1838, repr. 1994 ♦ Francesco Santi, “Orientamenti bibliografici per lo studio di Arnau de Vilanova, spirituale: Studi recenti (1968-1982)”, *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics* 2 (1983), 371-395 ♦ Joseph Ziegler, *Medicine and Religion c. 1300: The Case of Arnau de Vilanova*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

ANTOINE CALVET

**Arnold, Gottfried**, \* 1666 Annaberg (Saxony), † 1714 Perleberg (Brandenburg)

Arnold studied theology in Wittenberg and afterwards worked as a private tutor in Dresden. In 1697 he became professor at the University of Gießen, where he stayed only one year. He then tutored in Quedlinburg (Saxony). From 1701 until his death, he exercised the pastoral ministry. Arnold died as a church inspector, but his work as a historian of Christianity has made him a major figure of German → pietism.

Arnold long hesitated about becoming a pastor, because he was reluctant to swear on the Augsburg Confession. He took a strong aversion to all clergy. However, this protégé of Spener, the founder of

Lutheran pietism, finally resigned himself to becoming a minister of “Babylon”. He was to be mortified! Because he believed the true Church to be the inner Church, Arnold has been classed among the spiritualists: those who wanted to adore God in spirit and in truth, and not in temples made by human hands. But according to the doctrines that he sympathetically described, the inner Church is no more abstract than is the inner Man identifying with it. It is seen by him as a true communion of the faithful identifying with a single truth. It is secret for those who are not yet part of it. And in the end, it is the soul itself that becomes the true temple of God, at least for the few, and as long as the plenitude at the end of history has not yet arrived. The distinguishing feature of Arnold’s Christian esotericism is precisely that it is not institutional. An invisible line thus separates those who are “converted” from the ordinary faithful, even when they all assemble in the same place for worship in the visible Church.

The “converted” are those Christians who have received the baptism administered by the Holy Spirit. This second baptism is not a visible sacrament. But through the grace that it dispenses, Man is born again, according to Jesus’ explanation to Nicodemus. The Holy Spirit chooses to dwell in the heart of a person, who thereby becomes a “new Man”. For him, the Holy Spirit is the presence of God incarnated by Wisdom. It is by this presence that Man is reconnected with God.

Created before humanity and the world, Sophia/Wisdom is the image of God. The sinner does not perceive her, but she shines in the heart of the regenerated Man. She is the thought of God, and the Man inhabited by the Holy Spirit is her mirror. She embodies the true doctrine written down in the Bible and in the teachings transmitted through the ages. The resulting gnosis, in the noble sense according to which Arnold understood it, is a synonym of holiness. A Man who is not “born from above” is necessarily a sinful person, the “old Adam”, who cannot receive the Spirit of God. The holiness of the Man united with God is in fact the mirror of Wisdom. In his work as a historian of Christianity, Arnold was looking for the tradition of “true Christianity” in this sense, understood as the communion of the saints in Adam’s posterity. This communion of saints is his version of the universal ministry, of which Luther had an idea, but of which the Lutheran clergy is merely a counterfeit.

Besides many poems and religious songs, often characterized by a baroque lyricism (see notably those in his collection *Göttliche Liebesfunken*, 1698), Arnold composed a good number of other

works, among which we will here mention only a few that pertain to → Christian theosophy. First of all there is his monumental *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* (Impartial History of the Churches and Heresies, 1699-1700). It is clear from this work that the true Church also includes heretics. Without approving of them in every respect, Arnold generally argues in their defense. He categorizes many of them as belonging to the “witnesses to truth” that form a chain throughout the ages. They may be Catholic or Protestant. → Paracelsus, Schwenckfeld, → Weigel, and → Boehme have a place of honor among these reprobates, and Arnold’s book contains extensive discussions of Boehmenist and neo-Boehmenist theosophy as well as of → Rosicrucianism; but Arnold in fact attempts to trace the entire lineage of mystical theology from the first centuries on. In this manner he creates a complete referential corpus of “true religion”. Nobody before this *Impartial History* had ever attempted to provide such a systematic treatment of so many esoteric currents taken together. By doing so, the book in its turn came to exercise a notable influence on the further development of the very religious tendencies it described.

“Mystical theology” is supposed by Arnold to be communicated by inner channels; the converted person is instructed in it directly by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, Arnold also attempts to make it known through the human channel of writing; and this makes him, together with → Pierre Poiret (twenty years his senior) the great publisher of Christian mysticism in Protestant society. Arnold considered mystical theology, or *theologia regentorum*, as a specific discourse. Although opposed to scholastic or dogmatic theology, and the confessions of faith of the visible Churches, he does explain mystical theology as a doctrine. He traces its history in two crucial works published in 1702: *Das Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia* (The Mystery of the Divine Sophia) and *Historie und Beschreibung der Mystischen Theologie* (History and Description of Mystical Theology).

Wisdom, as Arnold explains in the former work, personifies the doctrine issued from the mouth of God before anything had been created. She is the divine intelligence, identified with the Word. From generation to generation, she is communicated to those people who are capable of receiving her. Priests who have no share in her revile the secret theology, but it perennially germinates and flowers in the spirit of the holy. It is always the same truth, whether found among Catholics or Protestants. It alone can end the quarrels between the theologians. Peace can reign among believers only through the

communion of the saints. The book on the Divine Sophia pertains to Christian theosophical literature by its content and by the very nature of its theme. Arnold frequented the theosophers, and published, notably, the writings of → Gichtel in 1701, and the *Cherubinscher Wandersmann* by the theosopher poet Johannes Scheffler, *alias* Angelus Silesius. His form of writing and inspiration is nonetheless very different from that of Boehme or Gichtel. Compared with these theosophers, Arnold proves to be, in his work, “scholarly” and theological rather than properly visionary. Contrary to them, too, he is rather distant from any form of mystical naturalism – thus the idea of the creative → imagination, so prominent in Boehme or Gichtel, with all its implicit consequences, is almost absent from Arnold.

The young Luther, who glorified the 14th-century mystic Tauler, had once adhered to the tradition of “mystical theology”. At the dawn of the Reformation he had published the *Theologica Germanica*, an anonymous treatise believed to have emanated from Tauler’s associates. However, the Reformer had later turned away from these beginnings. Arnold attributed the decline of the Reformation to this reversal. In contrast, he saw in the doctrine of pure love, from Molinos to Madame Guyon, a flowering of mystical theology: the quietist heresy, flourishing in the context of German → Pietism, seemed to him to redeem Luther’s mistake.

True Christianity according to Arnold unites only a small minority of the faithful here on earth. It must be considered first and foremost from the perspective of the end of time. Arnold nursed hopes for a universal restoration, or *apocatastasis*, at the end of a process of purification that would progressively extend, in the hereafter, to all of creation. Hell would come to an end. This concept of the *Wiederbringung aller Dinge* (re-establishment of all things) attracted quite a following at the time of Pietism, and was condemned in article twenty-three of the Augsburg Confession. It would reappear with Zinzendorf, but under the cover of a “secret theology”, and was later incorporated to some extent into the theology of the Enlightenment period, which in the name of reason rejected the dogma of eternal suffering. In Arnold’s time it was strictly prohibited.

Arnold’s works have had a wide influence. Its later impact on the strictly esoteric plane of Christian theosophy aside, it must be noted that posterity has mainly retained its criticism of established religion and of the dogmas that bound the faithful. In reading the *Impartial History of the Churches and Heresies*, the young → Goethe would later conclude that an individual can create his own reli-

gion – an idea that greatly appealed to him. Arnold’s opinion, however, was entirely different. For this fervent supporter of mystical theology, there could only be a single true doctrine, the one personified by Wisdom. The liberty of the Christian was that of the person who, freed from dogmas, had chosen the only true religion while completely renouncing his own will.

*Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie, von Anfang des Neuen Testaments biss auff das Jahr Christi 1688*, first edition: Frankfurt 1699 (I-II), 1700 (III-IV); reprint of the 1729 edition (Frankfurt), in 2 vols.: Hildesheim: Olms, 1967, and again 1999 ♦ *Göttliche Liebes-Funken aus dem grossen Feuer der Liebe Gottes in Christo Jesu entsprungen*, Frankfurt, 1698 ♦ *Das Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia oder Weissheit, Beschrieben und besungen*, Leipzig, 1700; reprint Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt: Frommann-Holzboog 1963 ♦ *Der richtigste Weg durch Christum zu Gott*; Frankfurt, 1700 ♦ *Historie und Beschreibung der Mystischen Theologie, oder Gottesgelehrtheit, wie auch deren alten und neuen Mysticorum*, Frankfurt, 1703; reprint Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt: Frommann Holzboog, 1965, and again 1971 and 1969 ♦ *Pietist Selected Writings* (Peter C. Erb, ed.), New York: Paulist Press, 1983 (contains, 205-246, several texts by Arnold in English translation).

*Lit.*: Hermann Dörries, *Geist und Geschichte bei Gottfried Arnold*, Göttingen: Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse III/51, 1963 ♦ Erich Seeberg, *Gottfried Arnold: Die Wissenschaft seiner Zeit*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964 ♦ Pierre Deghaye, *La doctrine ésotérique de Zinzendorf (1700-1760)*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1969 ♦ Bernard Gorceix, “Le culte de la Sagesse dans l’Allemagne baroque et piétiste: A propos du *Mystère de la Sophie divine* du piétiste Gottfried Arnold (1700)”, in: *Sophia et l’Ame du Monde* (A. Faivre, ed.), Paris: Albin Michel, 1983, 195-214 ♦ Dietrich Blaufuss & Friedrich Niewöhner (eds.), *Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714): Mit einer Bibliographie der Arnold Literatur ab 1714* (Proceedings of the Conference at the Herzog August Bibliothek in 1990), Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1995 ♦ Frank Carl Roberts, *Gottfried Arnold as a Historian of Christianity: A Reappraisal of the Unpartheiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, Ann Arbor (Mich.), Micr. Diss.: Nashville, 1973 ♦ Christa Habrich, “Alchemie und Chemie in der pietistischen Tradition”, in: Hans Georg Kemper (ed.), *Goethe und der Pietismus*, Halle and Tübingen, 2001, 45-77.

PIERRE DEGHAÏE

Ashmole, Elias, \* 23.5.1617 Lichfield,  
† 18/19.5.1692 Lambeth

Antiquary. Son of Simon Ashmole, a saddler and soldier, and Anne Bowyer. Educated at Lichfield

Grammar School, then privately in London, where he qualified as an attorney (1640). After the sudden death of his first wife, Eleanor Manwaring (1603-1641) and the growing threats of civil war, he left London for Cheshire, the home of his in-laws. In 1644 Ashmole was appointed an army officer and Commissioner of Excise (taxes and customs collector) by the Royalist Parliament, which was then in exile in Oxford. Ashmole moved to Oxford and became a member of Brasenose College from 1644-1646, but did not take a degree. In 1646 he joined a masonic lodge in Lancashire, in one of the earliest known records of speculative → Freemasonry. Ashmole spent the years 1646-1649 avoiding political troubles arising from his royalist loyalty, and achieving financial security through marriage. His second wife was Mary Forster, formerly Lady Manwaring (1597-1668). During the Commonwealth period, Ashmole spent much time traveling with friends to country houses and parish churches, where he would copy inscriptions, records, and heraldic achievements. Out of this interest in genealogy and the dignities of ancestors came Ashmole's decision to research and compile a history of the Order of the Garter, Britain's first Order of knighthood.

With the restoration of Charles II (1660), Ashmole was well placed for royal favor. He was appointed Windsor Herald and Comptroller of the Excise, and became a founding member of the Royal Society (1660). In 1669 he was made honorary M.D. at Oxford. His third and happiest marriage (1668) was to Elizabeth Dugdale (1632-1701), daughter of his friend Sir William Dugdale, but no children were born alive to them. Ashmole inherited a large collection of ethnographical and natural curiosities from the estate of John Tradescant (1608-1662), the naturalist, gardener, and antiquary. In 1675 he offered this collection to Oxford University, and a purpose-built museum housing them (now the Museum of the History of Science) was opened in 1683. It was the first public museum in Britain. A fire in the Middle Temple (1679) destroyed much of Ashmole's library, his coin and seal collections, and all his notes on antiquarian subjects. However, at his death a substantial library of books and manuscripts remained, which was bequeathed to Oxford's Bodleian Library.

Ashmole was a late example of the Renaissance polymath. Although a member of the Royal Society, he never contributed any discovery or invention in the spirit of the new science. His sciences were the historical ones of heraldry, genealogy, and numismatics, and the natural ones of botany and

medicine. His medicine was also antiquarian, being a blend of herbalism with old wives' cures based on the principles of sympathy and → magic. His magic was not mysterious or spiritual, but a practical application of the doctrine of → correspondences according to which he believed the universe to work. Ashmole made sigils and talismans in metals corresponding to the desired planetary influences, at the appropriate astrological times. Having learned goldsmiths' techniques, he would cast models of rats and insects, which he placed in his house and garden to repel vermin. His entire outlook on life was dominated by → astrology. When in London, he seldom missed the annual Astrologers' Feast. Among his closest friends were Sir George Wharton (1617-1681) and William Lilly (1602-1681), who did much to keep astrology alive and in the public eye during a period of waning belief. At every turn of events – personal, political, financial – Ashmole would draw a horary chart, connect it with the nativities of the people or events concerned, and attempt to predict the outcome for them.

Ashmole's regard for → alchemy was even less in tune with his times. He was not a practical, laboratory alchemist, but a profound student of alchemical literature, making an important collection of old English poems on the subject (*Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, 1652), including Thomas Norton's *Ordinall of Alchimy*. In his Preface to this anthology, Ashmole writes of the Philosophical Mercury and of the various types of Stone in terms that display his own belief in transmutation. His mentor in alchemy was William Backhouse (1593-1662), a landowning gentleman and a collector, who in 1651 adopted Ashmole as his philosophical "son". In 1653 Backhouse, believing himself to be near death, told Ashmole the true secret of the Philosopher's Stone, but no more is known than that. It seems most probable that the secret was spiritual, rather than chemical in nature.

Ashmole was also interested in the career and angelic conversations of → John Dee, and returned to this topic throughout his life. Intending to write a biography of the Elizabethan magus, Ashmole collected Dee's manuscripts and corresponded with his son, Dr. Arthur Dee (1579-1651). The biography was never completed, but in his other writings Ashmole propagated some lasting legends about Dee and his assistant Edward Kelley. Ashmole has done an invaluable service to historians in preserving the alchemical tradition through his editions, transcriptions, and the rich collection now in the Bodleian Library. The memory of the destruction of the monasteries and their records by Henry VIII, and the living example of Puritan vandalism, deter-



mined him in the duty of preserving all he could of the past. He was above all an antiquarian, and his philosophical convictions were partly those of a passing age. Perhaps his most lasting legacy was the idea of a museum, as a public collection of historical, exotic, and mind-expanding objects. Thus he is justly commemorated in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, and in the countless other museums of which his was the prototype.

*Lit.:* Arthur Dee, *Fasciculus Chemicus: or Chymical Collections*, trans. James Hasolle (i.e. Elias Ashmole), London, 1650 ♦ C.H. Josten (ed.), *Elias Ashmole (1617-1692): His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, his Correspondence, and Other Contemporary Sources Relating to his Life and Work*, 5 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 (vol. 1 is a Biographical Introduction) ♦ idem, "William Backhouse of Swallowfield", *Ambix* 4 (1949), 1-33 ♦ Derek Parker, *Familiar to All: William Lilly and Astrology in the Seventeenth Century*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1975 ♦ Alan Pritchard, *Alchemy: A Bibliography of English-Language Writings*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980 ♦ Matthew D. Rogers, "The Angelical Stone of Elias Ashmole", *Aries* 5:1 (2005) ♦ Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

JOSCELYN GODWIN

## Asiatic Brethren

Hans Heinrich von Ecker und Eckhoffen (1750-1790), a Bavarian Officer, established two of the various so-called "fringe-masonic" (in German: "winkel-maurerischen") Orders (or Systems) which flourished in the second half of the 18th century. The first, called the Ordo Rotae et Aureae Crucis (The Order of the Wheel and of the Golden Cross) was founded in 1776. When Adam Weishaupt had the idea of founding his famous Order of the → Illuminaten shortly afterwards, it was partly as a reaction against the esoteric orientation of the O.R.A.C. The latter did not attract many people and disappeared in 1779. Having been expelled in 1780 from another Order, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz (Gold and Rosy Cross) to which he also belonged, Ecker und Eckhoffen attacked it in a pamphlet published in 1781 (*Der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blösse*). That year he moved from Munich to Vienna. Once in Vienna, he laid the foundations of a second System, the Orden der Ritter und Brüder des Lichts (Order of the Knights and Brethren of the Light). This was a new, albeit more elaborated version of the O.R.A.C. It soon took on the name of Die Brüder Sankt Johannes des Evangelisten aus Asien in Europa (The Brethren of Saint John the

Evangelist from Asia in Europe), or Asiatische Brüder (Asiatic Brethren). In establishing Orders of his own (the O.R.A.C. and the Asiatic Brethren), Ecker und Eckhoffen had followed the trend shared during that period by many other Masons who claimed to possess the best esoteric knowledge. In establishing the Asiatic Brethren, he probably also wanted to take his revenge on the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer.

Like most Systems with higher degrees (or "higher grades"), the Asiatic Brethren recruited among Master Masons (which is the third degree of Freemasonry proper, and gives access to the higher ones) already initiated in a regular masonic lodge. The initiatory organization of the Asiatic Brethren was comprised of five degrees. The first two were designed as a kind of introduction to the following three, namely: 1) The Knights and Brethren of St. John the Evangelist from Asia in Europe. 2) The Wise Masters. 3) The Royal Priests, or "True Rosicrucians". The members of all degrees were supposed to "work" by themselves, outside the pale of the Asiatic Brethren lodge meetings proper, at kabbalistic interpretations of symbols, combinations of words and letters, etc.

One of the striking originalities of the Asiatic Brethren is that it seems to have been the first association of a masonic character in central Europe to recruit Jews. The pro-jewish attitude of the Asiatic Brethren is conspicuous in the Order's name itself, the term "Asia" referring to Jerusalem. Furthermore, the rituals were not designed by Ecker und Eckhoffen alone, but also by Jews supposedly well versed in Kabbalah, like Thomas von Schönfeld and Ephraim Joseph Hirschfeld. Schönfeld, a man of many parts, had been a follower of the Sabbatian movement (the cult of the 17th-century pseudo-Messiah Sabbatai Zvi). He had met Ecker und Eckhoffen in Innsbruck and then settled in Vienna (1785) in order to live close to him and actively participate in the workings of the Asiatic Brethren. In theory he was merely the archivist of the Order, but in fact he was instrumental in introducing kabbalistic elements and Jewish institutions into the rituals. For example, the supreme council of the Order was called the "Synedrion", i.e., Sanhedrin. The mingling of Christian and Jewish observances may have been easier for the Christian Brethren to accept than for the Jewish ones; but a number (albeit a small one) of Jews of the time belonging to the intellectual elite in Germany were imbued with the spirit of the Jewish Aufklärung, the Haskalah, and therefore prone to cast aside some norms of their faith. Furthermore, Schönfeld and Hirschfeld may have introduced some Sabbatian antinomian (both non-Christian and non-Judaical) elements



into the Order's doctrine and rite; for example, according to the "Laws" of the Order its adepts were to partake of a festive meal including pork.

In the "instructions" of these rituals we learn that the Order is the continuation of a very ancient alchemical, theosophical and magical tradition transmitted over the centuries through various channels, not least the Knight Templars. Prevalent are a cosmogony and a cosmology of a theosophical character, blended with arithmology [→ Number Symbolism]. We find, among other mythical narratives, a vivid description of the original Fall, in which a "Son of the Dawn" (Luzifer) plays a major part. The symbolism of these rituals resonates with those of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, which interpreted the first degree regular masonic symbols in an alchemical sense. Gershom Scholem has demonstrated that these texts borrow heavily from various sources (which they do not cite) belonging to Jewish kabbalistic literature, → Louis Claude de Saint-Martin's *Des Erreurs et de la vérité* (1775), and → Georg von Welling's *Opus mago-Cabbalisticum et theosophicum* (first published in 1718, complete editions in 1729 and 1785).

By 1785 the Asiatic Brethren were spreading rapidly far beyond Vienna, mostly in central Europe and Germany (Prague, Innsbruck, Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg). It is possible that it counted as many as several thousand members at that time. Quite a few were aristocrats or dignitaries of high ranks, like Duke of Liechtenstein, Count Joseph von Thun, a Minister of Justice in Austria, Prince Joseph von Linden, Prince Otto von Gemmingen, and Duke Ferdinand von Braunschweig. Nevertheless, since its inception in 1781 the System came in for its share of criticism and was attacked by rival fringe-masonic organizations with a similar esoteric orientation, such as the "Gold- und Rosenkreuz", which had gained a strong foothold in Berlin. This resulted into a flurry of published pamphlets: a quantitatively impressive body of literature, which is a welcome source of information for historians researching the esoteric organizations of that period. For example, when Ecker und Eckhoffen tried to present his System at the famous Masonic Convention of Wihelmsbad (in Hanau, 1782), his application was turned down, partly because he was discredited by his rivals, who presented him as a magician dealing with dangerous occult powers. Besides, the Masons at the Convent were for the most part Christians, and as such did not appreciate the fact that Ecker und Eckhoffen introduced Jews into Masonry. The success of the Asiatic Brethren aroused the special animosity of two prominent freemasons of the established rites,

Prince Johann Baptist Karl von Dietrichstein, Grand Master of the Austrian Lodges, and the famous masonic and Aufklärung figure Ignaz von Born. Partly due to their pressure, Joseph II passed a law (the "Freimaurerapotent", 11. Dec. 1785) imposing stricter controls on Masonic activity in Austria. As a result, the Asiatic Brethren and other similar higher degree Systems in Vienna dealing with esoteric matters like alchemy had to suspend their meetings.

Such events did not put an end to the Asiatic Brethren. Hampered in Austria, it continued to spread far and wide – albeit with unequal success –, particularly in North Germany (Hamburg, Hannover, Lubeck), Prague, Innsbruck, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Wetzlar. Prince Karl von Hessen Kassel became its official Grand Master in August 1786, which is why the same year the headquarters of the Order moved over from Vienna to Schlesvig. For some obscure reasons, Hirschfeld was expelled from the Order in 1790, but the texts he had written for the rituals stood him in good stead when he later used them in his book *Biblisches Organon* (1796), one of the most interesting theosophical works of the late 18th century.

After Ecker und Eckhoffen's death (1790) the Asiatic Brethren only maintained itself in an apparently limited number of lodges, but they were spread all over Europe throughout the first Empire. This survival was due in part to the never weakening efforts of Hirschfeld, and in Scandinavia to the tenacity of Karl A.A. Boheman. Furthermore, its discreet but enduring presence is documented well into the 20th century in a variety of similar Systems who took their inspiration from it. The → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in England, Francesco Brunelli's Arcana Arcanorum in Italy, and even Theodor Reuss's original → Ordo Templi Orientis idea, were all more or less inspired by the Asiatic Brethren. Interestingly enough, the Asiatic Brethren, along with the Illuminaten (Adam Weishaupt's politically oriented fringe-masonic Order) has become the mainstay of 20th century antisemites who see both as the vehicle that spread the Jewish revolutionary plots and inspired the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

## Astrology I: Introduction

Astrology presupposes a relation between the positions and movements of the planets, stars and celestial orbs and zones on the one hand, and earthly events and/or human life on the other, and claims to explain this relation and predict future events in terms of the properties and relative positions of these heavenly agents. The most general idea behind this is expressed in the *Emerald Tablet* as "as above, so below".

The questions why such a relation should exist, how it works, how we can know it, and of what use it might be to human beings have been answered in

rather diverse ways. Throughout the ages, the astrological view of the universe and of the nature of the relation between celestial and terrestrial phenomena has been essentially religious in nature, and it still is. Originally, astrology is supposed to have been mythical in character: the planets (traditionally including the sun and moon) and stars were thought to be living and divine beings, visible gods in the sky, whose great powers inspired awe and veneration. Gradually, the heavenly bodies became part of a hierarchical cosmology, in which the cause of their influences acquired a more transcendent character.

Basically, we might describe the most influential and long-lasting Western theories of celestial influence as either (more or less) "platonic" or (more or less) "aristotelian" in character; but in practice, the distinction is often problematic, as these views were often "harmonized". While both theories presuppose a transcendent and eternal Deity as the ultimate mover of the universe and regard man as a microcosmos, the "internal" organization of the universe is described in very different terms. The "platonic" universe is a living and animated organism, moved by the World Soul; the planets are "lesser gods", each of which performs his or her task by exerting a specific, innate influence on humankind by way of intermediaries. "Aristotelian" cosmology is more concerned with physical explanation of movement, light and influence of the heavenly bodies and orbs; although Aristotle does not explicitly discuss astrological theory as such, some of his views (especially from *De caelo* and *De generatione et corruptione*) could be used as a rational basis of astrological ideas. By way of Latin translations of Arab astrological literature, which was mainly aristotelian, these views gained great authority in Western Europe (Lemay 1962; 1987).

During the long period (12th- 17th/18th c.) in which celestial influence was part of the official Western European scientific paradigm, the why and how of these influences were seldom explained in a specific astrological context, as they belonged to the fields of cosmology, natural philosophy and metaphysics (Grant 1994, 569-617). Mainstream astrology had a rather practical approach; its theory was usually limited to an explanation of the qualities and influences of the planets, signs and other relevant elements according to astrological tradition, which claimed to be based on ages of experience and remained remarkably stable. Many texts are exclusively focused on methods of astrological interpretation and prediction.

Astrological statements are usually based on a diagram (chart, horoscope) depicting the state of

the planets, stars and orbs for a specific place and time. This requires a detailed knowledge of the astronomical state of the heavens, which may be acquired by observation or (usually) by calculation on the basis of tables. For the interpretation of the figure, the astrologer could rely on traditional information about the meaning of the data. A chart may be drawn for several astrological purposes, of which the most prominent fields are: mundane astrology (revolutions), horary astrology (interrogations), natal astrology (genethliology) and elections of times (katarchen). *Mundane astrology* is concerned with general predictions about political power and changes of government, warfare, what will happen to nations, regions and classes of people. The charts from which these predictions were drawn usually represented the exact astronomical beginnings of solar years, seasons or months. Some were based on phenomena like eclipses, comets and conjunctions of the superior planets. *Astrometeorology* (astrological weather prediction) is a more specialized part of mundane astrology. Over long periods of time, general astrological predictions were popular as an indispensable element in almanacs. *Horary astrology* is based on the assumption that the heavens contain the answer to any question for the exact moment on which it is asked. The subject matter of the question decides in which of the *loci* or celestial houses the astrologer will find the answer. *Natal astrology*, which uses a person's natal chart to draw conclusions about his character and life, has always been and still is the most popular type of Western astrology. *Electional astrology* is concerned with choosing the most favourable moment for the beginning of an activity – a journey, a marriage, the building or buying of a house, and so on. Sometimes the “planetary hours” are observed: each planet rules one day of the week, and every hour of the day has its own planetary regent, which gives it a certain quality that makes it unfit for certain actions but excellent for others. The moon's phase, its zodiacal position, or the day of the lunar cycle are also considered important. Some parts of medical astrology, especially the choice of the right moment for medication, purging or bloodletting, are of this type, although the constellation at the moment that the patient fell ill is usually also taken into consideration. With regard to all these types of practical astrology, it is important to realize that they were not objects of belief, but constituted rational and systematic methods that were simply taken for granted as long as the concept of celestial influence was generally accepted. They became “pseudo-science” only at a time when this was no longer the case.

The main philosophical issue raised by astrology was the problem of free will and fate. Belief in astral determinism or fatalism, which was adopted by some of the ancients, was unacceptable in Christian Western Europe. The standard solution was found in limiting the influence of the planets and stars to man's “mortal” frame, which includes his body, passions and appetites, while asserting that it did not have power over his immortal and immaterial soul. The usual aphorism quoted in this context is *Vir sapiens dominabitur astris* (‘the wise man will rule his stars’). Although this may be understood as ‘the wise man is free from celestial influence’, it could also be (and often was) interpreted as: ‘the wise man will, by his self-knowledge, succeed to make the best of his potential as indicated by his birth chart’.

ANNELIES VAN GIJSEN

## Astrology II: Antiquity

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### A. HISTORY

1. INTRODUCTION: ASTROLOGY, ASTRONOMY, AND METEOROLOGY

The term “astrology”, in its present sense, refers to a complex system of sidereal divination for the benefit of human affairs, but originally its meaning was more variegated. The term has long covered at least three different meanings: the present meaning, mentioned above, but also the scientific observa-

tion of the stars, that is, astronomy, and still earlier, the same observation of the stars for very practical purposes, in agriculture and in particular for weather prediction: meteorology.

The modern notion of astrology separated very slowly and confusedly from the two other notions. We could situate around the time of Aristotle the differentiation between the Greek terms astrology and meteorology, and only after the beginning of our era, the progressive differentiation between those of astrology and astronomy. However, the confusion of these two would persist practically until Kepler. Sometimes, to avoid such confusion, or to better define their methods, the technicians of ancient astrology attributed new terms to it (toward the 2nd century A.D.): “genethliology” and “apotelesmatica”, which concentrate on the planetary influences studied at the birth of a subject, or again the “art of the Chaldaeans”, referring to the most renowned source of ancient planetary divination.

## 2. FROM THE MESOPOTAMIAN SYSTEM TO HELLENISTIC FAITH

Elements of astrology, understood as astral observation from which predictions can be deduced, seem already to have existed as a complement to the Sumerian practice of haruspicy, but it was in Mesopotamia, toward the 2nd century B.C., that the elements of an astrological system were truly formed. It was founded on the idea of a sympathetic coincidence of the world, heaven and earth, and the realm of the gods; and on the obedience of each one, as part of the whole, to a pre-established destiny. Thus, for example, each celestial event, precisely observed, is considered as auspicious or inauspicious for the people, or for their leaders. A great number of such predictions, recorded on tablets, have been rediscovered in the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh.

The greatest divinities were the stars, and the Mesopotamian sidereal cult, along with astrological practices, spread widely, from Nineveh to Babylon. In addition, there was developed a precise subdivision of time, which assigned the months and the days to the dominion of astral divinities. These still presided, in what was a rudimentary beginning of geography, over each of the four parts dividing Mesopotamia inside an ideal circle. Let us first note that the Moon, *Sin*, presided over the hierarchy of the planetary divinities, and the portents drawn from its observation were comparatively numerous. The Egyptian priests, in contrast, later followed by the Greek astrologers, gave primacy to the Sun. Finally, ancient astrology

owes the zodiac and its subdivision into “signs”, which include the constellations, to Mesopotamian technique.

Celestial observation in Egypt, before the Hellenistic era, did not concern the influence of the stars upon a single individual, any more than it did according to the Mesopotamian method. Rather, it provided orientation, on the basis of the planetary movements and the horary tables of the risings and settings of stars, for the establishment of the ceremonial calendar of divine worship (favourable and unfavourable days, exact hours for services) and for the determination of sacred space by means of the cardinal points, needed to build the temples. We also owe to priestly Egyptian science the *Tables of the Thirty-Six Decans*, which mark the rhythm of the year and make it possible to calculate stellar risings.

Starting with the colonizing waves of Greeks moving to the East, from the eighth to the 6th century B.C., the amount of contact between the Chaldaeans and the Greeks increased, especially with Babylonia under Nabuchadnezzar. As early as that period, the Greeks began to draw from the oriental breeding ground all the astrological techniques that they were lacking. Moreover, an oriental understanding of the world began to permeate religious practices and even philosophical thought. Thus, the school of Pythagoras, probably connected with Orphism, drew inspiration from the sidereal cults of the East; it saw in numbers, which establish harmonious cosmic relationships, the essence of all things. The repercussions of this astral vision of the world, attributed to Pythagoras, continued well into the Roman Empire, in → Neoplatonism and in commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus*.

In the 3rd century B.C., in the *oikoumene* opened by the conquests of Alexander the Great, many Eastern Mystery religions spread through the Hellenistic world and found a favourable reception there. In their context, the astrological techniques became more than a means to an end. Revering Cybele, Attis, Atargatis, and Serapis, and especially Isis, to whom the faithful in quest of individual salvation adhered unanimously, these Mystery Religions had two faces. Their *exoteric* cult was open to everyone, and was often stamped with → magic; another, *esoteric* cult addressed a few initiates, and often involved a teaching of astrology, or even astrolatry.

Moreover, the weakening of civic religion in the Greco-Roman world favoured new individualistic aspirations, soon supported by certain tendencies in the Socratic, Platonic, and Stoic philosophies,

and this opened up a terrain favourable to astral determinism. The discoveries of the Hellenistic scientists were numerous and genuine; they included the precession of the equinoxes, an outline of the heliocentric theory of the universe, and the exact measurement of the circumference of the Earth. Simultaneously, the Egyptian priest Manetho, at the court of the Ptolemaeans, and the “Chaldaean” historian Berossus, a protégé of the Seleucids, wrote histories of their civilizations that included astrology, notably in the genealogies. Berossus settled on the island of Cos at the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., where he opened a very famous and busy school of astrology. A true “astrological science” was born, whose mythical founding fathers were the “Hellenized Magi”, Zoroaster, Ostanes, and Hystapes, whose “philosophy” and methods J. Bidez and F. Cumont have analysed.

From this period, we can date both a metamorphosis of astrology and its consolidation in the minds of people. It gained the sanctity of a faith in addition to its foundations as a science, while losing some of its traditional characteristics as a result of contact with the Greek spirit and the use of certain facts of astronomical discovery. It was also from the Hellenistic era on that astral divination was no longer applied solely to entire peoples and monarchs, but – responding to the new individualistic aspirations – came to include predictions for particular persons.

### 3. ASTROLOGICAL SYNCRETISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Astrological beliefs had not been absent in Rome before the imperial period, as shown by edicts condemning certain astrologers and practitioners of the occult sciences during the Republic. But it was due to the imperial conquests of the Orient, as early as the 1st century A.D., that astrology found a very broad following among all the classes of Roman society, including some of the emperors, such as Tiberius. Whole dynasties of astrologers, for example that of Thrasyllus, enjoyed celebrity. Yet, some sceptics raised their voices, such as the philosopher and scholar Carneades in the 2nd century B.C., or Lucian in the 2nd century A.D., the satirical poets of the Roman Empire, and the voices of Christianity.

The notion that the fate of living beings was absolutely determined by the laws of the planetary movements, and that humanity was completely subject to this sidereal fatality – the theoretical foundation of astrology – long ensured it a credible philosophical backing. Moreover, astrolatry, already practised in the Pythagorean school,

spread to Rome with the syncretic religion of the Syrian Baals and that of Mithra, a solar god who promised his worshippers heavenly immortality. Following the example of these religions, almost all the religions of salvation used astrological methods as a means of divination and as sacred elements of worship.

In accordance with the syncretism of the mystery religions, a kind of compendium of ideas came into being, characterized more by belief than by rationality, and the influence of which extended to the educated classes. Among the philosophical systems appropriated to serve as a substratum for these new forms of thought, Stoicism takes the first place. The Stoic notion of submission to fatality – but developed into a moral duty of renunciation –, its notions of a harmonious order of the world, universal sympathy, pantheism, and the migration of souls to the stars blended with the belief in sidereal divination and became a moral system propagated by a Syrian Stoic, Poseidonius of Apamea, teacher of Cicero. Indeed, the notion of universal sympathy, cornerstone of the Stoic system, made it possible to accept the influence of the stars on the natural elements (e.g. in the phenomenon of the tides, as demonstrated by Poseidonius) and even on human beings.

Thus the weakening of the critical spirit, which already inaugurated the era of the annotators and compilers at the turn of the Christian era, was as perceptible in astrological beliefs as it was in the writings that propagated them. This was true notably of two scholars of the 2nd century A.D., whose works have survived. The first, Vettius Valens of Antioch, fits the image of the scholarly compiler, more an astrologer and a priest than a scientist and an astronomer, although his work is cited with admiration by the Arab astrologers, such as Masallah in the 8th century A.D., and was much copied and annotated. His astrological tract, the *Anthologies*, is a didactic manual in nine books intended for his disciples, which methodically teaches how to set up a birth theme. The greatest merit of this work is that, although of Egyptian obedience, it attempts to reconcile the two rival astrological doctrines that were still mutually exclusive in the Hellenistic period: Egyptian (the tradition issued from the *Liber Hermetis* and from the teaching of Nechepsos-Petosiris) and Babylonian (the doctrine of the Chaldaean magi transmitted by Berossus).

His contemporary, Claudius Ptolemy, who also followed the Egyptian tradition, was a compiler equally lacking in originality. However, his famous *Tetrabiblos* or *Apotelesmatika* is a methodical



work and more critical than that of Vettius Valens. It is also a precise pedagogical manual, which covers genethliology and the establishment of a birth theme and provides a meticulous classification of the fixed stars, the planets, the signs, and their aspects.

If we find in Ptolemy an aspiration to technicality, a “scientific” intent, such is not at all the case in Vettius Valens or his contemporaries. We already noted the sacred character of astrology as early as its Mesopotamian origins. Despite its pretensions as to the rigorous observation of the stars, at no time did it ever lose its religious aspect. The “Chaldaeans” who delivered predictions most often mixed their calculations with religious considerations. Firmicus Maternus, in his *Mathesis*, proclaimed the faith that motivated him and all his colleagues who were ‘initiated’ into the ‘divine science’. Vettius Valens reminded his disciples of the necessary obedience to Fatality and the sacred rites (*Anthologies*, VII, 5 and IV, 2). Like a priest who initiates his mystes, he entreated them not to divulge his teaching (*ibidem*, VII, *proomion*), for immortality will be assured to astrologers loyal to their faith.

Like Vettius Valens and his colleagues, and like the *Chaldaean Oracles* in the 2nd century A.D., the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus granted astrology a prominent place in his *Mysteries of Egypt* (VIII, 4 sq.), not only as a technique of divination used in theurgy, but also as an essential part of hermetic metaphysical beliefs. Indeed, the astrological “revelation” of an astral cosmogony and of the sidereal influence on the world relates closely to the philosophical revelation of Hermetism and its moral substratum of a sympathy between the universe and humanity, the celestial and sublunar worlds. Furthermore, the principal aim of theurgic practice was to *influence* the invoked divinity, by any possible astrological and magical method.

Astrology, as a kind of knowing and as technique, thus became a favoured means of access to knowledge and gnosis, and hence a means of union with the divinity: the ultimate goal of Hermetic experience. The astrologer, or the magician, shared in the divine power, which he claimed came directly (through revelation) from the great Hermetic god Hermes-Thoth.

#### 4. SOME ESSENTIAL TERMS AND NOTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ANCIENT ASTROLOGICAL SYSTEM

We have seen that the basis of astrology is the principle of solidarity between the celestial and the terrestrial parts of the universe: from this, the

astrologers drew the conclusion of a necessary influence of the stars on human destinies.

*The planetary aspects.* Each star exercises a particular influence by its nature and position, and its aspects with respect to other stars exercise another influence. Certain planets are benefic (Jupiter, Venus, and the Moon); others are malefic (Saturn and Mars). Only the planet Mercury can have both qualities. Anthropomorphized and endowed with feelings, the stars stand in “opposition”, “conjunction”, or “exaltation” to each other, or in “depression” in a sign. They are part of a team or group, of the solar “sect” (“sect” of day, of the masculine gender: the Sun, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars) or of the lunar “sect” (“sect” of night, of the feminine gender: the Moon and Venus). The planet Mercury can again take part in both “sects”, according to its situation. Likewise, human beings and animals, minerals and plants, as well as all parts of the known world, find a place in the solar or lunar “sect”, within an organization of the world that considers itself rational and ordered.

The planets exercise determining influences, according to their relative positions. They can be in “opposition” or “squared” (two unfavourable aspects), or in “trine”, “sextile”, or “conjunction” (favourable aspects). The exact distribution of the parts of the human body under the rule of a planetary divinity and the signs of its “sect” is called *melothesia*. The geographical distribution of the regions of the *oikoumene* is called “chorography”.

*The zodiac and the birth theme.* The Chaldaeans invented the band of celestial space that touches the solar or ecliptic orbit, which is inclined 24 degrees 27 minutes on the plane of the celestial equator. The two intersections of the ecliptic and the equator form the *equinoctial points* (in the signs of Aries and Libra); their opposing points are the *solstitial* or *tropical points* (in the signs of Cancer or Capricorn). On this circle are distributed the twelve signs, often zoomorphic, borrowed from Babylonian mythology; Greek tradition simply took over the figure of the zodiac and adapted it.

There are two principal systems of astrological divination. First there is the “apotelesmatic” or “genethliological” system, which informs the seeker about the most important events of his life. Second there is the system of “Initiatives”, which defines the effects of a planetary configuration on a specific action to be undertaken.

To determine the events in the life of an individual, one must establish a “birth theme”. This term is not equivalent to the modern sense of “horoscope”. One establishes a birth theme by calculating the four points situated at the intersection of the

planes of the horizon and the meridian for a given birth; four “Centers” are thus determined, and the planet and the sign that appear at these “Centers” reveal the subject’s personality. There is first the “Horoscope”, the “Ascendant point” (point I), which determines the beginning of the cycle of the twelve “Houses” and the thirty-six “Decans”, each subdivision being dedicated to a particular area of human life; this is the point where the Sun was rising at the moment of the subject’s birth, on the eastern horizon. Next are calculated the “Lower Culmination”, “Imum Caeli” (IMC; point IV), the “Setting” or “Dysis” (point VII), and the “Upper Culmination” or “Medium Caeli” (MC; point X). These points are important in a birth theme and correspond with the subdivision of the “Houses”.

### 5. HITTITE AND INDIAN ASTROLOGY

Hittite astrology did not originate from an invention proper to the peoples of Anatolia. The texts rediscovered at Boghaz-Köy, such as lists of portents derived from the aspects or the eclipses of the Moon, are all translations of Babylonian writings. We know that contacts were established very early between Mesopotamia and Anatolia, which permitted the Chaldaean culture to exercise a strong influence not only in all the → divinatory arts, but also in literature and in medical practice.

Likewise, even though the Pythagorean legend made the philosopher of Samos a disciple of the Brahmans, we may assume that Mesopotamian technique largely influenced Indian astrology, as early as the conquests of Alexander, and that, during the Hellenistic period, Graeco-Egyptian astrology blended with that of India.

Finally, both Hittite and Indian astrology, which lacked an originality specific to their culture, rarely practised individual divination; they devoted their calculations to the destiny of a whole country or of its rulers.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The system of apprehending the world suggested by astrological methods and their theoretical foundations was recognized, in Antiquity, from the Mesopotamia of the second millennium B.C. to the Hellenistic and Byzantine worlds, as a form of knowledge and often even as a sacred science.

The only discordant voices came from the intellectual elite. There was opposition to astrology from genuine astronomers and philosophers, and sometimes, for completely political purposes, even from certain rulers, hindered by astrological investigations in their desire for absolute power. Voices rose in opposition to astrology especially in the

Graeco-Roman world, because this art pretended to appropriate the rational Greek spirit. It was held to be misguided because it proclaimed astrology as a science. Thus, Hipparchus, in the 2nd century B.C., wholly refuted the idea of using planetary observation to predict the future, even though he believed in the celestial nature of the human soul. Similarly, while Stoic philosophy, with which Hipparchus identified, was appropriated to serve as a “philosophical” substratum to astrology, the Stoics could not accept the divinatory formulas of the “*mathematici*” developed from stellar observation. The Cynical, Sceptic, and Epicurean philosophers also rejected any form of “astrological science”; Carneades, in the 2nd century B.C., ridiculed astrology and astrologers.

However, we have seen how much astrology was part of the mystery religions as early as the Hellenistic period, and how its methods served to discover the future in every area of life: birth, death, marriage, length of life, and so on. Even the juridical codes acknowledged it, if only to sanction its use as prescribed for magical practices. Frequently used in public life and political controversies, astrological consultation could also provide the name of a new emperor: the rulers, moreover, often availed themselves, as Augustus or Tiberius did, of personal astrologers. Thus, opposed and revered, science as well as faith, astrology conquered all of Antiquity despite discordant voices.

## B. LITERATURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Astrological literature appears in the form of archeological documents (tablets and temple inscriptions) or texts (most often fragmentary). All are put under divine patronage, i.e. of a deified planet or a god already worshipped; the god most frequently invoked was → Hermes Trismegistus, associated with his Egyptian homologue Thoth, in a syncretic concern for venerable authenticity. Among the surviving texts we can distinguish between “technical” works and “mystical” revelations. The first not only deal with the simple ideological basis of sidereal divination, the belief in the sympathy of all the constituents of the universe, but also treat of the various “mathematical” ways to predict the future through the observation of the stars. The second group of astrological compilations, of later date, expresses the authors’ faith in a revelation of a mystical nature and introduces astrological knowledge as a means of access to the union with the divine desired by the initiate. This is Hermetic astrology, more religious than “scientific”.

2. "TECHNICAL" ASTROLOGICAL TEXTS  
2A. FROM MESOPOTAMIA TO THE  
HELLENISTIC WORLD

Though one of the most ancient astrological documents known is a Babylonian tablet from the 2nd millennium B.C., most of the tablets conserved in the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh are more recent and date from the 7th century B.C. The observations inscribed on these tablets are of a "scientific" nature: lists of planetary risings and settings, eclipses, and descriptions of planetary movements. However, the predictions drawn from them are very different from the strict deductions that one might perhaps expect, and all pertain to astrological method. These tablets already give a description of the zodiac, which Graeco-Roman astrology would later use and complete. However, the first birth theme (today incorrectly called "horoscope") conserved is more recent; it is Babylonian and dates from about 410 B.C., when Babylon was under the yoke of the Achaemenian Empire. Before this period, a similar astrological practice does not seem to have existed.

After the conquests of Alexander, toward the middle of the 3rd century B.C., we see an increasing interest in these individual themes in Babylon, while in Hellenistic Egypt we find them only from the last decades of the 1st century B.C., inscribed on papyrus. However, the best-known birth theme is Syrian, and it also dates from the 1st century B.C.: it is a pictorial document on the monumental tomb of King Antiochus I of Comagena at Nimrud-Dagh. Depicting a lion covered with stars, it is moreover a "theme of conception" (a royal theme par excellence) and it represents the situation of the planets, not at the birth of the king, but at the supposed moment of his conception, in the sign of Leo.

Finally, the Hellenistic period is especially rich in collections of pseudepigrapha that, under the name of legendary heroes or deities, dispense astrological and magical teachings of an encyclopedic character. Often, only the titles of these collections have survived.

Some astrological texts reflect a tradition strongly tinged with religiosity, issued from Greco-Egyptian circles of the Hellenistic period. They have come down to us as fragments, attributed to the pharaoh Nechepsos and his supposed confidant, the priest Petosiris. These tracts probably appeared in Alexandria toward 150 B.C. and could be inspired from somewhat earlier sources, even though Petosiris claims to represent the Hermes-Thoth revelation itself. In any case, the fragments transmitted to us, along with the citations of these tracts by many astrologers, such as Firmicus Maternus or Vettius

Valens, reveal them as a true sum of both astrological technique and texts considered as sacred. Their authors moreover present them as a heavenly revelation; it is, for example, a "divine voice" that grants Petosiris the privilege of knowing the essence and the influence of the stars on the world.

At the same period also appear other writings claiming the direct authority of Hermes Trismegistus; the most "scientific" one of them is the *Liber Hermetis*, of which there exists only a Latin translation. This work deals particularly with the "twelve loci of the sphere", gives a detailed list of decans, and introduces many practical exercises, notably to calculate the death date of a subject. Astrologers like Thrasyllus, Vettius Valens, and Firmicus Maternus used it extensively. In the 3rd century A.D., the philosopher and astrologer Iamblichus of Chalcis stated that the number of works inspired by the *Hermetica* exceeded fifty thousand (*Mysteries of Egypt*, I, VIII). Likewise, an anthology conserved under the name Pseudo-Manetho, whose beginning dates to about the 1st century B.C., with interpolations written until the 2nd century A.D., was also strongly influenced by the tradition of the *Hermetica*. It mixes the authority of Asclepius, Petosiris, and the Egyptian priest Manetho and mainly deals with the system of "Initiatives" (on a specific action to undertake) and the calculation of a subject's lifetime. Also well known during the Hellenistic period were collections of the → Iatromathematica of Hermes, which study medical astrology (predicting notably the outcome of an illness), and the *Salmeschoimiaka* (*Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* III, 128), which place the division of time and favourable dates into the astrological context of the thirty-six decans. However, these two types of text show almost no characteristics of astrological technique, but instead are reflections of Hermetic faith. They are left to us in a fragmentary state. W. Gundel has published some of them; others appear in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*.

During the same period, a Babylonian astrological theory transmitted by the "Chaldaean" channel (chiefly the Syrian priests and perhaps the astrological school of Cos, where Berosus, whose work is lost, was teaching) came to enrich planetary divination. It was to become foundational to astrological doctrine by affirming the influence of the stars on the inhabited world, and particularly on humanity, as well as their divine nature. This was, it seems, the only original "Chaldaean" contribution to Hellenistic astrology. From the same "Chaldaean" tradition issued the apocryphal texts written under the pretended Persian authority of the "Hellenized

magi”, as J. Bidez and F. Cumont have called them: Pseudo-Zoroaster, Ostanes, and Hystapes. Many of these works were in the Library of Alexandria; sometimes we still have their titles or some references transmitted by Arab astrologers.

At the very beginning of the Christian era, a religious sect established on the shores of the Dead Sea at Qumran left us manuscripts written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Some contain birth themes established according to the Essene belief in the determinism of human life and its predestination to a “Destiny of Light” or a “Destiny of Shadows”, and are strongly tinged with spirituality. On the basis of the time of birth, Essene astrology could determine the character of a being, then its destiny and spiritual evolution. Some themes, studied and published by A. Dupont-Sommer, are those of personalities of great moral qualities, one of whom is even supposed to have been an “Elect of God”. If their style and form recall those of Chaldaean themes, these texts show us to what extent Essenian Judaism was open to the influences of the great spiritual and esoteric currents of the Hellenistic world.

#### 2B. FROM THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE BYZANTINE PERIOD

The development of astrology in the Roman Empire was to a great extent connected with the success of Eastern religions, which supplanted civic religion. With the religion of Isis and its mystery cult, astrology found a prominent position. In Egypt, pictorial astrological literature was represented by the zodiacs decorating the temples of Denderah, Esnah, and Akhmim in Upper Egypt. These zodiacs are all from the Roman era, despite the claims by the priests and astrologers connected to the temples, who wanted to trace them back to remote Egyptian antiquity. They were copied from Hellenistic zodiacs, as also happened in other traditions and cultures (Indian or Chinese). The most complete (circular) zodiac is that of Denderah. On view at the Louvre in Paris, it shows the division into zodiacal signs and decans, with the constellations and the planets in the signs.

By the end of the 1st century B.C., senator P. Nigidius Figulus had already worked to disseminate astrological theories in Rome, even trying to reconcile the “Chaldean” and “Egyptian” doctrines in the light of neo-Pythagoreanism. Likewise, a Syrian philosopher, Posidonius of Apamea, a reputed scholar who was the teacher of Cicero and a commentator on Plato’s *Timaeus*, broadly contributed to give astrology the support of Stoicism as a philosophical foundation. He was to inspire, among others, the theories of Ptolemy in his *Tetrabib-*

*los*. The rulers themselves, from Caesar to the Severi, furthered the influence of astrology on the minds of their subjects. These rulers included Tiberius and Hadrian, who believed in the power of the stars and employed the services of reputed astrologers, such as Balbillus or the “dynasty” of Thrasyllus. Some fragments of their astrological exercises are still extant in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (CCAG, VIII, 3); Balbillus, for example, has left us an original method to calculate the length of an individual’s lifetime.

Similarly, the poet Manilius, who identified with Poseidonius among others, provides in the five chants of his *Astronomica* a description of the planets and the signs, their relationships and their influence on people. The court of Augustus or Tiberius seems to have commissioned this work of little originality. During the Empire, in an intellectual atmosphere that favoured commentaries and exegeses, most of the writings were astrological compilations and protreptic manuals for the purpose of training disciples. We have already mentioned the *Apotelesmata* of Pseudo-Manetho, of Petosirian persuasion, whose composition extended from the 1st century B.C. to the end of the 2nd century A.D. This collection displays analogies with the manuals of Claudius Ptolemy, Vettius Valens, and Firmicus Maternus. This is because they all borrow from the same earlier sources, those of the Hellenistic vulgate. From Ptolemy, a methodical theoretician and good pedagogue, we have inherited an influential tract on astronomy, the *Mathematical Syntax* or *Almageste*, which in thirteen books develops a geocentric vision of the world, despite the teachings of his master Hipparchus. His *Apotelesmatica*, or *Tetrabiblos* teaches in a critical and methodical manner all the areas of astrological technique (planets and signs, aspects, genethiology, the art of establishing a birth theme, and calculations on the length of lifetime). His work influenced many later astrologers, such as Firmicus Maternus, Hephaestion of Thebes, Paul of Alexandria, Rhetorius of Egypt, Palchus, and even the Arab astrologers.

His contemporary, Vettius Valens of Antioch, left us *Anthologies*, a work in nine books, less critical than the *Tetrabiblos*. The collection, very mutilated, was a practical manual intended for his disciples. It is rather monotonous in its structure and form, mixing practical recipes with mystical injunctions to silence for students initiated into the “sacred science”. Vettius Valens especially follows the tradition of Petosiris, but he has the recognizable merit of having attempted to reconcile the two rival astrological doctrines, “Egyptian” and “Chal-

dean”, even though he was often content to compile rather than reconcile them. He remained, until the Middle Ages, an unrivaled master in both astrology and astral mysticism, held in great esteem by Antiochus of Athens, the Anonymous of 379, Hephaestion of Thebes, Palchus, Rhetorius, Theophilus of Edessa and many Arab astrologers. He would even be a subject, in the 16th century, of attentive study by → John Dee, the astrologer of Queen Elisabeth I of England.

We also still possess two works by an astrologer known as Firmicus Maternus, from the time of Constantine. The first, called *Astronomica*, is a paraphrastic commentary on the same work by Manilius. The second, *Mathesis*, is a compendium inspired by the *Orasis* of Critodemus and the *Hermetica*, and it describes in eight books the art of genethliology and of establishing a birth theme. The religiosity of the era and a syncretistic “mystical” theosophy strongly colours the whole work.

Besides the two summaries of Vettius Valens and Ptolemy, most of the other astrological tracts until the Byzantine period have survived in fragments, either as references in the better-conserved astrological manuals, or as astrological manuscripts. An inventory has been made, and the texts have been published, in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (CCAG; 12 volumes) by several philologists, including F. Boll and F. Cumont. This edition is still authoritative and cannot be neglected by anyone who wants to study ancient astrology.

In the “Chaldaean” astrological tradition, we must mention Critodemus, to whom Vettius Valens often refers, and who introduced Babylonian astrology in the 1st century A.D. His major work, the *Orasis* (the Vision), of which fragments remain (CCAG, VIII), often blends astrological description with speculations of a vague religiosity: astrology appears in it as a religion of salvation. Another work, contemporaneous with those of Vettius Valens and Ptolemy, has come down to us as fragments: the *Chaldaean Oracles*, a compendium of the “Chaldaean” theurgists attributed to a certain Julian the Theurgist, presented as a path to salvation through mystical union with cosmic and sideral divinities.

From the 2nd century A.D. on, astrological literature was further distinguished by the works of Antiochus of Athens and Dorotheus of Sidon, who refer to “Egyptian” authority. In the 4th century came the contributions of the Anonymous of 379, as well as Hephaestion of Thebes, who was an uncritical compiler, and Paul of Alexandria, who restored Ptolemy. Finally, in the 6th century, Palchus, another disciple of Ptolemy and Rheto-

rius, produced a work that included many astrological citations and thus restored the two astrological traditions. All these tracts have come down to us as fragments, published in the CCAG.

### 3. ASTROLOGY AS REVELATION: HERMETIC ASTROLOGICAL LITERATURE

Within the philosophical and religious syncretism that characterized thinking from the Hellenistic period onward, the religions of salvation stimulated the individual to seek knowledge of the divine and revealed to him the means to arrive at it. The mystes often hoped to obtain a beneficent revelation from the divinity. This could be a metaphysical or teleological revelation, concerning the origin of the world and the fate of souls; it could be a proreptic revelation, concerning a particular technique of astrology, → magic, → alchemy, or medicine; or a revelation concerning a specific life event, associated in this case with a prayer to obtain a favourable outcome.

From these individual requirements derived collections of different revelations: firstly, from about the 3rd century B.C., works concerning astrology, magic, and alchemy; secondly, more recent texts, toward the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., which reveal doctrines that are more philosophical and theological. In the first case we are dealing with a “popular” Hermetic literature, and in the second, with a “learned” one. If we use this classification derived from Festugière, we must nevertheless observe that the two groups of texts sometimes overlap; hence, we often find astrological observations in the “learned” treatises and, inversely, religious considerations in the “popular” ones.

#### 3A. ASTROLOGY IN THE “POPULAR” HERMETIC TREATISES AND THE NEW AIM OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION

We have already mentioned the *Liber Hermetis*, which is preserved in a Latin translation of a now lost Greek original (in a manuscript of 1431, cod. *Harleianus latinus* 3731). The original was written toward the 3rd century B.C. and attributed to Hermes-Thoth. It is a compendium permeated by the Hermetic faith in a divine revelation to the initiate, and intends to teach him an astrological doctrine and relevant exercises. The work treats of the fixed stars, the planets and their aspects, their positions in the zodiacal signs, the theory of the twelve houses of the sphere and examples of calculations to determine life events: birth, death, illnesses, etc. It also treats the theory of planetary “terms”, gives a list of decans, and predictions on length of lifetime and violent deaths.



The astrological tracts on medicine (iatromathematics) and on botany, which are related to the former, are part of the “popular” hermetic writings and seem to date from the 1st century before our era. It should be remembered that the notion of “science” of the classical Greek era does not exist in these works. The “scientist” here is anything but “disinterested”. He seeks to benefit from his observations and discoveries; he wants to know future events or become a master of nature through magic, by discovering the relationships of sympathy or antipathy that unite all the parts of the universe, including people. This explains the religious colouring and the appeal to mystery that “scientific research” often adopts as early as the end of the Hellenistic epoch.

Medicine was not exempt from this conception of the world and this perspective. Hermes’ *Iatromathematica* (ed. Gundel) thus gives recipes for zodiacal and planetary melothesia by which the doctor can treat illnesses. Moreover, *The Sacred Book of Hermes to Asclepius on the Plants of the Seven Planets* (CCAG, VIII, 3, 153) puts the plants in close relationship with the decans, the zodiacal signs, the planets and the fixed stars. The book provides a list of recipes based on one or several plants, adapted to the patient’s birth theme and the exact time of the beginning of the illness.

It was divine revelation again that enabled doctor Thessalus of Tralles, a religious author of the 1st century A.D., to be initiated by Asklepios himself into the knowledge of correspondences uniting twelve plants with twelve zodiacal signs and seven plants with seven planets (CCAG, VIII, 3, 163). After a spiritual preparation of fasting and silence and then a magical ritual presided over by an officiating priest, Thessalus entered into visual and oral communication with the god, who required secrecy from him in exchange for the revelation. We find again, as in all the Hermetic tracts, the mark of the same religious belief: truth can emanate only from the gods. Hence scientific research, considered as a quest for revelation and knowledge, must refer to them alone.

### 3B. ASTROLOGY IN THE “LEARNED”

#### HERMETIC TREATISES

The teaching dispensed in the Graeco-Egyptian temples to groups of initiates should be primarily understood as religious knowledge. The corresponding ideas nourished a whole literature that flowered during the first three centuries of our era: it provided “revelations” in the form of dialogues on cosmogony, the gods, and the means of entering into communion with them. These “learned” treatises, such as the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Ascle-*

*pius*, and the text gathered in the *Anthology* by Stobaeus (→ Hermetic Literature I), evince the same religious and moral attitude as the so-called “popular” treatises. They are *logoi* of teachings revealing a cosmogonical aspect, or descriptions of the narrator’s spiritual experience, affirming the regeneration of the mystes through initiation. All these texts, essentially “learned” and initiatory, contain numerous references to astrological theories and techniques. The most striking example is the fragment of Stobaeus (*CH*, III, fragm. VI, ed. Festugière) on the *Logos from Hermes to Tat*, explaining the doctrine of the thirty-six decans, in a description of the celestial world.

From the same perspective, *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* of Iamblichus of Chalcis, in the 3rd century A.D., defended the “Egyptian” doctrine and theurgic practices. In this work also, astrology was linked to hermetic astral theology (*De Mysteriis*, VIII, 4-7), and this system was taken up again in the Italian Renaissance, when → Marsilio Ficino translated and used the text. Thus, we can say that the division between the two literatures of hermetic astrology remained clearly intact in esoteric and exoteric teaching, but the analogies between them were evident in content and form. In content, “technical” and “learned” literature both purported to be apocalypses, revealed truths, often by the same god: Hermes Trismegistus, prophet of the word, was assimilated with the Egyptian god Thoth to gain greater authority. In their form also, the two types of literature are often related: based upon one faith, they both employ the language of the mystery religions, with the same divine invocations and the same conjurations to silence in the *Corpus Hermeticum* as in Vettius Valens.

### 4. CONCLUSION

We have seen that from the Mesopotamian world to the Byzantine era there existed a specific astrological literature, which varied according to its objectives and to the audiences addressed. But also literature itself, in the sense of literary creation and fiction, knew to make use of astrology: in the Graeco-Roman world, astro-theology blended with fiction to produce widely known works. The Greek and Latin novels are a good illustration of this: the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, or Apuleius’ novel *Metamorphoses*, assign a major role to the supernatural, and notably to the influence of the stars on humanity and the universe.

We have seen to what extent the “science” of astrology resulted in influencing all of Roman society, with satirists such as Martial or Juvenal, in the

1st century A.D., mocking the haste of their fellow-citizens to consult the stars and obey the rulings of the “mathematicians” for the smallest detail of their lives.

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## Astrology III: Middle Ages

### A. HISTORY

1. INTRODUCTION 2. ASTROLOGY IN ISLAMIC CULTURE (2A. THE EASTERN CENTERS 2B. AL-ANDALUS 2C. JEWISH ASTROLOGERS) 3. ASTROLOGY IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE (3A. LATE ANTIQUE INFLUENCES 3B. EARLY MIDDLE AGES 3C. THE TRANSLATORS OF THE 12TH CENTURY AND THEIR INFLUENCE)

### B. LITERATURE

1. INTRODUCTION 2. ASTROLOGICAL LITERATURE UNDER MUSLIM INFLUENCE (2A. MUSLIM LITERATURE 2B. JEWISH LITERATURE 2C. MAGICAL LITERATURE) 3. ASTROLOGICAL LITERATURE UNDER CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE (3A. EARLY SOURCES 3B. THE 12TH-CENTURY TRANSLATORS AND THEIR IMPACT)

## A. HISTORY

### I. INTRODUCTION

It is a commonly held prejudice that the “middle” ages are a period of a mere transition from antiquity to the higher level of “modernity”. In this view, it was the Renaissance that through its reference to antiquity woke up European culture from the deep sleep of the medieval period and helped making way for the triumph of enlightened rational science over magical-mystical speculation. This suggestive historical construction loses sight of the complex dynamics of this post-antique culture. Although it is true that parts of Christian theology in Rome and Byzantium aggressively attacked the religious and scientific traditions of antiquity, such an attitude should not be generalized. In fact, there are great differences from region to region and from ruler to ruler. Quite a few Christian sovereigns showed a remarkable interest in the sciences, and it was in the monastic schools of the high middle ages that the classical philosophical and scientific texts were tackled. Hence, the notion of a “medieval Enlightenment” (Flasch & Jeck 1997) is not too far-fetched.

Another prejudice that needs to be confronted is the idea of a “Christian occident”. A more accurate picture of medieval culture will not be possible until (at least) the Muslim and Jewish traditions are taken into consideration, that fostered a complex pluralistic discourse and a transfer of knowledge. Those Christian courts that were unacquainted with Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic increasingly felt the need to catch up on Muslim science; as a result, from the 10th century onward Christian scholars became familiar with Arabic science, philosophy, and also astrology. Therefore, although the following overview is – for analytical reasons – divided into Christian and Muslim domains, the dynamic transfers between them must always be taken into account.

### 2. ASTROLOGY IN ISLAMIC CULTURE

Given the fact that the Qur’an castigates human worship of astral deities but describes the interpretation of astral signs as a fair means to understand God’s will (see, e.g., sura 7:6-7), Muslim rulers from the beginning supported the development of the sciences in general and astrology in particular. Muslim culture – which soon reached from India and China to France and Spain – absorbed many different astrological traditions. Arabic science is therefore considerably more than the Arabs’ science; an important achievement of Muslim scholars was the integration of Indian and Chinese

astrology with the Babylonian and Hellenistic traditions that had been more or less canonized in the works of Ptolemy. In this regard, the Silk Road was an important place of exchange not only for goods but also for ideas, because Muslim, Manichaean, Jewish, Christian, and Chinese traditions were incorporated in new concepts.

### 2A. THE EASTERN CENTERS

Between the 8th and 10th centuries these traditions were actively collected and studied. The Abbassidian rulers of Baghdad in particular (Abū-Ja’far al-Mansūr, Hārūn al-Rashīd and ‘Abdalla am-Ma’mūn) helped to create a scientific atmosphere which encouraged scholars of astrology to develop new theories and approaches. Under am-Ma’mūn the library of Baghdad reached the height of its influence; Greek manuscripts from Byzantium and Cyprus were collected and teams of translators provided text-critical Arabic editions. Thus, the majority of the extant classical astrological texts – including Ptolemy’s works – were available in Arabic translation. In addition, a new genre was created that became a valuable tool for practicing astrologers throughout the middle ages. The so-called *zīj* is a kind of table that makes easily accessible the planetary constellations for a given time and helps the astrologers to figure ascendants and culminations, the horary movement of the stars, their average speed, the planets’ retrograde phases, etc. (see North 1994 for a detailed description). At the same time, the quality of *astrolabes* was significantly improved, which led to a better foundation of calendrical calculation and astrological analysis.

Among the most important astrologers of the period were Ma’shallāh (Latin Messalah, a Jewish astrologer who calculated the foundation horoscope for Baghdad), Ya’qūb ibn Yṣṣḥaq → al-Kindī, Ja’far ibn Muḥammad Abū Ma’shar (Latin Albumasar, 787–886), Abū Abd ‘Allah Muḥammad ibn Ġabīr al-Battānī (c. 858–929), and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Birūnī (973–c. 1050). Latin texts from medieval and Renaissance provenance regularly refer to all of them as important scholars, but from the perspective of esotericism al-Kindī and his pupil Abū Ma’shar are without doubt the most influential. Al-Kindī put forward a rational and philosophical foundation of esoteric disciplines which comprised not only astrology but also → magic and other divinatory techniques. In his book *De radiis (stellarum)* (On the Rays of the Stars) he combined Platonism and → Aristotelianism and developed a metaphysical foundation of magic. Applying a Stoic concept of universal sympathy he

argues that sympathy manifests materially in the “rays” between (celestial and sublunary) objects. From this al-Kindî deduces his thesis that a complete comprehension of the cosmos is possible, a thesis that is usually only attributed to Renaissance thought (see Travaglia 1999). But not only the stars send out “rays” but also every material object and even words and actions; therefore ritual, prayer, sacrifice, and magic are powerful ways of influencing the cosmos. This holistic explanation had a strong impact on e.g. → Roger Bacon’s and → John Dee’s philosophy of nature.

Abū Ma’shar grew up in Khurasan and was well acquainted with the doctrines of the Jews, Nestorians, Manichaeans, Buddhists, Hindus, and Zoroastrians who lived in that region. At the age of forty-seven he met al-Kindî and became his most important pupil. Abū Ma’shar’s opus comprises many different texts of astrological provenance, but most influential was the *Introduction into Astrological Prediction* that he wrote in 848 in Baghdad and that became known to the Latin west as *Liber introductorius maior*. For Abū Ma’shar astrology is a mathematical science in the strict sense. In contrast to other – mainly Christian – astrologers who denounced horoscopic astrology and concrete prophecies as *astrologia superstitiosa*, he views these as an important subdiscipline of astrology. Therefore, the *Liber introductorius* gives a complete overview of all classical astrological techniques, including Indian parameters and traditions that Abū Ma’shar weaves into his doctrines. In another work, the *Zij al-hazarāt*, he adds to the astronomical calculations a philosophical foundation of “hermetic” science. Astrology, he says, was once revealed to the humans by a divine source but was largely forgotten. He holds that his *zīj* was based on a text that had been hidden in Isfahan before the Flood and now was made known to the (learned) public by Abū Ma’shar.

Of particular significance for later astrologers was Abū Ma’shar’s doctrine of Great Conjunctions. He elaborated the well-known ancient speculation about the importance of the threefold conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn and applied it to the Shiite interest in the return of the Mahdi. Jews and Christians used this doctrine, for their part, to figure out the beginning of the messianic era or the return of Christ; this is but one example of how astrological doctrines fueled the apocalyptic discourse of Renaissance and Reformation Europe.

## 2 B. AL-ANDALUS

In close contact with the eastern centers of the Islamic world from the 8th to the 15th century the

western caliphates of the Spanish peninsula (*al-Andalus*) formed a second cornerstone of science and astrology. Already before the Muslims came to Spain there had been an astrological tradition, mainly based on the works of Isidore of Seville (see 3A below). But whereas earlier research was mostly interested in calendrical issues, from the 10th century onward new schools of astronomers at the emirate of Córdoba began to contest the hegemonic status of the east. The emir sent agents to Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo to collect all extant literature; in the second half of the 10th century schools for mathematics, astronomy, and other arts were founded that systematized, commented, and elaborated this material. In Córdoba taught the astronomer al-Majritî († around 1007) who transferred the famous tables of al-Khwārisimî to the meridian of Córdoba and adjusted the Islamic calendar. Al-Majritî instructed several well-known astrologers, and his example was followed by other centers of al-Andalus, from Seville and Valencia to Sargasso and Toledo.

As an example of how classical astrological techniques were further elaborated in medieval Islamic culture the teachings of Alcabitius (d. 967 in Aleppo) deserve mention. His *Liber introductorius* became a standard reference work for later astrology, after John of Seville had prepared a Latin translation in 1142. Alcabitius is important also with regard to his new system of dividing the twelve “houses” of the horoscope, i.e. the intermediate divisions between the Ascendant axis and the Medium Coeli axis. Referring to the classical methods of Porphyry and Rhetorius, the Alcabitius system remained in wide practice even after Campanus, Regiomontanus, and Placidus had proposed their new methods.

Of crucial importance for medieval astrology was the work of ‘Alī ibn abī al-Rijāl (Latin Haly Abenragel or Albohazen Haly, c. 1016–1062). Whether or not he was educated in Baghdad is not clear. He worked as notary and court astrologer at the court of al-Mu’izz ibn Bādis in Tunis, where he wrote his main opus: a systematical description of all aspects of classical astrological knowledge in eight books. Although there are several different versions and collections of this work – the versions in Old Castilian and Latin were particularly influential in Europe –, it seems to be clear that the first three books treated astrology and astronomy in general, the fourth and fifth book described the casting and interpreting of horoscopes, the sixth was devoted to “revolutions” (i.e. to transits and related interpretations), the seventh to “elections” (i.e. to catarchic astrology), while the eighth book

analyzed issues of mundane astrology and the turn of historical eras. Haly Abenragel makes extensive use of the old masters such as “Hermes”, Dorotheos, Ptolemy, Ma’shallāh, and al-Kindī, and he not only presents their ideas but also discusses the pros and cons of their theories. That the Muslim astrologer was indeed regarded by later scholars as *Summus astrologus* or even as *Ptolemaeus alter* can be seen from the fact that his book was reprinted six times between 1503 and 1571.

### 2C. JEWISH ASTROLOGERS

From the beginning of the Muslim era the Spanish peninsula was characterized by a vivid exchange of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious traditions. In this situation, Jews had a particularly important position, because many of them were acquainted with several languages. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Christian king Alfonso X asked his Jewish physician Jehuda Moshe to prepare a translation of Haly Abenragel’s work. Jews also worked as astrologers and wrote influential treatises in Hebrew (overview in Halbronn 1986). Among these are Abraham bar Chiyya (d. 1143), Abraham ibn Ezra (1098–1164) and Jehuda Halevi (1075–1141). Ibn Ezra published the most important astrological work of medieval Jewry, the *Sepher reshit hokhmah* (The Beginning of Wisdom), which was soon translated into French, English, and Old Castilian. In this book the author gives a concise introduction to nativities, horary astrology, elections, mundane astrology, and astrological medicine; its detailed reflections on the contemporary Aristotelian framework demonstrate the highest standard of medieval Spanish philosophy. In other books Ibn Ezra discussed astrological and theological issues with Jehuda Halevi, Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Abraham bar Chiyya, and he even proposed a calculation of the houses of the horoscope that resembled that of Placidus five hundred years later. Ibn Ezra wrote astronomical tables for Pisa (around 1143), and a London *zīj* that circulated around 1150 is also assigned to his authorship. The dominant position of Jewish scholars in medieval astrology continued until the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492.

In the 13th and 14th centuries Spanish astrology spread over whole of Europe. The “Alfonsine Tables” gained wide currency due to their improved mathematical quality, and the use of astrolabes reached a new standard (see North 1994, 203–223).

### 3. ASTROLOGY IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE

Quite against a commonly held position, astrology flourished in regions under Christian control

as well. Christian astrologers tried to determine “licit” from “illicit” astrology, and several emperors drew on astrological techniques to legitimate their power in quite the same way as their Roman predecessors had done (see Stierlin 1988). This holds true for Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, Henri II, and the emperor Frederick II, to mention but the most important rulers.

#### 3A. LATE ANTIQUE INFLUENCES

The classical astrological tradition had been preserved in Latin texts such as Firmicus Maternus and Manilius, and it was handed down to early medieval Christianity mainly by two authors: A.M.S. Boethius and Isidore of Seville. In his crucial work *Consolatio philosophiae* Boethius (c. 480–524) provided medieval culture with a well-versed description of classical philosophy and science. With regard to astrology, his contribution was important insofar as he reinforced → Neoplatonism and summarized the main arguments on the issue of determination, fate, freedom of will, and fatalism.

Boethius’ influence was surpassed, of course, by the writings of Isidore of Seville (c. 570–636). His encyclopedic *Etymologiae* covered in twenty volumes the whole of classical science and culture, and his differentiation between *astrologia superstitiosa* and *astrologia naturalis* became the standard argument for medieval scholars to justify “licit” astrology. For Isidore, astrology is “superstitious” if it wants to predict the character and the fate of a native with reference to his or her horoscope; this branch of astrology had become superfluous with the victory of Christ. Although this branch is not necessarily wrong (like many others, Isidore speculated about the “Star of Bethlehem”), it is definitely illicit. The accepted branch of astrology – *astrologia naturalis* – is focused on meteorological and mundane aspects of nature, and it also includes astrological medicine. Isidore’s claim that every physician needs to have an astrological education remained common in Christian culture right into early modern times.

#### 3B. EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The main centers of Christian astrological research in early medieval times were the monasteries. Boethius’ and Isidore’s reception began with Bede Venerabilis (673–735) who applied their teachings to a reformulation of the Christian religious calendar. This resulted in a new genre of calendrical reckoning, the so-called *Computus* (Borst 1991). To the calendrical considerations were added country sayings and astrological rulings



such as those of Firmicus Maternus. An important achievement of this new understanding was the calendrical reform of Charlemagne; his Imperial Calendar was in use until the 13th century (see Borst 2001). Among the monasteries that helped to establish a Christian astrology were the schools at Fulda, St. Gallen, Reichenau, and Regensburg. Later, in the 9th and 10th centuries, at the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll, monks compiled treatises on arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and calendars, and translations of these documents circulated widely in western Europe. This is the explanation of why Hermann the Lame (1013–1054), a monk at Reichenau, was able to write his detailed description of the use of astrolabes – he simply knew the Ripoll texts. Hermann improved the Beda reckonings and in his book *De mensura astrolabii* transformed the Arabic lunar calendar of his Spanish sources into the Latin Julianic solar calendar.

How deep-reaching the cultural transfers between Christian and Muslim Europe were can be exemplified by the works of Gerbert of Aurillac (940–1003) who in 999 became Pope Sylvester II (Lindgren 1976). Gerbert was educated in Barcelona in the *artes liberales* and was an expert of Arabic, mathematics, arithmetic, and → music. In his writings, he called for a reception of Arabic science in order to improve Christian culture, and he supported Arabic terminology and translations in the monastery schools, where Fulbert of Chartres, Hermann the Lame, or Walcher of Malvern were now studied in detail. In his book on the use of astrolabes – Gerbert had used one already in 989 in the monastery of Reims – he fortified Isidore's differentiation of natural and superstitious astrology. Through these activities, the knowledge of the astrolabe, which also made the casting of horoscopes much easier, became standard in Europe by the 11th century.

### 3C. THE TRANSLATORS OF THE 12TH CENTURY AND THEIR INFLUENCE

During the 12th century, most learned Christians felt the need to catch up with Muslim and Jewish science, and both with regard to literature and to art and iconography a considerable shift of astrological motives took place (Blume 2000). Isidore's differentiation was now further developed, e.g. by the scholastics Peter Abaelard (c. 1100–1140) at Chartres and Hugo of St. Viktor († 1141) in Paris, who taught that astrology can determine the *naturalia* (the natural causes) but not the *contingentia* (things that are dependent on chance and God's will). This was the official opinion of the Church for hundreds of years.

Adelard of Bath (c. 1080–c. 1150) was a key figure in the interference of Muslim and Christian astrology (see Hastings 1927, 20–42; Burnett 1987), because he actively reformulated astrological tradition. Adelard translated the tables of al-Khwāris̄mī and speculated on Abū Ma'shar's theory of the growth and decline of empires and religions. At the end of the 12th century, astrology was a common issue of almost all monasteries, and astrological knowledge began to spread from the clerical realm to the courts, guilds, and other layers of society (Blume 2000).

Until the 13th century a vivid discussion about astrology developed among scholastic scholars, among them Gerhard of Cremona (1114–1187), → Bernard Silvester († after 1159), → Michael Scot († 1235/6), → Albertus Magnus, → Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), and → Ramon Llull (von Stuckrad 2003, 192–206). Albertus Magnus's *Speculum astronomiae* (written in the 1260s) became one of the most influential treatises on astrology in the high middle ages (Zambelli 1992; cf. Paravicini-Bagliani 2001). In order to establish astrology as an accepted science, he distinguished between (illicit) magical applications and scientific scrutiny. Furthermore, Albert described astronomy and astrology as two distinct branches of this science; whereas astronomy can be regarded as a mathematical discipline, astrology interprets these calculations and is able to predict future events. Since astrology leads every earthly matter back to its divine source, it necessarily leads man to God who is seen as the unmoved mover of everything that exists. With this argument Albert reacted to the scholastic critics of astrology and introduced astrology as an important discipline for the pious Christian.

Albert's position – and also Thomas Aquinas's, who likewise argued that astrology was based on reason and that reason determines the will – came under attack in the context of the (mainly French) Averroists. John Duns Scotus, among others, stressed the primacy of will over reason. Because this is also valid for God, God's will cannot be detected by reason. Hence, astrology is a transgression based upon human curiosity and the theological truths must be believed, not understood. A radically different position was held by Roger Bacon who saw → alchemy, astrology, and magic as the peaks of a natural science that was based on empiricism. Bacon – referring to Ptolemy, Haly Abenragel, Abū Ma'shar, and others – called on the Church to support an *Astrologia sana*, because no serious astrologer had ever claimed a fatalistic or deterministic astrology. In sum, all arguments were

well established long before the “Renaissance” picked up these issues again.

## B. LITERATURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

By the end of the 4th century, the “classical” astrological literature of Greek and Roman provenance had reached the height of its influence and was spread widely over the ancient world. Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* were seen as the ultimate source of astrological reasoning (on the extant MSS see Boer 1961), but in addition to this scholarly kind of literature there also flourished a variety of philosophical, religious, or popular treatises that had their impact on later astrological discourse. Christian literature in particular – beginning already with Firmicus Maternus in the 4th century – questioned the legitimacy of astrology and developed a framework of interpretation that distinguished between accepted and illicit branches of this discipline. In other religious contexts, that is to say, in Jewish, “Gnostic”, Hermetic, Manichaean, and later in Islamic traditions, Greek and Roman astrology was likewise reshaped and adopted in terms of a (more or less) monotheistic creed.

For the centuries to come, astrological literature can be divided roughly with regard to language. While the Latin west was more or less unaware of the standard astrological Greek works and referred to Latin sources, it was in the cultures under Muslim influence that those documents were not only preserved but also translated, and a rich astrological discourse was developed with a nature of its own. This situation changed only from the 10th century onward, when Christian scholars were becoming more and more acquainted with Muslim astrology and astronomy.

## 2. ASTROLOGICAL LITERATURE UNDER MUSLIM INFLUENCE

### 2A. MUSLIM LITERATURE

The first notable astrological author among the Arabs was *Theophilus of Edessa* (c. 695-785). Theophilus was a Greek who in his old age became court astrologer to the Caliph al-Mahdî († 785). He wrote four treatises on astrology in Greek, some excerpts from which are edited in the CCAG, that is to say the *Works on Elections for Wars and Campaigns and Sovereignty* (showing strong Indian influences already, it is the only extant Greek astrological literature devoted entirely to military astrology); *Astrological Effects*, depending on Indian astrology and Rhetorius’ compendium of astrology;

*Various [Kinds of] Elections*, depending mainly on Dorotheos and Hephaestio of Thebes; and *Collection of Cosmic Beginnings*, a treatise on mundane astrology and annual and monthly predictions.

In the 8th century Indian astrologers such as Kankah were active at the courts of Baghdad and brought Hindu astrology to the Muslim west. Among those who absorbed these traditions, the Basra Jew *Ma’shallāh* (Latin Messalah, c.740-c. 815) stands out as the first real inventor of new approaches. He wrote more than twenty astrological treatises, the most important being *The Revolution of the Years of Nativities* (on Solar returns); *The Revolutions of the Years of the World* (on Aries ingresses); *Conjunctions*; *Letter on Eclipses*; *Reception of the Planets or Interrogations*; and *The Construction and Use of the Astrolabe* (Thorndike 1956; Spanish trans. by D. Santos). A summary of his book *On Conjunctions, Religions, and Peoples* is an outline of world history based on Aries ingress charts (referred to a fixed zodiac) and Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions (trans. and commentary by E.S. Kennedy and D. Pingree).

In the 9th century astrological theory and practice were elaborated by many influential experts. One of them was Ya’qūb ibn Yṣḥāq → al-Kindī (c. 796-c. 870) who wrote hundreds of treatises on a variety of topics. With regard to astrology, three are particularly well known in the West, namely *De iudiciis astrorum* (The Judgments of the Stars; with works of other authors), printed in translation by Peter Liechtenstein, Venice 1507; *De pluviis, imbribus et ventis ac aeris mutatione* (Rains, Storms and Winds, and Change in the Air; again including pieces of other writers), printed in translation by Liechtenstein in 1507. His book *De radiis (stellarum)* (On the Rays of the Stars) with its combination of Platonism and → Aristotelianism influenced esoteric authors of the Renaissance, from → Roger Bacon to → John Dee.

Ja’far ibn Muḥammad *Abū Ma’shar* al-Balkhī (Latin Albumasar, 787-886) is a key figure of Arab astrology in medieval times. Some fifty books are credited to him and his expertise in things astrological is enormous. His most famous works are *The Great Conjunctions* and the *Introduction into Astrological Prediction*. The latter was an encyclopedic treatment of all aspects of astrological theory and practice. It was translated as *Introductorius maior* by John of Seville (12th century), whose translation was never printed but is preserved in numerous MSS. Another translation by Hermann of Carinthia (as *Introductorium in astronomiam*) was published by Erhard Ratdolt at Augsburg in 1485 (repr. 1489). *The Great Conjunctions* – an

elaborate treatise on mundane astrology with special regard to the (“Great”) conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn that change their position in one of the four Trignons every 238 years – was also translated by John of Seville and edited by Johannes Angelus (Ernst Ratdolt: Augsburg 1489). Another book by Abū Ma’shar was the *Kitāb al-ulūf* or *Book of the Thousands*. Unfortunately, the original is lost, but D. Pingree (1968) restored a substantial portion of this work from later Arabic writers. The book comprised Albumasar’s outline of world history on a framework of Aries ingresses and conjunctions, but also an elaborate system of so-called “profections”. Very popular in medieval and Renaissance times was Abū Ma’shar’s *Flores astrologiae* or *Liber florum*, i.e. “The Flowers of Astrology” or “Book of Flowers”, translated by John of Seville (Erhard Ratdolt: Augsburg 1488; repr. 1489 and 1495). The “Book of Flowers” is an anthology of Albumasar’s larger writings on mundane astrology. Finally, his general treatise on the *Revolutions of the Years of Nativities* must be mentioned. This book on what today is called solar returns is preserved in the Arabic original and in Byzantine Greek translation; the Latin translation made from the Greek was falsely attributed to Hermes (*Hermetis philosophi de revolutionibus nativitatum libri duo incerto interprete* (Two books of Hermes the Philosopher on the Revolutions of Nativities by an unknown translator; H. Wolf: Basel 1559).

Abū Bakr al-Hasan ibn al-Ḥashīb (Latin *Albubater*, late 9th century) wrote an introduction to astrology, a book on the revolutions of nativities, and a very popular book on natal astrology. This was translated around 1225 by Salio (or Solomon) at Padua as *De nativitatibus* and published in an astrological compendium at Venice in 1492 (ed. and trans. D. Santos) and in another in 1493. Divided into 206 chapters – some of them consisting of only one sentence – all aspects of astrological interpretation are tackled and illustrated with one or more actual nativities.

*Alcabitius* (d. 967) or, less commonly, Abdilaziz, became famous because of his system of house divisions. But in his most important book, the *Introduction to the Art of Judgment of the Stars*, dedicated to the Sultan Sayf al-Dawlah (c. 916–967), he also presented a complete description of astrological theory and practice, numerous lists of place names by climates and influences, and long passages from Dorotheos and Ma’shallāh (see AAASLT, 137–139). The Latin translation by John of Seville, *Alcabitii Abdilazi liber introductorius ad magisterium judiciorum astrorum* (1142), was printed later more than a dozen times. Beginning

with Erhard Ratdolt’s Venice edition of 1503, it became common to print it along with the commentary of John Danko (14th century).

The writings of Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad *al-Birūnī* (973–c. 1050), a leading scholar at the turn of the millennium and the successor of al-Battānī (c. 858–929), are important, not only because he discussed Abū Ma’shar’s system of Great Conjunctions and kept up correspondence with other learned scholars – among them critics of astrology such as Ibn Sina (→ Avicenna) – but also because he spent a lot of time in India and incorporated further elements of Indian astrology into his own system. Al-Birūnī’s works were not translated into Latin by the 12th-century translators, but *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology* (1029; trans. R. Ramsay Wright 1934) with its precise and coherent description of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and astrology nevertheless influenced subsequent authors. In *Alberuni’s India* [sic] (2 vols., trans. Edward C. Sachau, Routledge: London 1910) he gives a detailed account of life in India in the early 11th century with special reference to Hindu astronomy and astrology. A treatise on calendars with some information on astrology is also available in English translation: *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. and ed. Edward C. Sachau, London 1879; repr. Minerva: Frankfurt a.M. 1984.

Next in the line of celebrated scholars was ‘Alī ibn abī al-Rijāl (Latin Haly Abenragel or Albuhazen Haly, c. 1016–1062). Particularly responsible for his fame is *The Outstanding Book on the Judgments of the Stars*, which was translated into Old Castilian as *El libro conplido en los iudizios de las estrellas* at the court of Alphonso X the Wise (1226–1284), first edited by Gerold Hilty in 1954. Since the extant Castilian Madrid MS 3065 contains only the first five of the eight books, the Latin translation that was made from a complete Castilian manuscript is important. It was first published as *Praeclarissimus liber completes in judiciis astrorum* by Erhard Ratdolt, Venice 1485. The printed book was as popular in Renaissance times as manuscript copies had been earlier. It was reprinted in 1503, 1520, 1523, 1525, 1551, and in 1571.

## 2B. JEWISH LITERATURE

Jewish scholars played a crucial role as translators of Arabic literature. Furthermore, they wrote extensively in Arabic themselves and provided medieval (and Renaissance) Jewry with detailed information on astrology in Hebrew. One of the most influential figures was *Abraham ibn Ezra* (1098–1164) who – in addition to Bible

commentaries and a Hebrew grammar – wrote more than fifty books on astrology and astronomy. In his works, he elaborates Arabic astrology into an own system of interpretation that meets Jewish interests. His best known astrological work is *Sepher reshit hokhmah* (The Beginning of Wisdom; 1148), which was translated into Old French by Hagin le Juif in 1273 (for English and French eds. see bibliography). There were also translations into Catalan that combined this book with other treatises of Ibn Ezra; the Latin translations were mostly made from the Catalan compilation. In *The Book of the Fundamentals of the Tables* Ibn Ezra proposed a division of the houses of the horoscope that were calculated in a similar way as Placidus developed it five hundred years later. The Latin version of this book was edited by José Millás Vallicrosa in 1947.

### 2C. MAGICAL LITERATURE

Another genre that must be mentioned belongs to the field of astrological → magic. The use of talismans and → amulets with astral symbolism flourished during the whole era under consideration, both under Islamic and Christian authority. Since it was important to produce and consecrate the images at a previously chosen time, this “applied astrology” forms a branch of electional astrology. There are a lot of medieval texts referring to planetary images, rings, and amulets (Robson 1931, ch. VII; Caiozzo 2003), a number of them being attributed to Hermes (Thorndike 1923–1958, vol. 1 and 2).

## 3. ASTROLOGICAL LITERATURE UNDER CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

### 3A. EARLY SOURCES

For a long time, Latin Christian culture harked back to two influential works of late antiquity, that is to say, *De consolatione philosophiae* by A.M.S. Boethius (c. 480–524), written around 523, and the massive twenty-volume *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville (c. 570–636). Both texts served as major transmitters of late ancient philosophy and science into medieval Christian scholarship, only supplemented by Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae* and Cassiodorus’ *Institutiones*. The introduction of new techniques was limited to calendrical issues, until certain Christian monasteries became increasingly familiar with Arabic astronomy and astrology. This happened in the 10th and 11th centuries, when scholars such as Hermann the Lame (1013–1054; *De mensura astrolabii*) and Gerbert of Aurillac (940–1003, the later Pope Sylvester II) introduced the Arabic art of using astrolabes into Christian culture.

### 3B. THE 12TH-CENTURY TRANSLATORS AND THEIR IMPACT

But it needed the effort of scholars from the 12th century to translate Arabic treatises into Latin and thus to provide a fair foundation for Christian experts to enter the discussion about astrology. Now, Ptolemy’s works became available in Latin translations: the *Almagest* was translated anonymously in Sicily around 1160; Plato of Tivoli translated the *Tetrabiblos* in 1138 and the *Almagest* in 1160 (note Plato’s order!); Gerhard of Cremona (c. 1114–1187) translated the *Almagest* in 1176. Two other translators of the time have already been mentioned: Hermann of Carinthia and John of Seville. The latter also wrote a short general treatise entitled *Epitome totius astrologiae* (The Epitome of All Astrology; ed. by Joachim Heller. Montani & Neuber: Nuremberg 1548); John’s translation of the Arabic *watad* “peg” or “pin” into Latin *cuspis* was the origin of the English word “cusp” as designation of the point at the beginning of a celestial house.

In this overview, only a selection of important Christian authors who entered the stage in the 12th and 13th century can be discussed. An outstanding example of his age is Adelard of Bath (c. 1080–c. 1150), because he not only translated Arabic tables – his translation of a now lost book by al-Khwārisimī (as *De numero Indorum*) is the closest to the original – and discussed the teachings of Abū Ma’shar but also wrote extensively on astrological magic and related topics. His *Ergaphalau* tackles the position of the science of the stars within a general division of knowledge and was probably meant to introduce a larger work on astrology (see Burnett 1987, 133–145).

Bernard Silvester wrote in 1147/48 an allegorical poem under the title of *Cosmographia*, which must be counted among the most important works of the high middle ages (today more than fifty manuscripts are still extant). The book, divided into *Megacosmos* and *Microcosmos*, adapts the teachings of Abū Ma’shar to a Christian context.

→ Michael Scot († 1235/6), who worked for the emperor Frederick II, translated al-Bitrujī’s *De sphaera* (or *In astrologiam*) but was influential mainly due to his major work, *Liber introductorius* (Introductory book), which gives a history of astrology (from → Zoroaster to Gerbert of Aurillac) and provides his contemporaries with an extensive encyclopedic compendium of medieval knowledge about the science of the stars.

The Italian Guido Bonatti (Latin Bonatus, c. 1210–c. 1295) was perhaps the best known



astrologer of the late Middle Ages. His comprehensive textbook *Liber introductorius ad iudicia stellarum* (Introduction to the Judgments of the Stars), written after his retirement from the court of emperor Frederick II, is a collection of ten separate treatises on various phases of astrology. It was printed as *Liber astronomicus* by Erhard Ratdolt, Augsburg, 1491. A contemporary of Bonatti's was Leopold of Austria, who wrote a compendium on astrology, *Compilatio Leupoldi ducatus Austriae filii de astrorum scientia* (Erhard Ratdolt: Augsburg, 1489).

→ Albertus Magnus' fame in matters astrological is based on his *Speculum astronomiae*. The "Mirror" does not only comprise a bibliography of books on astrology available at the end of the 13th century but also stands out as a highly sophisticated discussion of astrology in a scholastic context.

→ Roger Bacon accepts astrology as a valid science in his *Opus maius*, the shorter *Opus minor*, and in the *Opus tertium*, all of them being popular in the 13th century and influencing subsequent generations.

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KOCKU VON STUCKRAD

## Astrology IV: 15th–19th Century

### A. HISTORY

Throughout the Renaissance period, learned astrology enjoyed a flowering that did not fade until the end of the 17th century. The centers of this movement were the courts and the universities, where astrological studies developed in relation to those of astronomy and medicine. Essential to astrology's development were the multiple centers of Italy's political, cultural, and artistic life. At the University of Ferrara, Giovanni Bianchini (born in the first decade of the 15th century) taught and authored important astronomical tables. Also at Ferrara was Lucas Gauricus (1475–1558), whose inaugural lecture of 1507, *De astronomiae seu astrologiae inventoribus*, countered the anti-astrological theses of → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

Gauricus also taught at Bologna, spent time in Mantua, Rome, and Venice, and in Germany came into contact with the Wittenberg group. He was the author of a weighty series of works, among them a famous *Tractatus astrologicus* (1552), and was named Bishop of Civitate by Pope Paul III, whose pontificate he had predicted. At the Este court in Ferrara there was also Pellegrino Prisciani, counsellor of Prince Borso and inspirer of the astrological program illustrated circa 1470 by the frescoes of the Hall of the Months in Schifanoia Palace.

At the University of Bologna, astrology was practiced by Domenico Maria Novara, the teacher of Copernicus; by Gauricus; and by the mathematician and astronomer Johannes Antonius Magini (1555-1617), author of astronomical tables and of a comprehensive exposition of all astrology. At Mantua, Bartolomeo Manfredi was active, author of the *Libro del Perchè*. In Tuscany under the Medici, Lorenzo Bonincontri (1410-1491) worked, teaching astrology there before moving to Rome, where he was summoned by Pope Sixtus IV, and published a commentary on Manilius in 1484. At Padua teachers included Valentin Nabod and Andrea Argoli, who was named Knight of Saint Mark by the Republic of Venice for his excellence as an astrologer, and was the teacher of Giambattista Zenno, the future astrologer of Wallenstein. At Milan, astrology was in great repute under the Sforza, especially Ludovico il Moro who was accustomed to shower his astrologers with gifts. At Rome, many popes were patrons of astrology, from Pius II (who publicly praised the predictions of Biagio da Cremona) through Sixtus IV (who had his privy astrologer in Bishop Paul of Middelburg), Leo X (who in 1520 instituted a chair of astrology at the University), and Paul III (whose personal astrologer was the Fleming, Albert Pigghe). At Naples, Bonincontri was long resident, called “nobilis astrologus” by Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503), the great humanist who was also devoted to astrology and treated its themes in his *De rebus coelestibus* and in his short poem *Urania*.

Spreading out from Italy, astrology enjoyed great success throughout Europe. At the French court, where Charles V the Wise (1364-1380) had founded an institution named after his astrologer “Collège de Maître Gervais”, Louis XI (1461-1483) employed Galeotti and Angelo Catti; Simon de Pharès (1440-1495), author of the *Recueil des plus célèbres astrologues et de quelques hommes doctes*, was astrologer to Charles VIII; Cosma Ruggeri was in the service of Catherine de’ Medici, who also used the services of Michel de Nostradamus (1503-1566) and Francesco Giuntini (1523-1580).

Catherine entrusted the education of her youngest son to Giuntini, a Florentine Carmelite and author of a monumental *Speculum astronomiae*. Antoine Mizauld (1510-1578), physician and astrologer, worked under Marguerite de Valois; Morin de Villefranche (1583-1650) was protected by Marie de’ Medici and by the cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin.

Italian astrology was also welcomed in the German-speaking world. The Habsburgs were adepts and patrons of it: Frederick III (1440-1493) was constantly surrounded by astrologers, among them Johann Lichtenberger; it was for Maximilian I that Albrecht Dürer engraved the celebrated *Melencolia I*. Ferdinand I had the horoscope of his firstborn, the future Emperor Maximilian II, drawn up by the astrologer and historian Joseph Grünpeck. Charles V’s astrology master was Petrus Apianus, and it was said that his decision to abdicate was connected with the appearance of the comet of 1555. Maximilian II patronized the astrologer Cyprian Leowitz (1524-1574), among others; → Rudolf II employed Tycho Brahe and Kepler. Teaching at the University of Vienna were the humanist and astrologer Georg Peuerbach (1433-1461), whose pupils included Johann Müller, called Regiomontanus (1436-1475), an astronomer-astrologer and the first publisher of a printed edition of Manilius; Stabius, who dedicated to the Emperor an astrolobe called *Horoscopion universale*; Martin Pegius, to whom is due the first astrological treatise in the German language, published in Basel, 1570; Petrus Apianus, author of a long treatise *Astronomicum Caesareum*, dedicated to Charles V; Johann Stoeffler, author of almanacs and ephemerides. Stoeffler’s pupil Johann Schöner (1477-1547) was known as Carlostadius, and in 1545 published a great astrological opus with a preface by Melanchthon. Around Melanchthon at the University of Wittenberg there was an active group of astrologers including Schöner, Caspar Peucer (1525-1602), and Caro, who were also involved in the vexed question of Luther’s horoscope, first calculated by Lucas Gauricus.

In the Low Countries, astrology was cultivated mainly at the University of Louvain, where Johannes Stadius (1527-1579) calculated the annual ephemerides from 1554 to 1606 and proposed a system of houses different from that of Regiomontanus; and at the University of Leiden, where Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) taught, author of a large commentary on Manilius. Learned astrology was less fortunate in England, where it was practiced without much renown in the 16th century by Leonard Digges and → John Dee; in

1603, Sir Christopher Heydon wrote *A defense of judiciary Astrology*. In contrast, during the 17th century worldly astrology was much used in England, especially in relation to political events. The chief exponent of this tendency was William Lilly (1602-1682), author of *Christian Astrology* (1647) and an outstanding expert on horary astrology.

Worldly astrology is the aspect of learned astrology that most leans toward popular astrology, which in the era of printing gave rise to a vast production of predictions, annual prognostications, almanacs, calendars, lunaries, and books of popular astrological medicine, often printed in many thousands of copies. Some of these genera were also cultivated by important astrologers, e.g. the prognostications of Lucas Gauricus and Girolamo Cardan (1501-1576). Paul of Middelburg's predictions of 1486 were especially popular: repeated in 1488 by Johann Lichtenberger, they treated the effects of the great conjunction observed in the sign of Scorpio on November 25, 1484. This conjunction was interpreted as announcing the proximate appearance of a false prophet and of a religion of great sanctity, which would lead to new laws suppressing the privileges of the nobility and succoring the miseries of the populace. This was taken in contrary ways by Protestants and Catholics, as the former saw Luther as the renovator, the latter as the false prophet. In this way, astrological prediction using the technique of the great conjunctions, favored by the Arab and late medieval astrologers, became linked with Christian prophetism, presenting itself as a tool for pinpointing the dates of the great events announced by biblical prophecies. Thus astrology took on a role of politico-religious agitation, as exemplified by the prophecy of Antonio Arquati *De eversione Europae* (1480); the predictions of the universal Flood, the first of them formulated at the end of the 15th century by J. Stoeffler, connected with the great conjunction in Pisces of 1524; the periodical diffusion of predictions relating to the death of popes and the election of their successors. This type of prediction was restricted in Catholic lands by the inclusion of astrological texts in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of 1558, and by the papal bulls *Coeli et Terrae* (Sixtus V, 1586) and *Inscrutabilis* (Urban VIII, 1631). In contrast, from the second half of the 16th century astrology flourished in reformed Europe, even though Luther had regarded it with some scepticism, and Calvin had opposed it. Important astronomers such as Tycho Brahe continued to cultivate it, even in its predictive and prophetic modes.

Humanist philology contributed to the development of Renaissance astrology by discovering

ancient texts unknown to the Middle Ages. There was Manilius's *Astronomicon*, found in 1417 by Poggio Bracciolini in the library of the Convent of St. Gall and first printed in Regiomontanus's edition of 1472. Humanism also caused the printing of new and more accurate editions of ancient, Arabic, and medieval texts, such as the *Mathesis* of Firmicus Maternus, printed in Venice in 1499; the *Opus continens X tractatus astronomiae* of Guido Bonatti, published in 1489; the *Tabulae astronomicae* of Alfonso of Castile (Venice 1492); the *Sphaera mundi* of Giovanni Sacrobosco (Venice 1478); the *Compilatio de astrorum Scientia* by Leopold, son of the Duke of Austria (Venice 1489); also Porphyry's Introduction to Ptolemy (Basel 1559), the Commentary on Ptolemy attributed to Proclus (Basel 1554), Arab astrological writings, the *Concordantia* of → Pierre d'Ailly (Augsburg 1490), and texts by → Peter of Abano.

Most importantly, the new translations of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (in Latin, *Quadripartitum*) and of the pseudo-Ptolemaic *Centiloquium* followed the principles of humanist philology in being no longer made from Arabic versions, but directly from the Greek. The first two books of the *Tetrabiblos* were translated by Joachim Camerarius (Nuremberg 1535), and a complete translation by Antonio Gogava (Louvain 1548) was followed by two more complete editions: one by Camerarius and the second by Melanchthon (printed Basel 1553). The *Centiloquium* was published in Naples in 1512 with a commentary by Pontano, and at Venice by Lucas Gauricus in 1542, using the translation of George of Trebizond. The reformist current of 16th-century astrology was due to these translations, as it tried to include in the humanist *restitutio litterarum* the rediscovery of the authentic nature of Ptolemaic astrology, considered as the highest expression of the art in antiquity. Thus Ptolemy became the tutelary divinity of a trend of study dedicated to purging astrology of Arab superstitions, recovering its genuine nature and removing any magical temptations. This trend found its greatest exponent in Girolamo Cardan (1501-1576) and spread all over Europe, numbering among its proponents the Italians Giovanni Pontano and Agostino Nifo (1473-1546), the Fleming Pigghe, and the German scholars gathered around Melanchthon at Wittenberg. At Paris there were Gervais Mastallerus of Breisgau, active at the College of Beauvais, and, to an extent, Pontus de Tyard. The Ptolemaic *Tetrabiblos* was the subject of many important commentaries. Beside that of Melanchthon, there were those published by Schöner in 1529, by Cardan in 1554, by Johann

Gartze, called Garcaeus (1530-1575) in 1576, by Conrad Rauchfuss, called Dasypodius, in 1578, by Giuntini in 1581, and the ones that remained in manuscript by Ristori and Nabod.

On the technical level, the exponents of the "Ptolemaic" current of astrology in the 16th and 17th centuries kept to the basic procedures of the art as codified in late antique astrology, as far as the theory of the planets, signs, houses, and aspects was concerned. This resulted in the abandonment of many of the references by astrologers who had written in Arabic, contemptuously defined by Cardan and → Campanella as *nugae araborum*, and a widespread revisioning of the technique of the great conjunctions. The latter, especially in Albusar's version, had already been called into question by medieval astrologers like Ibn Ezra, and fiercely criticized in the most famous anti-astrological work of the Renaissance, the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1496). The reference to an untrustworthy parameter such as mean planetary motion gradually disappeared, as did the use of the theory during the prediction of historical events. Astrologers began to place genethliac astrology and the examination of the individual nativity at the center of their studies, drawn on square-shaped diagrams and regularly reproduced in collections of natal horoscopes, which were very popular in this era.

New developments appeared in the procedure of setting up the houses (domification), absent in Ptolemy and mainly practiced by Arab astrologers such as al-Qabisi. The most important innovations in this field, discussed by the Flemish astrologer Gemma Frisius in his *De astrolabio catholico* (Antwerp 1556), were linked to domification *rationalis*, i.e., on a strictly geometrical basis, proposed by Regiomontanus, already delineated in a different version by John Campanus of Novara (1223-1296), and taken up at the end of the 13th century by Leo Hebraeus (Levi ben Gerson), and to domification *naturalis*, connected with the conception of astrology as an aspect of natural philosophy, proposed by Cardan and Magini and codified in the later 17th century by the Olivetan monk Placidus Titi (1603-1668). As for the so-called astronomical revolution, it did not in the least call astrological studies into question: they adopted a representation of the heavens in geocentric perspective, but were not necessarily connected with the geocentric system of the universe. Not by chance, many of the protagonists of the new astronomy also cultivated astrological studies, from G. J. von Lauchen, called Rheticus, to Coper-

nicus himself, and from Tycho to Kepler. Galileo in a letter to Dini, Kepler in *Tertius interveniens*, and Campanella in the *Astrologicorum libri* emphasized the independence of astrology from geocentricity and heliocentricity alike. What did take account of the new developments in astronomy were those fundamental tools of astrological work, the tables and ephemerides. The first to use the Copernican scheme in them was E. Reinhold, with the *Tabulae prutenicae* (1551). Francesco Giuntini embraced the planetary motions both from the geocentric point of view in the *Tabulae alphonsinae*, and following the heliocentric scheme of Copernicus. Henri de Boulainvillier proposed the use of planetary positions in heliocentric perspective in a book on practical astrology of 1701. Finally, logarithms, invented in 1619, were soon employed in astrological calculation: Kepler used them in 1624, and Bonaventura Cavalieri in *Nova pratica astrologica de far le direzioni . . . per via di logaritmi* (1639).

On the philosophical level, the Ptolemaic stream of astrology during the 16th and 17th centuries saw a revival of that linkage between astrological techniques and Aristotelian natural philosophy which Ptolemy himself had first sketched out. On this point, and also in its rejection of many Arab procedures, this orientation contrasted with the interpretation of astrology in a Platonic and Hermetic key, which found its archetype in the second book of *De occulta philosophia* (1533) by → Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, himself indebted to important astrological pages of → Marsilio Ficino. While for Cardan, astrology formed a part of natural philosophy, for Agrippa it appeared as an instrument for penetrating the web of analogies that links the elementary world, the celestial world, and the divine world. This order of ideas was taken up by → Paracelsus (1493-1541) and → Robert Fludd (1574-1637) in their respective ways. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) distanced himself from both of them, being a radical critic of Fludd's fantastic mathematics and at the same time reviving the Platonic idea of the cosmos as a perfectly ordered whole, created and directed by a spiritual principle through which everything is made according to harmonious geometrical proportions. On this basis, Kepler's theory of planetary aspects equated to the concords and discords in music (explained both in *Mysterium cosmographicum* and in *Harmonices mundi*) constitutes one of the most relevant technical innovations of astrology in the modern age.

While Kepler's innovations found little response among astrologers, the welding of the procedures



of the art and a natural philosophy of traditionally Aristotelian stamp was proposed again in the last two great *summae* of 17th-century astrology: the *Physiomaematica sive Coelestis philosophia* (1675) of Placido Titi, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Pavia, and the *Astrologia gallica* (1661) in 26 books by Jean Baptiste Morin (1583-1656), Professor of Mathematics at the Collège de France. Placido's work presented astrology as a natural science, assuming that all the significant factors used in it were purely physical realities defined after the categories of Aristotelian physics. In Morin's work, the *Primum mobile* was identified as the primary physical foundation of every event; the zodiac was linked to it, to whose signs a fixed meaning was ascribed on the basis of the planets that governed them in the supposed horoscope of the world. On this point Morin rejected → Campanella's opinion, which held that the zodiacal signs, representing the stations of the sun's course, should be assigned reversed meanings for births in the southern hemisphere.

In much of learned Europe at the end of the 17th century, natural philosophy was becoming linked more and more closely to the mechanistic image of the physical universe, of which René Descartes' work provided one of the most influential versions. The new climate rendered ever less credible the philosophical references to which much of modern astrology was bound, as witness the long and resentful polemic between Morin and Pierre Gasendi, and writings such as those of the astronomer Giovanni Montanari, *L'astrologia convinta di falso col mezzo di nuove esperienza e ragioni fisico-astronomiche* (Venice 1685). This set off a crisis in learned astrology, which was marked by the increase of prohibitions not only against the practice, but also the study of the discipline. In 1666, Colbert prohibited the Academicians from pursuing it; after 1670, astrology was no longer taught at the University. In 1682, Louis XIV extended the ban on astrological calendars to the whole of France; a *Reichstagsabscheid* of 1699 did likewise for the Germanic world. In 1708, in his report to the Académie des Sciences, Bianchini called the planisphere a testimony to human folly; in 1756, an ordinance of Maria Teresa of Austria banned astrological predictions and superstitious conjectures. In the Age of Enlightenment, astrology became ever more alien to cultivated circles: D'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopédie* defined it as unworthy of consideration by a man of reason. Voltaire was of the same opinion, as was the archaeologist Charles Dupuis, who equated astrol-

ogy with superstition in his three-volume work *Origine de tous les cultes* (1794).

In reaction to the excesses of a schematic rationalism, the secret societies reconsidered the motives of the Platonic-Hermetizing astrology of the 16th and 17th centuries. During the 18th century, these societies brought about a Hermetic revival with Neoplatonic and Gnostic elements; but astrology was not practiced among them, only studied from a symbolic point of view as an ethical and philosophical doctrine. The *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum* (1735) of → Georg von Welling can be ascribed to this kind of orientation, while → Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* also seems to acknowledge a symbolic and Hermetizing astrology. Goethe opened his own memoirs, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, with an examination and commentary on his own natal horoscope. The interest in astrology also found a place in German → Romanticism, with a revival of its more strictly technical aspects. The most important exponent of this trend was Wilhelm Andreas Pfaff (1774-1835), who in an essay of 1816 entitled *Astrology* thus described the state of the art: 'Ignored, rejected, abandoned, the most ancient relative of heaven-dedicated Urania, that is, astrology, seeks to regain its own native land and its place among the sciences presided over by the Muses'. To Pfaff also is due a German translation of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (1822-23), which followed that which the celebrated astronomer J.C. Bode had published in 1795.

The spread of positivism stifled the incipient revival of astrological studies in almost the whole of Europe, with the marked exception of England, where at the same time as Pfaff's edition J. Ashmand had translated the *Tetrabiblos* into English, with an epigraph from Lord Byron and a dedication to Walter Scott. However, three editions of Ptolemy already existed in English: those of J. Whalley (1701), M. Sibly and J. Browne (1786), and J. Wilson (1820), while John Cooper had translated Titi's *Physiomaematica*. Using as its basic reference-points the texts of Ptolemy and Titi, English astrology developed throughout the century with close attention to the technical aspects of the discipline and to its empirical control. This direction differed from that of the esoteric astrology connected with the → Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, whose principal exponents were Sefarial and Alan Leo. From 1800 onwards, annual ephemerides were published under the title *Raphael's Ephemeris*. Among the new treatises on astrology in English were John Wilson, *Complete Dictionary of Astrology* (1819); John Worsdale,



*Celestial philosophy or genethliacal Astrology* (1824); Raphael (pseudonym of R.C. Smith), *Manual of Astrology*; Zadkiel (pseudonym of Lieut. Morrison), *Grammar of Astrology* (1834). Morrison founded in 1860 the Astrometeorological Society, and held that in genethliacal astrology the planets were to be considered as causes, but in horary astrology as signifiers. Zadkiel II (pseudonym of Alfred John Pearce) wrote *The Science of the Stars* (1881) and *Textbook of Astrology* (1897); George Wilde, *A Treatise of Natal Astrology* (1894). The latter work carried an Introduction by R. Garnett, librarian of the British Museum, who under the pseudonym of A.G. Trent distinguished astrology from theosophy, maintaining that 'Astrology is a physical and verifiable science or it is nothing'. The frequent use of pseudonyms by astrological authors is an evident symptom of the difficulty encountered by the discipline in getting legitimized in the eyes of the learned.

The same phenomenon was common in French culture of the late 19th century, in which astrology was cultivated mainly within the secret societies. Its principal representatives were the Abbé Constant, who wrote under the pseudonym of → Eliphaz Levi, and the physician Gérard Encausse, who wrote as → Papus. In 1888 Papus launched the journal *L'Initiation*, while the occultist Eugène Jacob published under the pseudonym of Ely Star a work of Kabbalistic astrology, *Les mystères de l'horoscope*. At the end of the century, astrology began to attract the interest of astronomers such as C. Flammarion (who furnished a Preface to Jacob's work) and Père Nicoulaud, who in 1897 published under the pseudonym of Fomalhaut a *Manuel d'astrologie sphérique et judiciaire*. The astrologer → F.C. Barlet and the bookseller-publisher Paul Chacornac became the masters of a new generation of students, including H. Selva and Paul Choissnard, who were also interested in the problem of the statistical control of the results of astrological work, along a direction of research destined to expand during the 20th century.

## B. LITERATURE

The subdivision and ranking of the various branches of astrological study in the late Middle Ages followed the example of the *Speculum astronomiae*, attributed to → Albertus Magnus and inspired by Arabic models. This was radically altered in the Renaissance era, thanks to the rediscovery of the classics of ancient astrology, such as the astrological poem of Manilius; the fresh circulation of texts that had been little read in the Mid-

dle Ages, such as Firmicus Maternus's *Mathesis*; and above all the rediscovery of the true nature of Ptolemy's astrology. The latter was to be found in four books that have entered history under the name *Tetrabiblos* (in Latin, *Quadripartitum*), and which were now translated directly from the Greek.

The return to Antiquity that characterized the age of Humanism affected astrological culture essentially in the form of a return to ancient astrology, and especially to Ptolemy, prince of astrologers. An example of Ptolemy's changed role is the course followed by Girolamo Cardan, the great philosopher, mathematician, and physician. His father had set him on the path of astrological study *iuxta araborum principia* (after the principles of the Arabs), but then Cardan read the integral translation of the *Tetrabiblos*. This caused him to reorient his own studies, freeing himself from the *nugae araborum* and setting himself to write a detailed commentary on Ptolemy.

A new image of astrology now entered circulation, different from the medieval one: a technically more rigorous study, using the precise and sophisticated tools of astronomical mathematics, and ready to re-evaluate and, if need be, to discard formerly sacrosanct references and procedures. The first change was the individualization of the object of study, and the description of the relations between its internal members. The Middle Ages had understood astrology as a kind of knowledge intermediate between cosmology and natural philosophy, mainly oriented towards general events, both natural and historical; at the center of attention were the techniques of worldly astrology, often in the spectacular but debatable form of Albumasar's theory of the great conjunctions. Genethliacal examination, focusing on the drawing-up and analysis of individual horoscopes or birth-charts, had seemed a specialized and less relevant application of worldly astrology. Now this ranking was reversed. From the start of the Renaissance era, genethliacal astrology reclaimed its ancient primacy, together with an increased interest in techniques connected with divination and → magic, such as interrogations and elections. Interrogations would find their great new interpreter in the Englishman William Lilly, but Cardan tended to substitute for them procedures that answered questions on the basis of a chart drawn up not (as in the classical technique) for the moment at which the question was posed, but for the questioner's moment of birth. This type of questioning thus also fell within the field of genethliology. As for

elections, closely connected with forms of astral magic, they found their place mainly in texts devoted to magic, such as *De occulta philosophia* (1533) by → Cornelius Agrippa, or connected with magic in various ways, such as → Tommaso Campanella's *De siderali fato vitando*.

Among the types of astrological literature that continued in a more medieval style, on the frontier between learned and popular astrology, were the calendars. These were full of astronomical, astrological, and liturgical information, explaining in simplified form the symbolism of planets and signs, and adding advice about agriculture and the conduct of life. In the same category were the annual prognostications, sometimes by illustrious astrologers such as Lorenzo Bonincontri, who published them for the years 1484-1491, and Cardan himself; the *Practicae*; and the predictions, both meteorological and prophetic, which determined the astrological procedures suitable for pinpointing the dates of the prophetic events. This category includes the predictions of Lichtenberger (who influenced Paul of Middelburg) regarding the effects of the great conjunction of 1484, and the numerous ones – 135 at least – about the epochal significance of the 1524 alignment of six planets in Pisces, mostly understood as announcing an imminent universal flood. Into this literature flowed the heritage of medieval conjunction lore, also present in Tycho Brahe but used ever more cautiously by astrologers. Already the object of criticism by medieval astrologers such as Ibn Ezra, and of a particularly fierce polemic by → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, it was refuted, or at least revised, by Lucio Bellanti (*De astrologica veritate*, 1498), Agostino Nifo (*De nostrarum calamitatum causis*, 1505; *De falsa diluvii prognosticatione*, 1524), Pedro Ciruelo (*Apotelesmata astrologiae Christianae*, 1521), Cyprian Leowitz (*De coniunctionibus magnis*, 1564), and Johannes Kepler (*Discorso sulla grande congiunzione*, 1623). On the borderlines between astrology, prophecy, and esotericism falls the visionary work of Michel Nostradamus (1503-1560), very much criticized by the strict Ptolemaic astrologers, and famous for an edition of his *Quatrains* published in Lyon, 1555, in which there seems to be a description of the unusual death of Henri II, killed in a tournament in 1559, with surprising circumstantial detail (though a similar prediction had been made by Lucas Gauricus in 1552).

There has been much emphasis on the role in the history of astrology played by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Disputationes* (1494). This monumental work in twelve books is a true *summa* of the

late-medieval anti-astrological polemic, whose arguments were drawn on by Girolamo Savonarola for his *Tractato contra li astrologi*. Pico's work was certainly discussed at length by astrologers, and many of them wrote replies and refutations of it, from Pontano (*De rebus coelestibus*, 1519) to Bellanti (*De astrologica veritate*, 1498), from Cardan to Kepler. However, its impact on astrological studies from the Renaissance to the modern age came not so much from its arguments (which in the technical part of the work had simply amplified and radicalized doubts and objections already present among astrologers), as from the contact with the ancient sources of the discipline, and from a new vision of the tasks and methods of research, and of technical developments within the art. We have mentioned the role of the *Tetrabiblos*, which in the 15th century was translated directly from the Greek, in an edition of the first two books (translated by Camerarius) in 1535, then in a complete translation by Antonio Gogava in 1548. This work played a fundamental role in opening new perspectives for the discipline. It created a totally new image in which genethliology played the major part, while smaller parts were allotted to the procedures outside it. Interrogations, elections, and the conjunctions beloved of the Middle Ages gave way to a more sober worldly astrology, resembling that of the Greek master. The new general treatises on astrology often took the form of commentaries on Ptolemy, which became almost a literary genre in itself. An unpublished commentary by Conrad Hergartner dates back to the 15th century; the commentary by the Italian humanist and physician Giorgio Valla (1430-1499) was printed in Venice, 1502; Lucas Gauricus's *Paraphrases et annotationes* in 1539; Cardan's very important *Commentaria* in 1554; Conrad Rauchfuss's *Scholia in Claudii Ptolemaei quatuor libros Apotelesmaticos* in 1578; Francesco Giuntini's commentaries in 1581; Andrea Argoli's *Ptolomaeus parvus* in 1652; Placido Titi's commentary in 1658. Other commentators on Ptolemy were Nabod, Ristori, and Fantoni. As for the *Centiloquium*, that was the object of a commentary by Giovanni Pontano in 1512, and by Gauricus in 1540, who edited it from George of Trebizond's translation; however, doubts were beginning to form about the authenticity of this text, whose chief spokesman was Cardan. There was a great number of general expositions of the material, among the most important of which were *Tractatus praeclarissimus* (1514) by John of Glogau; *Enarratio elementorum astrologiae* (1560) by Valentin Nabod; *Astrologiae methodus* (1576) by Garcaeus; *Astrologicorum libri* (1629) by Tom-

maso Campanella; *Tractatus astrologicus* (1633) by Henry Rantzau; *Astrologia naturalis* (1645) by Dost von Glatz (Origanus); *Isagoge in Astrologiam* by Giovanni Antonio Magini; *Astrologia gallica* (1666) by J.B. Morin; *Physiomatica* (1675) by Placido Titi. More typical of this era were the treatises devoted specifically to genethliology, sometimes virtual horoscope collections, such as *De iudiciis nativitatum* (1545) by J. Schöner; *Tractatus astrologicus* (1552) by Gauricus, which appeared in Italian the previous year; *Brevis et perspicua ratio iudicandi* (1558) by Leowitz; *Tractatus Astrologiae judicariae de nativitatibus* (1540) by Gauricus; *Tractatus astrologicus* (1633) by the Danish nobleman Rantzau; *Liber de exemplis centum geniturarum* (1547) and *Liber duodecim geniturarum* (1554) by Cardan. The texts were increasingly illustrated with nativities, especially of famous men, with the object of confirming the worth of genethliology and of showing that the well-known events of their lives were in accordance with the astrological diagnosis.

From the middle of the 15th to the end of the 17th century, the Ptolemaic revival conferred on astrology, in the eyes of astrologers themselves, the character of a rational and coherent discipline, and moved the center of debate from the question, so much discussed in the Middle Ages, of its compatibility with Christian doctrine to that of its epistemological status and its position within the world of learning. It is not surprising that these two centuries saw the intensive production throughout Europe of a technical literature aimed at furnishing astrologers with the indispensable tools of their trade, which are ephemerides and the various types of tables. Among the most famous books of ephemerides are the *Tabulae astronomiae* or *Canones super Tabulas*, compiled in the middle of the 15th century by Giovanni Bianchini on the basis of the Alfonsine Tables, and printed in Venice in 1495 by Simone Bevilacqua, with a dedication to Lionello d'Este; *Tabulae prutenicae* (1551) by E. Reinhold; *Teoricae novae planetarum*, written in 1454 by Georg Peurbach, who revised Bianchini's tables by comparing them with Alfonsine ones; *Ephemerides novae* (1556) by J. Stadius; *Ephemeridum novum atque insigne opus* (1557) by Leowitz; *Ephemerides* (1582) by G.A. Magini; *Tabulae Rudolphinae*, with a *Sportula* for the astrologers, by Kepler. Among tables of other kinds were *Tabulae directionum* (1467) by Regiomontanus; *Tabulae bergenses* (1568) by Stadius; *Tabulae primi mobilis* (1609) by Magini.

The debate over the procedure of domification (division of houses) was very relevant at this time,

not least with regard to the various images of astrology current within the art. In the 13th century the geometrician Giovanni Campanus had proposed a system of houses *modo aequalis*, based on dividing the vertical into equal segments. At the end of the 15th century there was a revival by Regiomontanus and Schöner of domification *rationalis*, already proposed by Ibn Ezra, based on the division of the celestial equator. Cardan, in *De exemplis centum geniturarum* (1547) had adopted the equal method in a version considered to derive from Ptolemy, based on the division of the zodiac into equal segments; later he accepted the rational method, and finally returned to the equal one. Leowitz spoke for the rational procedure (*Brevis et perspicua ratio iudicandi genituras ex physicis causis*, 1558). Magini adopted another method, again "in the manner of Ptolemy", based on the trisection of the diurnal arc. Finally Placido Titi proposed a "natural" system of houses that was not geometrical, with a proportional division of the diurnal and nocturnal arcs, in which each division corresponds to two hours of time. This is the Placidus method, still in use.

The panorama of 15th-17th-century astrological literature would be incomplete without mention of the many texts of astrological medicine that punctuate it. In them the ancient doctrine of zodiacal and planetary "melothesia" was revived for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes, following the most diffuse of → Marsilio Ficino's writings, the *De vita libri tres* (1489). The theory of critical days was very much used for studying the course and cure of illnesses. It was explained in texts such as *De diebus decretoriis* by Gauricus; *De ratione et usu dierum criticorum* (1555) by T. Bodier; *Amicus medicorum* (1614) by Jean Ganivet; *De astrologica ratione ac usu Dierum Criticorum* (1607) by Magini; *De diebus criticis* (1639) by Andrea Argoli; *De diebus decretoriis* (1665) by Placido Titi; *De annis climactericis* (1648) by Cl. Saumaise (Salmasius).

After having flourished for almost three centuries, European astrological literature suddenly diminished both in quantity and in quality when, at the end of the 17th century, the triumph of mechanistic physics distanced astrology from the university and from learned circles. The credibility of the discipline was impaired by the close connection made in many texts between its own techniques and a natural philosophy with Peripatetic roots, now become unrepresentable in the learned world. The great *Lexicon mathematicum astronomicum geometricum* (Rome 1668) in which the Theatine monk Gerolamo Vitali, disciple of Titi, had gathered

the fruits of three centuries of astrological labor, classifying all the Greek, Latin, and Arabic terms of the tradition, now appeared as the final homage to a defunct discipline and lay forgotten on the library shelves. From this moment until the second half of the 19th century, references to astrology, as also to alchemy and kabbalah, were used more in a symbolic sense than for any technical validity of the art. They appeared in the ambience of esotericism and secret societies, emerging now and then into the view of intellectuals like → Goethe and the German Romantics [→ Romanticism], who were discontented with a certain 17th-18th century schematic rationalism. One exception to this eclipse of astrological literature was the English environment, in which astrology, while not much in favor on higher cultural planes, still maintained a presence as a practice valued by the public, and fed by a technical literature oriented to the production of tables and ephemerides, which was especially prolific in the 19th century. In France, at the end of that century, there was a new wave of interest in astrology beyond the confines of esotericism: high-quality technical manuals were published, such as those of Fomalhaut and Selva, while Paul Choissard laid the foundations for an approach to astrology as experimental and controllable research susceptible to the statistical method, thus opening the way to its 20th-century revival.

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ORNELLA POMPEO FARACOVI

## Astrology V: 20th Century

### A. HISTORY

Although the sale of astrological almanacs flourished throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, in most Western countries the times were unpropitious for professional astrologers to expound on astrology as a worldview or interpret charts for clients. In the latter sense, there was thus a period of considerable decline throughout the West, with the partial exception of England where an astrological subculture continued to exist. By the turn of the 20th century, however, astrology had begun a



process of revival. At the beginning of the twenty-first, astrology has regained a remarkably strong position in Europe and North America, especially in popular culture. Polls indicate that roughly a quarter of the population in several Western countries assent to the proposition that the position and movement of the planets against the backdrop of the heavens correlate with personality traits and/or events in one's life. Compared to previous epochs, 20th century astrology has gone through several major transformations. These can be viewed against the backdrop of a general definition of astrology.

Broadly speaking, astrology can be understood as a set of divinatory propositions and practices, sometimes associated with articulated world-views, which attempt to express specific modalities of human existence by means of a canonical language based on elements of celestial mechanics. Under this definition, astrology is an umbrella term denoting a potentially quite diverse set of rituals and doctrinal positions. In contemporary astrology, this diversity manifests itself in conflicting techniques, theories, world-views, and claims of what astrology can and cannot do.

The similarities between older and contemporary forms of astrology typically concern the generalities of this class of divination. Thus, older and newer astrologies share the assumption that there is a correlation between celestial and terrestrial phenomena (often expressed by astrologers in the formula "as above, so below"), and that certain individuals through appropriate training have acquired the skills necessary to unveil the details of this correlation. A commonly (although not universally) held belief in older as well as newer forms of divination is furthermore that astrology works because human life and the larger cosmos are interconnected through a network of non-material links.

The changes that have taken place throughout the 20th century can be briefly summarized in the following six points. (1) 20th-century astrology has joined forces with a variety of other belief systems that are particular to the late 19th and the 20th centuries. Thus, wide-spread forms of 20th century astrology have arisen through a syncretism with theosophically inspired → occultism and → Jungism. (2) Classical (traditional) astrology was associated with prognostication and specific claims about the correlation between celestial events and outward human behaviour. In present-day astrology there is a tendency to put main emphasis on behavioural dispositions, traits, and personality. (3) The coexistence of many independent practitioners, who can disseminate their ideas with rela-

tive ease due to factors such as cheaper printing technologies and the existence of popular media, has led to a considerable divergence of opinion. There is thus no agreement among astrologers e.g. on what symbols should be used in interpreting a chart (midpoints, asteroids, transplutonian planets, etc.), which of several fundamental but conflicting technical systems is valid (house divisions), how selected factors should be combined in chart interpretation, which factors should be accorded the greatest importance in the birth chart or, in the case of psychological astrology, what model of human personality is the most appropriate. The variety of interests within the astrological community has also led to the revival and development of many specialized forms of divination beside the interpretation of birth charts. These include various versions of mundane astrology (attempting to cast horoscopes for nations and organizations rather than individual people), financial astrology (which predicts e.g. fluctuations on the stock market), and even astrological traditionalism (which rejects the psychological interpretation of charts and attempts to go back to Renaissance and Mediaeval methods of predicting one's destiny). (4) Astrology has undergone ambivalent and conflicting forms of adaptation to the cultural context of modernity. The cosmological doctrines that went with pre-modern astrology – the geocentric model of the solar system, the Aristotelian distinction between sublunar and celestial worlds – are defunct. At the same time, the failure of more modern philosophical, astronomical and physical models to provide a plausible underpinning for astrological tenets has resulted in an at least partial allegiance to older theories of → correspondences, all the more remarkable in an epoch that has seen the adoption by many esotericists of theories of instrumental causality. However, these older theories are often unsystematically mixed with theories of mechanical causality, Jungian theories of synchronicity and other attempts at formulating explanatory models. (5) Astrology is no longer part of a culture of accepted claims. Thus, older forms of astrology were routinely invoked in political decision-making; in the contemporary West, the few cases when divination has been similarly used (as during the Reagan era) have caused considerable consternation and controversy. Furthermore, although older forms of astrology also met with criticism, this criticism was usually of an abstract and philosophical nature. Critics addressed topics such as the different fates of people born at the same time, the lack of a plausible *modus operandi* for astrological influences



and the discrepancies between tropical and sidereal zodiacs. Modern opposition to astrological claims typically follows more empirically-oriented approaches. Contemporary skeptical responses typically point at the failure of astrologers in controlled experimental settings to correlate charts with personality profiles with any rate of success higher than chance. Conversely, several attempts have been made by astrologers to anchor their practices in empirical research; the most publicized of these attempts have been the statistical studies carried out by Michel Gauquelin (1928-1991). (6) Astrology is nevertheless practiced in a social context that bespeaks its positioning in contemporary society. Whereas practicing astrologers in pre-modern society characteristically plied their trade as independent agents, contemporary astrologers have the option of learning their craft through structured courses, to become members of organized bodies and to disseminate their ideas and advertise their practices through specialized journals. And whereas pre-modern astrology was treated as an arcane science in a male-dominated society, and was therefore dominated by male practitioners, contemporary astrology is integrated in a cultic milieu that is largely constituted by women, and is hence practiced by many women.

The revival of astrology began independently in England and in the USA. The key figure in England was Alan Leo (1860-1917), whose given name was William Frederick Allan. Leo, who had taught himself astrology, in 1890 became a member of the → Theosophical Society. In 1915 he founded an Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society. Leo was both a prolific writer and a very successful practicing astrologer. Numerous people became acquainted with astrology through Leo's textbooks.

In the USA astrology was to a large extent resuscitated from its slumber by Luke Dennis Broughton (1828-1898), who learned astrology in his native England and emigrated to America. He lectured and wrote extensively on astrology from the 1870s until his death, and introduced large numbers of people to the craft of chart interpretation.

The revival of astrology in countries such as France and Germany came a few years later, and was also largely ushered in by individual enthusiasts. In France, the astrological reawakening began during the last years of the 19th century with treatises published by → F.-Ch. Barlet (pseudonym of Albert Faucheux, 1838-1924) and Fomalhaut (pseudonym of abbé C. Nicollaud, 1854-1923). In Germany, Karl Brandler-Pracht (1864-1945) had a similar role in introducing astrology to the public around 1905. He was followed by a number of

astrologers who attempted to create innovative versions of astrology. The most successful of these attempts, in terms of the number of adherents, is Alfred Witte's and Reinhold Ebertin's theory that the midpoints between the positions of the traditional symbols of the chart should be accorded an important role. In the 1930s, the situation of astrology in Germany was marked by the rise of national socialism. After a period of favor, when several high-ranking members of the Nazi party including Heinrich Himmler and Rudolf Hess were interested in the subject, astrology was repressed once the National Socialists came into power.

The astrology of the first decades of the 20th century largely continued to be event-oriented, each symbol generally correlated with physical features, places, specific fortunes and misfortunes. To the extent that it dealt with character, astrologers tended to use static and common-sense theories of personality. The key figure to effect the decisive turn towards incorporating more dynamic psychological models into astrology was Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985). Rudhyar, who was a follower and friend of → Alice Bailey's, became acquainted with → C.G. Jung's work in the early 1930's. His synthesis of psychology, theosophy and astrology was published as *The Astrology of Personality* in 1936. In a thoroughly spiritualized Jungian vein, Rudhyar saw the chart as a map to the particular path of individuation for the person concerned. The astrologer's function is very similar to that of a spiritual guide, who discerns for the client the meaning of being born at a particular time and place.

The prediction of events remained an important part of astrology well after the publication of Rudhyar's first volumes. However, the counterculture of the 1960s signified a major boost for astrology in general and its psychological and Jungian variety in particular. The awareness among the population at large was to a large extent heightened due to the concept of the advent of a new era in history, the Age of Aquarius (not least as popularized in the 1969 musical *Hair*). Among the astrological cognoscenti, Rudhyar, who had worked in relative obscurity for many years, became a major source of inspiration. Since the late 1960s, interest has exploded, measured in terms of the number of practicing astrologers, in the output of literature and the number of potential clients.

Whereas political constraints for the following two decades limited widespread interest in astrology to the Western world, the fall of the Iron Curtain has brought about yet another boost, since the 1990s entailed a surge of interest in the former East Bloc countries. The wider effects of globalization

have spread modern Western, psychologizing forms of astrology well beyond the confines of Europe and North America, and have also introduced Indian and Chinese forms of astrology in the West.

At the same time, the very popularity of astrology in the last decades of the 20th century has given it the curious role of being a major catalyst behind the rise of organized skeptical movements. In 1975, 186 scientists signed a document against astrology which was published in the journal *The Humanist*. The following year, the *Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal* (CSICOP) was formed largely as a response to the wide-spread support for astrology. Within the next few years, many similar skeptical organizations were created, most of which continue to devote considerable effort to debunking and combating belief in astrology. 20th century astrology thus has an indirect influence that goes well beyond the ranks of the “believers”.

#### B. LITERATURE

The astrological literature of the 20th century is characterized by its scope and diversity. The vastness of the literature can be judged from the fact that at the beginning of the 21st century, catalogues of books in print list over three thousand astrology titles in the English language alone. The diversity is apparent from the fact that this literature ranges from elementary general introductions to highly specialized works, and covers many distinct branches of astrology, from the Jungian-inspired analysis of birth charts to various versions of mundane and predictive astrology. The following remarks can thus only give some ideas of the main trends of this literature.

Much astrology in the first decades after its revival at the beginning of the 20th century was characterized by the affinity of many of its practitioners with theosophy [→ Theosophical Society], and with the gradual transition from an event-oriented to a psychologizing practice. An important part of the literature on astrology of those decades is marked by this double affiliation. Among the “modern classics” of this genre one can single out *Esoteric Astrology* and other books written by the prolific Alan Leo (1860-1970) and *The Astrology of Personality* by Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985). Theosophically inspired astrology received its most extensive theoretical manifesto with → Alice Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology* (1950). However, predictive astrology represented a larger sector of the astrological literature during those first decades than it does today. Early 20th century handbooks on astrology, such as → Max Heindel’s *The Mes-*

*sage of the Stars* (1913) and Oscar Schmitz’ *Der Geist der Astrologie* (1922) thus devote considerable space to describing how a person’s relation with career, money, marriage and health can be seen in the birth chart.

Whereas much of astrology in older periods was reserved for an intellectual elite that had the astronomical and mathematical knowledge necessary to erect a chart, astrology as it was revived in the early 20th century was a more popular practice. A distinct genre of 20th-century literature consists of elementary handbooks for mass-market distribution. Characteristic examples are Alan Leo’s  *Casting the Horoscope* (1902), and *Heaven Knows What* (1935) and *Astrology for the Millions* (1940) by Grant Lewi (1902-1951).

Since astrology was largely practiced by individuals in a loosely knit cultic milieu, the literature also soon evinced a considerable diversity of opinion. Among the literature presenting various technical innovations, a few sub-genres can be mentioned. In books such as *Applied Cosmobiology* Reinhold Ebertin (1901-1988) developed a distinct form of astrology, inter alia by assuming that mid-points between planets represented important forces in the chart. Another distinct direction in astrology are Sabian Symbols, in which every degree of the zodiac has its own meaning. This system of interpretation is the subject of Marc Edmund Jones’ (1888-1980) *The Sabian Symbols* (1953).

Specific applications of astrology (other than interpreting the birth chart) were also revived and codified in founding texts. Charles Carter (1887-1968) published an influential text on mundane astrology, *An Introduction to Political Astrology* (1951). An early precursor of the attempts to analyze stock market fluctuations through astrology is J.M. Langham’s *Planetary Effects on the Stock Market* (1932).

The revival of astrology coincided with a period of unparalleled success for the natural sciences. Already in the first years of the astrological revival, volumes were produced that attempted to ground the claims of astrology in empirical research. A pioneer in this field is Paul Choïnard (1867-1930). Among his titles one might mention *Influence astrale* (1901) and *Étude nouvelle sur l’hérédité* (1903).

Astrological literature of the latter decades of the century, i.e. after astrology made the transition from a specialized subculture into mainstream popular culture in the 1960s, shows characteristics similar to the aforementioned, but in radicalized form. Firstly, the psychologizing trend has become the dominant form of astrology. Much contemporary literature therefore takes for granted that

astrology is a psychological art and thus a mode of understanding others as well as oneself, giving rise to titles such as *Relating* (Liz Greene 1978), *Astrology, Psychology and the Four Elements* (Stephen Arroyo 1975), *Relationships and Life Cycles* (Arroyo 1979), and *The Astrology of Self-Discovery* (Tracy Marks 1985).

Secondly, due to the widespread popularity of astrological beliefs, the existing customer base for literature on the subject is vast. A very large number of titles is thus published each year, making it possible for both broadly appealing subjects and niche interests to coexist on the market. The vast output of astrological texts can be loosely subdivided into genres. For the general public, there are mass-market books, e.g. the commercially highly successful best sellers *Sun Signs* and *Love Signs* by Linda Goodman (1925-1995). For the aspiring astrologer, new instructional texts are published each year, some of which are distributed by major, international publishing houses. Books for a more advanced audience tend to focus on specific interpretive issues. Thus, there are numerous books aiding the advanced practitioner to refine his or her understanding of the astrological houses, of specific planets or of characteristic configurations or events in the horoscope. Characteristic titles are *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil* (Liz Greene 1976), *The Twelve Houses* (Howard Saspotas 1985) and *Planetary Aspects* (Tracy Marks 1987). A considerable number of journals, ranging from mass circulation publications to specialized newsletters cater to the interests of those who have a long-term interest or are professionally involved in astrology. Closely related to these genres are astrological texts that are "literature" only by adopting a more inclusive definition. Among these there are the sun sign horoscopes in many newspapers and magazines. TV programs, Internet sites and advertisements in the media also contribute to making basic information on astrology a truly ubiquitous part of contemporary popular culture.

Thirdly, those who practice astrology continue to disagree on many issues. Present-day astrological literature therefore continues to be characterized by its diversity of opinion. The variety of doctrines on a number of technical issues has led to several distinct genealogies of traditions. Literature that presents specific interpretive choices can be subdivided accordingly. There are books linking astrology with Jungian thought. Among these, some of the most influential within the astrological community have been written by Liz Greene and Howard Saspotas, e.g. their joint production *The Development of the Personality* (1987). Others

present a variety of esoteric or occult interpretations of the chart. Books linking → reincarnation and astrology can be placed in this category, e.g. *The Divine Plot: Astrology and Reincarnation* (Tad Mann 1986). The literature of yet another school, that of Uranian astrology, is distinct inter alia in that it hypothesizes the existence of eight planets unknown to astronomy. Yet another sub-genre attempts to incorporate interpretations of major asteroids into the birth chart.

Fourthly, whereas all of the aforementioned are united by their interest in the natal charts of individual people, yet other genres of literature, each with multiple variations, concern distinct branches of astrology such as mundane astrology (the interpretation of the charts of nations and organizations), financial astrology, horary astrology (answering questions by interpreting the chart of the moment when the question was posed), electional astrology (choosing the appropriate moment to begin an activity through astrological considerations), and even astrological gardening (planting and harvesting according to astrological considerations). Thus, mundane astrology is the subject of volumes such as Nicholas Campion *The Book of World Horoscopes* (1992), whereas financial astrology is expounded in texts such as Henry Weingarten *Investing by the Stars* (1996).

Finally, astrology is no longer part of a culture of accepted claims. This fact has led to the rise of a new genre of literature on the subject. The booming interest in astrology has probably been the main impetus behind a genre of literature on astrology characteristic of the later part of the 20th century: the numerous attempts to carry out empirical studies of astrological claims. Excepting a few precursors, rigorous experimental studies of this kind have only been carried out since the mid-1950s. Two avenues of investigation have been followed. Firstly, there are statistical surveys examining whether chart factors can be correlated with specific individual traits. The most publicized and controversial of these are the studies of Michel Gauquelin (1928-1991), who in *The Cosmic Clocks* (1967) and numerous other books attempted to show that there was a statistically significant correlation between certain celestial events at birth and excellence in certain professions. Secondly, there is the skeptical literature that attacks astrology, typically along the line that astrologers consistently fail tests in which they attempt to match personality profiles with chart interpretations. A classic title in this genre is Roger Culver & Philip A. Ianna *Astrology: True or False? A Scientific Evaluation* (1988).

The implicit premise of such studies, whether

favorable or debunking, is that astrology is best analyzed by examining its relation with the empirical sciences; the polemics concern the question whether it is a valid science or a failed one. Almost entirely lacking from 20th century astrological literature are studies that treat contemporary astrology as a culturally constructed divinatory art. Considering the depth and finesse of the anthropological literature on e.g. African systems of divination, this lacuna is all the more remarkable.

*Lit.:* Patrick Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology*, London: Collins & Brown, 1992 ♦ Shoshanah Feher, "Who holds the cards? Women and New Age astrology", in: James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1992, 179-188 ♦ Suzel Fuzeau-Braesch, *L'astrologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995 ♦ Ellic Howe, *Urania's Children: The Strange World of the Astrologers*, London: Kimber, 1967 ♦ James R. Lewis, *The Astrology Encyclopedia*, Detroit: Gale Research, 1994.

OLAV HAMMER

## Audians

The Audians were adherents of a Christian sect, which flourished in the 4th century. Only a limited historical and geographical account of their activities can be gleaned from typically marginal references in the available sources (detailed survey in Puech 910/911). The scantness of concrete information is already apparent in the varying names for the group (Gk. *Audianoi*, *Odiano*; Lat. *Haeresis Audiana*) as well as their founder (Gk. *Audios*, *Audaios*; Lat. *Audeus*; Syr. *Audi*, *Odi*). Moreover, no original documents of the Audians have survived. All information about the sect derives from the heresiological writings of major Church authors. The statements of Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion*, 70) and Theodore bar Konai (*Scholia*, 11,63) are particularly important in this respect.

Audius, the founder of the sect, was a Syrian from Mesopotamia, who lived during the 4th century. Statements concerning the period of his public activity vary widely; Epiphanius (*Panarion*, 70, 1) gives the most plausible date at the time of Arius (ca. 325 A.D.). Audius initially enjoyed great respect as an ascetic and opponent of the growing decadence of the clergy. His break with the Church probably followed soon after the Council of Nicaea. Audius rejected its edict on Easter, and his dissent was initially more schismatic than heretical. Audius had himself illegally consecrated bishop by a follower and founded communities, which

pledged themselves to extreme asceticism. He was thereupon banned by Constantine the Great to Scythia for several years. Afterwards he went on a long missionary journey, which led him into the Kingdom of the Goths, where he was successful as a missionary and monastic founder until his death. The persecution of all Christian communities by a Gothic ruler forced the Audians living there to flee back to the region where the movement had originated. There the sect swiftly declined in importance. In Epiphanius' time it was already small with an insignificant number of followers (*Panarion*, 70.15,5).

Little is known concerning the organisation and lifestyle of the Audians. Presumably the Audians were an initially orthodox ascetic movement, which wanted to restore the purity of the early Church and opposed any form of luxury. Afterwards, there arose an independent Audian church with its own episcopate, which assumed an increasingly heretical character, developed specific doctrines and elaborated its own apocryphal scripture, including a rich apocalyptic literature. Theodore bar Konai names an *Apocalypse of Abraham*, an *Apocalypse of John*, possibly identical with the so-called *Apocryphon of John* (= NHC II, 1 parr.), a *Book of Questions* and a so-called *Apocalypse of Strangers*, which is perhaps identical with the *Apokalypsis Allogenes* (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 16), the text *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 3), and the *Allogeneis* of the → Archontics and → Sethians. This similarity suggests that the Audians shared many ideas with these groups. Moreover, the Audians presumably had various editions of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*.

Audian doctrines have syncretic features, chiefly indicating a proximity to Jewish and Judaeo-Christian views. As quartodecimans, the Audians retained the 14th Nisan as the time of Passover and thereby oriented themselves towards Jewish prescriptions (*Panarion*, 70, 9, 2-14, 4). There is also a markedly anthropomorphic image of God, based on a literal interpretation of Genesis 1:26: As God made man in his image, he also possesses a physical form. Accordingly, texts which endow God with attributes of the human body (e.g. Psalm 114:4; Isaiah 41:20) are understood in concrete terms rather than metaphorically (*Panarion*, 60, 2, 3-8). Here one sees an archaic, Judaeo-Christian conception of God with parallels in other early Christian texts, for example the pseudo-Clementine homilies (Stroumsa, 262).

The Gnostic views held by the Audians can be reconstructed in outline. Their cosmology and anthropology are characterised by a sharp dualism,

expressed in the polar opposites of light and darkness. Darkness and seven other powers form the seven planetary archons, which function as creators of the world and man. The myth of human origin taken from Genesis is expanded: the progeny of a part of mankind resulted from Eve's sexual relations with the archons. The human body is governed by the seven archons and must therefore be overcome; for this reason any kind of sexual activity is condemned and the idea of a bodily resurrection rejected.

The Audians' exemplary fulfilment of an ideal disseminated by the Church coupled with diametrically opposed doctrines led Epiphanius to place the sect outside the usual heresiological scheme, a verdict which has persisted until the present day (Stroumsa 267: '... another case of Christian monks, apparently orthodox in their beliefs and praxis, but ... the carriers of radical, heretical teachings').

K. Holl (ed.), *Epiphanius III: Panarion haer.* 65-80 (2nd rev. ed. by J. Dummer), Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980 ♦ translation with notes: F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Book 2/3, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994 ♦ A. Scher (ed.), *Theodor bar Konai, Liber Scholiorum*, vol. 2, 2nd edition = CSCO, Scriptorum Syri, 26, Louvain: Peeters, 1954 ♦ Fr. translation: R. Hespel/R. Draguet = CSCO, Scriptorum Syri, 188, Louvain: Peeters, 1982.

*Lit.*: H.-Ch. Puech, "Audianer", in: *RAC* 1 (1950), 910-915 ♦ J. Jarry, "Une semi hérésie syro-égyptienne: l'Audianisme", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 63 (1965), 169-195 ♦ C. Scholten, "Audios", in: *LThK*<sup>3</sup> (1993), 1174 ♦ G.G. Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 112), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1999.

GUIDO BEE

**Augustine** (Augustinus of Hippo),  
\* 13.11.354 Thagaste, † 28.08.430  
Hippo Regius

Life and work of Augustinus of Hippo, the most influential Father of the Catholic Church in the West, were inextricably connected with the gnosis of → Manichaeism. In 373, as a young student of rhetoric in Carthage, he made his sudden change to the "religion of Light", which at that time was very attractive to intellectual circles both in Roman North Africa and, for example, Italy. From his nineteenth up to and even beyond his twenty-eighth year, Augustinus was a Manichaean Hearer (*auditor*). In the writings after his return to the

Catholic Church (the definitive conversion to Catholicism took place in the autumn of 386), he was involved in a conflict with his former coreligionists and, at the same time, with his own Manichaean past. This period began with *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and the Morals of the Manichaeans* (started in 387) and came to a provisional conclusion with *On the Nature of the Good* (finished after 404). But also many excursions in his letters, sermons and major works like the *Confessions* (finished about 400) and the *City of God* (413-426/7) are definitely anti-Manichaean. Even towards the end of his life, in his writings against the Italian bishop Julian of Eclanum, Augustinus still had to struggle against the charge of being a Manichaean.

In many respects Augustinus's writings are unique sources for our knowledge of Manichaeism in the Latin West. Apart from the *Fragmenta Tabestina*, the remnants of a Manichaean codex in Latin found near the Algerian city of Tébessa in 1918, nearly all the other primary Latin sources came down to us via the works of Augustinus. Most important in this context are fragments of → Mani's *Treasure of Life* (via Augustinus's *Against Felix* and *On the Nature of the Good*; some other parts via Augustinus's pupil Evodius of Uzalis); fragments of Mani's *Foundation Letter* (mainly via Augustinus's *Against the "Foundation Letter" of Mani*); the *Capitula* of the Manichaean bishop Faustus (via Augustinus's *Against Faustus*) and the Letter of the Roman Manichaean Secundinus (preceding Augustinus's *Against Secundinus* in the manuscripts). The alleged Letter of Mani to Menoch, which the Italian bishop Julian of Eclanum brought to Augustinus's attention (see Augustinus's *Against Julian, an Unfinished Book* III, 166 and 172-173), seems to be a (Pelagian?) falsification, though it gives proof of a profound knowledge of Manichaeism. From Augustinus's *Against Adimantus*, written to refute the disputations of Mani's disciple Addā which seem to have been a collection of quotations from the Old Testament contrasted with selected New Testament texts, we get an impression of Manichaean biblical interpretation. Besides, Augustinus's *On the Morals of the Catholic Church and the Morals of the Manichaeans* and, not least, the 46th chapter of *On Heresies*, provide unique information on Manichaean myth, doctrine, ritual, and ethics.

To what extent Manichaeism exerted a lasting influence upon Augustinus has been a question since the attacks of Julian and other contemporaries. Apart from his marked and life-long anti-Manichaean attitude, more or less distinct positive Manichaean influences seem to have remained in



(certain traits) of Augustinus's doctrine of the two cities (civitates), in his doctrine of sexual concupiscence, and in his appealing mystical spirituality.

Edition of Augustinus's main anti-Manichaean works by J. Zycha in CSEL 25, 1/2, Prague-Vienna-Leipzig: Tempsky-Freitag, 1891-1892 ♦ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, recensuit J.B. Bauer, CSEL 90, Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1992 ♦ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, edidit D. Weber, CSEL 91, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998 ♦ F. Decret & J. van Oort (Latin text, French tr.), *St. Augustinus, Acta contra Fortunatum Manichaeum* (CFM, Series Latina II), Brepols: Turnhout 2004.

*Lit.*: F. Decret, *Aspects du Manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine*, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1970 ♦ F. Decret, *L'Afrique manichéenne (IV<sup>e</sup>-V<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978 ♦ F. Decret, *Essais sur l'Église manichéenne en Afrique du Nord et à Rome au temps de saint Augustin*, Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1995 ♦ J. van Oort, "Augustine and Mani on concupiscentia sexualis", in: J. den Boeft & J. van Oort (eds.), *Augustiniana Traiectina*, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987, 137-152 ♦ J. van Oort, "Augustine on sexual concupiscence and original sin", in: E. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXII*, Leuven: Peeters, 1989, 382-386 ♦ J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991, 33-47, 199-234 ♦ J. van Oort, "Manichaeism in Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei*", in: E. Cavalcanti (ed.), *Il "De ciuitate Dei": L'opera, le interpretazioni, l'influsso*, Roma-Freiburg-Wien: Herder, 1996, 193-214 ♦ J. van Oort, *Mani, Manichaeism & Augustine: The Rediscovery of Manichaeism & Its Influence on Western Christianity*, Tbilisi: Academy of Sciences of Georgia, 1996 (2001<sup>4</sup>) ♦ A. Hoffmann, *Augustins Schrift "De utilitate credendi"*: Eine Analyse, Münster: Aschendorff, 1997 ♦ J. van Oort, "Mani and Manichaeism in Augustine's *De haeresibus*: An Analysis of *haer.* 46,1", in: R.E. Emmerick et al. (eds.), *Studia Manichaica*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000, 451-463 ♦ J. van Oort et al. (eds.), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001.

JOHANNES VAN OORT

**Auvergne**, William of → William of Auvergne

**Avicenna** (Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā), \* ca. 980 Afšana near Buḥārā in Transoxiana, † 1037 Hamaḍān

1. LIFE AND WORK 2. AVICENNA'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE 3. AVICENNA'S LOST ESOTERIC TEACHING? 4. AVICENNA ON ALCHEMY

## 1. LIFE AND WORK

We know about Avicenna's life through an autobiography, completed by one of his disciples, Gūzḡānī (see critical edition Gohlman, ed.). Avicenna's father held a high position in the Samanid administration. A few years after Avicenna's birth, the family moved to Buḥārā, the capital of the Samanid's. In this intellectually active city, Avicenna received a very good education. He studied Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), medicine, and philosophical sciences: logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics. At seventeen, he was appointed personal physician of the Samanid Nūḥ ibn Maṣṣūr in Buḥārā; here he had the opportunity to complete his education, thanks to the extraordinary library of the Samanid ruler. After his father's death, he was also given an administrative position. A few years later, for reasons unknown to us, Avicenna left Buḥārā for Gorgāng in Ḥwārazm (999?-1012), where he came in the service of the Ma'munid Alī ben Ma'mūn. In the next years we find him in Ḡorḡān (1012-1014), Ray (1014-1015), and Hamaḍān (1015-1024), serving different rulers as a physician, and sometimes as a political administrator as well. Finally he went to Iṣfahān (1024-1037) where he stayed in the service of the Kakuyid 'Alā' ad-dawla until his death, which happened during a trip with his master to Hamaḍān.

A philosopher, physician, and mathematician, Avicenna has left a large corpus that western intellectuals began to discover between the mid-12th and the late 13th century. His *magnum opus* is the encyclopedic *Kitāb al-Sifā'* (Book of the Cure), written between 1020 and 1027. It contains *Summae* (*Ḡumal*), i.e. collections on logic, natural science, mathematics and metaphysics. Each one is divided into several sections (*funūn*). A large part of the natural science collection, including the fifth chapter of the first treatise of Meteorology (which is itself the fifth section of the Natural science collection where Avicenna expresses his views on → alchemy), was translated into Latin, like the whole of the metaphysics and a small part of the logic. The introduction to the Logic (*al-madḥal*) and a chapter from section 5 on proof (*al-borhān*), a large part of the first section of Natural science (*al-Samā' al-Ṭabī'i*), the section 6 of Natural science which is the Treatise on the Soul (*Kitāb al-naḥs*), and the whole Metaphysics were translated during the second half of the 12th century at Toledo. The names of the two translators of the Treatise on the Soul, the archdeacon Dominic Gundisalvi or Gundissalinus and Avendauth, an "israelita philosophus" are both mentioned in the letter dedicating the treatise to the archbishop John of Toledo. Several sections of Natural science, among which the

fifth section on Meteorology, were translated at Burgos toward 1240 by Master John Gonsalvi and Salomon. A version of three chapters of this section had been separately translated at the end of the 12th century (see d'Averny 1952, 1957, 1970).

Using Aristotelian and Neoplatonic conceptual elements, Avicenna elaborated an original system of his own. His theory of knowledge is strictly rationalistic and has its source in his comprehensive philosophical system which is distinctly rationalistic as well. The principles of this system are not compatible with any kind of esoteric teaching. The emphasis on knowledge of what is internal (*bāṭin*) and as such not accessible to sense perception or to discursive thought, as opposed to what is external (*ẓāhir*) and visible – which is a fundamental character of mystical or esoteric thought in Islam –, is strictly alien to Avicenna's philosophical system. Below, we will see how Avicenna has nevertheless become important to the history of gnosis and Western esotericism.

## 2. AVICENNA'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

The first Principle – i.e. God – in Avicenna's metaphysical system is a pure intellect (*'aql maḥd*). As such he has an uninterrupted intellection of himself and through his eternal thought of himself, he eternally and continually emanates the first intellect, which is the mover of the outermost sphere. The first intellect has an intellection of the first Principle and as a consequence of this intellection, a second intellect necessarily proceeds from it. It has itself as a second object of thought, insofar as it is a being that exists necessarily by reason of the first Principle, and it thereby emanates the soul of the outermost sphere. It also has itself as a third object of thought, insofar as it is a being which has a possible existence by reason of itself; and it thereby emanates the body of the outermost sphere. The process is the same for the second intellect, and so on, up to the tenth intellect. The power of the tenth intellect is not strong enough to emanate eternal beings, so it emanates both the substantial forms and the intelligibles (*Kitāb al-Šifā'*, Metaphysics, IX, 4). Each sphere of the Avicennian cosmos presents a triadic structure, an intellect, a soul, and a matter moved by the soul. Each element of this scheme is necessarily linked to the other and each effect can be rationally inferred from its cause. The pure intellect is the ultimate principle of all existents. Reality has an intelligible and a rational structure: the Avicennian rationalist theory of knowledge has its source in this metaphysical truth.

The last intellect of the cosmos, i.e. the active

intellect, contains all the intelligibles and the goal of human activity is to acquire these. This is not possible as long as the rational immaterial soul is joined to the body; but the supreme bliss for this soul is to become like a perfectly polished mirror in which all knowledge is reflected. The destiny of the soul in the hereafter depends upon man's rational activity during his life. The highest state of human activity in this life and in the next is rational activity. A soul who has neglected this noble activity will suffer eternally. To obtain these intelligibles, the human intellect (which is a faculty of the rational soul) has to come into contact (*ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect. At birth, the human intellect contains no intelligibles: it is merely an empty potentiality for thinking, called "material intellect" (*'aql hayūlānī*), and belongs to every member of the species. Then, when it acquires the first intelligibles – i.e. theoretical propositions such as "the whole is greater than the part" – it is called "intellect in habitus" (*'aql bi-l-malaka*). When the human intellect obtains the secondary intelligibles which consist of universal concepts and derivative propositions – however without being into contact with the active intellect –, it is called "actual intellect" (*'aql bi-l-fi'l*). Their acquisition normally requires the presence of the first intelligibles and the use of the thinking activity which requires the participation of the external senses (sight, smell and so on), as well as the internal senses (→ imagination, memory, and so on). The next stage, the "acquired intellect" (*'aql mustafad*) is no longer a stage of potentiality like the first three: at this level, the human intellect has established contact with the active intellect and receives the intelligible forms from it. The rationalist character of Avicenna's theory of knowledge is strengthened by two of his fundamental theses. 1) The "contact" between the sublunar and the supralunar realms is only an epistemic one. Avicenna rejects the possibility of an ontic union (the technical term for this used by the mystics is *ittiḥād*) between the human intellect and the transcendental principle of knowledge. 2) Some men possess "insight" (*ḥads*), which is an aptitude to acquire knowledge by establishing contact with the active intelligence without resorting to any kind of preparation (i.e. without using the thinking faculty), or to any teaching. When man establishes contact with the active intellect through insight, he obtains instantaneously the middle term in any syllogism. The knowledge of the intelligible world and of the reality as it is in itself is necessarily a syllogistic knowledge. When the capacity of insight reaches its highest level, it is called "holy intellect" (*'aql qudsī*). This capacity belongs only to proph-

ets: it is the highest of the powers of prophecy and the highest level of the human faculties (*Kitāb al-Šifā*. Treatise on the Soul, V, 5, p. 219). Thus, for Avicenna real knowledge is demonstrated scientific knowledge which follows a strict syllogistic process according to the rules established by Aristotle's logic. In Avicenna's comprehensive philosophical system, prophecy is conceived as a human experience, although an exceptional one, – it is studied in the sixth section of the Natural Science – interpreted in a rationalist manner without recourse to the religious theme of God's election. Moreover, the "mystic" (*al-ʿārif*) described by Avicenna in the *Išārāt wa-Tanbīhāt* (Pointers and Reminders) is the man who has purified his soul by ascetism and whose intellect has reached the level of "acquired intellect" (Goichon 1961, 486-489). The function of ascetic exercises, religious prescriptions such as fasting, prayer and so on, is only propaedeutic; they prepare the rational soul for establishing contact with the active intelligence.

Another important aspect of Avicenna's theory of knowledge is linked to his theory of imagination. The souls of the celestial spheres, being joined to a body, are endowed with a faculty of imagination which contains images of the particular things, while the intelligences of the celestial spheres contain only intelligible forms (*Kitāb al-Šifā*, Treatise on the Soul, IV, 2, p. 158). By the medium of his imagination, man usually receives those images during the sleeping state while his senses are at rest. A brief survey of Avicenna's theory of the internal senses is necessary to understand this theory of imagination. To the five external senses, Avicenna adds five internal senses: (1) common sense, (2) retentive imagination, (3) compositive imagination, (4) estimation, (5) recollection. To be perceived, the sensible form grasped by the external senses must be imprinted in the common sense. When an image fashioned by man's compositive imagination is imprinted in the common sense, it is perceived as if it were a sensible form grasped by the external senses. Man's imagination receives the images from the celestial souls during the sleeping state and imitates them. Sometimes, the images framed are similar to those perceived during the visionary experience and sometimes they are not, when the imagination has been disturbed by the other bodily faculties. In the first case, the result brings foreknowledge of the future and in the second case it is only a "confused dream". Some men have a strong imagination and a noble soul. Their imagination is not diverted by the activity of the senses and acquires through figurative images what the soul learns through intellectual prophecy.

Those men are prophets and their experience is the consequence of the prophetic imagination. The prophet transposes his particular vision into symbols and images accessible to everyone. But the status of those images is not clear: are they mere colourful duplicates of the intelligible forms or are they endowed with their own heuristic value? This unresolved point of Avicenna's theory of knowledge has given birth to different interpretations.

→ Henry Corbin has devoted to Avicenna's theory of imagination one of his important studies concerning the Islamic interpretation of the esoteric mystery of God's presence to man (*Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*). Corbin's interpretation has been highly influential among students of western esotericism but it presents some difficulties when we read it in the light of Avicenna's theory of emanation. According to Corbin's acute and in many respects inspired analysis, the Islamic mystic and esoteric literature has produced an original answer to the question of the mystery of the possible meeting between man and the spiritual world. The meeting takes place in a world which is neither the world of sense perception nor the one of universal concepts, but an intermediary world called the *mundus imaginalis*. By his imagination, man participates in this world where it is given him to receive individual revelations which – although they are not sense perceptions –, have specific characteristics like smell, colour and sound. The *mundus imaginalis* is the nexus between the sensible world and the angelic world; its existence makes it possible for the mystic to meet an angelic entity which symbolizes his real nature. Henry Corbin confers a specific significance to three Avicennian recitals which he designates as "the visionary recitals' cycle", namely, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* (Alive, the son of Awake), *Salāmān wa Absāl* and *Risāla-at-Tayr* (The Bird's Recital). He considers them to be the highly individual expression of a single visionary experience. They are not to be considered as allegorical recitals in the sense that the experience they describe could be expressed differently, for example through rational discourse. Rather, each Avicennian recital expresses an individual experience which has taken place in the *mundus imaginalis* through the medium of the faculty of imagination between the mystic (in this case, Avicenna) and an angelic entity who represents his real nature. Each symbol contained in those recitals is unique, being the trace of the authenticity of the experience. Each symbol is a "secret" offered by Avicenna to his reader in order to make him aware of his real nature. Thus, these recitals have an initiatic function which no other

kind of discourse (allegoric or demonstrative) could assume.

For Corbin, Avicenna's recitals revolve around his pivotal doctrine of angelology, of which theory of knowledge and cosmology are only parts. Knowledge is an illuminative process, which leads the human soul to forsake the West and turn toward the East, i.e. toward the focus of its real nature. The angel's gift manifests itself as an inner epiphany of beauty and light invading the human soul and revealing to it its real nature. Knowledge is thus a gnosis, an initiatic process in which each soul experiences an absolutely unique relationship to the divine.

Corbin's interpretation of Avicenna's theory of imagination raises a fundamental question: is true knowledge an initiatic process, an absolutely individual relationship between a singular human soul and a celestial entity, or rather the reception by human souls of the intelligibles contained in the celestial intelligences through a single effusion, each soul receiving the amount of intelligibles it is ready to receive? To answer this question, we have to consider the structure of the process of emanation. In Avicenna's metaphysical system all reality emanates from God through the first intellect. God is the ultimate principle of both existence and intelligible thought. The flux coming from the supralunar realm is always identical to itself; only the disposition of the receptacles to receive it varies. This is a principle that Avicenna has always maintained. Thus, knowledge is one – i.e. it consists of all the intelligibles contained in the intellects of the celestial spheres – and continually emanates from the celestial principles. Only the disposition of men's intellect to receive it varies. The initiatic individual process between an angelic entity and a gnostic is hardly possible in such a rationalistic scheme where a unique flux continually and necessarily emanates from each celestial entity, each being like a mirror reflecting in his own way the supreme gift. Thus, it seems difficult to distinguish the experience related respectively in the three "visionary recitals" – which is an epistemic one – from the rational process of knowledge that man's intellect has to undertake to obtain eternal bliss as described by Avicenna in the *Kitāb al-Šifā*.

### 3. AVICENNA'S LOST ESOTERIC TEACHING?

For a long time, western scholars have mistakenly believed that there had once existed a body of esoteric teaching by Avicenna, known as "Eastern philosophy". As shown by Gutas, the origin of this mistake goes back to the medieval Andalusian philosopher Ibn Ṭofayl († 1185) who borrowed the title *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* (Alive, the son of Awake)

from Avicenna's recital to elaborate the myth of the solitary philosopher. In his introduction, Ibn Ṭofayl had drawn a connection between Eastern philosophy and mysticism, and framed the following misleading subtitle: "On the Secrets of Eastern Philosophy". A modern western scholar, M.A.F. Mehren borrowed Ibn Ṭofayl's subtitle for his own edition and translation (into French) of some of Avicenna's treatises (*Rasā'il Ibn Sīnā fī asrār al-ḥikma al-mašriqiyya*, the French title is *Traité mystiques d'Avicenne*) and this title has contributed to the idea that Avicenna had a mystical or esoteric teaching. In a well known paper from 1925, C.A. Nallino established, however, that in the part of his work named by himself "Eastern philosophy", Avicenna did not profess a teaching definitely distinct from the one contained in his systematic works. The fragment subsisting today in the manuscripts under the title *Kitāb al-mašriqiyyīn* (The Book of the Easterners) is a treatise on logic which contains no trace of an esoteric teaching (it is published under the name *Mantiq al-mašriqiyyīn* by Š. al-Nağğār). The "Easterners", as S. Pines (1952) has suggested, could be the name used by Avicenna to express his own interpretation of some philosophical issues raised by the Aristotelian philosophy. Thus, the idea of a lost avicennian esoteric teaching is incorrect.

### 4. AVICENNA ON ALCHEMY

Avicenna's views on Alchemy are expressed in the fifth chapter of the first treatise of his *Meteorologica* (i.e. the fifth section of the Natural Science of *Kitāb al-Šifā*) known in the West as *Avicennae de congelatione et conglutinatione lapidum*. The Arabic title of this treatise is *Kitāb al-ma'ādīn wa-l-ātār al-'uluwiyya*. In this treatise, Avicenna gives two different theories of the formation of metals. He accepts the mercury-sulphur theory, usually attributed to Ġābir Ibn Ḥayyān (Geber; 8th-9th century), but he also maintains the Aristotelian theory which explains the diversity of metals by the theory of condensed vapors. It is the relationship between the four Aristotelian qualities – hot, cold, moist, dry – in the mercury and sulphur substance that determines the production of all metals: 'if the mercury is pure and if it be commingled with and solidified by the virtue of a white sulphur which neither induces combustion nor is impure, but on the contrary, is more excellent than that prepared by the adepts (*ahl al-ḥīla*), then the product is silver. If the sulphur, besides being pure, is even better than that just described, and whiter, and if in addition it possesses a tinctorial, fiery, subtle, and non-combustive virtue – in short, if it is superior to that which the adepts can prepare – it will solidify the mercury into gold' (ed. Holmyard and Mande-



ville). Avicenna believes that there is a specific difference between silver and gold; accordingly, it is impossible to transmute one metal into another one. Only the production of a “tincture” that makes a metal externally look like another one is possible. In this treatise, Avicenna clearly rejects the opinion of the alchemists who believe that the transmutation of metals is possible: ‘As to the claims of the alchemists, it must be clearly understood that it is not in their power to bring about any true change of species’ (o.c., 41). In Zetzner’s *Theatrum chemicum* and in Manget’s *Bibliotheca chemica curiosa*, we find not only the *Avicennae De Congelatione et Conglutinatione Lapidum*, but also three other treatises attributed to Avicenna. The first one is the *Liber Aboali Abincine de Anima in arte Alchemiae*. It was translated into Latin in the 12th century and was considered authentic. J. Ruska (1934) has definitely demonstrated however that it is a forgery composed in Spain in the 12th century. The second one is the *Declaration Lapis physici Avicennae filio sui Aboali*. This is likewise a forgery, as has been demonstrated by Ruska in the same article. The third one is the *Avicennae ad Hasen Regem epistola de Re recta*. Modern scholars do not agree about the authenticity of this treatise (the correct latin title of which is probably *Epistola Principis Albolaly cognominis Albinsceni ad Hakasen de Re Tecta*, as emphasized by Ruska). On the basis of the Latin translation, Ruska originally considered it a forgery. Some years later however, A. Atech published a critical edition of the Arabic version (in “Ibn Sīnā, Risālat al-iksīr”) which allowed him to establish the treatise as authentic. Atech identified the minister to whom the treatise is dedicated as Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Sahl b. Muḥammad al-Sahlī or al-Suhaylī, who was minister at Gorgānḡ where Avicenna lived between 1002 and 1005). Moreover, as Atech notes, all the Arabic manuscripts attribute this treatise to Avicenna and two of them are very old (1192 and 1298). This treatise expresses the view on alchemy of the young Avicenna, who does not yet clearly reject the possibility of the transmutation of the metals as he will do later. H.E. Stapleton likewise believes that this treatise belongs to Avicenna’s early manhood (Stapleton et al. 1962).

*Kitāb al-Šifā* (Treatise on the Soul, ed. G.C. Anawati & S. Zayed), Cairo, 1974 ♦ *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* and the *Risāla-at-Ṭayr* have been edited by M.A.F. Mehren in his *Traité mystiques d’Avicenne*, Leyde, 1889-1891 ♦ H. Corbin had translated the two treatises into French in his *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire*, Paris: Berg international (2th ed.), 1972 ♦ Of *Salamān wa Absāl’s Recital* we have only an abstract made by Našīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201-1274) in his commentary of the *Kitāb al-*

*išārāt wa-l-Tanbihāt*. For the arabic edition, see *Kitāb al-Išārāt wa-l-Tanbihāt li Abī ‘Alī bin Sīnā mā’a šarḥ Našīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī* (S. Dunyā, ed.), 4 vols., Cairo, 1957 ♦ “*Manṭiq al-mašriqiyyīn*” (S. al-Naḡḡār, ed.), Cairo, 1982 ♦ *Avicennae De Congelatione et Conglutinatione Lapidum* (E.J. Holmyard & D.C. Mandeville, eds.), Paris: Geuthner, 1927 ♦ Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Išārāt wa Tanbihāt* (French transl. by A.M. Goichon), *Le livre des directives et des remarques*, Paris: Vrin, 1961 ♦ *The life of Ibn Sina* (W.E. Gohlman, ed. & transl.), Albany, 1974.

*Lit.*: M.-Th. d’Alverny, “Notes sur les traductions médiévales d’Avicenne”, *Archives* 19 (1952), 337-358 ♦ idem, “Les traductions d’Avicenne (Moyen Age et Renaissance)”, in: *Avicenna nella storia della cultura medievale*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 304 (1957), 71-87 ♦ idem, “Les traductions d’Avicenne: quelques résultats d’une enquête”, *Correspondance d’Orient* 11 (Actes du V congrès international d’arabisants et islamisants), Brussels 1970, 151-158 ♦ S. Pines, “La philosophie orientale d’Avicenne et sa polémique contre les Bagdadiens”, *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 27 (1952), 5-37 ♦ J. Ruska, “Die Alchemie des Avicenna”, *Isis* 21 (1934), 14-51 ♦ A. Atech, “Ibn Sīnā, Risālat al-iksīr”, *Turkiyat Mecmuasi* (1952), 27-54 ♦ idem, “Ibn Sīnā ve Elkimya”, *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* IV (1952), 47-62 ♦ H.E. Stapleton, R.F. Azo, M. Hidāyat Ḥusain and G.L. Lewis, “Two alchemical Treatises attributed to Avicenna”, *Ambix* 10 (1962), 41-82 ♦ C.A. Nallino, “Filosofia ‘orientale’ od ‘illuminatia’ d’Avicenna”, *Rivista degli studi orientali* 10 (1925), 433-467 ♦ G.C. Anawati, “Avicenne et l’alchimie”, *Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* 41 (1971), 285-341 ♦ A. de Libera, *L’art des généralités*, Paris, 1999 ♦ D. Gutas, “Avicenna – V. Mysticism”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (E. Yarshater, ed.), vol. III, London/New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, 8 ♦ idem, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, Leiden/New York: E.J. Brill, 1988 ♦ H. Corbin *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, New-York: Pantheon Books, 1960 ♦ H.A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 ♦ A.M. Goichon, *Le récit de Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān commenté par les textes d’Avicenne*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959 ♦ idem, *La philosophie d’Avicenne et son influence en Europe médiévale*, Paris, 1951 ♦ M.E. Marmura, “Avicenna – IV. Metaphysics”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (E. Yarshater, ed.), vol. III, London/New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, 73-79 ♦ P. Lory, “Islam”, in: *Dictionnaire critique de l’ésotérisme*, Paris: PUF, 1988, 663-667 ♦ G. Nogaes, “El misticismo persa de Avicena y su influencia en al misticismo espanol”, *Cuadernos del Seminario de Estudios de Filosofia y Pensamiento Islamico* II, Madrid, 1981, 65-88 ♦ G. Saliba, “Avicenna – VIII. Mathematics and Physical Sciences”, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (E. Yarshater, ed.), vol. III, London/New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, 88-92 ♦ M. Sebti, *Avicenne: L’âme humaine*, Paris: PUF, 2000.



**Aziz, Aia** → Théon, Max

**Baader, Benedict Franz Xaver von,**  
\* 27.3.1765 Munich, † 23.5.1841 Munich

1. LIFE 2. WORK 3. BAADER'S THEOSOPHY 4. EROTIC PHILOSOPHY
5. ART 6. SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY
7. SCIENCE 8. BAADER AND CATHOLICISM
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12. BAADER'S INFLUENCE

Undoubtedly → Christian theosophy's greatest 19th-century German exponent, Baader is a grand unifying figure, joining in his writings the domains of science, religion, and literature, as well as the three main traditions of Christianity (Protestantism [particularly theosophy], Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy). A peerless aphorist, Baader is intellectually among the most stimulating, profound, and difficult of the theosophers. During his lifetime, Baader stood as at least the equal of, and arguably superior to his more well known philosophical contemporaries, many of whom were awed by his insights into nature and human culture, by his immense command over numerous languages, and by his uniting of religion and science and the arts. Even the most famous of his contemporaries were dazzled by their conversations with him; → Schelling reportedly said that for several hours after talking with Baader he was no longer certain what he himself thought.

#### 1. LIFE

The son of a physician, Joseph Franz von Baader, Baader early on had awakened in him an inclination to study nature; already as a child, he had an extraordinary love of learning. At the age of sixteen, he and his older brother Joseph went to the Universät Ingolstadt, where his father wanted him to study medicine; in 1783, the two went to Vienna to continue their studies. Baader returned to Munich to assist his father in medical practice, but in 1786 decided to pursue his interests in natural science, in particular minerology and chemistry. He studied minerology at Freiberg, befriending such luminaries as Alexander von Humboldt, and spent four years in England beginning in 1792, where he witnessed the social effects of the industrial revolution, especially the appearance of a proletariat class. In 1796, he returned to Germany, where he rose through a series of successively higher administrative positions, in 1800 becoming a chief administrator for a group of factories. In the same

year he married Francisca von Reisky, daughter of Baron von Reisky, who bore him two children, Guido (b. 1801) and Julie (b. 1804). Through various chemical experiments Baader developed a patented formula for glass fabrication that brought him a substantial income. During this period, he met with or became known to the major philosophical and literary figures of his day, including Tieck, → Novalis, → Schelling; he also studied the works of → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and → Boehme. In 1814, Baader wrote to the leaders of Austria, Russia, and Prussia, in the hope that he might be instrumental in forming a greater union between East and West, particularly in religious matters. During this time, he moved in very high circles in Russia and Germany, while also studying very intensely the works of Boehme, Saint-Martin, and related authors. His first published work was "Vom Wärmestoff" (On the Substance of Warmth), in 1786, which H. Grassl has termed 'the first fruit of Romantic speculation about nature' (40). In 1792, he published an article on the use of explosives, but for many subsequent years his primary intellectual work took place in journals, where he developed the comprehensive theosophic worldview expressed by 1815 in his seminal "Ueber den Blitz als Vater des Lichtes" (On the Lightning-Bolt as the Father of Light), followed in the next year by his "Sur l'Eucharistie" (On the Eucharist), and in 1817-1818 by writings such as "Ueber die Ekstase" (On Ecstasy) and "Sur la notion du temps" (On the Notion of Time). He maintained his connections with the Russian nobility, in particular with Alexander Galitzin. Baader taught at Ludwig-Maximilian Universität from 1826 onward, offering a series of philosophical lectures at Munich university, lectures which he wrote between 1828-1832 and in which he took issue with Schelling's philosophical views.

On 17 January, 1835, Baader's first wife died after a long illness. Baader was deeply affected by that loss, and shortly thereafter he lost his brother, Joseph, as well. In 1839, Baader married a young woman named Marie Robel, who was his junior by over four decades. Around this same time, he became engaged in a number of controversies concerning the relationships between Catholicism and Protestantism, on which he had views very much colored by his own deep study of the Protestant Boehme while remaining a lifelong Catholic himself. He also engaged in these late years, i.e. 1839-1840 in an intense polemic with Hegel, with whose views he greatly disagreed. In the summer of 1840, Baader's health began to fail, and he died in 1841 after a protracted illness.

## 2. WORK

Referred to as “Boehmius redivivus” [Boehme reborn] by August Wilhelm Schlegel – a complimentary designation still indissolubly linked to Baader’s name – Baader was a great reader of Boehme, Saint-Martin, and Meister Eckhart, whose works he rediscovered for the modern era. Most famous as a theosopher, Baader’s theosophic writings encompass an unusual range of subjects. Baader’s collected works were edited by Franz Hoffmann and published posthumously (Leipzig 1851). The first several volumes deal with philosophy (the first with “speculative logic”; the second with metaphysics; and the third with nature-philosophy). The fourth volume, which includes his “Sätze aus der erotischen Philosophie” (Statements from the erotic Philosophy), and his “Vierzig Sätze aus einer religiösen Erotik” (Forty Statements from a religious eroticism), is organized around the concept of “philosophic anthropology”. The fifth and sixth volumes center on the theme of social philosophy, while the remaining volumes (especially the seventh through tenth) deal with various aspects of religious philosophy. The eleventh volume includes Baader’s journals, the twelfth his remarks on the writings of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, and the thirteenth his observations on the writings of Jacob Boehme. The fourteenth volume is devoted to Baader’s thoughts on concepts of time; the fifteenth includes letters and a biography; completed by an index in the sixteenth volume. Baader’s writings range even more widely than this overview would indicate, however, their scope including politics, social organization, natural science, literature, economics, and religion, revealing a remarkable catholicity and depth of thought.

## 3. BAADER’S THEOSOPHY

Baader explicitly placed himself in the theosophic current of Jacob Boehme, and indeed, a significant portion of his collected works is devoted to the explication of Boehme’s writing. Christian theosophy in the Boehmean tradition is an esoteric current with the following characteristics: 1) a focus upon Wisdom or Sophia, 2) an insistence upon direct spiritual experience, 3) a spiritual cosmology 4) a spiritual leader who guides his or her spiritual circle through letters and oral advice. These four characteristics describe such figures as → John Pordage, → Jane Leade, Thomas Bromley, and Johann Georg Rapp, all of whom were members of and led Sophianic spiritual groups devoted to direct spiritual experience, and all of whom saw nature in a spiritual light. Theosophy drew upon and in many respects synthesized a variety of pre-

existing spiritual currents in the West, including → alchemy, Sophianic mysticism, and a form of spiritual → astrology. Baader belongs to this current of thought, but his work is far more philosophical than that of visionary theosophers like Pordage. Baader’s work is very much engaged with and part of the intellectual currents of his age; unlike theosophers like Pordage or Bromley, whose works consist largely in accounts of their own spiritual experiences, Baader gave many university lectures, corresponded and argued with all the main philosophers of his day, and in general was much more engaged with the society in which he lived than were the more reclusive theosophers like those mentioned above.

This said, Baader’s work corresponds precisely with all four characteristics of theosophy. His work is certainly Sophianic, albeit in a much more intellectual form than with most theosophers. According to Baader’s complex Sophiology, Sophia is ‘the mirror and the eye of God, or the first idea of God’ (15.447); Sophia corresponds to Plato’s Idea, to the Indian idea of Maya, and to Jacob Boehme’s *magie* (9.182, 219). Sophia is ‘the heavenly Virgin’, but not identical to the Virgin Mary (15.449). Baader also emphasized direct spiritual experience, or gnosis, which he held to be the center of Christianity. He drew explicitly upon the work of Meister Eckhart in this regard, whose work he rediscovered. Baader writes that ‘True gnosis is a circle’, and that ‘the systematic character of gnosis [means that] every single concept leads to the Center, and the Center in turn to all other concepts’ (14.160). Baader’s work certainly emphasizes a spiritual cosmology or, as he puts it, cosmosophy, and much of his work has as its purpose the renewal of a proper relationship between humanity, nature, and the divine. His works include an ecological dimension that now seems strikingly prescient, but this ecological dimension is intimately linked to his spiritual cosmology that derives from Boehme and Saint-Martin. Finally, Baader himself may be seen as a spiritual leader who sought to guide others through his letters, essays, and lectures. His audience was not only a small group, however, but was national and international in scope. In this regard, he is unique as a public intellectual among theosophers.

## 4. EROTIC PHILOSOPHY

It is for his “Erotische philosophie” that Baader is undoubtedly best known. Baader wrote extensively on love and the erotic impulse, perhaps not least because he recognized that in the Christian tradition as a whole these themes were not adequately dealt with. In his *Sätze aus der Erotischen*

*Philosophie*, Baader begins by noting that religion and love are intimately connected, and that together they bring the highest happiness possible in life; but if they remain viewed only in the “chiaroscuro of reason” their significance remains far from realized. Baader argues that every union can take place only through a subjection: one cannot have an authentic union without the generosity of giving up, most of all, giving up one’s pride. He points out that the word *Sünde* (sin) has the same root as *sondern* (to separate), and this reveals the underlying meaning of sin as the opposite of love. Love unites in mutual subjection; sin separates through individual pride. But this is not to say that separation does not have its place: Baader provides the example of a parent or of a lover with whom a sharp division eventually gives way to a reconciliation that results in a deeper love. In this example there is also an allusion to the relationship between the creature and God, the creature being separated from God only to be united more strongly in the end.

Baader offers a developed and profound theory of the androgyne as central to understanding the nature of humanity as well as of individual human lives and relationships. Male and female lovers are engaged in the process of realizing in one another the original spiritual androgyne: the man helps the woman to realize masculinity in herself, just as the woman helps man to realize femininity in himself. If the lovers are not engaged in this process, the woman becomes merely a serpent to the man, while he is in turn merely a luciferian proud spirit to her.

According to Baader, love entails service: even God serves his servants. And so, Baader continues, if you want genuine worldly power, be someone who can be loved and admired; for people will only serve well those for whom they have some admixture of love and admiration. The obverse of loving service is doctrinaire blindness: ‘Since the negative spirit is doctrinaire and possesses peoples’ intelligence, out of it emerges a crowd of coldblooded, parched and poisonous heart-rotting philosophic, religious, and moralistic systems, mostly worse than their originator, because they are more obsessed than possessed’ (*Sätze* no. 31). Baader shares his denunciation of doctrinaire systems with other theologians, like → Gichtel; most important in human relationships is the process of loving reconciliation and deeper union. The relationship between man and woman is analogous to and a reflection of the relationship between humanity and God.

## 5. ART

Baader’s perspective on the arts is integrally united with his religious philosophy and spiritual anthropology. He profoundly dislikes the notion

that art can be separated from religion, and at one point observes that ‘beautiful art should have a religious aim, or can only be laughable, where it is not flat-out irritating’ (SW II: 432). The task of the great artist is to unite the good, the beautiful, and the delightful, in this way awakening in us the sense of nostalgia (*Wehmut*) over a lost paradise, thus giving us a foretaste of the future indissoluble union of these three in paradise restored. To the degree that modern art is divorced from spiritual significance and does not recall paradise to us, it is degraded and even becomes a kind of self-parody. Art must be understood in a religious context; and in order to be great art, it must also be religious. As an example of the highest Christian art, Baader mentions images of the Madonna and of Christ that in turn reflect the virginal androgyne, the angelic nature prior to and above sexual differentiation. Great art, in Baader’s view, represents the transcendence of sexual desire (as exemplified in heathen works of art). A great work of art reveals the integrated, virginal and transcendent nature of humanity. It reminds the individual lovers of how, when they will step before Christ, they will become integrated, whole beings, who realize the *Urbild*, the archetype of integrated humanity (SW III: 303-310).

## 6. SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Baader’s social philosophy cannot be understood except in light of his integrated religious philosophy as a whole. If great art must be understood as a revelation or reminder of paradise and in relation to Baader’s philosophy of spiritual eros, likewise society as a whole must be understood in the same light. In a striking passage entitled “Der Stamm- baum der Liebe” (The Family Tree of Love), from his writings on the connections between *cultus* and culture (SW V:275-276), Baader observes how the divine love descends to humanity and spreads itself outward, horizontally, toward all humanity, as well as downward in order to raise up nature. In this is the origin of the religious *cultus* and hence of all culture. Humanity comes to realize its potential in culture, which in turn is inseparable from its spiritual meaning in the religious *cultus*. Baader conceives of society as existing in a triadic relationship of love: love for fellow humanity, love for God, and love for nature. He who does not love his brother does not love God or nature either. Thus Baader strongly criticizes modern rationalism, in which all three bonds are sundered. One cannot reverence nature alone, but only in relation to these three elements of the divine, humanity, and nature. The industrial and merely money-based economic worldview exists by virtue of sundering the bonds of inheritance and heritage, dissolving the proper

relationship to nature and the land, and replacing it with mere exploitation. But a proper relationship with the land is a marriage-bond that joins past humanity with future humanity, and joins humanity, nature, and the divine in a profound unity that approaches and reflects paradise. In short: love is the foundation of a just and authentic society.

Baader's theosophic worldview requires a center and respects hierarchy, but does not support despotism. In a lecture on the freedom of the intelligence, Baader argues against both leftist and rightist political positions, the former being defined as a radical insistence on total individual freedom, the latter as stultifying traditionalism (SW I:133). Both of these, like an exclusively scientific viewpoint, represent false and deceptive kinds of freedom, for only through religious perception can one come to understand true freedom, which can be realized only insofar as one realizes that all power rests ultimately in God. Thus the concept of an enlightened monarchy was not foreign to Baader's writings. He saw great hope in the founding of Ludwig-Maximilian Universität in Munich, which he perceived as a sign of a possible new unity of secular and religious learning. This university was, of course, founded under the auspices of the Kaiser by that name, and hence Baader wrote that 'Only a monarch, whose heart burns for religious things, like his spirit and heart, entrusted with the depths of science and art, is gracious, only a monarch who pronounces particularly that he will not knowingly introduce the misuse of intelligence, and who is an enemy alike to unbelief and superstition, at the expense of his people knowing his religiosity, not that he should be religious at the expense of his knowledge – only under the protection and attention of such a monarch, I say, in a full, patriotic, proud and daring testimony, can the world-reconciling bond between the priests and the learned again begin to close!' (SW I:149-150).

Baader saw society as an organic whole – one might even say as an *anthropos*, with head, limbs, and so forth – and fought strenuously against nihilism and disharmony in society. In an organic society, religion and science would be reconciled under the sign of Sophia, or divine Wisdom. Drawing on such prominent mystics as Eckhart and Tauler, Baader insisted that a healthy society is one in which there is an integral unity with the divine, and an absence of selfishness, isolation, and arrogance. Everyone in such a society would be connected with its transcendent religious center and origin. Thus he wrote of the 'necessity of an inner conjoining of religion with politics, love being the organizing principle (as the organizer par excellence' (SW II:117).

## 7. SCIENCE

Since Baader was himself trained as a scientist, and worked in industry, his views on science and related questions take on a particular force: he sought to conjoin science and religion in himself and in his own theosophic perspective. In 1825, he published a text titled "Alles, was dem Eindringen der Religion in die Region des Wissens sich widersetzt oder selbes nicht fördert, ist vom Bösen" (Everything that opposes or does not further the penetration of religion into the region of knowledge is evil; SW VII:47ff.). Here he strongly denounced the separation of science and religion, insisting instead that the two must be joined together for the good of each. Those who cultivate the attempted suppression of science from religious viewpoints are as destructive, from Baader's perspective, as those who, on the contrary, seek from a scientific viewpoint to ignore and suppress religion. What should be promoted is a religious science or scientific religion: scientific inquiry guided by religious awareness. And Baader goes even beyond this idea to espouse the union of art and science with religion: the striving for the Kingdom of Heaven as an inner experience should be 'the focus for all outwardly effective creations of poetry and art of man, but also it should be . . . the principle of physics as the science and art of the illuminating Idea. Of which our so-called nature philosophy barely has an idea any more, because, having lost what the man of nature should be, science has also lost what the nature of man could and should be' (SW IV:215-216). Thus Baader's central organizing principle, here as throughout his work, is that of the reunion of the arts and sciences, reintegration of humanity as a whole, under the sign of the divine.

## 8. BAADER AND CATHOLICISM

A lifelong Roman Catholic, Baader nonetheless held somewhat unusual views regarding his own tradition. Most well known in this regard is his opposition to the institution of the papacy. Baader argued that a synodic or collegial structure was the best means of organizing the visible church, and that the papacy was merely an historical accretion, not an intrinsic part of Catholicism (SW V:399-404; V:369-382; X:53-88). He hoped for an eventual reunion of Eastern and Western Christianity, and saw a synodic or collegial organization as the best means toward this end (SW V:391-398; X:89-254). The majority of his essays on these topics date from the last two years of his life, but their themes occupied his attention from relatively early on. Like → Novalis, Baader hoped to see the whole of Europe united in a single overarching Christen-

dom. But in spite of being deeply inspired (also like Novalis) by Boehmean theosophy, he opposed the purely inward trend of Protestant → Pietism, insisting on the necessity of an outward church (SW XII: 538ff.). In his essay “Ueber die sichtbare und unsichtbare Kirche” (On the visible and invisible church) Baader argued for the ‘inseparability of the outer and inner churches’, by which he meant the union of priest, scholar, and artist under the sign of gnostic realization (SW VII:211-222).

### 9. TIME

Throughout his work, Baader was much concerned with the nature and significance of time. In “Sur la notion du temps (On the notion of time, 1818)” he wrote that there are, in general, two classes of beings outside time: one is above it, the other below, the one paradisaical, the other demonic (SW II:69). Life moves in a cycle of descent, continuation, and re-ascent. We ordinarily assume that eternity is an ‘immoveable and starry present’, whereas in fact it is, strictly speaking, completedness or completion; this is the true definition of eternity. Humanity has fallen from eternity into time. Following Saint-Martin, Baader distinguishes between eternal time and illusory time. Illusory time is what we ordinarily conceive of as time rushing past: it is peripheral and without any ultimate reality. Humanity cannot find God if it remains caught in this illusion-time, trapped in the peripheral. However, it can move from the peripheral to the center once again, for the peripheral illusion-time always carries traces of its transcendent origin. This allows the re-ascent, the reintegration of separated being into transcendence; and such reintegration brings about the restoration of humanity and nature to their original, virginal nature, which is the aim of all true religion. Philosophers like Kant are mistaken because their observations remain limited to illusion-time and do not recognize the primacy of love as the reintegrating principle. As a result, their philosophies are like autopsies on a loveless corpse: their observations are relevant only to fallen beings caught in illusion-time. By contrast, Baader insists that within time itself is the regenerative power of the divine Word, which we can awaken and which ultimately leads to the realization of a higher embodiment beyond mere illusory time.

Drawing on Saint-Martin and Boehme, Baader concludes that ‘The original purpose of man was “to build paradise and to spread it first over the earth, and then over the whole universe” – that is, to turn back in or to enrapture the fallen outward-turned temporal beings (creatures) with the higher,

eternal nature, the crown of their life, enrapturing them again in eternity. But man himself, turning outward from the eternal into this time, does not want to be revealed any more in God, but rather only in this creature, instead of being revealed again through God. And so he then sinks beneath these creatures’ (II.119-120). Thus we see Baader’s theosophic diagnosis of our condition, and its implied cure.

### 10. NATURPHILOSOPHIE

Baader’s was the era of attempts at great syntheses of religion, science, philosophy, and the arts; and arguably the most complex of these was that of Baader himself. Faivre offers the following as characteristics of → Naturphilosophie: 1. A conception of Nature as a text to decipher by → correspondences; 2. A taste for the living concrete and for a plural universe; and 3. The identity of Spirit and Nature (1994, 83). It is in this latter regard that Naturphilosophie of this period led naturally to a fascination with → animal magnetism, a particular interest of Baader’s. Indeed, Baader wrote quite a bit on animal magnetism, including on the idea that ‘magnetic appearances are anticipations of posthumous conditions’ (II.182; IV.47). In Baader’s view, magnetism offered insight into the ways that spirit enlivens nature, as well as a way of revealing the ultimate unity of science and religion through an authentic Naturphilosophie that takes into account spiritual realities – as opposed to a rationalist philosophy of nature that renders nature merely a collection of objects to be exploited or manipulated. Baader criticized some contemporary nature-philosophers, for ‘whoever . . . confuses himself with this external world will eventually end up believing that he is of the same (empty or inwardly null) nature that it is’ (II.89-90). Baader wrote on Naturphilosophie in such essays as “On the Pythagorean Quaternity in Nature”, where as early as 1798, he pointed out the importance of the triad and the quaternity in completing the triad (III.247, 267). Both Hegel and Schelling proposed triadic philosophic principles, but Baader saw them as incomplete even from a philosophical, let alone a religious perspective (XV.178ff.; IX.307). In other words, Baader opposed to some contemporary Naturphilosophers his own perspective that includes recognition of the divine aspects of both humanity and nature, and that did not render the natural world (and humanity) empty or void as he believed scientific rationalism did. Baader’s religious Naturphilosophie separated his perspective from that of many of his contemporaries, including most notably Schelling and Hegel.



### 11. BAADER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Even though he did not publish books, Baader was recognized by his contemporaries as a great philosopher. Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) spoke very highly of him, as did Hegel, Schelling, Friedrich Schlegel, Jean Paul, Tieck, Fichte, and many others. Schlegel wrote in a letter that 'the most remarkable, the most intelligent, the most profound man I have seen in a long time is indeed Baader. He has made many things clear to me'. From all accounts, Baader was a brilliant speaker, and many have described how electrifying an intellectual encounter with him could be. This can still be seen in his aphoristic writings, even though many of his contemporaries lamented the fact that Baader could not write in as organized and lucid a manner as he spoke.

Among Baader's most important relationships was his friendship with Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. In 1806 Schelling broke with Fichte and Spinoza and, under the influence of Baader, turned to Boehme for inspiration. For more than a decade, the two were friends, Schelling being deeply affected by Baader's philosophy. However, in 1824 they broke completely, and during the remainder of Baader's life Schelling was extremely antagonistic toward his former friend, even seeking to block the publication of his *Sämtliche Werke*. Schelling felt personally affronted by several of Baader's critiques of contemporary philosophy, and put off by Baader's theosophy. Baader's *Bemerkungen über einige antireligiöse Philosopheme unserer Zeit* (Remarks about some anti-religious philosophemes of our time, 1824; II.443ff.) Schelling saw as a personal assault. Baader, for his part, said that Schelling had lost his creative spark many years before (SW XV:431ff.), and did not countenance what he saw as Schelling's pantheism. Baader saw Schelling's philosophy, like that of Hegel, as too limited and monodimensional. Baader claimed himself as 'the first one since the introduction of Cartesian philosophy who opened up again the insight into a more profound alliance between the knowledge of natural and divine things' (*Lettres inédites* IV.367). He saw Schelling as ignoring the hidden principles of nature as revealed by Boehme and before him by → Paracelsus; in Baader's view, Schelling did not understand the erotic transcendence of male-female polarity, so that his philosophy ends in dualism and ultimately "irreligiosity" (XV.438).

Another important figure Baader knew well was Hegel, and Baader's influence on him is important but remains relatively little-known. The two first met in Berlin in 1823/24, although Hegel had

known Baader's work more than two decades before. Hegel was particularly influenced by Baader's *Fermenta Cognitionis* (SW XV:401ff.), even though in this work Baader criticizes some aspects of Hegel's thought. Unlike his relationship with Schelling, Baader's relationship with Hegel remained relatively cordial, in spite of the fact that Baader strongly criticized Hegel's idealism, his separation of spirit from nature and what Baader saw as his misunderstanding of the nature of God. In Baader's view, Hegelian philosophy pointed toward the resolution of duality in the triad, but in fact like Schelling's philosophy results in a dualism and an alienation from nature. Hegel, for his part, did write that their differences were minimal in the end, but this was by no means the view of Baader himself.

### 12. BAADER'S INFLUENCE

Since the 19th century, Baader has been surprisingly neglected even in Germany, let alone elsewhere in the world. This lack of interest can be attributed in part to the extraordinary complexity of his thought, as well as to the byzantine complexity of his sentences. His notorious prolixity is no doubt a major reason for his relative obscurity. Ramon Betanzos attributes the decline in Baader's stature in the 20th century to Baader's not having constructed a single elegant model of philosophy. Yet, as Faivre and Betanzos himself show, Baader's thought is in fact susceptible to being explained in a clear and organized manner.

Baader's main influence lies in Russian theosophy. Vladimir Solovyov and Nicolai Berdyaev remain the most important figures to have been clearly influenced by his theosophy and in particular by his erotic philosophy. → Leopold Ziegler is arguably the 20th-century figure who most clearly continues Baader's highly intellectual current of theosophy. A number of recent studies of Baader as well as works introducing Christian theosophy as a whole – chief among them the works of Antoine Faivre – are bound to spark a reassessment of Baader's importance.

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ARTHUR VERSLUIS

**Bacon, Francis** (first Baron Verulam and Viscount St. Albans), \* 22.1.1561 London, † 9.4.1626 Highgate

Bacon was the son of a renowned attorney. Gifted with rare precocity, he had a brilliant student career at Cambridge. While he was still young (1576-1579), Elizabeth I entrusted him with a diplomatic mission to France, then appointed him Queen's Counsel; he became a member of Parliament in 1584. In 1597, he published *Essayes or Counsels Civill and Morall*. After the Queen's death, her successor James I elevated Bacon successively to the positions of Attorney General (1613), Lord Keeper of the Seal (1617), Lord Chancellor and Baron of Verulam (1618), and Viscount St. Albans (1621). But in the latter year Bacon was accused of bribery, brought before a tribunal, fined

£ 40,000, and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Soon freed, he devoted the last four years of his life to writing various works, notably the utopia *New Atlantis*, published posthumously in 1627 after *Sylva sylvarum* (Forest of Forests), a natural history book that emphasized the necessity of practical experiments. It was in the course of one of these that Bacon met his death.

Fundamentally opposed to scholasticism, Bacon had emphasized scientific activities ever since his *Advancement of Learning* of 1605. As Thorndike has noted, and, following him, Rossi, Bacon's way of envisaging these activities, i.e., his "experimental science", was partly rooted in the "occult philosophy" [→ occult / occultism] of the Renaissance. Thus in *Sylva sylvarum*, Bacon stated that he considered it 'not natural history, but a high kind of natural magic'. This collection of fragments of what was intended to be a kind of grand encyclopedia of nature and the arts was destined to furnish the materials for the "New Science", as he hopefully called it. The influence on Bacon of the magical and alchemical traditions is perhaps nowhere more evident than in these texts. For example, he declares (as also in *New Organon*) that a spiritual or pneumatic body is contained in all substances. He believes in the transmutation of metals, for according to him a metallic spirit exists that is homogeneous and common to all, so that freeing a metal from its impurities amounts to rendering it in the pure state. Matter is reducible to two elements, mercury and sulfur; air can be transformed into water. Conformably with the occult philosophy of the Renaissance, Bacon thought that man is made to "scientifically" dominate nature, of which he is the 'servant and interpreter'. He was very interested in → astrology, which he treats at length in his *De augmentis scientiarum*. And he often says that he believes in the possibility of the indefinite prolongation of human life. Lastly, like many representatives of occult philosophy, he thought that the experimental methods used by the seeker should remain secret and known only to an initiated minority.

For all this, Bacon had no indulgence for → Paracelsus, whom he treats in *Temporis partus masculus* (The Masculine Birth of Time) as a monstrous hatcher of phantasms orchestrated by the trumpets of ostentation, and the author of many obscurities (among other reproaches, he includes that of believing in the magical power of the → imagination exercised at a distance). Bacon is no more tender towards → Cornelius Agrippa, whom he regards as a clown, nor towards Ieronymus Cardanus whom he sees as a spinner of cobwebs. His

basic objection to them is their taste for ostentatious marvels, whereas according to Bacon, one should not flaunt phenomena which give the impression of being marvelous or admirable, but instead study them with a mind motivated solely by scientific curiosity. This is how he tried to modify the rules of  $\rightarrow$  alchemy, to fit them to the needs of a scientific technique. For example, in *New Organon* (Book IV, § 4), where he appropriates the goals of alchemy and makes use of its vocabulary, he nevertheless sees himself as aloof from the alchemists' subjective methods, especially their constant recourse to ancient texts which they consider sacrosanct.

Many authors have tried to associate the person and work of Bacon with the Rosicrucian current [ $\rightarrow$  Rosicrucianism], mainly basing their allegation on his utopia *New Atlantis*, published as fragments a year after his death, in which he presented the ideal of a society that was both religious and extremely advanced in knowledge. In the college called "Solomon's House", an order of learned priests pursues researches at a very high level in the artistic, scientific, and technological fields, for the service of humanity. This fictional account of a world in which the progress of knowledge, experiment, and technique would contribute to human happiness summed up the ideal that had possessed Bacon all his life. In fact, this work has some analogies with two other utopias: *La città del Sole* by  $\rightarrow$  Campanella, and *Christianopolis* by  $\rightarrow$  Johann Valentin Andreae. The first of these utopias, written circa 1604 in the prison of the Holy Office, had been published in Frankfurt in 1623, thanks to the diligence of Tobias Adami, a relative of Andreae, who had brought a Latin manuscript of it from Italy.

In *New Atlantis*, as in Andreae's *Christianopolis*, the narrator and his companions survive a perilous voyage to arrive at an unknown coast. For Bacon, it is the place that harbored the last survivors of ancient Atlantis. The mariners discover in the New Atlantis a population imbued both with the ideas of Kabbalah [ $\rightarrow$  Jewish Influences] and with the earliest Christian convictions, which they derived from a Bible that came to the island in a mysterious cedarwood ark. Moreover, the New Atlantis is situated in a place called *Ben Salem*, whilst Andreae's *Christianopolis*, which had appeared in 1619, is built on the island of *Caphar Salama*. Beside these two references to the Hebrew *shalom*, signifying peace, there is the fact that Bacon's *Collegium*, the site of study and research, is called "Solomon's House". It is a center for experimental philosophy, where new animal and vegetable species have been created, and air travel and submarine navigation

have been invented. Certainly Andreae's *Christianopolis* also possessed amphitheatres reserved for the advanced study of mathematics, physics, medicine, law, and astronomy, but the accent there was on the Christian heaven and the mystical numbers, whereas Bacon's Academy is essentially focused on its experimental work, and looks forward to a triumph of science. Even so, Frances A. Yates saw in the inhabitants of New Atlantis, who knew all the languages of Europe, disciples of the Rose-Cross: 'Modern students of Bacon', she wrote, 'are not familiar with Rosicrucian literature . . . But those who read the *New Atlantis* before the *Fama* and the *Confessio* . . . would have immediately recognized the R.C. Brothers and their Invisible College in the denizens of New Atlantis' (Yates 1972, 127). While the correspondence between *New Atlantis* and the two Rosicrucian texts is evident, the fact remains that the influence of the latter on Bacon's work is unproven, and that Yates's assertion can be questioned, to say the least.

Far bolder than Yates, some authors fascinated by the Rosicrucians, or those who call themselves Rosicrucians, have not failed to exploit the person and work of Bacon for their own purposes. Most notable are those who distinguished themselves in the "Bacon-Shakespeare controversy", especially from the middle of the 19th century onwards. This controversy was re-launched during the occultist period by W.F.C. Wigston in 1888 and 1891, then by the widely-read writings of Alfred Dodd in 1931, and it even continues today.  $\rightarrow$  Manly P. Hall, who believed in this legend, compiled its essentials in a chapter of his popular and oft-reprinted folio volume, *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (1928). An 'abundant cryptographic proof' supposedly placed this theory beyond all possible doubt. Hall invites the reader to view a color-portrait of Shakespeare, then to superimpose on it a semi-transparent page carrying the portrait of Bacon, which according to Hall 'establishes beyond all cavil the identity of the two faces'. It is Bacon 'who wrote into the Shakespearian plays the secret teachings of the R.C. and the true rituals of the Freemasonic Order'.

It was in fact easy to make of Bacon one of the original inspirers of speculative  $\rightarrow$  Freemasonry, since he was already considered a Rosicrucian, and Rosicrucianism as having been at the origin of masonry. For example  $\rightarrow$  Elias Ashmole, together with a handful of other learned men including the astrologer William Lilly, took the description of New Atlantis as a model and created in London, in 1646, the "House of Solomon" whose name and

program were directly inspired by Bacon's work. But the program itself was just as much indebted to the "Rosicrucianism" of → Robert Fludd, interpreted in an atmosphere of alchemy, → astrology, medical → magic, etc. It was a small step from there to making Bacon the indirect inspirer, through Ashmole, of the Royal Society's creation. Finally the pre-masonic aspect of the "House of Solomon", as well as the widespread idea that speculative Freemasonry, which appeared in 1717, had emerged from the Royal Society, sparked a flurry of commentaries. After that it was no longer surprising to see Bacon's name listed on a frequent *corpus nominum* in many discourses of an esoteric type, in the company of other notorious and ancient (that is, 17th century) Rosicrucians. To Bacon was even attributed the title of "Imperator" of a Rosicrucian society that allegedly already existed in his time, and his portrait invariably figures in the grand gallery of esoteric worthies, as printed and distributed by societies like the A.M.O.R.C. Hall was a typical representative of this state of mind in not hesitating to assert that Bacon, 'if not actually the Illustrious Father C.R.C., referred to in the Rosicrucian manifestoes, . . . was certainly a high initiate of the Rosicrucian Order'. More than that, Bacon 'was a link in that great chain of minds which has perpetuated the secret doctrine of antiquity from its beginning' (Hall, CLXVI, CLXVIII.f.).

We are dealing here with very typical cases of the tendency to utilize historical personages and works for purposes of legitimization, no matter what violence is done to the objective facts of history. If in truth Bacon's thought has some of its roots in the occult philosophy of the Renaissance, we have seen that that does not make him an integral part of that tradition, in which he occupies a marginal position. Bacon's tenacious presence in the history of modern Western esoteric currents is essentially due less to the intrinsic content of his oeuvre than to efforts at appropriation. What is justified, following Thorndike and other commentators, is the idea that Bacon's influence contributed to developing in the English ruling classes of his time an 'amateurish interest' in the natural sciences and experimentation, which may have played a part in the foundation of the Royal Society, in which can be seen – and this time with justification – one of the sources of inspiration of speculative Freemasonry.

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ROLAND EDIGHOFFER

**Bacon, Roger**, \* ca. 1215 place unknown, † ca. 1292 place unknown

English philosopher, educated at the Universities of Oxford and Paris (where he lectured on Aristotle in the 1240s), author of works on a broad array of topics including optics, semantics, physics, and theology. Bacon entered the Franciscan Order in the late 1250s, perhaps after returning to Oxford. Between 1265 and 1268, he compiled his encyclopedic and ambitious works, the *Opus Maius*, *Opus Minus* and *Opus Tertium*, undertaken for Pope Clement IV (Pope from 1265-1268) in the hope of persuading him to authorize a radical program of educational reform for theologians. The Pope's death in 1268 put an end to Bacon's hope of acquiring a papal aegis for his project. An entry in a late 14th-century chronicle of the Friars Minor asserts that Bacon was imprisoned in the late 1270s by the Minister General of the Order who condemned his



doctrine for certain suspect novelties. While the precise nature of these novelties remains a matter for scholarly speculation, it is not implausible that he was indeed imprisoned; the 1270s were a decade of reaction against the influence of Arabic learning and Bacon's thought was connected to a number of potentially controversial issues. His writing (particularly in the three volumes commissioned by the Pope) reveals an opinionated and irascible personality, who was nevertheless a systematic thinker and important synthesizer of new ideas.

Bacon had a wide array of metaphysical enthusiasms and his interest in the new learning often tended to privilege its esoteric content. He was responsible for a careful edition, with introduction and commentary, of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*. Like most medieval readers, Bacon believed the *Secretum* to be the genuine work of Aristotle, hence deserving of careful attention. According to Bacon, all knowledge derived from and returned to a single paradigm which might eventually be reconstituted by taking into account both esoteric and exoteric faces of Aristotle's works. Bacon had an investment in the claims of the *Secretum* to reveal (enigmatically) the ancient wisdom delivered at the beginning of time to the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, who had in turn transmitted it to the Egyptians, Chaldaeans, and others of the wise. This wisdom had fallen into desuetude until after the time of Muhammad, when (according to Bacon) it began to be recuperated by → Avicenna and Averroes and the other Arabic philosophers. The West was now in a position to reassemble the ancient wisdom of the prophets, but could do so only by attending to the new learning of the Arabs, balanced of course by an intensified study of Scripture.

The new learning included astrological and alchemical writings, and both disciplines played important roles in the curriculum advocated by Bacon in the works commissioned by the Pope. In the *Opus tertium*, Bacon urges the importance of a knowledge of → alchemy for medicine. Having derived a recipe for the philosopher's stone from an enigmatic description in the *Secretum secretorum*, Bacon held that this elixir (based on human blood, but with a rectified proportion of humours) could effect not only the transmutation of metals but also the prolongation of human life to the span enjoyed by the Old Testament patriarchs. In the chapter on mathematics in the *Opus maius*, Bacon urges the importance of the study of → astrology and stresses the need to know more about astral and other occult natural powers [→ occult / occultism] in order to combat the Antichrist, whose advent he

believed to be imminent, and who, as he believed, would know how to bring to bear the occult powers of art and nature against Christendom.

When he delivered the *Opus maius* to the Pope, Bacon included a copy of a shorter treatise, *De multiplicatione specierum*, which elaborates his understanding of the optical model of the propagation of species into a broad treatment of natural causation in general with attention to its grounding in mathematics. From Bacon's elaboration of the principle of multiplication of *species* (which he also referred to as forms, similitudes, images, intentions and rays), it is clear that he had a familiarity not only with the most important current writers on optics, but also with the *De radiis stellarum* of the Arabic philosopher → Al-Kindi. While the *De radiis* itself is not cited in the *De multiplicatione specierum* (for obvious reasons; its alternate title was *Theory of Magic Arts*, and is elsewhere mentioned by Bacon as a work containing much wisdom, but corrupted with falsity), its influence clearly underlies many of Bacon's more radical claims for occult powers and astral influences, most notably his varied and potentially controversial claims made *passim* in the *Opus maius* for the *virtus verborum*, the power of words. In the papal *opera*, too, as also in his famous "Letter on the secret works of Art and Nature and on the nullity of Magic", there is evident a strong concern with differentiating bad demonic magic power from legitimate occult natural powers – a concern not dissimilar to that manifested in other writers in the same century (like → Albertus Magnus, most notably in his *Speculum astronomiae*).

Bacon's effect on esoteric philosophy in later periods would appear to be largely indirect. His alchemical theory, basing the principle of the philosopher's stone in organic materials, seems to represent a kind of evolutionary dead end in the alchemical tradition, and other aspects of his thinking about the occult powers of nature apparently wield less influence than the originality of his ideas might sometimes seem to deserve. However, it is clear that his interests in these areas contributed to Bacon's later reputation, and (like several other medieval philosophers) he becomes the subject of some rather fantastic posthumous legends involving bronze heads and magic mirrors. → Agrippa, perhaps influenced by this legendary material, refers to Bacon as a dabbler in goetia, though others assert that he does not deserve this reputation. → Pico della Mirandola upholds him as being among the wise, an early champion of natural magic, while Bacon's standing remains prominent with → John Dee, who owned most of his works



and annotated his famous *Letter*. Later, as most evidently may be seen in Lynn Thorndike's interpretation, he comes to be represented as urging the claims of experimental science against the superstitious fallacies of magic. Scholarly opinion is currently swinging towards giving the esoteric and magical content of his ideas a fairer representation.

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*Lit.*: Stewart Easton, *Roger Bacon and his Search for a Universal Science*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952 ♦ Claire Fanger, "Things Done Wisely by a Wise Enchanter: Negotiating the Power of Words in the Thirteenth Century", *Esoterica* 1 (1999), 97-132 at <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Archive.html> Volume 1 ♦ Jeremiah Hackett, "Roger Bacon: His Life, Career and Works", in: Jeremiah Hackett (ed.), *Roger Bacon and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays*, Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1997, 9-23 ♦ idem, "Roger Bacon on Astronomy-Astrology: The Sources of the *Scientia Experimentalis*", in: *Roger Bacon and the Sciences*, 175-198 ♦ George Molland, "Roger Bacon as Magician", *Traditio* 30 (1974), 445-460 ♦ idem, "Roger Bacon and the Hermetic Tradition in Medieval Science", *Vivarium* 31 (1993) 140-160 ♦ William R. Newman, "An Overview of Roger Bacon's Alchemy", in: *Roger Bacon and the Sciences*, 317-336 ♦ Irene Rosier, *La Parole comme Acte*, esp. Ch. 6, "Le pouvoir magique des mots", Paris: J. Vrin, 1994 ♦ Steven J. Williams, "Roger Bacon and the *Secret of Secrets*", in: *Roger Bacon and the Sciences*, 365-391.

CLAIRE FANGER

**Bailey, Alice Ann**, \* 16.6.1880  
Manchester, † 15.12.1949 New York

Born to Frederic Foster La Trobe-Bateman and Alice Hollinshead, Alice Ann La Trobe-Bateman is best known by the name she assumed when she married her second husband, Foster Bailey. She is chiefly remembered for three accomplishments. First, for serving as the amanuensis for her Tibetan master Djwhal Khul (known simply as The Tibetan or D.K.), the latter's teachings appearing in twenty-four books written from 1922 until the late 1940s, all of which reflect a Theosophically-based inter-

pretation of Humanity and the Cosmos. Second, for establishing an esoteric school known as the Arcane School in 1923. And third, as organizer (with her husband Foster Bailey) of two service activities known as "World Goodwill" and "Triangles".

Her religious upbringing was conservative Christian but with a "mystical" tendency. Although she came from a prominent family (the La Trobes), she led a life that was sometimes troubled in her youth (she had attempted suicide thrice by the age of 15), privileged (she claimed to have lived the life of a "society girl" up to the age of 22, living with her well-to-do grandparents and later, after their death when she was about eight years old, with her aunt), and service-oriented. Regarding the latter, having been stimulated by her upbringing to care for the poor and the sick, she attempted to put her fundamentalist Christian religious ideals into practice first by becoming a Y.M.C.A. worker and later, in her early twenties, by working as an evangelist to the British troops in the Sandes Soldiers Homes in Ireland and India. Despite this fundamentalist upbringing, Alice exhibited esoteric inclinations as well. According to her autobiography, this latter tendency first came to the fore in 1895, when at the age of fifteen, while with her aunt at Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland, she experienced her initial contact with what she later came to see as a "Master of Wisdom": a member of that spiritually advanced hierarchy believed by Theosophists to disclose elements of the ancient wisdom to humans. The message of the Master – whose name she later discovered was Koot Hoomi or K.H. – was that she should work in the world on his behalf. A second event that she claimed to have occurred around the same time, and which she came to regard as significant, was her participation in a ceremony performed during the "Full Moon of May". The precise nature of this ceremony is unclear, but Alice claimed that it was held every year in a valley in the Himalayas, obviously implying an esoteric ceremony of some sort. Participation in this ceremony helped her realize her spiritual status, and perceive the unity of all existence as a 'divine and living whole' demonstrating 'the glory of the Lord'. For the next fifteen years or so, she led a tripartite life: first, that of evangelist and social worker following fundamentalist dogma; second, that of a budding mystic who retained a sense of the Hierarchy of Masters connected to inner spiritual planes; and third, from her late twenties to her mid-thirties, that of a woman involved in the world as the wife of a clergyman (Walter Evans) and mother of three daughters. The marriage, in 1907 or 1908, re-sulted in the couple

traveling to the United States of America for reasons of her husband's seminary training. But the marriage soon disintegrated due to her husband's mental problems; his increasing violence, including occasional physical abuse of his wife, led to their divorce in 1915. Alice found herself without money, and was forced to make ends meet by working in a sardine cannery in Pacific Grove, California.

At this same time (1915), she first came into contact with the → Theosophical Society and its teachings. Having been exposed to the writings of → Helena P. Blavatsky, especially *The Secret Doctrine*, and those of → Annie Besant, she gradually mastered the Theosophical worldview that was to become basic to her understanding of the ancient wisdom as taught through her other Master, The Tibetan (Djwhal Khul), who appeared to her for the first time in 1919. These teachings included the following main points: (a) that there is a divine Plan in the universe; (b) that those who execute the Plan and who guide Humanity make up a Hierarchy of spiritual leaders led by the Christ; and (c) the Law of Cause and Effect and the law of rebirth (karma and → reincarnation). The “collaboration” with The Tibetan resulted in a vast corpus of teachings, beginning in 1922 with a volume called *Initiation, Human and Solar*.

A *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (first published in 1925) provides a detailed description of how the macro- and microcosm have emanated from the “Boundless Immutability Principle”, interpreted by the author as identical with the Parabrahm of H.P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*. On the macrocosmic level arise the three *Logoi*, described as the “Undifferentiated and Unmanifested”, the aspect of “Duality of Spirit-Matter”, and “Cosmic Ideation” (or the Universal World-Soul, the Creator). From the *Logoi* are manifested the universes, which in turn comprise “Manifesting Stars and Solar Systems”. Three micro- and macrocosmic laws are associated with the three *Logoi* as cosmic functions: Synthesis (expressed as Will), Attraction (expressed as Love), and Economy (expressed as Intelligence). Seven centers of “logoic Force”, also known as the seven planetary *Logoi* and the seven Rays, emanate from these Laws: Ray I (the Ray of Will or Power), II (Love-Wisdom), III (Active Intelligence), IV (Harmony, Beauty and Art), V (Concrete Knowledge or Science), VI (Devotion or Abstract Idealism), and VII (Ceremonial Magic or Order). These Rays, therefore, are manifestations or emanations of both the macro- and microcosm. By definition, a ray is ‘a name for a particular force or type of energy, with the emphasis upon the qual-

ity which that force exhibits and not upon the form aspect which it creates’ (*Esoteric Psychology* I, 316). Applied to humanity and humans, the doctrine of rays is supposed to explain qualities of all of humanity, of the races, of cycles, of nations, of the soul, of the personality, and of the elements of the human mental, astral, and physical bodies.

Apart from the teachings of the Tibetan, which are published through the Lucis Trust – an entity created by Alice and Foster Bailey (who were married in 1919) in 1922 – the other main source through which Bailey's theosophy has been spread is the Arcane School, established by Bailey in April 1923 as a correspondence school designed to answer the questions raised by readers of her publications. As the name indicates, it is an esoteric school modeled after the original Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society founded by Blavatsky. The seven principles or propositions of the Arcane School (described at the end of her *Unfinished Autobiography*) are: (1) it is a training school for disciples; (2) it is devoted to training *adult* men and women so that they may take their next step upon the path of evolution; (3) the School recognizes the Spiritual Hierarchy of the planet, and its instructions about the mode whereby that Hierarchy may be approached and entered; (4) it teaches that the ‘souls of men are one’; (5) it teaches the necessity of *living* the spiritual life and rejects all claims to spiritual status; (6) it is non-sectarian, non-political, and international in its scope; (7) it claims to emphasize no theological dogmas, but teach only the Ageless Wisdom as recognized in all countries down through the ages. In addition to these principles, the essential teachings of the Arcane School are described as follows: (1) that the Kingdom of God, the Spiritual Hierarchy of our planet, is already invisibly present and will be materialized on earth; (2) that there has been a continuity of revelation down the ages and that from cycle to cycle God has revealed Himself to humanity; (3) that God Transcendent is equally God Immanent, and that through human beings, who are in truth the sons of God, the three divine aspects – knowledge, love and will – can be expressed; (4) that there is only one divine Life, expressing itself through the multiplicity of forms in all the kingdoms of nature, and that the sons of men are, therefore, ONE; (5) that within each human being there is a point of light, a spark of the one Flame – this is believed to be the soul, the second aspect of divinity, ‘the *demonstration* of the divine livingness in each person which is our goal, and discipleship is a step upon the way to that attainment’; (6) that an ultimate perfection is possible for the individual

aspirant and for humanity as a whole through the action of the evolutionary process (involving a ‘myriad of developing lives, each with its place within the scheme . . . [leading] to those exalted spheres where the Lord of the World works out the divine Plan’); (7) that there are certain immutable laws governing the universe, and man becomes progressively aware of these as he evolves, these laws being expressions of the will of God; (8) that the basic law of our universe is to be seen in the manifestation of God as *Love*.

The ideas developed within the Arcane School led to the formation of two organizations that were founded to ‘channel activity’ in light of the teachings. The first, “Men of Goodwill” (later renamed “World Goodwill”) was founded in 1932 in order to establish human relations based on the principle of “brotherhood” and non-discrimination with respect to race, religion, ideology, politics, and economic convictions. The second organization, “Triangles”, was established in 1937, and operates according to a principle of networking that allows three individuals to ‘link each day in thought for a few minutes of creative meditation’. “Triangles” is linked with “World Goodwill” as a microcosm of relationships established on a personal level, embodying a “spirituality” that purportedly bears no relation to any one religion. World Goodwill emphasizes an ethic based upon the “Will to Good”. This Will is expressed in the esoteric philosophy of the Arcane School and the publications of the Tibetan through Bailey. Finally, all the teachings and service activities are encapsulated in the ‘Great Invocation’: ‘From the point of Light within the Mind of God / Let light stream forth into the minds of men. / Let Light descend on Earth. // From the point of Love within the Heart of God / Let love stream forth into the hearts of men. / May Christ return to Earth. // From the centre where the Will of God is known / Let purpose guide the little wills of men – / The purpose which the Masters know and serve. // From the centre which we call the race of men / Let the Plan of Love and Light work out / And may it seal the door where evil dwells. // Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth’.

Bailey’s work has had a great influence on the development of contemporary esotericism. Although it is difficult to ascertain the number of individuals who have been exposed and influenced by her teachings, it may well be in the hundreds of thousands, if one judges from the publication records of Lucis Publishing Companies. Many of the teachings – such as those on spiritual evolution, the perfectibility of humanity, the unity of life, and

emphasis on “Love” – are closely related. These teachings, and the promise of a “New Age” – prominent not only in Bailey’s publications but also reflective of the *Zeitgeist* of the 1920s and 1930s, and adopted and further popularized from the 1960s on – also contribute to her popularity: the earlier, England-based, utopian/millennarian phase of the → New Age movement was heavily influenced by Bailey’s theosophy. In addition, Bailey’s grand esoteric cosmology, rivaling those of Blavatsky, → Steiner, → Gurdjieff and → Ouspensky, helps add to her reputation as a significant thinker. As a result of the interest in this cosmology, a number of groups have developed in addition to the Arcane School and its sister organizations, including the Aquarian Educational Group, Arcana Workshops, the School for Esoteric Studies, the Tara Center, and Meditation Groups, Inc.

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*Lit.*: Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000 ♦ J. Miller, “In Defense of Alice A. Bailey”, *Theosophical History* 2 (1988), 190-206 ♦ Sir John R. Sinclair, *The Alice Bailey Inheritance*, Wellingborough Northamptonshire: Turnstone Press Limited, 1984 ♦ Steven J. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*, London and New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.

JAMES A. SANTUCCI

**Ballanche, Pierre Simon**, \*4.8.1776 Lyons, † 12.6.1847 Paris

The Ballanche family owned a publishing house in Lyons. An encounter with Juliette Récamier during her period of exile under Napoleon transformed Pierre-Simon’s ambitions. Upon his father’s death in 1816, Ballanche sold the business and moved the next year to Paris, where he devoted the rest of his life to private study and chaste devotion to Mme. Récamier. Ballanche held himself above the political factionalism of the Restoration era, believing that social and political harmony could

be achieved only through an intellectual mediation of old and new values under a vision of a progressive Christianity. It was the elaboration of a progressive Christianity appropriate to the post-Revolutionary age that Ballanche set out to achieve in his works. Election to the Académie française in 1842 only partly assuaged Ballanche's conviction that his contemporaries had neither understood nor appreciated his teaching.

The intellectual career of the deeply, if heterodoxically, Catholic Ballanche began under the influence of → Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald. Ballanche, however, influentially modified Traditionalism by adding to it an element of social progressivism. His work also displays familiarity with a wide range of esoteric thought, including → J. Boehme, → L.C. de Saint-Martin, the magnetizers Jacques Pététin and Johann Carl Passavant, and, above all, → A. Fabre d'Olivet, whom he knew personally.

Ballanche believed that the divine order underlying the material universe is discernible through the complementary mediations of symbolic imagination and primitive revelation. Ballanche's cosmos is the cosmos of → correspondences of the Illuminists: the material universe both veils the underlying spiritual reality and is a symbolic reproduction of it. The symbolic imagination of the poet-seer – exemplified in his *Vision d'Hébal* and discussed in Bk. VII of *Orphée* – intuits spiritual truths and translates them into material form (Ballanche is one of the founders of 19th-century symbolist poetics). Poetry is the intuitive faculty of penetrating the essence of beings and things. The direct and immediate contemplation of the unity and harmony of all things is a vision that lifts the seer out of time and space (Hébal's vision of the entire history of humanity lasts only as long as it takes a church clock to toll the Ave Maria). But this is the privilege of the few. Ballanche's philosophy of history, which is played out in time and space, is the story of the reintegration of all humanity.

As indicated by the titles of Ballanche's major works, *Institutions sociales* (1818) and *Essais de Palingénésie sociale* (1827-1831), the social order receives pride of place in Ballanche's philosophy of history. Social palingenesis, or social evolution, the providential law governing history, is the sequence of births, deaths, and rebirths of societies throughout the centuries of human history. Each new stage of social evolution effects the initiation of a greater proportion of humanity into knowledge of the primitive revelation and full participation in religion and society. Each social evolutionary advance must be won at the price of suffering because it is the

means by which humanity expiates original sin. Social evolution will culminate in full religious and social equality for all humanity. This religio-social utopia, which Ballanche believes to be close at hand, will mark the completion of the terrestrial phase of the rehabilitation of humanity from the Fall.

While the doctrine of correspondences is fundamental to the nature of the world in which social evolution unfolds, the Illuminist themes central to the operation of Ballanche's philosophy of history are those of the identity of the fall and rehabilitation, redemption as the reintegration of lost unity, initiation, and magnetism [→ Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism]. Ballanche posits, prior to all history, a Primordial or Universal Adam. The Fall shattered the original unity of the primordial Adam by casting him into the world of time and space; into, that is, a process of succession and division that sundered the original unity into a multiplicity of individuals and generations. By entering into time and division (sexual and, even more fundamentally, social), humanity is able to expiate its sin over countless generations. The Fall transformed Universal Adam into social evolutionary humanity. And because social evolution is the means by which the lost unity of humanity will be restored, the means of overcoming the consequences of the Fall were produced in the Fall itself.

Social evolution operates by means of initiation, or the acquisition of responsibility. The content of primitive revelation has been transmitted through an unbroken chain of initiations down the ages. Initiation, for Ballanche, comprises the knowledge that the purpose of social life is the spiritual end of overcoming the effects of the Fall. Those in a given society who understand this are the initiators; those who do not are the initiateables. In the cosmogonic age (the first of three ages in Ballanche's philosophy of history), only isolated sages like Orpheus understood the rehabilitatory function of social life. The patrician age is so named because it marks the accession of the patricians to the knowledge that society is an instrument for the spiritual rehabilitation of humanity. History thenceforth chronicles the plebeians' slow acquisition of social responsibility and self-awareness. When, at the culmination of the plebeian age, the entire human race has come into possession of this knowledge, the initiation of humanity will be complete and social evolution will have accomplished its purpose. Each successive initiation represents a social evolutionary advance, the sum of which constitutes the rehabilitation of humanity.

*Vision d'Hébal* introduces Hébal as a Scottish chieftain endowed with second sight. Released



from the limits of space and time and freed of his individuality, Hébal's consciousness is assimilated to the universal consciousness, he seizes immutable truths, and becomes the Universal Man living an infinite life. This description accords with contemporary theories (J.P.F. Deleuze and A.J.F. Bertrand) about animal magnetism. Allusions to magnetism, in fact, appear throughout *Palingénésie sociale*: Orpheus' account in Book II of *Orphée* of his poetic vision is strongly reminiscent of Hébal's vision; in *Prolégomènes*, Ballanche links magnetic somnambulism and linguistic capability as survivals of a primitive human faculty; and in *Orphée* he suggests that magnetism offers us the possibility of knowledge of the primitive instinctive faculties and suggests that these faculties will be reacquired as humanity evolves.

While it is sometimes difficult to tell what in Ballanche comes directly from Fabre d'Olivet, Saint-Martin, or Boehme, and what comes from these or other theosophical writers via intermediaries, the centrality of Illuminist themes demonstrates how deeply Ballanche's thought is indebted to the Western esoteric tradition. Nevertheless, Ballanche adapted his borrowings from → Illuminism by linking them to the history of social institutions. By reading historical events, not merely as signs of the process of the reintegration of the primordial Adam, but as the necessary and efficacious means of that reintegration, Ballanche historicized what he borrowed from Illuminism. Ballanche, finally, was not, properly speaking, an Illuminist: he never claimed to have experienced interior illuminations permitting him to penetrate the divine understanding; he did not consider himself a disciple of Boehme or any other Illuminist; and he was not initiated into any Illuminist society. Ballanche, moreover, seems less confident than the Illuminists that we can truly know the spiritual world; he does not deny the possibility of inspired theosophical knowledge, but restricts himself in his works to the historical demonstration of the terrestrial mission of humanity.

*Essai sur les Institutions sociales dans leur rapport avec les idées nouvelles*, Paris: Didot, 1818 ♦ *Essais de Palingénésie sociale: Prolégomènes*, Paris: Didot, 1827 ♦ *Essais de Palingénésie sociale. Orphée*, Paris: Didot, 1829 ♦ *Oeuvres complètes*, 6 vols., Paris: Bureau de l'Encyclopédie des connaissances utiles, 1833; repr. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967 ♦ *La Vision d'Hébal* (1831) (A.J.L. Busst, ed.), Genève: Droz, 1969.

*Lit.*: Paul Bénichou, *Le Temps des Prophètes: Doctrines de l'âge romantique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1977, 74-104 ♦ Claude-Julien Bredin, *Correspondance philosophique et littéraire avec Ballanche* (Auguste Viatte,

ed.), Paris: Boccard, 1928 ♦ Joseph Buche, *L'Ecole mystique de Lyon 1776-1847*, Paris: Alcan, 1935, passim ♦ A.J.L. Busst, "Ballanche et le poète voyant", *Romantisme* 4 (1972), 84-101 ♦ Alfred Marquiset, *Ballanche et Mme. d'Hautefeuille: Lettres inédites de Ballanche, Chateaubriand, Sainte-Beuve, Mme. Récamier, Mme Swetchine, etc.*, Paris: Champion, 1912 ♦ Arthur McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy: The Philosophy of History of Pierre-Simon Ballanche*, Leiden, Boston & Köln: E. J. Brill, 1998 ♦ Arlette Michel, "Ballanche et l'épopée romantique", in: *Mélanges Jeanne Lods*, Paris: L'Ecole Normale Supérieure de Jeunes Filles, 1978, 876-886 ♦ Jacques Roos, *Aspects littéraires du mysticisme philosophique et l'influence de Boehme et de Swedenborg au début de romantisme: William Blake, Novalis, Ballanche*, Strasbourg: P.H. Heitz, 1951, 327-436 ♦ Auguste Viatte, *Les Sources occultes du romantisme*, 2 vols., Paris: Champion, 1928; reprint 1979, 214-242.

ARTHUR MCCALLA

**Balsamo, Giuseppe** → Cagliostro, Alessandro di

**Barlet, François-Charles** (ps. of Albert Fauchoux), \* 12.10.1838 Paris, † 24.10.1921 Paris

A civil servant employed in the Registry, after law studies required by his father (librarian at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal), Albert Fauchoux found in occultism [→ occult/occultism] the compensation for the scientific study he had been denied. First posted in Corsica, where he spent his free time in botanical studies, he then moved near Paris, where initiatic societies were flourishing in the 1880s, and concluded his career in 1899 as departmental director at Abbeville. He had meanwhile married Jeanne Bellchambers, an English singer and widow of a legal adviser, who protected his solitude – a little too much, so his occultist friends thought – and to whom he remained very attached until her death at the beginning of World War I. Thenceforth he lived an ascetic life in the Rue des Grands-Augustins, Paris, dividing his time between occultist societies and working on publications. There were few such societies to which he did not belong, his enthusiasm sometimes extending to frauds pure and simple (e.g., the *Centre ésotérique oriental de France* of Albert de Sarak). In addition to these activities, he regularly attended services in Notre-Dame Cathedral, the ritual of the Catholic Church having long fascinated him. This omnipresence made him a living archive of the occultist world; → Guénon owed him much of his own information on this subject. After having been one of the first members in France of → Madame



Blavatsky's → Theosophical Society, and apparently having belonged to the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, Barlet played an important role in a group descended from the latter, the Philosophie Cosmique of → Max Théon (Barlet took on the editing of its journal in 1901 and 1902). As a Gnostic bishop consecrated in 1890 by Jules Doinel (1842-1902), Barlet entered the Supreme Council of the Martinist Order [→ Martinism] of → Papus (1891), then became a directing member of the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix of → Guaita (1892). It was to → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre that Barlet, after a secular education, owed his interest in Judeo-Christianity, and in a Christianity conceived as the best possible object of study, which would open up to a vision of the synthetic and unitary world: that of synarchy. After the death of his master, Barlet published Saint-Yves' unfinished work, the *Archéomètre*, in Guénon's *La Gnose*. There was nothing in Barlet of the religious founder or the magus; he aspired to make occultism into a positive science, establishing laws and creating a pedagogy. → Astrology seemed to him the most suitable means for reconciling the demands of science with the attainments of tradition, but his publications were extremely varied.

*Essai de chimie synthétique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1894 ♦ *Principes de sociologie synthétique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1894 ♦ *Synthèse de l'esthétique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1895 ♦ *L'Art de demain*, Paris: Chamuel, 1897 ♦ *Ordre kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix*, Paris: l'Ordre, 1891 ♦ *La Tradition cosmique*, Paris 1903.

*Lit.*: Charles Blanchard, Louis Leleu, Paul Redonnel, Victor-Emile Michelet, Sédir, Georges Tamos, Emmanuel Delobel, Paul Chacornac, "Numéro exceptionnel consacré à la mémoire de F.-Ch. Barlet", *Le Voile d'Isis* 59 (1924) ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'Esotérisme chrétien au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1992, chs. IV-V.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Barrett, Francis**, \* 18.12.1774  
Marylebone, London, † probably  
ca. 1830 London

Barrett described himself, on the title-page of *The Magus*, the book on which his reputation rests, as a 'Professor of Chemistry, natural and occult Philosophy, the Cabala, &c., &c.' This was a somewhat grandiose claim for a man whose profession was that of apothecary and it brought derision from his contemporaries: the poet Robert Southey described him as a rascal who 'professes to teach the occult sciences' while being 'a greater rogue than Solomon'.

This jaundiced view was due in part to the notoriety Barrett had gained in 1802 from a series of unsuccessful attempts at balloon ascents that he had made, in front of very large crowds, first at Greenwich and subsequently at Swansea. Apart from these events little is known of Barrett's life. In his early adult years he travelled in the West of England and in South Wales. He was married at Barnstaple, Devon, in 1800 but returned to London where his son was born in 1801. Nothing certain is known about Barrett's career subsequent to the year 1802.

Equally uncertain is the source of Barrett's enthusiasm for occultism [→ occult/occultism], but in 1801 his one unquestioned work, *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer; being a complete system of Occult Philosophy*, was published at London by the prestigious publishing house of Lackington, Allen and Co. This compendium of the theory and practice of the occult sciences is largely derived from earlier books, notably the spurious *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* attributed to → Cornelius Agrippa, and the works of → Peter of Abano and → John Heydon. Barrett had access to copies of these and many similar texts from the library of Ebenezer Sibly, which had been acquired, after Sibly's death in 1799, by John Denley, a bookseller specialising in occult books and manuscripts. According to Frederick Hockley, Barrett had borrowed from Denley 'the whole of the materials' that he needed to write *The Magus* but had 'never recompensed him with a copy'.

But however many sources Barrett may have drawn upon, *The Magus* marked a departure in English occult literature. It was the first comprehensive survey of magic to be compiled by an avowed practitioner, and one who also gave 'private instructions and lectures' on the subjects contained in the book. The advertisement for this proposed institution, which was to be limited to twelve students, offered to initiate students into virtually every branch of the occult sciences. Barrett's original plans were much less grand. In the manuscript of *The Magus* (now in the library of the Wellcome Institute) he offered simply to correspond with interested readers, and it seems probable that the printed book, complete with engraved plates of talismans and Barrett's coloured drawings of the heads of demons, so impressed its author that he conceived the idea of a school of occult philosophy.

What success the school met with is unknown, but Barrett did have one apt pupil in the person of "Dr." John Parkins, an unsavoury astrologer, crystal gazer and author of two books on fortune-telling and folk-medicine, who set up a "Temple of Wisdom" at Little Gonerly in Lincolnshire. Barrett

gave Parkins a manuscript on crystal gazing and associated magical practices, and it is clear from annotations by Parkins that he made use of it. But neither Barrett's "school" nor royalties from *The Magus* brought him financial security and Hockley's comment on his career is probably accurate: 'Barrett, notwithstanding his professorship of Magic, lived and died in poverty.'

One later book, the anonymous *Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers* (1815) has been frequently attributed to Barrett, but the weight of evidence is against this. His reputation thus stands or falls with *The Magus* which, despite its many faults, exercised a significant influence on the ideas and the writings of the many magicians and would-be Rosicrucians who flourished during the "occult revival" of the later 19th century. Nothing like it was published subsequently until members of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn began to produce their own editions and translations of magical and kabbalistic texts from 1889 onwards. That *The Magus* also was being regularly reprinted and is still being read late in the 20th century is a testament to the genius of its enigmatic author.

*The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer; being a complete system of Occult Philosophy*, London: Lackington, Allen & Co, 1801 ♦ Surviving manuscripts by Barrett: Wellcome Library MS 1072 Holograph of *The Magus* (1800); MS 1073 *Direction for the Invocation of Spirits* (1802), Yale University Library, Mellon Collection MS 140 George von Welling, *Philosophy of the Universe*. Holograph transcription by Barrett of a translation into English of c 1780 (1801).

*Lit.*: Alison Butler, "Beyond Attribution: The Importance of Barrett's *Magus*", *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* 1 (2003), 7-32 ♦ Ron Heisler, "Behind 'The Magus': Francis Barrett, Magical Balloonist", *Pentacle* 1:4 (1985), 53-57 ♦ Frederick Hockley, *The Rosicrucian Seer: Magical Writings*, Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986 ♦ Francis X. King, *The Flying Sorcerer: Being the Magical and Aeronautical Adventures of Francis Barrett, Author of The Magus*, London: Mandrake, 1992 ♦ Timothy d'Arch Smith, *The Books of the Beast: Essays on Aleister Crowley, Montague Summers, Francis Barrett and Others*, Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1987.

ROBERT A. GILBERT

## Basilides, 2nd century

1. BASILIDES ACCORDING TO CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, ORIGEN, EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA AND HEGEMONIUS 2. BASILIDES ACCORDING TO IRENAEUS 3. BASILIDES ACCORDING TO HIPPOLYTUS

Basilides was a free Christian teacher who presumably lived and taught in Alexandria during the reign of the emperor Hadrian (cf. Jerome, *Chronicle*, 201, 1f Helm). He had a son who became his disciple, Isidore. The ancient evidence about Basilides and his school can be divided into three groups: 1. the fragments and testimonies preserved by → Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea and Hegemonius (*Acta Archelai*); 2. the report of Irenaeus of Lyon, which influenced the heresiology of Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius of Salamis and Filastrius of Brescia; 3. the report of Hippolytus of Rome. Scholarly opinion is divided as to the question whether 2. and 3. contain valid and authentic information. There is some scholarly consensus that 1., particularly the original fragments preserved by Clement of Alexandria, are authentic and might – where possible – be used as a touchstone for 2. and 3. A majority of scholars seems to accept 3. as genuine in one way or another. The view of the present author is that only 1. contains information about the teaching of Basilides and his early circle of disciples (perhaps only Isidore, but that remains unclear in Clement). 2 and 3 are either spurious, i.e. they are not by Basilides and his disciples, or reflect the views of later Basilideans. It is possible that Hippolytus or his source are using information derived from Irenaeus of Lyon and Clement of Alexandria.

### 1. BASILIDES ACCORDING TO CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, ORIGEN, EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA AND HEGEMONIUS

Basilides wrote *Exegetica* in 24 books (Agrippa Castor, in Eusebius, *HE* IV, 5, 7-8); this is probably a commentary on a gospel. The identity of this gospel is unclear. Origen mentions in passing that Basilides had written his own gospel (*Homilies on Luke* I, 2); and this claim, which is not confirmed by any other source, is not impossible. Perhaps Basilides had produced his own gospel "edition" upon which he then commented. There are indications that Basilides' gospel is based on the Gospel of Luke (see below). For Basilides' son Isidore, however, the use of the Gospel of Matthew is attested (see below). Three fragments of Basilides' *Exegetica* have been preserved, one in Clement and two in Hegemonius.

Clement of Alexandria presents in *Stromateis* IV, 81, 1-83, 1 a large fragment from the 23rd book of Basilides' *Exegetica*. It addresses the question of how the goodness and justice of God can be reconciled with the execution of persecuted Christians. Basilides rejects the answer that the deaths of

Christian martyrs are the work of the devil. For him, this is God's way of punishing the hidden sins of the Christians; it is a sign of the goodness of God that the Christians are not punished for any misdeeds but rather for their being Christians. Basilides defends the justice of God: if someone has not committed an actual sin, he may still undergo divine punishment, because he has the internal disposition to sin. Divine providence cannot be bad and unjust; every human being is sinful (Job 14:4 LXX), only God is just. It is striking how Basilides here combines two traditionally distinct ideas (cf. Philo of Alexandria): on the one hand, the goodness of a God who benefits his creatures, on the other hand, the justice of a God who judges and punishes. Basilides indicates that God guides human beings (*agein, periagein*); he seems to accept the Platonic and biblical concept of pedagogical and cathartic punishments (cf. Clement's remarks *Strom.*, IV, 83, 2; 88, 2).

Hegemonius quotes in *Acta Archelai* 67, 4-12 two fragments taken from the 13th book of Basilides' *Exegetica*. The first fragment is the beginning of the book indicating its contents: 'The parable of the rich man and the poor man demonstrates where the nature without root and without place which attaches itself to things might have come from'. Basilides' remark seems to allude to Luke 16:19-31. In view of the second fragment, the phrase 'the nature without root and without place' has to be understood as a periphrasis for "evil". It is, however, unclear how Basilides used Luke 16:19-31, in order to explore the nature of evil. In the second fragment Basilides pretends to relate the opinion of anonymous "barbarians" about the origin of good and evil in the world: in the beginning there were two ungenerated principles, light and darkness. Both existed for themselves, liked themselves, were perfect in themselves. Then, at a second stage, Light and Darkness took notice of each other: whereas Darkness desired the Light and pursued it, Light only looked at Darkness, but felt no desire to participate in it. In this way the ontological difference between good and evil was established. Still, by this look of Light at darkness, a reflection of Light was produced in the Darkness. Basilides concludes: 'Therefore there is nothing perfectly good in this world . . . because that which has been received in the beginning, was too little'. The visible creation is this mixture of darkness and light; it is bad, insofar as it falls far short of the perfectly good. It is difficult to tell whether this "cosmogony" reflects Basilides' own views. However, the fact that he adduces it is significant in itself: he emulates philosophers like Plutarch or Numenius

who also invoked exotic lore in order to explain the principles of this world (Löhr, 236-241). Moreover, the "cosmogony" of the barbarians is full of philosophical resonances: e.g. Darkness's pursuit of Light is erotic in the Platonic sense of the word. The "cosmogony" evinces no radical dualism, but is nevertheless more pessimistic about this world than either Plutarch or Numenius.

Apart from these three quotations Clement has several doxographical passages where he transmits various doctrines of Basilides. Since they are taken out of context, the precise meaning of these "doxai" is not always easy to determine. According to *Strom.*, IV, 86, 1, Basilides said that it is the will of God, firstly, to love everything – because everything has a relation to the totality of all things –, secondly, not to desire anything, and thirdly, not to hate anything. According to Basilides the sins that are forgiven by baptism are those that are committed involuntarily and in ignorance before baptism (IV, 153, 4). Basilides assumed an "Ogdoas" of which the virtues of Justice and Freedom were important elements (IV, 162, 1/perhaps an allusion to Ps. 84:11 LXX; 88:15 LXX; 96:2 LXX). "Election" (*ekloge*) is a favourite Basilidean self designation; Basilides – perhaps taking his cue from Gen. 23:4 – taught that the "election" is a stranger (*xenos*) in this world (IV, 165, 3). Basilides's faith is intellectual, is *noësis*; he calls it (V, 3, 2) "faith", "kingdom" and a creation of good things, worthy to exist near the creator's being' (my translation follows a suggestion by R. Peppermüller), the 'unlimited beauty of an unsurpassable creation'. According to Basilides, Moses' temple (sic!, but cf. Hekataios of Abdera apud Diodorus Siculus, XL, 3) proclaims not the one God, but the one world (V, 74, 3); here Basilides probably follows an "interpretatio graeca" of Jewish religion (Löhr, 194f.). Basilides apparently taught the transmigration [→ Reincarnation] of souls (into both human beings and animals); Clement relates a "doxa" and Origen quotes a fragment where Basilides or his disciples use this doctrine in order to interpret two difficult passages from scripture, i.e. Deuteronomy 5:9 and Romans 7:9 (Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 28; Origen, *Comm. on Rom.*, V, 1; cf. also Origen, *Comm. on Matth.*, ser. 38).

Clement mentions three writings of Isidore, the son of Basilides. *Strom.*, II, 113, 3-114, 1 quotes a short passage from Isidore's work *On the attached soul*. In this fragment Isidore relates an objection against the doctrine that the soul has attachments (*prosartemata*) which produce its passions: if you persuade others that the passions of bad people are

caused by these attachments, they will have an excellent excuse for their misdeeds; they will say that they could not help misbehaving. But Isidore insists on human responsibility: we have to fight against these passionate attachments, ‘we must prevail with the help of the rational part of the soul and rule over the lower creation within ourselves’ (a possible allusion to Gen. 1:28; 9:1; cf. Philo, *Questions on Genesis*, II, 56). Shortly before this quotation, in *Strom.*, II, 112, 1ff., Clement presents a Basilidean “doxa” where the doctrine of the attachments is described in some more detail: the attachments are substantially spirits that have become attached to the souls according to an original confusion and mixture. This remark seems to indicate that the attachments derive from chaotic, primeval matter (a Platonic doctrine; Löhr 83, note 11). This first class of attachments seems to be responsible for human passions. To these are added a second class of attachments, i.e. spirits of a bastard and animal nature (wolves, monkeys, lions); they try to assimilate the passions of the soul to those of animals, ultimately even to those of plants and stones. This doxa is probably equally derived from Isidore’s book. It is remarkable that Isidore tries to establish a difference between human passions and lower animal passions.

*Strom.*, III, 1-3 contains three fragments of Isidore’s *Ethica*, probably a writing dealing with moral problems. These fragments discuss the question of whether or not to marry: with reference to Matthew 19:11f. Isidore distinguishes between three kinds of eunuchs: those who have a natural aversion against women, those who refrain from sex either because of their conspicuous encratism or because they have been castrated, and those who wish to devote themselves fully to the kingdom of God and do not wish to be bothered by family cares. As regards those who find it difficult to live without sex, Isidore – interpreting I Cor. 7:9 – advises against a forced abstinence: if your prayer entirely focuses on celibacy you might get separated from Christian hope. If someone is too young or too poor and yet feels the need to marry, he should seek the support of his Christian brother. Isidore criticizes an attitude that avoids sin only out of fear. He concludes his discussion by quoting a Epicurean maxim (cf. Epicurus, *Ep. ad Men.*, 135; Fr. 456 Usener): for human beings, there are some things that are both necessary and natural; other are only natural. Clothing is both natural and necessary, but sex is only natural, not necessary. These fragments from Isidore’s *Ethica* present an example of Christian pastoral advice. Like the pagan philo-

sophical schools, the school of Basilides and Isidore claimed to teach (Christian) philosophy as a way of life; theoretical instruction and practical advice went hand in hand. Like the pagans, Isidore taught his followers certain short maxims which they could recall and meditate at appropriate moments (Löhr, 116ff.).

*Strom.*, VI, 53, 2-5: Clement quotes one fragment from the first and two from the second book of Isidore’s treatise *Interpretations of the Prophet Parchor*. The identity of the Prophet is unclear (Löhr, 199, note 8). Clement’s choice of quotations is meant to confirm his views on the ‘theft of the Greeks’: in the first fragment Isidore refers to a theory of Aristotle according to which all human beings use demons during their life time. Isidore designates this Aristotelian teaching as a “piece of prophetic learning” which Aristotle had purloined without acknowledging his source. The original context of this remark was perhaps a more extended discussion of the phenomenon of prophecy. The second fragment claims that the intellectual property of the Christians should not be attributed to any philosophers; the philosophers simply stole it from the prophets and attributed it to someone whom they spuriously claimed to be wise. In the third fragment this remark is illustrated with reference to a fragment of Pherekydes of Syros (cf. Fr. 68 Schibli); Isidore contends that Pherekydes’ allegorical theology is derived from the prophet Cham. The last two fragments must be read as responding to a pagan theory according to which ultimate wisdom resides in an original true account of reality which is shared by ancient wise men such as Pherekydes, Linus, Musaios and Orpheus. The Platonist and critic of Christianity, Celsus, shared this theory (cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 16); Isidore tries to top it by pointing to possible prophetic sources of the ancient pagan sages. With this claim he possibly exploited a tradition according to which Cham had been the ancestor of the Phenicians (Gen 10:6f.) and Pherekydes had been introduced to Phenician wisdom (Fr. 80 Schibli).

Apart from these three quotations from the writings of Isidore, Clement refers several times to opinions which he seems to attribute to the disciples of Basilides. In *Strom.*, II, 112, 1 the phrase ‘those around Basilides’ (*hoi amphiton Basileidēn*) seems to refer to Isidore only; the same applies to the phrase ‘the pupils of Basilides’ (*hoi apo Basileidou*) in *Strom.*, III, 1, 1. Perhaps, then, this is also the case in other passages where similar phrases are used in order to introduce Basilidean “doxai”. In *Strom.*, I, 146, Clement relates different opinions

among the Basilideans about the dates of the baptism and the death of Christ (perhaps the Basilideans speculated equally about his birth, cf. I, 145, 6). It is possible that Clement has read a Basilidean work where different chronological hypotheses were discussed. In *Strom.*, II, 10, 1 and 3, Clement relates Basilidean teaching about the correspondence between Christian hope and faith and the spiritual state/level of each Christian. In *Strom.*, II, 27, 2, he quotes a Basilidean definition according to which 'faith is an assent of the soul to those things that do not affect the sense perception because they are not present'. In *Strom.*, II, 36, 1, Clement paraphrases a Basilidean exegesis of Proverbs 1:7 which relates this saying to John the Baptist: when the Archon (i.e. John the Baptist) heard the saying of the servant spirit (that is the divine voice from heaven, the servant spirit being symbolized by the dove; cf. *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 16), he was shaken and amazed. This amazement (*ekplêxis*) was called fear (*phobos*; cf. Diogenes Laertius, VII, 112) and this fear became the beginning of a wisdom that elects, selects, distinguishes and establishes everything in its proper place. 'This is because the ruler of everything brings forth not only the cosmos, but also the "election" [i.e. the Basilideans] by distinguishing it'. The revelation of Jesus as the Son of God at the river Jordan marks the beginning of a new dispensation, a re-creation of the world: from now on the Archon, a lower deity, is involved in the process of bringing the selves of the true Christians into their transcendent, celestial abodes.

## 2. BASILIDES ACCORDING TO IRENAEUS

Irenaeus of Lyons, *AH*, I, 24, 3-7, describes a Basilidean system, according to which the unbegotten and nameless Father begets a series of five emanations (Nous, Logos, Phronesis, Sophia and Dynamis). Sophia and Dynamis beget the primary powers, rulers and angels which in turn create the first heaven. From the primary rulers other powers and rulers derive which create a heaven modelled on the first one – and so on, until the number of 365 heavens is complete. The angels of the last, visible heavens have created everything that is contained in this world. They have distributed the earth and the nations amongst themselves, their chief is that angel that is reputed to be the God of the Jews. This angel wished to subject all other peoples to his people, the Jews. Provoked by this aggression, the other angels resisted him; likewise the other nations resisted the Jewish people. The highest God

watched the war between the angels and sent his first born Nous, who is Christ, in order to liberate the world from the rule of the angels. The Nous appeared as a man and performed miracles. He did not suffer, but instead of him Simon of Cyrene had to bear his cross (Mt. 27:32) and suffer, the Nous having exchanged his outward appearance with Simon of Cyrene. The powers crucified him out of ignorance (I Cor. 2:8). Since he is an incorporeal power and the intellect of the unbegotten Father he can change his outward appearance as he likes (cf. Peterson). By this mimicry he becomes invisible for the powers and angels in the 365 heavens and can ascend to his Father. All those who profess the crucified are still under the domination of the angels; those who deny him, on the other hand, are liberated from their oppressive power and have the true understanding of the dispensation of the unbegotten Father. This system probably has an apocryphal writing as its source. In spite of its negative evaluation of the created world, it is not dualistic: everything has the Father as its – albeit distant – source. Evil seems to be a function of the growing distance from the source. The emanations from the father describe a descent from the intellect to practical creative reasoning. The story of Christ's (i.e. Simon of Cyrene's) passion develops and glosses I Cor. 2:8 and Matth. 27:32; Irenaeus tries to suggest a connection between Christological Docetism and a Basilidean rejection of martyrdom: just as the Nous-Son became invisible for the powers and rulers, the believers should aspire to invisibility and the avoidance of martyrdom (I, 24, 6): 'You should know all, but no one should know you!' The Basilideans claimed a higher form of "gnosis": 'Not many people are able to understand this, only one in thousand, two in ten thousand' (cf. *Gospel of Thomas*, log. 23; other parallels, Löhr 265, note 40).

## 3. BASILIDES ACCORDING TO HIPPOLYTUS

Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio*, VII, 20-27/X, 14 gives a totally different account of the teaching of Basilides: according to him, Basilides and Isidore claimed that their doctrine derived from the apostle Matthias who had been privately taught by Jesus. The system starts with a piece of negative theology, the doctrine of the "non-existing" God. This God produces a "non-existing" world, i.e. he sows a seed that contains the cosmos. Everything else emerges from this world seed. Since the world seed was produced by the non-existing God, everything is produced out of nothing. The world seed contains a tripartite sonship: the first sonship,



whose substance is light and subtle, ascends quickly to the God whose great beauty attracts everything. The second sonship needs the help of the “wing” of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit was unable to ascend to the height of the Father. The third sonship remains in the world seed; these are the pneumatic Christians. The system then distinguishes between the “hypercosmic” region, the boundary-spirit (i.e. the firmament) and the cosmos. Below the firmament two archons with their corresponding sons emerge from the world seed: the Archon of the Ogdoas and the Archon of the Hebdomas. Then the gospel arrives in this world; it comes from beyond the firmament and is transmitted through the sons of the two archons. The archons are illuminated and understand that there is a world beyond them. Finally the process of downward illumination reaches Jesus, son of Mary. The world will continue to exist until the third sonship will have been formed and purified and will have followed Christ into the transcendent realm. The power for this transformation is conveyed by the light that shines from above. Once the whole tripartite sonship has been established in the hypercosmic region, God will cast a great ignorance over the whole cosmos and the two archons; all those souls that belong to this world will no longer come to know anything beyond it, all desire for the hypercosmic region will cease. Since desire means death, this will give them a kind of immortality. Thus the whole process of salvation history consists in the return of everything that was contained in the world seed to its natural position (like returns to like). The passion of Jesus Christ is interpreted accordingly: The death of Jesus is the beginning of the separation of all things; Jesus dissolves into his bodily, psychic etc. components which return to their natural positions.

Since this report has many parallels in other sections in Hippolytus' *Refutatio* where other “Gnostic” systems are reported, some scholars have concluded that Hippolytus' source for these reports was a forgery (Salmon, Stähelin). Even if that conclusion is unwarranted, we still need a theory to explain these parallels and to reconcile Hippolytus' report with the fragments found in Clement of Alexandria, Origen and the *Acta Archelai*. The Basilidean system according to Hippolytus exhibits several remarkable features: an extreme negative theology which possibly develops the information furnished by Irenaeus (or his source) that Basilides called the Father ‘unnameable’ (*innominatus*) (Irenaeus, *AH* I, 24, 4); an idiosyncratic version of the creation out of nothing which is hostile to both emanationism and a Pla-

tonic theory of creation; a peculiar theory of a tripartite sonship; the idea that at the end of salvation history God will bring over this world a state of ignorance. Some traits of the system seem to derive from Valentinian sources, but on the whole this is an original if uneven attempt to improve upon preceding versions of salvation history. However, as in the case of Irenaeus' report, there are no very strong reasons to attribute this system to Basilides and his early circles of disciples (Isidore).

*Lit.*: B. Aland, “Seele, Zeit, Eschaton bei einem frühen christlichen Theologen: Basilides zwischen Paulus und Platon”, in: J. Holzhausen (ed.), *Psychê – Seele – Anima*, Festschrift K. Alt (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 109), Teubner: Stuttgart & Leipzig, 1998, 255-278 ♦ S.-P. Bergjan, *Der fürsorgende Gott: Der Begriff der PRONOIA Gottes in der apologetischen Literatur der alten Kirche* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 81), Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002, 123-170. ♦ A.P. Bos, “Basilides as an Aristotelianizing Gnostic”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 (2000), 44-60 ♦ H. Langerbeck, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philol.-Hist. Klasse, Dritte Folge, Nr.69), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967 ♦ A. le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, II<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècles* (2 vols.), Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985 ♦ W. Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (trans. R. McL. Wilson), vol. 1: Patristic Evidence, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 ♦ F. Legge (trans), *Philosophumena or the Refutation of all Heresies*, 2 vols., London, New York: MacMillan 1921 ♦ W.A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule: Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 83), Tübingen: Mohr, 1996 ♦ idem, “Isidor I (Gnostiker)”, in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 18 (1998), 977-982 ♦ E. Mühlberg, “Basilides”, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 5 (1980), 296-301 ♦ A. Orbe, “Los ‘apéndices’ de Basilides III (Un capítulo de filosofía gnóstica)”, *Gregorianum* 57 (1976), 251-184 ♦ E. Peterson, “Alte Schulformeln und ihre Deutung”, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 23 (1924), 293-298 ♦ S. Pétremont, *Le Dieu séparé*, Cerf Paris 1984 ♦ G. Salmon, “The Cross-References in the ‘Philosophumena’”, *Hermantanea* 11 (1885), 389-402 ♦ H.S. Schibli, *Pherekydes of Syros*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990 ♦ P. Schüngel, “Gnostische Gotteslehren”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999), 361-394 ♦ H. Stähelin, *Die gnostischen Quellen Hippolyts in seiner Hauptschrift gegen die Häretiker* (TU 6), Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1890 ♦ M. Tardieu, “Basilides”, in: *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, II, Paris, 1994, 85-89 ♦ Y. Tissot, “A propos des fragments de Basilide sur le martyre”, *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 76 (1996), 35-50 ♦ J.H. Waszink, “Basilides”, in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 1 (1957), 1217-1225.

**Bernard Silvester** (Bernardus Silvestris),  
 \* year and place of birth unknown,  
 † after 1159, place of death unknown

Little is known about his life. An educator in Tours, he died after 1159. He was the author of several works: *Experimentarius*, a book of spells, from Arabian sources; *Mathematicus*, a poem addressing the problem of destiny, in which he stated that 'blind chance stirs up the ridiculous troubles of humanity; our times are play, entertainment for the gods'; and a *Commentary* on Martianus Capella, in which he defined notably his hermeneutics. However, his principal work was the *Cosmography*, an allegorical novel, in which verse and prose alternate, and divided into two parts, the *Megacosm* and the *Microcosm*. Rather than attempt a complete analysis of this dense and complex work, let us concentrate on the major place that → hermetism occupies in it.

Bernard was, like the masters of Chartres (v.g. Thierry of Chartres, to whom his work was dedicated), an heir of Latin Platonism. From Macrobius he borrowed doctrinal elements and the idea that 'nature does not like to see itself exposed naked to every look', which justifies the recourse to 'fabulous narrative' (*narratio fabulosa*), an equivalent of Platonic myth. 'The veil (*integumentum*)', he says, 'is a discourse that contains a true meaning in a fabulous narrative. An example is the legend of Orpheus'. Bernard imitated the *prosimetrum* form of Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, which describes the seven liberal arts allegorically. He also borrowed from it the concept that knowledge is a prerequisite in the quest for wisdom. Bernard was sensitive, moreover, to the hermetic atmosphere of the *De Nuptiis*, in which arithmetical onomancy, theurgy, and divination [→ Divinatory Arts] are present alongside the liberal arts. At the term of an initiation *mysterium*, Mercury, that is, Thoth, representing the higher part of the human soul, saves the lower part, Philology, 'which loves reason'. Another major source for Bernard was the *Asclepius*. Bernard drew inspiration also from many classical authors: the great poets, notably Virgil, perceived as a pagan prophet, but also the astrologers such as Firmicus Maternus, Manilius, and Hygin. Among the medieval sources appear the *Liber de sex principiis* and certain Arabic astronomical treatises.

The construction of the *Cosmography* rests on a traditional concept: the correspondence between, on the one hand, the universe, the megacosm (or macrocosm), and, on the other, humanity, the microcosm. Its content consists of the story of the

restoration of the universe, which Nature asked of Noys, who would gain satisfaction at the end of a long initiatory journey pursued from one end of creation to the other, including the different planets. A hermetic tone marks the characters in this novel, whether they belong to Christian theology or to pagan mythology. God is defined according to the Bible, as well as to the *Timaeus* and to Macrobius. He is both Tugaton (Good) and the luminous Trinity. His creation, which is the passage from material and spiritual oneness to the many, conceals a musical [→ Music] and numerical harmony [→ Number Symbolism].

Silva-Yle, matter, proves to have a mysterious duality. It is not only a formless chaos tending toward evil, but also a fertile principle and connected with God. Noys, despite his Nicean definition 'God born of God', is not Christ, but a feminine character, Wisdom and Divine Providence, at the same time as the cradle of life. Nature, a daughter of Noys, constructs the joining of the soul and the body, in parallel to the celestial order. Her sister, Urania, establishes mediation between the divine decrees written in the stars and the spiritual existence of humanity. Endelichia is the spouse of the World, thus its soul. Physis attends to organic life. Imarmene represents the continuity of a time that sees the historical development of matter. The latter is marked by the appearance of notable characters and events, agreeing with that which is written in heaven. Other characters play a role in the *Cosmography*: angels, demons, spirits of sexuality, ouisiarchs of each planet operating between two worlds, and an ouisiarch Panthomorphus who gives things their form.

The influence of the *Cosmography*, exercised already on medieval authors – Alain de Lille, Jean de Meung, Dante, and Boccaccio –, has continued until our times, as the theologian C. S. Lewis refers to it explicitly in his symbolic science fiction novel, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938). This success is explainable by the fact that Bernard, in assembling all the elements of European culture and spirituality in a poetic masterpiece, managed to create a true modern myth.

*Cosmographia* (P. Dronke, ed.), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978.

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**Besant, Annie,** \* 1.10.1847 London, † 20.9.1933 Adyar (Madras), India

A political and social activist and reformer, one of the outstanding British orators during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, whose main claim to fame today is her long and eventful tenure as the President of the → Theosophical Society (Adyar) from 1907 to her death in 1933, Annie Wood was born to William Burton Persse Wood and Emily Morris in 1847. Three quarters Irish by descent and, as she writes in her *Autobiography*, in her heart all Irish, she was to associate with the plight of the Irish under English domination, especially in her early years. In her later years, the plight of India and its natives was added to her concerns, which led her to advocate Indian Home Rule.

Wood's early education took an important turn at age eight (1855), when Ellen Marryat, perhaps a relative of Wood's now widowed mother, agreed to take Annie in her care. As an Evangelical Christian, Miss Marryat instilled in Annie not only Evangelicalism but also its emphasis on the uplifting of others less fortunate. After eight years with Miss Marryat, Annie returned to her mother, continued her studies, and met a young man who was soon to be ordained an Anglican priest, Frank Besant. They were married on December 21, 1867 and had two children over the next few years, Arthur Digby (b. January 16, 1869) and Mabel (b. August 28, 1870). Annie was soon to question orthodox Christian doctrine – especially the age-old issue about the existence of evil and misery in a world created by a God who is All-Good – when both infants contacted whooping cough in 1871. This doubt eventually led her to radically change her view of Christianity by denying the divinity of Christ. It was a position arrived at largely due to the influence of a clergyman, Revd. Charles Voysey, in 1872, a cleric who only a few years previously (1869) was himself charged with heresy by the Church. It is no wonder that Annie's association with Revd. Voysey caused much dismay with her husband.

The dual influence of Voysey and his associate, Thomas Scott – a free-thinker who sought to undermine the Church and whom Annie also met in 1872 – consolidated her acceptance of “heretical” doctrines, which she soon expressed in print. Her views and her refusal to accept her husband's admonition to return to the Church led to her eventual separation from Frank in 1873.

The following year introduced Annie, who exhibited atheist leanings by 1874, to the free-thinker and atheist Charles Bradlaugh and his National Secular Society through his newspaper,

*The National Reformer*. She joined the Society in August 1874, wrote extensively for the newspaper – so successfully that she eventually became its co-editor – and gave numerous addresses on behalf of the Society. During her tenure as co-editor, she advocated feminist causes, one of which was birth control, thus becoming the first woman to do so publicly.

By 1878, she assumed the office of secretary of the revived Malthusian League. One year earlier, she and Bradlaugh had reissued the 1832 pamphlet *The Fruits of Philosophy* by Dr. Charles Knowlton, through the auspices of their recently established (January 1877) Freethought Publishing Company. This led to Besant's and Bradlaugh's prosecution, still in 1877, under the Obscene Publications Act. The outcome was a verdict of “guilty”, which was eventually reversed. The reversal of the judgement led Besant to write a series of articles on birth control in *The National Reformer* that was to be published in a pamphlet, *The Law of Population*.

In addition to her continued involvement with Bradlaugh and the National Secular Society, Besant became acquainted with socialism during the early 1880s. At first, she held negative feelings toward the movement, but by 1884 her opinion changed to the point where she decided, in January 1885, to join the Fabian Society, a decision that was carried out a few months later with a member of the society, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), sponsoring her. This was the beginning of a relationship – intellectual and perhaps romantic – that was to have an influence over her for some time. Her concern for the poor led her to convert to socialism, but it also led to her surrender her co-editorship of *The National Reformer*.

In 1887, economic conditions had deteriorated to a point where there were numerous demonstrations by the unemployed. One of the most famous sites of London, Trafalgar Square, was especially overridden with the unemployed and destitute, and thus became a rallying ground for the socialist groups. In November, all gatherings in the Square were banned, but an alliance of socialists, Irish, and radicals – together making up the Metropolitan Radical Federation – gathered nonetheless, with Besant as one of the leaders. The result was a clash between the demonstrators and the police known as “Bloody Sunday” (November 13), a *mêlée* that led to 300 people being arrested and 150 hospitalized.

A few days after, the Law and Liberty League was co-founded by Besant and William Thomas Stead, with Besant becoming the editor of its journal, *The Link*. The primary purpose of the League

was to support free speech, to campaign for candidates who were in favor of free speech, and to champion the cause of the poor and downtrodden. By May 1888, a concrete cause presented itself with the unfair labor practice of the Bryant and May matchmaking firm. The working conditions at the factory were such that Besant and Herbert Burrows of the Social Democratic Federation instigated a boycott of the company and a strike by its workers. Both were successful. Subsequently the Matchmakers' Union was established, with Besant playing an active role both in the Union and in trade unionism generally. Later that year, her attention turned to poor children and their plight; she stood for a seat at the London School Board (the Tower Hamlets district) in 1888, won by a large margin, and remained in office for the following two years.

For all her activism in socialist causes, socialist philosophy, and socialist societies (she was by now a member of both the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation), Besant felt there was a lack of adequate philosophy. Socialism was sufficient for solving economic problems, but not for realizing "the Brotherhood of Man", to use her expression. There was much talk at this time (1888) about the idea of Brotherhood, 'in which service to Man should take the place erstwhile given to the service of God', Besant remarked in an article in the February issue of *Our Corner*, a journal she had founded in 1883. But if socialism was insufficient, then where could such a Brotherhood be realized? Besant's attention was first drawn to the occult [→ occult/occultism] with the publication of A.P. Sinnett's *Occult World* in 1881, and to → Spiritualism from 1886 on; but it was her enthusiasm for the ideas contained in → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, which Besant subsequently reviewed in 1889, that transformed her from socialism to Theosophy. Shortly after her review, which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in April, she joined the → Theosophical Society, on 10 May 1889, and thereafter visited Blavatsky in Fontainebleau. Blavatsky quickly recognized in Besant a potential asset to the Society, so much so that Besant quickly became Blavatsky's key disciple as a member of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section and the co-editor of Blavatsky's magazine, *Lucifer*.

After Blavatsky's death on May 8, 1891, the Outer Head of the Esoteric Section (now called the Eastern School of Theosophy) passed to Besant, who was also the president of the Blavatsky Lodge in London, and to William Q. Judge, the Vice-President of the Theosophical Society. Judge was to be the head of the E.S.T. for America, Besant for the

rest of the world, an arrangement that would not last longer than a few years. The arrangement ended in 1895, when Judge and a majority of members of the American Section decided to declare its autonomy from the Theosophical Society, thus leaving Besant as the most influential Theosophist with the possible exception of → Henry Steel Olcott.

Besant's visit to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and India in 1893 to meet Olcott was the beginning of her lifelong love and devotion for India and its people. From 1896 on, she became a permanent resident of the country, engaging in many activities, the first of which was education. Besant's studies in Sanskrit and Hindu religion and philosophy resulted in her translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in 1895, with the assistance of the scholar Bhagavan Das. A year later, she conceived the idea of establishing a college for Hindu boys that would include instruction in Sanskrit. This idea came to fruition with the establishment of the Central Hindu College in Benares (now Varānāsī) on 7 July 1898. The College was to have a profound impact on Indian education in the ensuing decades. A few years later (1904), the educational opportunity afforded to Hindu boys was extended to Hindu girls with the opening of the Central Hindu Girls' School, thus cementing the claim that Besant was one of the leading pioneers in the education of Hindus of both sexes.

From the mid-1890s on, Besant became associated with the increasingly popular lecturer and occult writer and investigator → Charles Webster Leadbeater. Although not herself a psychic, it was due to his influence that Besant's interests turned from religion to occult phenomena at this time. By 1895 a collaborative effort was begun to investigate a number of supra-physical phenomena, including → reincarnation and the astral plane. The results of these joint investigations were a number of co-authored books including *Occult Chemistry* (1908), *Talks on the Path of Occultism* (1926), *Thought Forms* (1901), and *The Lives of Alcyone* (1924). As early as 1898, their interest came to extend also to a Theosophical interpretation of Christianity, leading to Leadbeater's *The Christian Creed* of 1899 and Besant's *Esoteric Christianity* of 1901. The collaboration was temporarily halted by charges of immoral conduct brought against Leadbeater in 1906, which led to his resignation from the Theosophical Society in the same year. After Olcott's death in 1907, Besant was elected President of the Theosophical Society on June 28. By August, she and Leadbeater were again conducting occult investigations even before his formal reinstatement



to the Society, which took place eighteen months later, in December 1908.

Leadbeater's reinstatement would soon lead to the defining moment in the history of the Theosophical Society, the discovery on Leadbeater's part of a young boy, Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was expected to be "overshadowed" by the Lord Maitreya, the World Teacher. Although talk of a Master of Wisdom who would appear amongst humanity goes back to H.P. Blavatsky, the discourse of a coming World Teacher, a Maitreya, Christ or Messiah – the identification of Maitreya and the Christ was apparently developed by Leadbeater – seems to have begun with Besant, in a rudimentary form around the turn of the century, and with Leadbeater in more developed form as early as 1901. By the end of 1908 Besant was quite explicit about a "Teacher and Guide" who would once again walk among humans. In April 1909, Leadbeater actually discovered a Brahmin boy whom he claimed would serve as the vehicle for the Teacher, the Lord Maitreya who would incarnate into him. The purpose of this coming was to prepare for the coming sixth sub-race of humanity and the still more remote sixth root race. For the next twenty years, especially after 1924, much of Besant's energy was devoted to furthering the cause of the World Teacher. All came to naught, however, when Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star, the organization that was established to further the claims that he was the coming World-Teacher, by declaring in 1929 that "Truth is a pathless land" and by turning his back on Theosophy and its leadership.

In addition to the World Teacher taking possession of the body of Krishnamurti, a "World Mother" would also be manifested through an earthly vehicle: Mrs. Rukmini Arundale, the wife of George Arundale, who would later become Besant's successor as president of the Theosophical Society. The idea of the World Mother probably originated with Leadbeater, and was then taken up by Besant, who came to represent her as the 'embodiment of womanhood in the occult hierarchy'. Nothing much came of this new teaching, however, and by 1928 it had been forgotten.

Besant's emphasis on service to the Indian nation, in the context of which she attempted to promote a number of reforms (she encouraged inter-caste and interracial relations, championed the cause of the "outcasts" and "untouchables", and encouraged Indian women to engage in the public domain) eventually led her to get involved in the struggle for Indian independence. Although there is evidence of such activity as early as 1910, it was not until 1913 that she claimed to have come into contact with

the Rishi Agastya, a Mahatma whom Theosophists believe is 'the Regent of India in the Inner Government'; this Master supposedly had instructed Besant, as his Agent, to 'form a small band of people, who were brave enough to defy wrong social customs, such as premature marriage'. Once engaged in this attempted reform, Besant established the Home Rule League in 1916, in imitation of the Irish Home Rule movement, and began to work for Indian self-government. As an outlet for her views, in 1914 she bought an old and established paper, the *Madras Standard*, and converted it into *New India*, which was 'to embody the ideal of Self-Government for India along Colonial lines . . .'. As a promoter of independence, she worked with many Indian leaders including the militant nationalist Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) and the moderate former Theosophist Gopala Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915). It was during this time, between 1915 and 1919 that her political influence was at its height. Besant worked with all the great leaders of the independence movement, serving as President of both the Home Rule League in 1916 and 1917, and the Indian National Congress in 1917. By 1920, however, Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) had effectively assumed an ascendant position, eventually becoming the leader of the independence movement. His methods and goals were different from Besant's, and more attractive to the Indian population. Besant continued to participate in Indian self-rule throughout the 1920s, and supported the Nehru Report (named after Motilal Nehru [1861-1931]) of 1928, which advocated Dominion Status for India, in contrast to Motilal's son, Jawaharlal (1889-1964), who advocated complete independence. Besant did not live to see India receiving independence in 1947.

Throughout the 1920s, Besant became more involved with Krishnamurti and the Order of the Star in the East. After the dissolution of the Order of the Star (as it was called in the late 1920s) in 1929, Besant's health began to decline. On 20 September 1933 she died at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar. She was cremated in the Garden of Remembrance on the Theosophical Society's estate, with a portion of her ashes placed in the Garden and a portion scattered over the Ganges at Benares.

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2002, cited 2002 April, June]. Available from: <http://www.blavatskyarchives.com/besant1888.htm>. First published in *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London), April 25, 1889, 3 and reprinted in *The Theosophist* (Adyar, Madras, India), August 1889, 696-698 ♦ *The Law of Population: Its Consequences, and Its Bearing upon Human Conduct and Morals*, London: Free-thought Publishing Company, 1891 ♦ *The Bhagavad Gītā* (1895), Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1967 (11th Adyar edition) ♦ *The Ancient Wisdom* (1897), Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1939 ♦ *Sanātana-Dharma: An Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*, Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1940 ♦ Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1901 ♦ Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Occult Chemistry* (1908), Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1951 (3rd edition, edited by C. Jinarājadāsa) ♦ Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Man: Whence, How and Whither*, Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1913 ♦ Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Lives of Alcyone*, 2 vols., Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1924 ♦ Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, 3 vols. (1926): vol. 1: "At the Feet of the Master" (6th ed., 1971); vol. 2: "The Voice of the Silence" (6th ed., 1973); vol. 3: "Light on the Path" (2nd ed., 1931).

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JAMES A. SANTUCCI

**Bibliophilus Irenaeus** → Oetinger,  
Friedrich Christoph

**Bimstein, Louis Maximilian** → Théon,  
Max

**Bingen, Hildegard of** → Hildegard of  
Bingen

**Blake, William**, \* 28.11.1757 London,  
† 12.9.1827 London

An engraver by trade, Blake was primarily a self-educated graphic and literary artist whose work reflects the attempt to confront contemporary

political and social problems through a philosophically based spiritualism. Although baptized and buried in the Anglican Church, Blake was born into a family of freethinkers, and himself attempted to get back to the pure form of Christianity he believed to have existed before it was corrupted by organized religion.

Blake's life reflects the conflict between corporeal and spiritual needs. He worked as a commercial artist, engraving illustrations for popular books, including some by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), and, notably, the account of John Gabriel Stedman (1744-1797), *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796). Yet, he was always more interested in executing his own illuminated books, which reflect an increasingly strong influence by the *prisca theologia* [→ tradition], a pure form of theology that had developed as a counterpoint to conventional religion. Attempting to address the sometimes contradictory obligations of his materialistic and idealistic needs, Blake experimented with novel paint formulæ and engraving methods (explained to him, in a dream, by his deceased brother Robert), all designed to make his visions commercially viable. Unfortunately, none of the innovations proved financially successful.

Throughout his life, Blake evinced a strong interest in spiritualism. As a child, he experienced religious visions, and as a young man, he circulated among the mystics who frequented London in the 1780s. He met the neoplatonist Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), as well as the artist Henry Fuseli (1741-1825); and he engraved the frontispiece for Fuseli's English translation of → Johann Kaspar Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man* (1788). Intellectually, he was attracted to the writings of → Emanuel Swedenborg, owning and annotating at least three of Swedenborg's books – *Heaven and Hell*, *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, and *Divine Providence* – and was likely familiar with two others – *Earths in the Universe* and *True Christian Religion*. In addition, Blake and his wife both signed the register for the first General Conference of the New Jerusalem Church in 1789. There is no clear evidence, however, that they attended any subsequent meetings, and Blake was eventually disillusioned enough to satirize Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* in his own *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793), transforming Swedenborg's Memorable Relations into his own Memorable Fancies. Renouncing, for a time, Swedenborg's influence, Blake claimed that 'Swedenborg's writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further' (pl. 22, E 43).

From Swedenborg Blake turned to → Paracelsus, the 16th-century Swiss alchemist, and → Jacob Boehme, the 17th-century German visionary, whose works had been translated by the 18th-century English mystic, → William Law. Although Blake spent his entire life in England, he did leave London for a few years, spending 1800-1803 in Felpham, as a guest of minor poet William Hayley (1745-1820). Although the relationship with the practical-minded Hayley quickly deteriorated, the stay in the country afforded Blake access to an extensive library. More successful was the relationship with Thomas Butts, a minor bureaucrat whose patronage during the first decade of the 19th century enabled Blake to illustrate parts of the Bible and Milton, among other things. Later in life, in 1818, Blake was discovered by John Linnell (1792-1882) and John Varley (1778-1842), two young artists whose own interests in the occult helped reinvent Blake's final works.

These disparate interests all converge in Blake's own form of a *prisca theologia*, in which he uses a kabbalistic-like myth as the basis for unifying all of his spiritual interests. His thesis in the early tract, *All Religions are One* (1788), that 'The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy', would lead inexorably to a rejection of any particular religious organization, the Swedenborgian New Church included. As he explained in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: 'Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental dieties from their objects: thus began Priesthood. / Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. / And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things. / Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast' (pl. 11).

Intellectually, Blake agreed with the basic assumptions of → Francis Mercurius van Helmont's delineation of the *prisca theologia*, that the universe is an organic, vital, evolving whole, and that humans, having been made in God's image, are to use their imagination to help restore the post-lapsarian world to its original perfection, through the exercise of their intellect and imagination. In the works leading up to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake applies his spiritual principles to contemporary problems. The early unpublished poem, *The French Revolution* (1791), focuses on the war in Europe; *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) considers English participation in the slave trade; and various lyrics in the collected *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and later, the combined *Songs of*

*Innocence and of Experience* (1794) explore different forms of social, religious, political and moral hypocrisy.

At the same time that he worked on these exoteric works, Blake also began exploring esoteric themes. *There is No Natural Religion*, the companion to *All Religions are One*, is a series of aphorisms that conclude with the Application: 'He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is'. He also began exploring the dimensions of gnosis in *The Book of Thel* (1789), a neoplatonic poem in which the soul ultimately chooses to stay in the 'vales of Har', Blake's name for what he sees as the debilitation inherent in pre-lapsarian Eden, rather than become part of the corporeal cosmos where, though contributing to the life cycle, she will die. Similarly, in the unengraved *Tiriell* (c. 1789), Blake merges exoteric and esoteric themes, condemning contemporary politics for being a function of the erroneous use of reason, as opposed to intellect. To complete this phase of his artistic development, Blake wrote two prophecies – *America* (1793) and *Europe* (1794) – in which he presents an apocalyptic interpretation of the American and French Revolutions.

In the mid-1790s, Blake began the decades-long process of rendering his kabbalistic *prisca theologia* into mythic form. During this period he completed the four "minor prophecies", in which he worked out specific details of his developing myth. In the first, *The Song of Los* (1795), Blake traces the progress of organized religion, attributed, in *The Book of Urizen* (1794), to the consolidation of the rational factor. The problem, as analyzed in *The Book of Ahania* (1795), is that once consolidated, reason became cut off from its spiritual component. Therefore, as suggested in *The Book of Los* (1795), the relationship between reason and vision had to be reconfigured. Of key importance to Blake's thought process at this stage was the commission, worked on in 1795-1796, to help illustrate the popular poem by Edward Young (1683-1765), *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742-45), an extensive meditation based on conventional Christian theology. Even though the commission eventually fell through, the detailed analysis required for the project forced Blake to confront point by point his own attitude towards exoteric theology.

During the next ten years, intermittently from 1796 until 1807, Blake attempted to consolidate his criticism into a full-scale epic that would counter the errors propagated by Young's *Night Thoughts*.

*The Four Zoas* – or *Vala*, as it was originally called – is the first major attempt to transform his *prisca theologia* into narrative form. Written, in many cases, on proof sheets from the Young project, *The Four Zoas* is an early revision and re-presentation of exoteric Christianity in an esoteric form, its nine “nights” corresponding respectively to the kabbalistic *sefirot* (emanations) from *Malkhut* (Kingdom) through *Hokhmah* (Divine Wisdom), tracing the *via mystica* back to *Keter Elyon*, the Supreme Crown. Even though the myth is populated by unique allegorical figures with originally coined names, its structure resembles Francis Mercurius van Helmont’s system of Christian Kabbalism. A major collaborator with → Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689) on the *Kabbala Denudata* (2 vols., Sulzbach, 1677-1684), van Helmont contributed the *Adumbratio Kabbalæ Christianæ*, a full-length Platonic dialogue between a Kabbalist and a Christian Philosopher, designed to demonstrate the congruence between the myth generated by Jewish mystic Isaac Luria (1534-1572) and Christianity. According to kabbalistic tradition, our existence is part of a larger cycle of creation, the purpose of which is to provide the opportunity for all souls to be purified. In the *Adumbratio*, van Helmont christianizes the myth, using the Bible to justify his transformation of the Jewish system. In order to add a specifically christological function, he expands what was originally a three-part structure – “Contraction”, “the Breaking of the Vessels”, and “Restoration” – into four phases: “The Primordial Institution”, the Godhead’s original intention for creation; “The State of Destitution”, the fall, as caused by the breaking of the vessels, and the ensuing contamination of souls; “The Modern Constitution”, corporeal existence in which both macrocosm (Christ) and microcosm (man) work, each on his own level, to effect the form of restoration; so that, finally, in “The Supreme Restitution”, Christ can defeat the forces of evil and man can rise.

We do not know Blake’s specific source for Kabbalism. However, in his major prophecies, he generated a universal *prisca theologia* which incorporates into a Lurianic/van Helmontian base all of his esoteric reading, including the neoplatonists, Boehme and even Swedenborg. The result was a four-fold myth about the nationalistic hero, Albion – ‘His fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity / His fall into the Generation of Decay & Death & his Regeneration by the Resurrection from the dead’ (n. 1, 4:4-5). In this first attempt at an epic narrative, Blake seems incapable of delineating a non-conventional role for the Saviour.

Available only in a heavily revised manuscript, *The Four Zoas* reflects the creative process involved in the attempt to transform abstract theory into a fully realized myth. In its earliest form, originally entitled *Vala*, the epic was apparently intended to focus on the emanation of the spiritual component, her individuation signifying the consolidation of the force that would oppose true vision, and therefore lead inevitably to organized religion. As the poem evolved, however, Blake shifted his focus from the effect to the cause, from *Vala* to the four zoas, his name for the four psychological components that correspond to the four kabbalistic souls. In its final form, *The Four Zoas* depicts the initial disorganization of the four zoas, as Urizen (the Rational Soul) usurps the function of vision, causing Urthona (the Immortal Soul) to grow dark and to limp. Throughout the poem, the action delineates the process by which the zoas are ultimately realigned so that Albion can be regenerated. The problem is that at this point, the action leads almost inexorably to an external catalyst – Christian ransom – for its resolution. Although Blake would work on the poem for at least a decade, and would even complete its apocalyptic vision – ‘The war of swords departed now / The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns’ (n. 9, 139:9-10) – he could never integrate within its action a christological function that was not inimical to the concept of free will.

Blake confronts that specific problem in *Milton*, a brief epic in which the historical John Milton – whose doctrine in *Paradise Lost* was the source, Blake believed, of subsequent theological misapprehensions – returns to correct his error. As a transmigrating soul, Milton has wandered in heaven for one hundred years, unhappy at the legacy he left on earth. Hearing, in the Bard’s Song, the esoteric account of creation and fall, he identifies himself as the source of the exoteric misconception that has been promulgated on earth – ‘I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!’ – and returns to correct his error: ‘I go to Eternal Death’ (14[15]:30, 32). Once there, he literally reforms Urizen so that Albion can rise, and all of creation can prepare for ‘the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations’.

In delineating *gilgul*, the process by which the transmigrating soul returns to correct its error, Blake, like van Helmont before him, associates the kabbalistic *Adam Kadmon* (primordial man) with the christological function, though not as an external Saviour. Instead, he reconfigures Los, the personification that had been associated with the → imagination, into an internal Christ. Becoming

what Blake will call 'the vehicular form' of Urthona (the Immortal Soul), Los is now depicted as having forgotten his originally intended function. But when Milton reforms Urizen, Los 'recollect[s] an old Prophecy in Eden recorded' (20[22]:57), and devotes himself to constructing Golgonooza, the lower Eden where transmigrating souls will be purified in preparation for the apocalypse. Instead of sacrificing himself for the sake of mankind, Los creates the structure through which the individual can, of his own free will, save himself.

If *Milton* creates the form of restoration, *Jerusalem*, Blake's final prophecy, enacts the process in the fullest sense. Consistent with the four-part structure delineated by van Helmont, Blake divides the action of *Jerusalem* into the four-part process 'Of the Sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through / Eternal Death! and of the awaking to Eternal Life' (4:1-2). Juxtaposing the corresponding actions of the macrocosm (*Adam Kadmon/Los*) and the microcosm (*Adam Rishon/Albion*), Blake divides his epic into four chapters, corresponding respectively to van Helmont's four sections. In his first chapter, Blake conveys the inverse of van Helmont's "Primordial Institution", portraying the prelapsarian state in terms of what was lost as a result of the fall, when Albion chose 'demonstration' over 'faith'. At the same time that Albion lapses into despair, the psychological state that prevents restoration of the microcosm, Los confronts his Spectre, the force of negation that attempts to deter him from effecting restoration on the macrocosmic level. In the second chapter, Blake depicts van Helmont's "State of Destitution", when 'Every ornament of perfection, and every labour of love, / In all the Garden of Eden, & in all the golden mountains / Was become an envied horror' (28:1-3). Even though, in his spiritual blindness, Albion turns his back on the Divine Vision, still, Los labors at his furnace, renovating the form of religion so that Albion will be able to rise. Next, corresponding to van Helmont's "Modern Constitution", Albion, the microcosm, confronts the perversions of Christianity that were produced as a result of the fall, while simultaneously, Los, on the macrocosmic level, attempts to align the biblical tribes with Albion's sons, to prepare for the "Supreme Restitution", when Los will confront negation at its very source, as he 'altered his Spectre & every Ratio of his Reason / . . . Till he had completely divided him into a separate space' (91:50, 52). Finally, 'Time was Finished! The Breath Divine Breathed over Albion' (94:18).

Through *Jerusalem*, which he worked on intermittently from 1804 until the 1820s, Blake was able to conceive a kabbalistic version of Christian-

ity, one that enabled Albion to exercise the free will necessary to save himself, but without sacrificing the christological function of Los, who on the one hand, manipulated the form that Albion would actualize, and on the other, confronted the shards of negation that exist as an obstacle to cosmic restoration. Thus, it was through his verbal art that Blake was able to articulate his system. From that point on, however, he would focus on the visual art for its ultimate expression.

In his last works, Blake used the myth he had developed in the composite art as the standard against which to criticize and artistically revise the Bible and other religious works. He returned to the Book of Job, which he had worked on sporadically throughout his life, this time engraving plates that inverted the focus of the composite books. There, the pictures had been used to illustrate the verbal text; now, he uses words to illuminate what is primarily a visual text. In its completed form, Blake faults Job for constructing a rationalistic interpretation of religion, rather than experiencing God directly through the imagination. *The Ghost of Abel* (1822), a two-plate response to Byron's *Cain: A Mystery*, published in December 1821, is subtitled 'A Revelation In the Visions of Jehovah / Seen by William Blake'. For *Laocoön* (c. 1826-1827), his last illuminated work, Blake arranges a vast collection of aphorisms, using Hebrew and Greek, as well as English, all around a statue of Laocoön and his two sons, to convey the disparity between that which is taught and that which is true. Finally, on his deathbed, Blake worked on the 102-water color drawings that criticize and correct → Dante's *Divine Comedy*, demonstrating how organized religion had occluded the medieval Italian poet's true vision.

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SHEILA A. SPECTOR

## Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna, \* 12.8.1831 Ekaterinoslav, † 8.5.1891 London

Undoubtedly one of the most fascinating, controversial, and influential women in the 19th century writing on the ancient wisdom tradition, Blavatsky was born in the von Hahn family on August 12, 1831 (or on July 31, according to the old Julian calendar that was still current in Russia) in Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk), the Ukraine. Descended from a prominent family of Russian, French Huguenot, and German background, her father, Col. Peter Alexeyevich von Hahn (1798-1873), was a descendant of the medieval crusader Count Rottenstern and a Captain of Artillery. Her mother, Helena Andreyevna, *née* de Fadeyev (1814-1842), was a woman of great literary talent who wrote novels under the pseudonym of Zeneida R\_\_va. Because of her husband's position, the family traveled constantly. During an interlude in the early 1840s following the death of her mother in Odessa, young Helena was sent to live with her grandparents (Andrey Mihailovitch de Fedeyev and Helena Pavlovna Delgorukova) in Saratov, where she remained until 1845. According to accounts of this period, Helena already exhibited traits of mediumship.

By age eighteen (1849) she married Nikofor Blavatsky (1809-?), a man for whom she obviously had little attachment, given that she left him after only three months. From that time on she em-

barked on years of wandering, presumably in search of esoteric truths and occult training, traveling to a number of destinations, including Constantinople – where the greatest concentration of Sufi mystics resided – Greece, Egypt, and Eastern Europe. While in Egypt (1849-1850), she met the Copt occultist Paulos Metamon, a so-called magician who many years later (1871) was said to have assisted Blavatsky in the establishment of the "Société Spirite" in Cairo. It has been claimed that Metamon was her occult teacher during these early years of her travels. From Egypt, Blavatsky left for Europe, traveling to Paris and London, where she later claimed to have met her Master for the first time in Hyde Park during the summer of 1850.

From Paris, Blavatsky left for North America, inspired by the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and his descriptions of the Native Americans and the promise of secrets possessed by the medicine men or shamans. She arrived in Quebec, but was ultimately disappointed with the group of Native Americans with whom she met. After this meeting, she commenced on a new plan, leaving for New Orleans to investigate Voudouism, then on to Texas, Mexico, and – for much of 1852 – to Central and South America. She then decided to go to India, and together with two other companions – one of them a Hindu she had originally met in Honduras and whom she had selected to be her guru or Master – they sailed first to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and then on to Bombay (Mumbai) sometime during the latter part of 1852. During the same year she attempted to enter Tibet through Nepal but failed in her attempt. She then journeyed to south India, Java, and Singapore and ultimately back to England. Her probable arrival there was in 1853, and she remained until 1854. Sometime in the second part of the year, she set out once again for the United States, landing in New York, journeying across country through Chicago to her final destination in San Francisco – traveling for part of the journey in a covered wagon caravan – where she remained until 1855.

Her next destination was India (Calcutta), which she reached via Japan. During her second visit there, from 1855 to 1856, she met with a German acquaintance of her father (an ex-Lutheran minister by the name of Kühlwein) and two other companions, all of whom attempted to enter western Tibet through Kashmir to Ladakh. If we trust the account in A.P. Sinnett's (1840-1921) *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, she alone among her traveling companions was taken into Tibetan territory by a Tatar shaman guide, albeit for only a short time.



Blavatsky left India in 1857 for Europe (France and Germany) by way of Java, and finally ended up in Russia. The period from 1858 to 1863 she spent primarily with her family; and during a period of about a year she stayed with her husband, General Blavatsky, in Tiflis. We know that sometime around 1859 she became very ill and came close to death. This period in Russia is significant because the mediumistic or psychic powers she was said to have displayed since childhood now became particularly prominent; this, at least, is what we can deduce from the account of her sister, Vera Petrovna de Jelihowsky (or de Zhelihovsky, 1835-1895), who, when questioned on the subject, replied: 'I remember that when addressed as a medium, she (Mme. Blavatsky) used to laugh and assure us she was no medium, but only a *mediator* between mortals and beings we knew nothing about'. The types of phenomena that were produced during the time of Blavatsky's stay in Pskov are classified and described by Madame de Zhelihovsky as follows: '1) direct and perfectly clear written and verbal answers to mental questions – or "thought-reading"; 2) prescriptions for various diseases, written in Latin, and subsequent cures; 3) private secrets, unknown to all but the interested party, divulged, especially in the case of those persons who mentioned insulting doubts; 4) change of weight in furniture and of persons at will; 5) letters from unknown correspondents, and immediate answers written to queries made and found in the most out-of-the-way mysterious places; 6) appearance and *apport* of objects unclaimed by any one present; 7) sounds as of musical notes in the air wherever Mme. Blavatsky desired they should resound' (Sinnett, *Incidents*, 86). Blavatsky's exact whereabouts between 1863 and 1867 are not altogether certain, but it is reasonable to assume that she left her family and Russia around 1863 and traveled to Italy, the Balkans, Serbia, Egypt, and Persia (Iran). It was an eventful period because of her association with a revolutionary Italian society, the Carbonari, on the one hand, and a controversy surrounding her relationship to her adolescent ward, Yury, on the other. The child was apparently in her care since 1862, when she resided in Tiflis. Although he was the son of Baron Nicholas Meyendorff and an unknown mother, suspicion was placed on Blavatsky as being the actual mother by the sister-in-law of the Baron, who claimed that the latter had an ongoing affair with Blavatsky since she arrived in Russia in 1858. Yet, a medical examination in 1885 revealed that Blavatsky suffered from *Anteflexio Uteri*, 'most probably from the day of her birth', so it is unlikely that the child was hers.

When the boy died in 1867, she arranged, with the assistance of her long-time friend, Agardi Metrovitch, to have him buried in Russia. It was apparently this same Metrovitch who introduced Blavatsky to the cause of the Carbonari, but his identity and his relationship to Blavatsky remain unclear. According to Blavatsky herself, the two had been acquainted since 1850, and she probably knew that this revolutionary half-Italian had ties to the society that included among its membership Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) and Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), and whose purpose was to break the hold of the Papacy over Italy. Blavatsky actively supported Metrovitch's cause, even to the extent of participating in the battle of Mentana (November 3, 1867). This battle was lost to the Papists and the French, and Blavatsky received multiple wounds, including being shot in the leg and right shoulder and stabbed near her heart.

Blavatsky's travels resumed in early 1868. She left Italy, traveling to India by way of Constantinople; this time she claimed that she was accompanied by her Master. After having reached India later in the year, she claims to have entered Tibet and resided both in Greater and Little Tibet, even staying at the home of the Master Koot Hoomi in Little Tibet and in Shigatse in southern Tibet, the latter close to Tashilhumpo, the residence of the Panchen Lama.

The first so-called Mahatma letter, or letter from the Master KH (Koot Hoomi), arrived at the home of Blavatsky's aunt, Nadyezhda Andreyevna de Fadeyev in 1870. It stated that Helena would be returning shortly to her family. This she did after journeying to Greece and Cyprus at the end of 1870, where she claimed to have met the Master Hilarion (Illarion). From Piraeus (Greece) she boarded the SS *Eunomia* for Cairo in July 1871. On route, the gunpowder magazine in the cargo hold blew up, causing many deaths. Blavatsky was rescued and brought to Alexandria, arriving in Cairo toward the end of the year. Here she made the acquaintance of Emma Cutting, who is known to Theosophists by her married name, Mme. Alexis Coulomb, and who would cause untold grief to Blavatsky thirteen years later.

While in Cairo, Blavatsky founded the "Société Spirite", a society that seems to have had a double agenda: a public and a private one. The first involved the public investigation of passive reception by mediums of spirit communications – a reflection of the → spiritualism that was practiced in the United States since 1848. There appears to have been another agenda, however, that was known only to certain individuals in the society

(including Blavatsky and Metamon, the same Copt magician whom Blavatsky met in 1850). It involved conducting undisclosed occult practices that may very well have been similar to those practiced in the early → Theosophical Society. As far as Blavatsky was concerned, the importance of the “Société Spirite” lay in its private aspect. Within a few months, perhaps weeks, the formal society all but disappeared.

By April 1872, Blavatsky again left Egypt, traveling to Odessa to reunite with her family, but making a number of stops on the way. In March or April 1873 she traveled to Paris via Bucharest before finally taking a passenger liner to the United States, where she arrived on July 7, 1873. This journey marks the conclusion to her earlier life of travel and the beginning of the next major period of her life.

What are we to make of this extended period of travel by a girl who began her journeys as a recently married teenager and who later claimed to have resided in many of the most inaccessible places on earth, sometimes disguising herself as a man, once involved in a battle, meeting with practitioners of magic and the occult arts, and spending the better part of twenty years as a veritable gypsy? In psychological terms one might speak of travel compulsiveness, but if we take Blavatsky’s own words seriously, this compulsion had a purpose. Most of what we know about this period originates from her own reminiscences, from the accounts of acquaintances who affirm having met her during the course of her travels, and from family members who left their own written recollections of her activities. Even if we assume an attitude of healthy skepticism regarding the question of whether all these accounts are to be trusted, it remains that much of it appears to have a basis in fact. Some of Blavatsky’s adventures have been embellished by her, but it seems certain that she met many unusual people and acquired a vast store of esoteric and occult knowledge. Already as a child of fifteen, she claims to have been exposed to an occult library, consisting of several hundred volumes, belonging to her maternal great-grandfather, Prince Paul Vassilyevich Dolgorukov (1755-1837). In all likelihood, this was her first exposure to → alchemy, → magic, and kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. Combine this with the psychic abilities that her family claimed she exhibited, and we have the basic conditions for a theoretical as well as practical occultist. Blavatsky’s interests appear to have driven her to seek more knowledge of esotericism and occultism, not just from written sources but also from living teachers. Who these teachers were,

and how they were related to the Theosophical “Masters” who were to play a highly important role in her life, remains a mystery to this day.

Why Madame Blavatsky came to the United States is open to speculation, but in keeping with her propensity for the mysterious, she claimed that she had been sent by her Lodge either to reveal the truth about modern spiritualism or to form a secret society. The events leading up to the foundation of what would become known as the Theosophical Society begin in 1874, with her introduction to Col. → Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907). According to Olcott’s account in his *Old Diary Leaves* (I, 1f.), their meeting took place in Chittenden, Vermont on October 14, 1874, during his investigation of the spirit or phantom phenomena allegedly occurring at the farmhouse of William and Horatio Eddy. Thus began a lifelong collaboration, sometimes rancorous and turbulent but always productive. Their initial interest involved the investigation of spiritualist phenomena, including the phantom forms at the Eddy brothers’ home in Chittenden, and the reappearance (having first appeared as the spirit guide to Florence Cook in England) of the spirit “Katie King” in Philadelphia through the mediums Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Holmes. There is no doubt that Blavatsky defended → spiritualism in her early correspondence to the New York *Daily Graphic* and spiritualist papers. One example illustrating her high opinion of spiritualism and her belief that the United States was the cradle of that phenomenon appears in the *Spiritual Scientist*, in which she remarks that she ‘came over here [the U.S.] from France with feelings not unlike those of a Mohammedan approaching the birth-place of his prophet’. Comparing these remarks in support of spiritualism, made in December 1874, to those made in February 1875, one can observe a marked change in attitude. In her correspondence of that month with Hiram Corson (1828-1911), a professor at Cornell University, she writes that for her, spiritualism is based not on the modern American variety that began in 1848 but on a much older one, originating ‘from the same source of information that was used by Raymond Lully, Picus della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Robert Fludd, Henry More, etc. etc. etc.’. Thus she expressed for the first time her concept of an “ancient Spiritualism” or “occultism” [→ occult/occultism] that was later to become the foundation of her theosophy. To Blavatsky, American spiritualism was devoid of ancient wisdom, whereas “ancient Spiritualism” or occultism comprised ‘a system that should disclose . . . the “deepest depths” of the Divine Nature, and show . . . the *real tie which binds all*

*things together*'. In other words, what we see here is a shift from a form of spiritualism based merely upon investigation of "phenomena" but devoid of doctrinal content, towards one that claims to be rooted in the ancient wisdom of the Western esoteric tradition. Henceforth Blavatsky would continue to emphasize this tradition, while increasingly including Eastern (primarily South Asian) occult teachings as well. By July 1875 the first public statement of her views appears in a response to an article by HIRAF (an acronym for five authors) entitled "Rosicrucianism", which had appeared in the July 1 and 8 issues of the *Spiritual Scientist*. Blavatsky's response, entitled "A Few Questions to 'HIRAF'", appeared in the following two issues (July 15 and 22). For the first time, she presents a rather detailed exposition of her views on occultism and magic – presented by her as the practical and theoretical sides of the Ancient Wisdom. Because it is a response to → Rosicrucianism as interpreted by HIRAF, one important idea evident from this article is her acknowledgement of the existence of a number of "Brotherhoods" devoted to the "Wisdom or Occult tradition", going back as far as the Egyptian → Ophites and persisting through the "Fire-Philosophers" or Paracelsists and European alchemists.

Staying at 46 Irving Place in New York during much of 1875, Blavatsky attracted to her apartment a number of interested individuals curious to hear her views on occultism. From the early months of 1875, she was also involved in the writing of her first major work, *Isis Unveiled*. In addition to this creative activity, she experienced a rather tumultuous period involving domestic problems (her marriage with and divorce from a Russian citizen, Michael Betanelly, within the space of a few months) and a serious leg injury caused by a fall.

The meetings at her apartment led to the formation of the Theosophical Society later in 1875. On September 7, a lecture was given here by George Henry Felt (1831-1906) entitled "The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians". According to Felt's own account, he successfully proved the existence of 'elementals or intermediates, or elementary or original spirits' existing on various levels from 'inanimate nature through the animal kingdom to man'; furthermore, Felt affirmed that these beings were represented in the Egyptian zodiacs (i.e. the forms appearing there were not figments of the imagination but real creatures), and that they could be evoked by chemical means. This lecture incited Col. Olcott to suggest, in a note passed to Blavatsky during the meeting, whether it would 'not be a good thing to form a Society for this kind

of study?' Blavatsky agreed to the proposal, and the other members of the audience concurred, thus initiating the process of formally establishing a society which would soon come to be known as the Theosophical Society, which was to be organized on October 30 and 'constitutionally perfected' on November 17, 1875.

The second significant event that occurred during the New York years (1873-1878) was the publication of *Isis Unveiled* on September 29, 1877. A monumental work in scope, the text extended over 1268 pages in two volumes: the first volume called "The 'Infallibility' of Modern Science" and the second called "Theology". Originally entitled *The Veil of Isis* (which remains on the heading of each page), it had to be renamed once it was discovered that this title had already been used for an 1861 Rosicrucian work by W.W. Reade. Many years later, within a month of her death, Blavatsky revealed that the text was not written primarily for the general public but rather for the members of the Theosophical Society; and she added that much of the work was edited by Col. Olcott and Alexander Wilder (1823-1908) – an old acquaintance of Olcott's, and a member and later Vice-president of the Theosophical Society. Blavatsky writes in the Preface that *Isis Unveiled* 'is a plea for the recognition of the Hermetic philosophy, the anciently universal Wisdom Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology'. This Wisdom Religion is identified with magic, considered in ancient times 'a divine science which led to a participation in the attributes of Divinity itself'. Volume one is devoted to the hidden and unknown forces of nature, discussing subjects such as phenomena and forces (Chapter 2), elementals and elementaries (Chapter 7), cyclic phenomena (Chapter 9), psychic and physical marvels (Chapter 11), and the Inner and Outer Man (Chapter 10), all accompanied by a vast array of supportive and incidental knowledge – ancient and modern, Western and Eastern, esoteric and exoteric. Volume two discusses similarities of Christian scripture, doctrine, history, and personalities with non-Christian systems such as Buddhism, Hinduism, the Vedas, and Zoroastrianism, all based on the notion that they share a common origin referred to as the 'primitive "wisdom-religion"'.

Sometime during the writing of *Isis Unveiled* the idea came up (probably first in Olcott's mind) of a move to India, and eventually this plan was confirmed when the Masters' "Orders to make ready" to leave New York were recorded in his diary on May 24. Shortly thereafter (July 8, 1878) Blavatsky became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Toward the end of the year, Blavatsky and Olcott departed from New York harbor to England, arriving from there in Bombay on February 16, 1879. Blavatsky was never to return to the U.S. again.

After their arrival in Bombay, accompanied by considerable publicity in the Indian newspapers, Olcott and Blavatsky settled in a home on Girgaum Back Road. One of the newspapers, *The Pioneer* (Allahabad), gave especially favorable accounts of the Theosophists because its editor, Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840-1921), had had an interest in the Theosophical Society and its founders as a result of his involvement with spiritualism. Sinnett's interest in Theosophy eventually led to his and Mrs. Sinnett's meeting the Theosophists for the first time in December 1879, thus resulting in Blavatsky's short-time involvement with *The Pioneer*. She contributed a number of letters, unsigned articles on Russian subjects, and an eleven-part translation of "The Travels of Colonel Grodekoff".

In October 1879, Olcott and Blavatsky initiated a monthly magazine designed as the main organ for the Society, *The Theosophist*, with an initial circulation of 400 copies. Prior to this event, however, far more ambitious plans were being developed. Olcott records in this diary entry of May 23, 1879, that Blavatsky began work on 'her new book on Theosophy', an undertaking that was to culminate in the publication of her greatest work, *The Secret Doctrine*.

In 1880, two significant events occurred. The first was Blavatsky's and Olcott's first tour of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), which resulted in both of them formally accepting the Five Precepts (*pansil*; Pali: *pañcasīla*) and presumably the Triple Gem as well. Thus they formally became Buddhists; although in Blavatsky's case one should perhaps say that she reaffirmed her Buddhism, since she already identified herself as a Buddhist during her New York residency in the 1870s. The outcome of this visit was the establishment of branches of the Theosophical Society in Ceylon and the initiation of a Buddhist revival that, through the sustained efforts of Col. Olcott, would continue to develop throughout the 1880s and 1890s.

In October 1880, a significant event took place: the receipt of the first of a long succession of letters from the Masters K.H. (Koot Hoomi) and M. (Morya) to Sinnett and others. K.H., M. and other Masters, believed to belong to an "Occult Brotherhood" in the East, were assumed to have given their philosophical and ethical teachings to the world through the medium of the Theosophical Society; they were also believed to have been the teachers of Blavatsky, who had first become their pupil (*chela*)

and who had received training and instruction during her visit to Tibet. From the first letter received by Sinnett on October 15, 1880 to the final letter of the series in 1886, 145 were written. The esoteric teachings contained in these letters were summarized by Sinnett in his book *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883).

The year 1884 was eventful for the Founders and for the Theosophical Society. Early in February Olcott and Blavatsky visited Europe – Blavatsky for medical reasons, Olcott on Society business and as an advocate for the Buddhist cause in Ceylon. While in England, Olcott had to intervene in a struggle that was causing considerable distress within the British Theosophical Society. The latter, formed in 1878, consisted in the early 1880s of a small, intellectual group of individuals whose president, George Wyld (1821-1906), attempted to establish an independent Society more in step with the teachings of Christianity and less with the "atheism" of Blavatsky and her anti-Christian views. Having failed, he resigned in 1882. A similar crisis within the Society developed over the next two years involving Mrs. → Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-1888) and her close associate, Edward Maitland (1824-1897), resulting in the formation of the Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies]. Early in May, Olcott, Blavatsky and other members of the Theosophical Society assented to a series of meetings with a committee formed by the Society for Psychical Research (established in 1882) on the subject of psychic phenomena, including 'the phenomenal receipt of written documents' and 'the precipitation of Mahatmic writing within closed letters from ordinary correspondents while in transit through the mails'. Blavatsky was questioned in Cambridge in August 9th, and the S.P.R. committee was favorably impressed with her responses. Its 'preliminary and provisional' report came out in December 1884.

In the month following the interview, an explosive event in India lent support to the negative conclusions of a second S.P.R. Report, issued in 1885. These developments were to leave a permanent stain upon the reputations of the Theosophical Society and Blavatsky. Under the title 'The Collapse of Koot Hoomi', *The Madras Christian College Magazine* of September 1884 published the first part of an exposé containing fifteen letters purportedly written by Blavatsky to Emma Coulomb. The letters were intended to be proof of Mme. Coulomb's charge that Blavatsky had committed fraud. Blavatsky vehemently objected to the allegations, but did not bring charges against Mrs. Coulomb and her husband, Alexis, and the magazine.

This was because Olcott had convinced her to leave the decision to a special Committee comprising, among others, a number of prominent Indian legal experts and government officials. The Committee suggested not prosecuting the defamers due to the inherent legal dangers to plaintiffs in libel cases. This position was also supported by the delegates at the 1884 Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society, held in December.

Meanwhile, the S.P.R., which had concluded in its first report that there was some evidence that could not be discounted, decided to continue its investigation by sending an observer, Richard Hodgson (1855-1905), to India in November 1884. He remained there for three months, investigating the charges by the Coulombs; his goal was to determine 'the competency of the witnesses to phenomena, and to ascertain, if possible, the trustworthiness in particular of three primary witnesses, viz., Mr. Damodar K. Mavalankar, Mr. Babajee D. Nath, and Colonel Olcott'. Hodgson's conclusions, issued in December 1885, could not have been more damaging and devastating to Blavatsky and the Society. They included the following: (a) the letters to the Coulombs were written by Blavatsky, (b) the Coulombs were Blavatsky's accomplices in the production of fraudulent phenomena, (c) the primary witnesses to the existence of an Occult Brotherhood, including Blavatsky, had made false statements, (d) the Masters Koot Hoomi and Morya must be fictitious, since their handwriting resembled M. Damodar's and Blavatsky's, (e) no instance of phenomena was witnessed by Hodgson, (f) the objects of the Theosophical Society were political and Blavatsky was a Russian spy. Hodgson concluded with this statement: 'But acting in accordance with the principles upon which our Society [the S.P.R.] has proceeded, I must express my unqualified opinion that no genuine psychical phenomena whatever will be found among the pseudo-mysteries of the Russian lady *alias* Koot Hoomi Lal Sing *alias* Mahatma Morya *alias* Madame Blavatsky'. The S.P.R. Committee concluded: 'For our own part, we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history'.

Blavatsky returned to India at the end of 1884, but within a month she became gravely ill, causing her to resign from the office of Corresponding Secretary of the Society on March 21. Shortly thereafter, she left India for the last time, traveling to Europe. After a sojourn of three months in Italy,

she decided to settle in Würzburg (Bavaria), in August 1885. By the end of the year, she was immersed in the writing of her *magnum opus*, *The Secret Doctrine*, aided by the recent arrival in Würzburg of Countess Constance Wachtmeister (1838-1910).

For the next two years, *The Secret Doctrine* was to be Blavatsky's major project. From Würzburg she moved to Ostend (Belgium) in July before being persuaded by some English Theosophists to settle in London. This she did in May 1887, residing first at the home ("Maycot") of Mabel Collins (1851-1927), the author of *Light on the Path*. Within a few days (on May 19), the Blavatsky Lodge was established, and within a few months (September), the magazine *Lucifer* was founded to provide 'some sort of public propaganda' before the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*, which took place a year later. If the contents of the magazine did not excite the general public, the title certainly did.

In September of 1887, Blavatsky and the Blavatsky Lodge moved to 17 Lansdowne Road, the focal point of Blavatsky's activities for the next two-and-one-half years before she relocated to 19 Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, London in 1890, which became the new headquarters of the Blavatsky Lodge as well as of the British Section and of European headquarters. The headquarters incidentally was the home of → Annie Besant (1847-1933), a recently recruited member (May 1889) and rising star of the Theosophical Society. Thirteen months after the establishment of the Lansdowne Road residence as headquarters of the Blavatsky Lodge (October 9, 1888), a second significant event occurred: the establishment of a new organization that was closely affiliated with the Theosophical Society. This organization, the "Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society" (E.S.), had as its goal the promotion of 'the esoteric interests of the Theosophical Society'. Blavatsky became Outer Head (the Inner Heads were the Masters or Mahatmas), with the responsibility of giving esoteric teachings to a small group of students who desired chelaship. The E.S. was independent of the administration of the Theosophical Society, or in the words of Olcott, it was '*not* the T.S.; nor that its rules are binding only upon members belonging to that special school; nor that it would be violation of the T.S. constitution for it to interfere with their rights of private judgment; nor that the President-Founder is compelled to guarantee to every individual member, of whatsoever religion, race, sex, or color, his or her personal liberty of belief and speech'.

A few days after the founding of the Esoteric Sec-



tion came the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*, consisting of two volumes with a total of 1474 pages. The first volume, *Cosmogogenesis*, discusses cosmic evolution, expanding upon the contents of *Isis Unveiled*, while the second volume, *Anthropogenesis*, discusses the evolution of Humanity through a succession of Root Races, five of which have already appeared. Based on stanzas taken from *The Book of Dzryan* (seven in volume I and twelve in volume II), a work unknown to modern scholarship, said to be composed by an unattested person and in a language unknown to philosophy, *The Secret Doctrine* (SD) contains the following ideas: 1) There exists a single, Supreme, Eternal, Immutable, Unknown and Unknowable, Infinite Principle or Reality (SD I:14); 2) There is a fundamental unity to all existence (SD I:120, 276); 3) The eternal, manifested Universe and everything within it is subject to the ‘law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow’ (SD I:17); 4) The evolution of nature – material and spiritual – reflects progressive development and not merely repetitive action (SD I:43, 277-78; II:653); 5) The evolution of the individual is not limited to one life but continues through innumerable lives made possible by the process of → reincarnation, i.e. the entrance of Self – the trinity of Spirit, Soul, and Mind – into another (human) body (SD II:302-306); 6) This evolution is brought about by the Law of Cause and Effect, or Karma – good actions leading to good consequences, bad actions to bad consequences – thus assigning full responsibility to the individual who performs the actions (SD I:639, 642-47; 7). The structural framework of the universe, humanity included, is by nature septenary in composition (SD II:605-41; 8). The cyclic, evolving universe is hierarchical in constitution, each component – for instance, the planets and the sun in our Solar System – consisting of seven constituents or globes, thus illustrating the correspondence between the microcosm of the human being and the macrocosm of the universe (SD II:68f., 434f.; 9). Human evolution on the Earth is taking place within seven Root Races, each of which is divided into seven sub-races. In our present state of evolution, we belong to the fifth sub-race (the Anglo-Saxon) of the fifth Root Race (SD I:610; II:1f., 86f., 300f., 434f., 688f.); 10) The individual is a microcosm, a ‘miniature copy of the macrocosm’ (SD I:274; 11). The universe is guided and animated by a cosmic Hierarchy of sentient beings, each having a specific mission (SD I:274-77).

Students of *The Secret Doctrine* soon began to ask questions about its contents. Blavatsky’s responses during meetings of the Blavatsky Lodge

in the first half of 1889 led to the publication, in two parts, of the *Transactions of The Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society* in 1890 and 1891. They cover issues concerning the heart of *The Secret Doctrine*: the “stanzas of Dzryan” included in the first volume.

In July 1889, Blavatsky, while visiting Fontainebleau for rest and recuperation, wrote or “translated” excerpts from “The Book of the Golden Precepts”, entitled *The Voice of the Silence*, allegedly part of the same series of texts from which the stanzas of the *Book of Dzryan* had been derived. Some stanzas she claimed to be pre-Buddhist, others Mahāyāna Buddhist in spirit. The first part, from which the title of the whole work is derived, highlights the progression of knowledge from the ordinary, waking (ignorant) state to the fourth or dreamless state of higher spiritual consciousness, until finally, in Blavatsky’s words, your ‘Self is lost in SELF, *thysel*f unto THYSELF, merged in THAT SELF from which thou first didst radiate’. The second part, “The Two Paths”, refers to the ‘*Open PATH*’, i.e. the path of the layman or the exoteric path, that ‘leads to the changeless change – Nirvāna, the glorious state of Absoluteness, the Bliss past human thought’; and it distinguishes this from the second Path of ‘RENUNCIATION’, the ‘Path of Woe’, a ‘*Secret Path* [which] leads the Arhan to mental woe unspeakable’ but which also leads to ‘Paranirvānic’ bliss. The third part, “the Seven Portals”, purports to bring wisdom to the aspirant through ‘a golden key that openeth its gate’, which echoes in part the six *pāramitās* or perfections, discussed in great detail in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by the 8th century Buddhist poet Shāntideva.

The same month also witnessed the publication of *The Key to Theosophy*, a popular introduction to the “Wisdom Religion” or Theosophy. Among other subjects, it discusses the septenary nature of humanity and earth, reincarnation, post-mortem states, mind and ego, and gives information about the Theosophical Society and the Theosophical Masters or Mahatmas.

Although Blavatsky’s writing career was open to criticism by non-Theosophist theologians, scientists, and academics, by far the most serious challenge to the credibility of her major contributions – *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, and *The Voice of the Silence* – came from a spiritualist, William Emmette Coleman (1843-1909), who claimed that she had plagiarized many of her teachings from sources such as Ennemoser’s *History of Magic* and *Demonologia*, Dunlap’s *Sod: The Son of Man* and *Sod: The Mysteries of Adoni*, King’s *Gnostics*, and

Jaccoliot's *Christna et le Christ* and *Le Spiritisme dans le monde*. Coleman listed a total of about one hundred secondary sources. Plagiarism has been an issue in Theosophy since the charges first appeared in the late 1880s. Blavatsky's methods of citing sources have been defended by Theosophists, but in all fairness no detailed investigation has even been conducted, nor have criteria been established to prove or disprove the allegations. Interestingly, many of the authors who were allegedly the victims of Blavatsky's plagiarism were alive when the charges were made, yet none indicted her.

A final assault on Blavatsky's character came from one of the leading American Theosophists, Elliott Coues (1842-1899). Having failed to retain a position of authority within the newly reorganized Theosophical Society in America in 1886, and having failed to enlist Blavatsky's aid in his efforts to gain control, Coues, in an article written by him appearing in the *New York Sun* in July 1890, attacked Blavatsky as an imposter and the Society for its teachings. This resulted in a lawsuit initiated in Blavatsky's name against both Coues and the *Sun*. The suit was terminated because of Blavatsky's death on May 8, 1891. Although Coues was unrepentant, the *Sun* did retract the story in a separate suit that W.Q. Judge, the General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in America, brought against the paper, and agreed to publish Judge's sketch of Blavatsky's life, entitled 'The Esoteric She', in the September 27, 1892 issue.

In the year before her death, Blavatsky took on additional administrative responsibilities when she became President of the newly established European Section. In *Lucifer* (July 1890), she declared that she would exercise 'the Presidential authority for the whole of Europe', thus effectively becoming the co-leader of the Theosophical Society and declaring independence from Adyar.

On April 26, symptoms of influenza appeared, and her condition grew steadily worse. Blavatsky's final days were described by Laura Cooper, who, with Claude Falls Wright and Walter Richard Old, witnessed her passing. Over one hundred notices appeared in the British press, in addition to numerous letters from Theosophists, all attempting to define Blavatsky's achievements. These achievements, according to the correspondents, were not to be located in her mediumship and psychic abilities, which may or may not have existed; rather, it was in her ability to synthesize with great erudition a vast expanse of knowledge and to articulate the knowledge that she believed to be the Ancient Wisdom of her Masters. Blavatsky's esoteric synthesis has served as a basic source for later esotericists,

literati, scientists, and entire movements, including the → New Age. Unlike most of her contemporaries, she is as visible today as any modern trend-setting guru, and she will most likely remain the most memorable and innovative esotericist of the 19th century.

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JAMES A. SANTUCCI

## Boehme, Jacob, \* ca. 24.4.1575 Alt-Seidenberg, † 17.11.1624 Görlitz

1. LIFE 2. BOEHME'S PERSPECTIVE  
3. AURORA 4. THREE PRINCIPLES  
5. SUBSEQUENT WRITINGS 6. CONCLUSION

Shoemaker, Lutheran dissenter, and author of numerous writings that exercised a profound and lasting influence on German Spiritualism and → Pietism and its equivalents in other countries, on German literature and philosophy, as well as on mysticism and → Christian Theosophy.

### 1. LIFE

Despite a rich mythic and legendary overlay, the salient facts of Boehme's life are largely documented. He was born into a prosperous and respected Lutheran peasant family. As a young man, he was given the relatively thorough elementary school education that is reflected by his fine writing skills in German. He took up the shoemaker's trade

as an apprentice and journeyman before acquiring rights of citizenship as a master shoemaker in Görlitz in 1599. In that year, his unexceptional course of life appears to have become firmly established when he purchased a house and married the daughter of a prosperous butcher, out of which union the first of four sons was born in 1600. Although by his twenty-fifth year he was very much engaged in the normal life of his time, place, and station, he was religiously troubled and beset by deep melancholy. In 1600, the luminous experience which launched his career as a visionary author took place. In the famous version recounted by Franckenberg, the young shoemaker was seated in his shop when the gleam of light (presumably a reflection of the sun) in a tin or pewter vessel gave him the impression of looking into a concealed "center of nature", a sense that seemed confirmed during a walk out into the countryside. Boehme's own account in chapter nineteen of *Aurora* recollects a prior melancholy sense that God was remotely situated in the heavens above and that the poor human beings were abandoned in a harsh world down below, in which true piety was not required. Upon realizing that the "true heavens" were everywhere, he felt himself joyously embraced by divine love. This experience initiated his path to authorship and anticipated his themes of good and evil, divine presence, and natural or cosmic intuition.

The two parallel strands – involvement in the life of his times and apparent singularity of inspiration – traverse his career and constitute the central challenge to scholarship. Both as recounted in Franckenberg's early biography and recalled by Boehme himself, the experience of 1600 was a seminal one. From 1600 until 1612, he wrote and rewrote drafts of the book to which he gave the title *Morgen Röte im aufgang* (Morning Glow in the Ascendant). This work circulated beginning in 1612 as the 400-page fragment known by the equivalent title *Aurora*. Circulating in hand-copied manuscripts, *Aurora* caused a local and regional stir in these years of religious and political tension. When a copy of the manuscript came to the attention of the Lutheran chief pastor of Görlitz, Gregor Richter, the humble shoemaker was formally reprimanded by the city council for his unauthorized religious publication.

Authorial silence was imposed and apparently maintained until around 1618, when he resumed composing and circulating religious treatises. Thereupon began an uninterrupted authorial output that coincided with the first, Bohemian phase of the Thirty Years' War. Supporting himself and his family by mercantile activities, Boehme wrote

and disseminated numerous tracts amounting to thousands of pages. *Beschreibung der Drey Principien Göttliches Wesens* (Description of the Three Principles of Divine Being, 1618), the initial treatise of this phase, is pivotal within his development. Most important among the writings that follow are *Vom dreyfachen Leben des Menschen* (On the Threefold Life of Man, 1620), *Vierzig Fragen von der Seelen* (Forty Questions about the Soul, 1620), *Von der Menschwerdung Jesu Christi* (On the Human Genesis of Christ, 1620), *Von sechs theosophischen Puncten* (On Six Theosophical Points, 1620), *De Signatura Rerum* (On the Signature of Things, 1622), and *Mysterium Magnum* (The Great Mystery, 1623). A number of longer works were written as responses to doctrinal controversies in which the author became involved: *Unterricht von den letzten Zeiten* (Teaching on the Final Times, 1620), *Schutz-Schriften wieder Balthasar Tilken* (Apologies against Balthasar Tilke, 1621), *Anti-Stiefel: Bedencken über Esaiä Stiefels Büchlein* (Anti-Stiefel: Remarks about Esaiä Stiefel's Booklet, 1621/22), *Von der Gnaden-Wahl* (On the Election of Grace, 1623), and *Von Christi Testamenten* (On the Testaments of Christ, 1623). The *Theosophische Sendbriefe* (Theosophical Letters, 1618-1624) document his interactions with the like-minded or with opponents and shed light on common experience at the start of the Thirty Years' War. A number of writings emerged as letters but can stand on their own as treatises. These include some essay-like tracts that exerted an influence on posterity, such as *Kurtze Erklärung von sechs mystischen Puncten* (Short Explanation of Six Mystical Points, 1620), a work that came to the attention of the young Schopenhauer and anticipated the latter's mature metaphysics of will. A single collection of mainly devotional tracts, *Der Weg zu Christo* (The Way to Christ, 1624), was printed during his lifetime. Its appearance in print touched off the final rounds of his conflict with Lutheran orthodoxy: his late controversy with the pastor of Görlitz which is documented in his *Schutz-Rede wieder Gregorium Richter* (Defense against Gregor Richter, 1624), as well as his journey to Dresden to answer questions from and direct an appeal to the new clerical and secular overseers of a Lusatian province conquered by Lutheran Electoral Saxony in 1620. Upon his death of natural causes at the age of forty-nine, his reputation was high, though contested; and it was soon to be spread abroad by friends including Franckenberg and Dr. Balthasar Walter. In the subsequent 17th century, Boehme's fame spread through much of Germany, as well as to Holland, England, France,

Russia, and America. He had a significant impact on sectarians, especially those of the Spiritualist or Pietistic type, and on religious authors, including the German Baroque poets Angelus Silesius and Quirinus Kuhlmann. Because of the richness of Boehme's thought and writing, it stimulated and influenced various strands of Christian mysticism, theosophy and dissent, including the English dissenters of the mid-17th century, the ecumenical and kabbalistic thought of → Oetinger, the French Christian philosophy of → Saint-Martin, and the mysticism of the Russian Berdyaev, among others. Boehme's influence declined in Germany after the 17th century. He was known during the Enlightenment in Germany, but was regarded less and less favorably. Leibniz could still write respectfully of various German mystics and Pietists including Boehme. Herder at least knew of him; but Hamann, whose own thought no doubt has considerable affinities with Boehme's, condemned him for his obscurities. Subsequent phases of his influence arose in the Romantic era [→ Romanticism] and around the beginning of the 20th century. Since this influence frequently resulted in a more distanced reinterpretation, it will be discussed below.

## 2. BOEHME'S PERSPECTIVE

Though massive, complex, and frequently inscrutable in detail and expression, Boehme's oeuvre reflects its historical origins and can be studied to highlight the source materials of its synthesis. The most fundamental origin and source is the Lutheran Reformation, with its elevation of scriptural and lay authority and its agony as the transfer of authority led to strife and confusion instead of to the harmony and renewal of spiritual life anticipated by adherents of the new faith. Before Boehme, conflicts within the Reformation had encouraged the antidoctrinal and sometimes mystical writings of → Paracelsus, Sebastian Franck, → Weigel, and others. Moreover, much of the history of German mysticism can be understood as an attempt to retrench articles of faith during the epochs in which these were undermined in their universality or in their apparent coherence by internal or external conflicts.

The Lutheran Reformation, in bestowing authority and spiritual autonomy on a Bible-reading lay priest, confronted the young Boehme with a set of contradictions which are worked out in his writings. If truth is integral and accessible, how do conflicts over doctrine arise and how can they be resolved? Given the premises of Lutheran theology that Boehme accepted, the answer could only lie in



a more deeply and contextually enriched and spiritualized interpretation of the Bible. It could hardly seem satisfying to maintain a dual standard of two truths, according to which one truth was found in Scripture and another in the knowledge of nature or the experience of life. The injunctions to study nature, know thyself, and heed Scripture must all lead to the same luminous conclusion. This direction of thought correlated with Luther's teaching of divine omnipresence. This doctrine was formulated by Luther to justify his challenged doctrine of Christ's real presence in the bread and wine of Communion, but it was capable, independently of Luther's intentions, of being vivified in symbolic images and elaborated into a kind of religious metaphysics. The resultant metaphysics holds that the deeper core of truth that lies concealed beneath the outer letter is identical with the hidden substrate of nature and with the innermost core of the soul. The inner truths of nature, the soul, and Scripture are at root identical for the simple reason that the same hidden deity is present in all things created or eternal. By the same token, one and the same misapprehended truth had to lie at the root of all conflicting sources of authority, be they scriptural, natural-philosophical, existential-introspective, or even doctrinal. Doctrine – the province of a professional clergy (which Boehme despised as an instigator of religious strife) – fails to apprehend the deeper truth that is revealed by the Holy Spirit and witnessed in external nature and self-knowledge. Doctrine, as the province of the professional clerical class, is exclusionary and authoritarian. By contrast, the writings of Boehme, understood to be guided by the Holy Spirit and tutored by a nature construed as the visible symbol of God, were intended to be non-exclusionary and antiauthoritarian (though certainly their tolerant ecumenicism was doomed to fail almost from the start). Boehme's thought is understood by him as a deconcealment of a deeper truth that encompasses divergent doctrines in a broader harmony. Hence, the coherence of his underlying themes of nature theology, theogony, and theophany fulfills for him a dialectical progression from the simplicity of the divine source to a worldly multiplicity with its confusions, conflicts, and bifurcation of good and evil, to a resolution and synthesis, with a restored eschatological unity which is projected back onto a transcendent plane.

As an intellectual biotope, Görlitz was remarkably rich in humanistic, clerical, and alchemistic conveyers of knowledge and ideas. We can assume that Boehme's writings tapped into this rich soil. His ability to immerse himself in and draw on the

half-clandestine circles is extraordinary, but not without equal in the history of knowledge. Interpreting Boehme is accordingly like interpreting other literature from a remote period. Its historical context is decisive. A hermeneutic approach crediting the author's divine inspiration is appropriately complemented by a sociohistorical approach which may ignore claims of special inspiration. As in Bible scholarship, skeptics and believers can proceed in fertile collaboration. It is only the interpretation that disregards the writings, or projects extraneous constructs onto them, that precludes a shared endeavor. In order to do justice to the express intention of Boehme's work, it is especially necessary to consider not only the originality of his theories but also their roots in the Reformation mainstream, since, for all his idiosyncracies, Boehme is overt in his allegiance to Lutheranism, distinguishing his faith from that of Calvinists, Catholics, and sectarians of several persuasions.

### 3. AURORA

Boehme's *Aurora* is seminal. The subtitle of this fragmentary work promises to bring to light the "Root or Mother of Philosophy, Astrology, and Theology", as well as a "Description of Nature". The work also undertakes to clarify the relationship of good and evil and promises to reveal eschatological dimensions. Not unlike Hegel's philosophy, the theosophy of Boehme aspires to encompass in essence everything known: as an evolving whole in which the work itself serves as a keystone and final proof, anticipating its own eschatological fulfillment. For Boehme, knowledge resides in the intuited parallels of Scripture, celestial and earthly nature, divinity, and humanity. "Philosophy" in his usage includes not only his intuitive grasp of nature, but also an increasingly informed borrowing from Paracelsus and alchemical philosophy [→ Alchemy]. → "Astrology" gives voice to an echo of the traditional planetary influences that go back to Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (the "source spirits" with their equivalent qualities), as well as to an idiosyncratic understanding of the new heliocentric cosmology. "Theology" includes Boehme's unorthodox defence of his own Lutheranism, with its controversial doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist, as well as the heterodox Spiritualism Boehme inherited from Valentin Weigel. Although it is certain that Boehme knew of the writings of both Weigel and Paracelsus, it is not known when the acquaintance began or based on which writings. Boehme's extensive contemplation of "the locus of the world" in *Aurora* suggests an early familiarity with Weigel's



*Vom Ort der Welt* (On the Place of the World, 1576). Boehme's sophiological speculation on the "Noble Virgin of Divine Wisdom" in *The Three Principles* echoes an epistolary exchange that took place between Weigel and the Görlitzer Abraham Behem, an older contemporary of Boehme. The teaching of the first Adam prior to the fall from grace could be of Kabbalistic origin, but it might also signal the influence of Gregor of Nyssa or → Johannes Scottus Eriugena. Though initially reluctant to acknowledge sources other than nature and the Holy Spirit, Boehme admits having studied (without satisfaction!) the works of many "high scholars". His first writing could hardly have been more frank in declaring its intention to harmonize divergent spheres of knowledge.

After the eschatological contextualization of its preface, the *Aurora*-fragment of 1612 begins by proclaiming that, if illuminated by God, one can research the divine being hidden in nature. This is done by means of a phenomenological reading of natural things: these are found to consist of "qualities" or "forces", which are in turn grasped in a reified form as source-spirits (*Quellgeister*), of which the author recognizes seven. The spirits or qualities vary somewhat in description but are sufficiently constant to give his thought its peculiar character. Turning attention to the manifest relations of the macrocosm of earth and the heavenly bodies, *Aurora* discovers in the solar system a visible symbol of the Trinity (a notion found also in Kepler's *Epitome of the Copernican Astronomy* in this same period). *Aurora* also accepts the symbolic and real centrality of the sun in the solar system. This counterintuitive image of things implies that the world is maintained in its stable condition by invisible forces. Therefore, the seven qualities or forces are elaborated into a microcosm of divine being, a kind of dynamic and nature-generating atom of all things and processes: the dry (saturnine) quality is superseded by the sweet quality and the bitter quality. A flash bifurcates the process or interaction of the qualities, giving rise to the qualities corresponding to water or fire. The fifth quality of love is followed by the sixth, known as "sound" (*Ton*) or "mercury" (*Mercurius*) and the seventh (*Corpus*). In the same way that the solar system or the revolving heavens can be said to be a created image of the uncreated God, the sequence of qualities is both manifest in time and a pattern of eternity. In making sense of this seemingly unmotivated sequence, it is helpful to notice how the individual qualities are linked with traditional planetary qualities in chapters 20 and 21. With slight variations, the seven qualities develop as the

trunk of Boehme's inspiration, onto which most other terms of speculation are grafted and out of which the countless individual expressions of his thought branch off or blossom. In *Aurora*, the force-qualities appear in two very different substantive embodiments: as the world of the angels (who are either good in their obedience to God, or evil, as the spirits corrupted by obedience to the fallen Lucifer). The angels have anthropomorphic aspects that allow their world to serve either as a positive model for human society or as a warning against sinful pride, evil hostility, and wanton tyranny. In *Aurora*, the force-qualities are also generalized and understood as the metaphysical substance known as *Salitter*. Like the angels, *Salitter* exists in good and evil or eternal and fallen variants. *Salitter* is another name for *sal niter* or *niter*, a substance of interest to Paracelsus both for its chemical properties and eschatological implications, and about which the alchemists of Boehme's day were formulating sensational theories.

The avantgarde heliocentrism and alchemy of *Aurora* testify to its topicality with respect to the scientific culture of the time. The depiction of the angels as a utopia of freedom and ordered obedience to the sovereign deity echoes the political ambience of desperate optimism during the interval between the death of Rudolf II and the coronation of Matthias as the new Holy Roman Emperor (the compositional dates cited in the autograph manuscript coincide precisely with the months in question). It was a moment of hope against hope, when the long period of peace in Middle Europe and the ecumenical culture of Rudolphine Prague seemed poised between regression and fulfillment. However, the religious tensions and forces of intolerance were on the rise after the founding of the religious-confessional alliances which initiated the Thirty Years' War in 1618. Boehme's irenic utopia of the angels was only one of several reform-minded or antiwar tracts published during the second decade of the 17th century. The same decade saw the publication of the Weigelian or pseudo-Weigelian posthumous tracts against war and orthodoxy, as well as the Rosicrucian manifestoes [→ Rosicrucianism I].

#### 4. THREE PRINCIPLES

When Boehme ended his mandated authorial silence on the eve of and in the first years of the war, his thinking and tone were more somber and esoteric than in 1612. References to persecution, war hysteria, and apocalyptic conflicts darken the exposition of his pivotal *Three Principles of Divine Being* of 1618. The "principles" of his title find

their way into his work at the beginning of this second tract as an interpretation of the Paracelsian *tria prima* of Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt. In connecting these three alchemical substances (found, according to Paracelsus, in all things) with three aspects of the omnipresent trinitarian deity, Boehme was in accord with the master's own statements of intention (though the latter were not widely known at the time). However, the thematic and terminological incorporation of the *tria prima* by Boehme led to an extraordinary complexity. His combination of the three with his seven spirits or qualities could be varied almost endlessly. He utilized these variations as a kind of code in terms of which his discussion of the intractable problems of evil, theogony, creation, and human freedom could be treated. These were the universalized versions of the historical questions of society and the individual in his time. Why did Christian faith lead to religious war? How could obedience to authority be reconciled with spiritual autonomy? How could the supreme source of authority for all Protestants, the Holy Scriptures, be interpreted to reconcile contending doctrines? How could scriptural authority be reconciled with other sources of truth or inner certainty? The resultant synthesis, though surely daunting to modern readers, may have seemed in its very intricacy the more compelling to Boehme's thinking contemporaries in search of alternatives to the inexorable cycle of intolerance and warfare.

*The Three Principles* introduces the myths of the androgynous Adam and the Noble Virgin of Divine Wisdom into the evolving work. Prior to the hapless Adam whose fall is recounted in Genesis, God had created an angelic Adam to be an eternal angel in place of the fallen angel Lucifer whose fall spoiled the region of the angelic realm that became the place of the created world. This first Adam was not mortal. "He" was neither male nor female: this androgyny and perfection anticipate the state of the reborn souls in heaven whose purpose is to subsist in eternal joy and glorify their Maker. The female aspect of the first Adam was the Noble Virgin of Divine Wisdom. This is a female aspect of the paradoxically trinitarian deity. It is possible that Boehme's female deity owes something to the mariological eternal virgin ("goddess") of Paracelsus's *Liber de Sancta Trinitate* of 1524, but more likely that she was borrowed from Weigel's evocation of a divine "mother" who is instrumental in bringing forth and increasing nature in his *Fourfold Interpretation of the Creation* (circa 1580). Boehme's scriptural allusions link the Noble Virgin to the personified Wisdom of the intertestamental apoc-

rypha. But the author appeals to the reader's introspection to recognize the truth independently of sources. In *Three Principles*, the first Adam shows signs of failure through his base desires of lust and greed. God recognizes that no good can come of this and remakes Adam as a mortal being, with an external companion in Eve. God thus restarts humankind on its long march to self-understanding and redemption. The critical station upon that path is the *now* of the book itself, a time in which the new awareness and renunciation are to come to the fore and recreate the primal work of perfection. Near the end of the pivotal work of 1618, its author appeals to his contemporaries to rally to the chivalric cause of the Noble Virgin by opposing religious war and hatred.

##### 5. SUBSEQUENT WRITINGS

The works written after 1618, especially in his most prolific year 1620, reveal signs of an increasingly formulaic composition. Boehme envisages a single divine process that can be interpreted variously. The same process manifests itself as the articulation of the trinitarian deity within the "pure divinity" or transcendent oneness of the Godhead; as the creation of the finite world; as the resurgence of life in nature; as the birth of an infant; or as the spiritual rebirth of the believer. The divine birth takes place in eternity; however, it is reflected everywhere in time. Theogony is mirrored in the primal separation of the elements or planets out of a primal chaos. The eternal divine birth is reflected in the birth of each human being, and in the spiritual rebirth of the individual believer. Since time is in eternity and eternity in time, the same pattern or process can be discerned everywhere by the illuminated spirit. The birth agony of a mother and the ordeal of a spiritual rebirth correspond to the inner life of a nature that renews itself every springtime. The death or suffering manifest in this process also echoes the suffering and death of Christ. Furthermore, if the moment of redemption in the process is not attained, the course and outcome remain onesided, comparable to an alchemical transformation that goes wrong and spoils its ingredients. The fallen nature of our world, its darkness and death-riddled transience, are Lucifer's own kingdom. In this life, human beings simultaneously inhabit two eternal worlds: the dark world which is ruled by the wrath of God the Father and the light world of the Son as Redeemer (represented also by the Noble Virgin of Divine Wisdom), as well as our world, which mixes light and darkness, much as the dual nature of Christ combines the divine and the human natures without

confounding them. Though Boehme deemphasizes the historical Jesus, his speculation is intensely Christocentric.

In his evolving oeuvre, his presentation of theology becomes ever bolder and more intricate. Evil, though not part of the “pure divinity”, appears to have a counterpart in a divine evolution that is eternal and transcendent, yet also projected into and realized by transient nature and humankind in history. It seems rather as if the contradictions of the age of religious war were to be accounted for theologically by dwelling on the deep mystery of God and the inevitability of evil. It is no doubt the case that the rational mind cannot resolve the paradox of a good and omnipotent God who nonetheless allows, or even causes, evil and suffering to arise; but the paradox generates ever more intricate conceptualizations of the divine process and of the complex depth of the world and human nature. In *Six Theosophic Points*, the “light world” rises out of the “dark world” of evil and suffering. Such aspects of the mature writings may lend credence to the opinion that Boehme’s theosophy is gnostic in character. Yet much suggests that he understood his work as orthodox Christian and even Lutheran. The gnostic emphasis on secret knowledge and on salvation from a fallen realm in which the soul is in exile certainly seems for Boehme compatible with Christianity, even when the shadows deepen and the divine “light” recedes to the scope of the few truly faithful in a world ruled by the wrathful God’s satanic instrument.

In his subsequent books (*The Threefold Life of Man* and *Forty Questions on the Soul*), the “dark world” or “fire world”, ruled by the wrathful God, is counterpoised with the introspective search for the hidden God manifest in the innermost being of the soul. In *The Human Genesis of Jesus Christ*, an orthodox Christology is set forth by means of the coherence of Boehme’s terms of speculation. In the dual natures of Christ, the same pattern of coherence is manifest as in the Virgin Birth in Maria, the eucharistic miracle of Christ’s locally present flesh and blood, or the perfectability of the debased elements upon which alchemy attempts its transforming wonders. The Bible as a history of separate events and disparate persons is transcended in Boehme’s speculative code as it reveals all things in all. The entirety of “our religion”, writes the author at the beginning of chapter nine, resides in only three articles: the creation, fall, and rebirth or restoration. The three represent the eschatological aspect of the coherent pattern of all Boehme’s thought.

*Signatura Rerum* and *Mysterium Magnum*

return to the exegesis of nature and Genesis (it is an article of faith that the book of the world and the first book of the Bible are correlative and cast light on one another). Boehme’s work on the “Signature of Things” proceeds by spiritualizing alchemistic lore – and thus by decoding what was at its inception a product of religious analogy. Boehme’s doctrine of the “signature of things” elevates a divinely inspired intuition over both doctrine and literalism. In the human realm, this suggests a morality of intention which militates against the doctrinally correct but inhumane conduct of the professional clergy during an era of religious war. The last extensive work, *Mysterium Magnum*, is an exegesis of Genesis that recapitulates his concepts and applies them in a verse-by-verse interpretation of the entire first book of Moses. In this long virtuoso performance, Boehme’s speculative enterprise which had begun with speculation concerning Creator and creation comes full circle. Several lesser writings of his late period establish his eclectic liberality in incorporating sources such as the Kabbalah or the Weigelian speculation concerning the relations of subject and object (cf. *Betrachtung Göttlicher Offenbarung, Questiones Theosophicae*, 1624).

##### 5. CONCLUSION

Boehme composed these later writings in a condition of rising optimism encouraged by the temporary decline of hostilities after the first, Bohemian phase of the war, and no doubt reinforced for him by his growing following of like-minded dissenters. Looking back, we recognize this period as one of momentary calm on the eve of the redoubled storm that would sweep his world aside; but to the author who died in 1624, the return of this relative calm under the coreligionist sovereignty of the conqueror of Lusatia, the Elector-Prince Johann Georg of Saxony, could not appear accidental. So it was in a state of rising expectation of new times that Boehme took the unique step of allowing a volume of mostly devotional writings to be printed and sold. This caused a storm of adverse reactions from various Lutheran clergymen. Their anger was transmitted and magnified by Pastor Gregor Richter of Görlitz, who again took his case to the city council. Matters were made worse when the latter was unable to respond decisively by curbing either the inflammatory sermons of Richter or the defiant protests of the author. With the support of his noble adherents, Boehme journeyed to Dresden and met with the high Saxon clergy. By his account, he was treated well. It is altogether conceivable that the Saxon clergy discerned in him a Lutheran loyalist by intention and an anti-Calvin-

ist slandered by a Görlitz pastor whose own Melanchthonian leanings would have made him suspect. Even if the Dresden consistory did not pronounce the writings of Boehme unobjectionable, it is beyond dispute that their defenseless author was neither imprisoned nor reprimanded by these protectors of the faith who had shown little restraint in rooting out doctrinal deviation. In all events, the conclusion of Boehme's career is conducive neither to the Christian orthodox attempt to cast him as an outsider, nor to the heterodox attempt to reclaim him as the conscious founder of an alternative spiritual tradition. The history of Christianity or of Lutheranism is full of doctrines that are considered heretical and alien in one time or place but not in others. The posthumous vilification of Boehme's memory in Görlitz was brought about by the incendiary polemics of Richter.

Boehme scholarship needs to look beyond the frequent tendency to segregate the author in an esoteric tradition. Looking back at his work from beyond the "endtime" he envisaged, any appropriation risks misconstruing his intentions. His writings are certainly remote in origin and difficult to interpret; however, the same can be said of other authors in his or our own time. The complexity of Boehme's work is generated by its multiple simultaneous references to Scriptural exegesis, Christian doctrine, theology, philosophy, nature as macrosom and microcosm, alchemical theory, astronomy, meteorology, an introspective or humoral psychology, as well as his personal spiritual experience. Boehme's work is complex because it artfully strives to convey the sense that "all things are in all" (in accordance with its Lutheran tenet of divine omnipresence) and not least because he makes use of a symbolic code in treating his themes. He does this for a reason. The logical and discursive separation of things one from another (Creator from creature, heavens from earth, or wrathful Father from merciful Son) is the root of despair, doctrinal quarreling, and war. The symbolic terms into which he resolves the *separata* allow these to flow into and rise out of one another, perpetually quickened by the seven spirits and their qualities. However, this process is not undirected, nor is his ecumenicism relativistic. If nature and the human being are not redeemed, they must pass into the eternal hellish perdition that surrounds the righteous few in the fallen world of strife and suffering. God appears as an eternal free-flowing process, but God is only God by virtue of the free self-transcendence embodied in the Son (whereby the self-transcendence takes place in eternity, so that the gnostic implications are only apparent). Lucifer and the

evil spirits of our world are a spoiled son: the same evolutionary process gone bad. Adam and Christ are the dominant polarities of religious experience. Both are within the believer. The age of an eschatological enlightenment is near at hand. As the preface of *Aurora* makes evident, Boehme's work is to be a last flowering from the very root of the tree of knowledge. The sense of approaching chiliastic resolution is not bound to any date, but the historical darkness of Boehme's last years appears to him to foreshadow dawn, a belief eloquently expressed in several of the *Theosophic Letters* (esp. 41, 42). This means that to all other difficulties of his thought is added the unretrievable sense of a unique moment in the process of the world, a sense that informs his work. In presenting him as the intentional founder of a continuing tradition, one thus risks overlooking the informing chiliastic horizon of his theories.

Boehme's influence was, however, broad and far-reaching. The Pietists, dissenters, and mystics of the 17th and 18th centuries still maintained his sense of an all-informing chiliastic horizon. The German Romantics, who imagined themselves positioned at a similar, eschatologically exalted, turning point within the life of the world, made good use of him, having recognized, as did their Baroque precursors, the poetic and philosophical implications of his thought. The reception of the German Romantics alone ranged from → Novalis's *Aurora*-inspired vision of a resurgent springtime of nature and of a spirit realm in which all things are only by virtue of their correspondences with all other things and with God; to the early → Schelling's conceptual and terminological borrowings or → Franz von Baader's mysticism of love; to the grim finale of the Romantic period in Schopenhauer's pessimistic reevaluation of the Boehmian voluntaristic metaphysics and theory of the signatures. One of the most abiding virtues of Boehme's work is the poetic fecundity of its impact in Baroque or Romantic Germany, as well as England, Russia, France, or America. The reception of his writings could be facilitated by the understanding that one can appreciate the poetic beauty of his inspiration in the same way one encounters → Dante's great symbolic summa of high medieval knowledge – without embracing the beliefs on which it was founded.

*Die Urschriften* (Werner Buddecke, ed.), 2 vols., Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1963; 1966 ♦ *Sämtliche Schriften* (Will-Erich Peuckert & August Faust eds.), 11 vols., a facsimile edition of *Theosophia Revelata: Das ist: alle Göttliche Schriften des Gottseligen und Hoherleuchteten Deutschen Theosophi Jacob Böhmes*,

Johann Georg Gichtel & Wilhelm Ueberfeld (eds.), Amsterdam, 1730, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1955-1961 ♦ *Werke* (F. van Ingen, ed.), Frankfurt a.M.: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1997 ♦ For an overview of English translations, see Weeks, 1991, 247-248.

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ANDREW WEEKS

## Bogomilism

Bogomilism was a religious movement, condemned as heretical, which first appeared in the 10th century in Bulgaria. Its name comes from that of the first preacher of the sect, the pop (priest) Bogomil. The movement spread from Bulgaria to Constantinople and to different regions of the Byzantine empire (Macedonia, Thrace). Since the 12th century, the impact of Bogomilism is attested in the West.

Concerning the doctrinal origins of Bogomilism, scholarly opinions diverge. Medieval authors emphasized the characteristics it had in common with → Manichaeism, Paulicianism and Messalianism. The presence of the Paulicians, members of a dualist sect who moved from Asia Minor to Thrace around 975 A.D., could have favoured the birth of Bogomilism in Bulgaria. Essential components of Bogomilism are an anti-sacerdotal and anti-sacramental tendency, on the one hand, and dualistic beliefs, on the other.

The movement arose at the time of the czar Peter (927-969). Two important documents describe the heresy. The Letter of Theophylact, patriarch of Constantinople, written around 940, characterizes it as a mixture of Manichaeism and of Paulicianism. Indeed, according to this text, the beliefs of these new heretics correspond to those of the Paulicians: opposition between the creators of Good and of Evil, and between the visible and the invisible worlds; rejection of Moses' Law; association of the Prophets with Evil; a docetist Christology; rejection of the real presence in the Eucharist. In addition, they rejected marriage, which they considered a law of the demon.

The tract of the Bulgarian priest Cosmas (around 972) is a polemical text full of biblical quotations, written in order to convert the heretics to the orthodox faith. According to Cosmas, Bogomils attribute the creation of the visible world to the devil, whom some of them identify with a fallen angel, while others call him Mammon, because he ordered men to take women, to eat meat, and to drink wine. The heretics condemn marriage and call children "children of Mammon". They reject the cult of the cross and of the icons. For them, Christ's words about his body and his blood actually refer to the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. They understand Christ's miracles in the figurative sense. They do not hold in respect either the liturgy of the Church, or its hierarchy. They condemn the immorality of the priests. They do not accept the Old Testament and do not venerate the Mother of God. According to Cosmas, the Bogomils have their own prayers. They confess their sins to one another, and even women take part in this practice. They reject manual work, and revolt against the powerful.

In the 11th century, Bogomilism arrived in the Byzantine Empire. A letter of Euthymius, monk of Peribleptos (a monastery in Constantinople), written after his stay at Acmonia (in the Opsikion theme, in northwestern Anatolia) before 1025, relates the process against a heretic named John Tzurillas. He had preached in Thrace and around Smyrna, and then established his center of activity



in a village of the Opsikion theme. According to Euthymius, the new heretics are called Phundagiagitae (“bag-men”) in the Opsikion theme, while in the Cibyrhaeot theme (south-west of Anatolia) and in the West (Balkans) they are designated as Bogomils. They reject the Old Testament, the order of the priesthood, the cult of the saints, and the prayers of the Church except the Pater Noster; they do not venerate the cross, and do not practice communion and baptism. According to their cosmogony there are eight skies, seven of which were created by God; the eighth one and all the visible world is the work of the devil, with the exception of the Sun and human souls. The devil had much difficulty in keeping the soul in Adam’s body: he closed Adam’s anus, then vomited in his mouth in order to block the exit of the soul. The heretics do not believe in the resurrection of the body, at the time of the Parousia and the Last Judgment.

At the same time, Michael Psellos describes the beliefs of the Euchites, who were apparently very close to the Bogomils. He makes use of informations given by a Thracian heretic. In their mythology the Godfather has two sons, and the elder son governs the terrestrial world.

At the beginning of the 12th century, Bogomilism had spread in Constantinople even among the aristocratic families. Much attention was attracted by an event that happened ca. 1100, an account of which is given by Anna Komnena (*Alexiad*). A heresiarch named Basil, who has preached his beliefs for more than forty years, was summoned to appear before the Emperor in his Palace in order to explain his teaching. Despite all attempts to convert him, he refused to renounce his convictions and was burned at the stake in the Hippodrome. Several of his followers were imprisoned.

The beliefs of the Byzantine Bogomils were described by the monk Euthymius Zigabenus in his *Panoplia dogmatica* (written between 1111 et 1118). He derives the Bogomils from the Messalian heresy, but mentions the Paulicians too. He begins by presenting the biblical canon of the heretics: they reject → Moses’ books, and the God who appears here. They accept only the Psalms and the Prophets of the Old Testament. Their teaching concerning the Trinity is very particular: they assert that the Father engendered the Son, and the Son in turn engendered the Holy Spirit. The demon, or Satanaël, is the elder son of the Father, born before the Son and the Holy Spirit. He rebelled by pride against the Father and seduced part of the angels, but God expelled them from heaven. Then Satanael created the visible sky and earth, and the body of the first man. When he was trying to animate Adam’s body, his breath, combined with moisture

that ran down from Adam, turned into a snake. Then Satanael asked God to send his breath of life to animate Adam’s body. But later Satanael, in the shape of the snake, seduced Eva, and engendered with her Cain and his twin sister, named Calomena. But God punished him, depriving him of his divine shape and of his power of creation; however He permitted him to govern what he had created. God the Father sent his Word, Jesus Christ (whom the heretics also refer to as an archangel) down to earth. He slipped in through the right ear of the Virgin and then went out in the same manner; his body was immaterial, and physical only in appearance. Likewise it was only in appearance that he was crucified, died, and was resurrected. After having bound Satan, he returned to the Father. The heretics identify the God of the Old Testament with Satanael. They do not venerate icons, the cross and relics; they are against priests, who, according to them, are moved by demons. They think that demons live in everybody except the heretics themselves. They do not baptize with water but with the Holy Spirit, by laying the Gospel of John on the head of the initiate. Before becoming members of their sect, new believers have to practise purification rites and prayers. The heretics condemn the Eucharist and give a purely allegorical meaning to it. For them, the bread of the communion means the prayer of the Pater Noster, because it is a question of one’s daily bread, while the chalice of blood means the new alliance. Reception of both is called the “Secret Supper”. They assert that demons live in churches and Satan himself occupies the St.-Sophia of Constantinople! The only prayer they accept is the Pater Noster, which they recite seven times by day and five times by night. They assert that they have in themselves the divine Word or the Holy Spirit, and transmit it by preaching. According to them, at the time of death they leave the dirty clothes of the body, which will never be resurrected. They then assume the same immortal and divine shape as that of the Christ, and will enter the realm of the Father. The heretics gradually initiate new followers into their secrets. They give a particular interpretation to the Scriptures, frequently attributing an allegorical meaning to the text.

In the period of the 1240s, during the reign of John II Komnenos and of Manuel Komnenos, the Bogomils were condemned several times. According to an anti-heretical treatise (of Anselm of Alessandria, ca. 1270), the people of the West – that is to say, of France – became familiar with the heresy in Bulgaria and Constantinople at the time of the second crusade. At the end of the 12th century, the Bogomil apocryphon intitled *Interro-*

*gatio Iohannis*, conserved only in two Latin versions, was adopted by the Italian → Cathars of Concorezzo. The contents reveal close similarities with the Bogomil beliefs described by Euthymius Zigabenus.

At the beginning of the 12th century there appears the nickname “Bougre” (Bulgare) as one of the names of Western Cathars. Anselm of Alessandria specifies in his tract ‘because the French have let themselves be deceived by the Bulgares at Constantinople, one referred to the heretics in the whole of France as Bulgares’. In the middle of the 13th century, Raynier Sacconi gives a list of dualistic Churches in the West and the East. He asserts that all the Cathar Churches derive from two Eastern “orders”: from that of Bulgaria and that of Dru-gunthia (the identification of which is very controversial; situated in Thrace or Macedonia). A third Eastern “order”, that of Sclavonia, of which the center was situated in Bosnia, represented an intermediate tendency.

At the end of the 12th century, Bogomilism – referred to as Patarinism – appears in Serbia, where it is severely persecuted. But the heretics are able to take refuge in Bosnia under the protection of the ban Kulin. To the pope’s alarm, Bogomilism prospers in Bosnia up to the Ottoman conquest (1463), even though from the middle of the 15th century king Stepan Thomas starts to persecute it. In 1462, he sends three aristocrats to Rome in order to refute their beliefs. At this occasion, the uncle of the inquisitor Torquemada writes up a list of the fifty errors of the “Manichaeans” of Bosnia. Under the Turkish domination, the Bosnian Patarins probably converted to Islam.

In Bulgaria, Bogomilism is again widespread during the 13th century. The synod of Trnvo condemns it in 1211, along with other sects. At this time, Bogomilism and Messalianism become synonyms. In 1238, the pope asks Hungarian king Béla IV for a military intervention in Bulgaria, which is full of heretics protected by Tsar John Asen. But the crusade cannot be organized: in 1241, the Tartars invade Eastern Europe.

In the Byzantine Empire, Bogomilism persisted up to eve of the Turkish conquest. It is particularly well attested in Thrace and in Macedonia in the 14th century. During the early 1320s the Bogomil heresy was present even on Mount Athos, coinciding with the growth of the Hesychast movement.

It has left very few traces in Russia, but in Russian and Slavonic apocryphal literature there are many themes and motifs that reflect a dualistic worldview and are close to Bogomil beliefs. For example, in the legend of *The Sea of Tiberiad* (conserved in Russian and South Slavic manuscripts,

the most ancient of which are from the 15th and the 16th centuries), there occurs the motif of the world’s creation with the help of Satan, combined with the motif of “cosmic diving”: Satan, in the shape of an aquatic bird, brings up earth and a stone from the bottom of the water. God and Satan together create the earth, angels and demons from this matter.

Because of the unequal reliability of documents about Bogomilism and because of its wide diffusion in the Balkans and the Byzantine Empire during a period spanning six centuries, it is difficult to define its characteristics. Bogomilism was a many-faceted doctrinal heresy that contested orthodox religion and the Church and, in several historical contexts, could be the expression of political commitment.

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EDINA BOZOKY

## Borborites

The Borborites or Borborians were adherents of a Gnostic sect that flourished in the 4th century and reportedly continued its existence at least until the 6th century. Epiphanius of Salamis, who has left us an extensive report on the Borborites (*Panarion*, 26), says that they were influenced by the teachings of the → Nicolaitans (*Pan.*, 26, 1, 3), who are discussed in *Pan.*, 25. They called themselves “Gnostics”, but were also known as Phibionites, Stratiotics, Levitics, Secundians, Sokratites, Zachaeuses, Coddians and Barbelites (*Pan.*, 25, 2, 1; 26, 3, 7; also *Anacephlaleiosis*, 26). Since we only have Epiphanius’ testimony, we do not know to what extent these Gnostic groups were really identical. The name Borborites means “filthy people”, which suggests that it was not a self-designation

but a contemptuous quibble. *Anacephaleiosis*, 26, suggests what may have prompted it to Epiphanius himself or to others: ‘Yet others call them Borborites. These people take pride in Barbelo, who is also called Barbero’. Therefore, another form of the name Barbelites (“Barbelo people”) may have been Barberites, and that may have led to the nickname Borborites. Epiphanius’ report makes it clear that the Borborites adhered to a “Sethian” form of Gnosticism [→ Sethians], comparable to that of the “Gnostics” in Irenaeus I, 29, and in the *Apocryphon of John* and related texts.

The Borborites made use of many books, which, except for a few quotations by Epiphanius himself, are completely unknown to us: *Noria*, about Noah’s wife (cf. NHC IX, 2: *The Thought of Norea*), the *Gospel of Perfection*, the *Gospel of Eve*, the *Greater and Lesser Questions of Mary*, books of Jaldabaoth, books in the name of Seth (cf. NHC VII, 2: *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*; NHC VII, 5: *The Three Steles of Seth*), *Apocalypses of Adam* (cf. NHC V, 5: *The Apocalypse of Adam*), the *Birth of Mary*, and the *Gospel of Philip* (a quotation, *Pan.*, 26, 13, 2-3, is not found in the *Gospel of Philip* of NHC II, 3). If Epiphanius is to be trusted, which will be discussed below, these books taught a curious Eucharistic ritual, in which instead of bread and wine male semen and female menstrual blood were offered up and eaten by the participants. With the semen on their lifted hands they said to the “Father of All”: ‘We offer you this gift, the body of Christ’, and eating it: ‘This is the body of Christ, and this is the Passover because of which our bodies suffer and are constrained to acknowledge the passion of Christ’. And doing the same with the menstrual blood they said: ‘This is the blood of Christ’ (*Pan.*, 26, 4, 5-8). The ideology behind this ritual seems to be that the divine element in human beings is located in their creative power and that, therefore, salvation is realized by the emission of the bodily fluids, which then are offered to God. In the section on the Nicolaitans, Epiphanius transmits a Gnostic myth about Barbelo, which seems to have been popular among the Borborites (*Pan.*, 25, 2, 2-4). According to this myth, she continually appears to the archons in beautiful form and ‘through their lust-caused ejaculation robs them of their seed – to recover . . . her power’ (*Pan.*, 25, 2, 4). Epiphanius refers to the Borborites when he says that some of the followers of Nicolaus said: ‘We gather the power of Prunicus (i.e. Barbelo) from our bodies through their emissions’ (25, 3, 2). In the section about the Borborites, however, he puts all stress on their unbridled licentiousness and promiscuity. They rejected fasting (26, 5, 8) and asceticism (26, 13, 1), but for-

bade procreation (26, 5, 12) and called the female members of the sect “Virgins” (26, 11, 9). To leave their “virginity” unimpaired, they practised coitus interruptus (26, 11, 9-11), and when a woman accidentally became pregnant they aborted the foetus and ate it (26, 5, 4-6), saying: ‘We have not been deceived by the archon of lust, but we have gathered up the brother’s transgression’. A special group, which they called “Levites”, who may have been the same as the “Levitics”, practised homosexuality (26, 13, 1). They found their views and practices confirmed by a curious exegesis of biblical texts, of which Epiphanius gives some examples.

For a correct assessment of the evidence presented above the all-important question is: How trustworthy is Epiphanius? At this point, scholarly opinion is divided and varies from almost complete acceptance of Epiphanius’ reliability (Benko, Gero) to its almost complete rejection (Williams). Epiphanius claims to have come across this sect when he lived in Egypt, probably in Alexandria about A.D. 330. He had heard their teachings ‘out of the mouth of practising Gnostics’, who in fact were beautiful young women who tried to seduce and to convert him (26, 17, 4; 18, 2). But after reading their books and understanding their true intent, he reported them to ‘the bishops’ (probably the college of Alexandrian presbyters), and ‘finding out which one were hidden in the church, . . . they were expelled from the city, about eighty persons’ (26, 17, 9). He obviously did not participate in the sexual orgies of which he gives a detailed description. The instruction of the beautiful female adherents of the sect was apparently not very specific, since he understood their true intent only after reading their books. We may safely assume that he interpreted these books in the light of what he had heard or thought to have heard about the practices of the Borborites. In many Gnostic texts the divine element in human beings is called semen, which has to be gathered during the process of salvation, but this word is usually used in a metaphorical sense. However, it seems quite possible that some people took the word literally, which led them to practices as described by Epiphanius. Of course, his anti-heretical zeal may have given his fantasy free play, but that does not imply that his report is completely unreliable. Moreover, two Gnostic texts, which are earlier than Epiphanius’ *Panarion*, explicitly condemn similar practices (*Pistis Sophia*, 147; *Second Book of Jeu*, 43). It has been objected that these texts are ‘once again polemical accusations, not advocacy by practitioners’ (Williams), but that does not exclude that there may have been some truth in these allegations. Religiously

inspired sexual rituals, which from the outside look like sheer obscenities, are not uncommon in the history of religions.

According to a number of Syriac, Armenian, Coptic and Arabic sources, the Borborites survived tenaciously in the Christian Near East (Gero). They are reported to have lived in Southern Asia Minor, Armenia and Syria. In imperial legislation, they are mentioned from the 5th century onward: they are forbidden to build churches and to hold religious services. Unfortunately, these sources provide little information on the ideas and practices of these Borborites, and when they become more specific the influence of Epiphanius' report is unmistakable. The 6th-century author Barhadbešabbā says that the Borborites believed that angels had created the world and that their central rite consisted of the ritual defilement of ten virgins by the priests of the sect. If one of these conceived, she was worshipped 'in the place of Mary' and her foetus was sacramentally consumed (Nau, 190f.): the child was apparently identified with the body of Christ and the woman with the Virgin Mary. There are other testimonies that some groups, which their opponents called Borborites, held the Virgin Mary in high esteem and even attributed to her a divine status. According to some she had a heavenly body, but according to others she was a heavenly power or even a goddess, so that she and her Son were two divinities by the side of God – a view already refuted in the Koran, *Sura* 5, 116. These views can be traced back to the 4th and the 5th centuries (van den Broek, 149-156).

The evidence presented above leads to the conclusion that the Borborites, who called themselves "Gnostics", most probably were an offshoot of the "Gnostics" who adhered to the system described in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 29 and the *Apocryphon of John*. Their distinctive feature seems to have been a literal interpretation of the metaphor "semen" as indication of the divine element in humankind. There is no reason to push Epiphanius' testimony completely aside and to deny that the "gathering" of the divine sperm through sexual rituals apparently was an important element in their cult. But we need not to take Epiphanius' report at face value; on the contrary, we may assume that also in this case we have the same mixture of truth, hearsay, misunderstanding and sheer slander that so often characterizes his anti-heretical polemics. The strong emphasis Epiphanius lay on the sexual rituals of their cult has obviously obscured other aspects of their beliefs. One of these beliefs may have been the exaltation of the Virgin Mary to a divine status.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

**Bourbon, Duchess of** → Orléans, Bathilde d'

**Bourignon, Antoinette**, \* 13.1.1616 Lisle (Flanders), † 1680 Franeker (Netherlands)

Bourignon was born to wealthy Catholic parents. Even as a child she spent much time in prayer and reclusion, and at four asked her parents in what country Christians lived, so that she might travel there, since she thought Christians lived in poverty and were not interested in worldly things. Although her father wanted her to marry a rich merchant, she left home in 1636, and spent some time in a convent. As she grew older, she mortified herself for seven years, wearing a shirt of horsehair and sleeping on a board, gave her clothing to the poor, and ate only what was necessary for life, even going so far as to mix ashes with her food to deny herself pleasure from it. She was of a middle stature, slender and delicate. She travelled extensively in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany,



bringing a small wooden printing press with her; she also visited England and Scotland. Her works were placed on the Index of forbidden books by the Vatican; she was also condemned frequently by Protestants, including the Scottish Presbyterian general assemblies of 1701, 1709, and 1710. She died in Franeker, Holland, in 1680; her complete works were published in London in 1699.

Her major treatise, *Lumière du Monde* (Light of the World), was occasioned by M. Christian de Cort, Superior of the Fathers of the Oratory at Mechlin in Flanders, a man who regarded her as a spiritual teacher. She went to Holland for the printing of this book, and there encountered sectarians, including Jesuits, Jansenists, Lutheran and Calvinist Ministers, Anabaptists, Quakers, and Lbadists, who attacked her as a visionary, a blasphemer, a heretic, and even as a sorcerer. She proposed a series of Rules from God, the first two of which are '1. Do all in good order, and in season; for I am a God of order: And Disorder comes from the Devil, and from Sin. 2. Never be eager in Temporal Affairs; but apply your mind to do well what you do, in quietness; for the wandering of the mind, and disquiet spoils all' (xix).

It is evident from this example of her writing that the works of Bourignon are much tamer than the invective poured out against her would seem to warrant. Her many treatises reveal the work of a very sincere and pious woman intent on spiritual practice. Bourignon, and her publisher → Pierre Poirer, were in fact at great pains to show their own orthodoxy, and for this reason she signed a confession of faith with five points, insisting on her belief in 'all that a true Christian ought to believe', dated 11 March 1675. Widely reprinted, her five points of public confession are: (1) I am a Christian, and I believe all that a true Christian ought to believe, (2) I am baptized in the Catholic Church, in the Name of the Father, in the Name of the Son, in the Name of the Holy Ghost, (3) I believe the Twelve Articles of the Creed, and I do not doubt of one Article of it, (4) I believe that Jesus Christ is True God, and that he is also True Man; as also that he is the Saviour and Redeemer of the World, (5) I believe in the Gospel, in the Holy Prophets, and in all the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament.

Seeing herself as an orthodox Christian, in nearly every one of her works Bourignon attacked sectarianism, and in this one can see a bit more clearly why she was herself attacked. She launches into those who claim she is not Catholic – she will live and die a Catholic. But she so opposes sectarianism as to even attack those who take the name Catholic. Those who are Reformed, she writes,

ought to reform themselves. Bourignon strongly critiques those who hypocritically take on a mantle of sanctity while remaining corrupt within. She attacks the corruption of established churches, and insists instead that 'La vraye Eglise consiste en l'assemblée des ames qui sont possédées par l'Esprit de Jesus Christ' (The true church consists in the assembly of souls possessed by the spirit of Jesus Christ) (III.294). She also attacked Quakerism in a separate treatise (*Œuvres*, vol. X).

The English translations of *Lumière du Monde* and some of Bourignon's other works, including *Confusion of the Builders of Babel* (1708), *An Admirable Treatise of Solid Vertue*, (1699) and *Collection of Letters* (1708) in turn inspired antimystic sentiments in England even as they later met with approval among non-sectarian spiritual circles like that of the Philadelphian Society. A very informative example of this antimysticism is to be found in a treatise by John Cockburn (1652-1729) entitled *Bourignianism Detected* (London 1698). 'They are not mean and ignorant Persons who follow this Woman', Cockburn wrote, 'they are some of the better sort, who have been reputed, Men of Sense, Learning, and Probity' (i-ii). Cockburn writes derisively that 'Our Quakers and Philadelphians, as well as the Quietists and Pietists abroad, are of the same kidney, and do all stand upon the same foundation; so that what overturns one, overturns all' (iii). Cockburn and others were particularly incensed at assertions of Bourignon's supernatural knowledge. Cockburn claims that she is in fact a messenger of Satan, a 'false prophet', and so forth (11, 25, *passim*). She was defended by George Garden and others against these charges, notably in Garden's work *An Apology for Antonia Bourignon* (1699).

Although she is occasionally cited as a Boehmenist, Bourignon did not strictly speaking belong to the theosophic tradition [→ Christian Theosophy], but instead represents a strain of Catholic quietist mysticism along the lines of Miguel Molinos. In Bourignon's work, as in quietist mysticism more generally, we see nothing of the visionary imagery that so characterizes the theosophic school. At the same time, quietist mysticism bears some similarities to theosophy in its emphasis on direct spiritual inspiration and on anti-sectarianism. The most complete study of Bourignon thus far is van der Does (1974).

Antoinette Bourignon, *Œuvres* (P. Poirer, ed.), 19 vols., Amsterdam (n.p.), 1679-1684 ♦ *La vie de demoiselle Antoinette Bourignon, écrite par elle-même*, Amsterdam, 1683 ♦ *Light of the World*, London: J. Burrough and J. Baker, 1696 ♦ *An Admirable Treatise of Solid*



*Vertue*, London: J. Burrough, and J. Baker, 1699 ♦ *Collection of Letters*, London: J. Burrough and J. Baker, 1708 ♦ *Confusion of the Builders of Babel*, London: J. Burrough and J. Baker, 1708.

*Lit.*: Mirjam de Baar, “Ik moet spreken”: *Het spirituele leiderschap van Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680)*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2004 ♦ John Cockburn, *Bourignianism Detected: or the Delusion and Errors of Antoinia Bourignon*, London, 1698 ♦ Marthe van der Does, *Antoinette Bourignon, 1616-1680*, Amsterdam: Holland UP, 1974 ♦ George Garden, *An Apology for Miss Antonia Bourignon*, London: D. Brown, S. Manship, R. Parker and H. Newman, 1699 ♦ Serge Hutin, *Les Disciples anglais de Jacob Boehme aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: Editions Denoël, 1960 ♦ R.A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1950, 352-355 ♦ Gustav Krieg, *Der Mystische Kreis: Wesen und Werden der Theologie Pierre Poirets*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1979.

ARTHUR VERSLUIS

**Bô Yin Râ** (ps. of Joseph Anton Schneider, as of 1920 Joseph Anton Schneider-franken), \* 25.11.1876 Aschaffenburg, † 14.2.1943 Massagno (Switzerland)

Schneider studied at the Städelische Art Institute in Frankfurt, from which he graduated in 1899, and at the art studios of the Municipal Theatre in Frankfurt (1896-1898). Hans Thoma, one of the leading German artists of the time, accepted him as one of his pupils. Later he also came to benefit from the advice and support of Max Klinger. In 1900-1901, he continued his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and attended the Academy Julian in Paris before returning to Vienna. He then stayed in Berlin (1904-1908) and settled in Munich (1909-1915). While travelling in Greece from 1912-1913, he continued to paint (mostly landscapes), and in 1914 he began publishing his first writings, signed with the initials B.Y.R. Drafted in 1916, he was stationed in Görlitz, where he served as an interpreter in Greek, and met → Gustav Meyrink in 1917. In Görlitz he also founded a Jakob Boehme Society in 1920, exhibited his landscape paintings, and continued to work at his “cycles” – series of prose writings – like *Das Buch der königlichen Kunst* (The Book of Royal Art; 1913-1932). The first version of *Das Buch vom lebendigen Gott* (The Book of the Living God; 1919), his first book signed “Bô Yin Râ”, is also the first of his writings published by Kurt Wolff (Verlag der Weissen Bücher, Leipzig) in the years 1920-1921. It is prefaced by Gustav Meyrink, whose novel *Der Golem* had appeared in 1915, also at Wolff’s.

From then on Bô Yin Râ became a prolific writer. Most of his pieces are of small size, and he often put many of them together to constitute larger books. In the 1920s at least fifteen titles appeared, a number of them beginning with “The Book of . . .” like *Das Buch vom Jenseits* (The Book of the Afterlife; 1920/29), and *Das Buch vom Menschen* (The Book of Man; 1920/28). In 1923, the year when his *Okkulte Rätsel* (Occult Enigmas) appeared, he took up residence in Switzerland, at first in Horgen near Lake Zurich, then in Massagno near Lugano. As before, he continued to devote much time procuring new editions (enlarged or modified) of his former or more recent publications. In Switzerland he became acquainted with the publisher Alfred Köber-Stähelin, who from 1927 on published all his works. Among his last ones in the 1930s are *Ewige Wirklichkeit* (Eternal Reality; 1934) and *Geistige Relationen* (Spiritual Relations; 1939). At his death, Bô Yin Râ left a collection comprising forty books and two hundred paintings.

Bô Yin Râ is lavish in clues about post-mortem life which are sometimes reminiscent of → Swedenborg’s. He explains, for instance in *Das Buch vom Jenseits*, that “life beyond” is in reality the very life we live on earth, only it is experienced by means of different senses. He occasionally touches upon the topic of → reincarnation, discussing under which conditions it may be possible. All his views on such questions are based on his belief in an intricate relationship between the Spirit’s all-pervading radiant substance, and the concrete forms in which this substance manifests itself in material life. Nothing spiritual is ever devoid of form. It is a matter of using our creative → imagination to transform our external life and inner body after the picture of our spiritual life. Such a transformation is destined to prepare our life beyond, and can be achieved by artistic creation. His own paintings were supposed to play such a role.

In some of the writings which constitute the cycle *Hortus Conclusus*, discussions devoted to such topics are combined with a presentation of twenty of his paintings, for example, “Lux in Tenebris”, “Birth of the External Cosmos”, “Astral Luminescence”, and “Inferno”. These are meant to depict the very nature and dynamic structure of eternal life. His views here are reminiscent of those of the classical theosophical current (although he rarely quotes his predecessors), and he evinced a particular interest in → Jacob Boehme.

Most of these works of art have a cosmological or cosmogonic character. In *Welten: Eine Folge kosmischer Gesichte* (Worlds: A Series of Cosmic Visions; 1924), a work introduced by a poem of → Giordano Bruno, he again presents twenty such

paintings. His philosophy of nature, besides being scantily developed, does not call into question the theory of evolution. And when it comes to the evolution of mankind, he is content to explain that the progressive appearance of the human being as we now know him/her is the result of the influence of an eternal and active reality, exercised upon our ape-like ancestors.

Bô Yin Râ called himself a “Bote der Weissen Loge”, a messenger of the White Lodge, claiming, like → H.P. Blavatsky and → Annie Besant before him, that he had received his revelations from a hidden Asiatic Master. As a matter of fact, he occasionally discusses the issue of the Blavatskyian Mahatmas, and his teachings are to some extent influenced by those of the → Theosophical Society, although he readily criticizes the latter, notably in *Mehr Licht!* (More Light!; 1921/1936), where he is also very critical of the Jewish Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. The expression “White Lodge” (possibly linked to the name of Kurt Wolff’s Publishing Company) seems to be meant in a metaphoric sense, and does not refer to any actually existing association. In any case, Bô Yin Râ’s teachings are self-initiatory in character, devoid of any specific ritual.

Besides the “White Lodge” he oftentimes mentions (in particular in *Das Geheimnis* [The Secret]; 1923) a “Lichtgemeinschaft der Leuchtenden des Urlichts” (a Light Community of the Enlightening People of the Original Light). These “Leuchtenden” are the wardens of the “original legacy of mankind”. The expression “die Leuchtenden” is very reminiscent of the “Lichtfähigen” (the people able to receive the Light) that → Eckartshausen had written about in *Die Wolke über dem Heiligthum* (1802). In a narrative set within *Das Buch der Gespräche* (The Book of Conversations; 1920), Bô Yin Râ tells us about his own initiation into this community of the “Leuchtenden”, in Greece, but this description appears to be merely metaphorical.

A wide readership (there are countless new editions and translations) bears witness to Bô Yin Râ’s continuing influence, which may be seen operating in various contemporary movements, particularly in neo-Rosicrucian groups [→ Rosicrucianism] such as the A.M.O.R.C. and the Lectorium Rosicrucianum.

Bô Yin Râ has been translated into at least fifteen languages. Since 1928 practically all of his works have been published and/or newly edited at Kober Verlag AG (Bern) in their original language, German, and many of them in English at the same publisher. Most of his works can be found in: *Nachlese: Gesammelte Prosa und Gedichte aus Zeitschriften*, 2 vols., Vol. 1: *Gesammelte Prosa und Gedichte aus Zeitschriften* (contains *inter alia*: *Über meine Schriften* [1930];

*Warum ich meinen Namen führe* [1927]; *Wer ist Bô Yin Râ?* [1924]). Vol. 2: *Gesammelte Texte aus Zeitungen und Zeitschriften (Aufsätze über Kunst; Abhandlungen; Besprechungen; aus den Zeitschriften Magische Blätter, Die Säule und Theosophie; Dankesadressen; Persönliche Erinnerungen)*, Basel: Kober Verlag AG, 1990 (1st ed., 1953) ♦ Among his works available in English are: *The Book on Life beyond* (1920/29), 1979 (2nd ed., 2002); *Spirit and Form* (1924), 2001; *The Meaning of this Life* (1927), 1998; *The Book on Solace* (1924), 1996; *The Book on Happiness* (1920), 1994; *About my Books, Concerning my Name and other Texts* (articles and shorter pieces), 1977; *Worlds of Spirit* (a compendium of texts and paintings), 2002; *The Book on Human Nature* (1920/28), 2000. *The Wisdom of St. John* (1924), 1975; All: Kober Verlag AG: Bern.

*Lit.*: Alexandre de Dánann, *Bô Yin Râ: De la Taychou Marou au Grand Orient de Patmos*, Milano: Archè, 2004 ♦ Otto G. Lienert, *Weltwanderung; Bô Yin Râ: Leben und Biographie*, Bern, 1994 ♦ Wolfgang Nastali, *Ursein – Urlicht – Urwort: Die Überlieferung der religiösen “Urquelle” nach Joseph Schneiderfranken Bô Yin Râ*, Münster: ATEdition, 1999 (2nd ed. revised) ♦ idem, “‘Lebendiges Feuer’: Die Überlieferung der ältesten Lichtbotschaft durch J.A. Schneiderfranken Bô Yin Râ”, *Gnostika* 23 (2003), 45-55, and 24 (2003), 58-67 ♦ Rudolf Schott, *Bô Yin Râ: Leben und Werk* (1954), Basel: Kober Verlag AG, 1979 ♦ Otto Zsok, *Der religiöse Urquell: Dargestellt im Lichte des geistigen Lehrwerks von Joseph Anton Schneiderfranken Bô Yin Râ. Eine religionsphilosophische Studie*: Erzabtei Sankt Ottilien: EOS Verlag 2001.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

**Boyle, Robert**, \* 25.1.1627 Lismore (Ireland), † 31.12.1691 London

Boyle is a preeminent figure of the 17th century. He is best known as a natural philosopher, particularly in the fields of chemistry and physics, but his scientific work covers many areas including hydrostatics, medicine, earth sciences, natural history, and traditional → alchemy. His avid service to the Christian faith produced devotional and ethical essays, and theological tracts on the limits of reason and the role of the natural philosopher as a Christian. He also funded numerous missions and the translation of the Scriptures into several languages.

Boyle was born into one of the wealthiest families in Britain. He was the fourteenth child and seventh son of Richard Boyle, the Great Earl of Cork, by his second wife Catherine, daughter of Sir Geoffrey Fenton, secretary of state for Ireland. His education began at Eton at age eight where his studiousness was apparent. In October 1638, he and his brother Francis were sent on a Continental

Grand Tour with their tutor Isaac Marcombes. They travelled through France, Switzerland, and Italy. In 1642, owing to the Irish Rebellion, Francis returned home while Robert went to his tutor's home in Geneva to continue his studies. Boyle returned to England in 1644, and took up residence at his hereditary estate of Stalbridge in Dorset, where he began to write ethical and devotional treatises, many borrowing literary styles modelled after the French romances he enjoyed. In 1649 he began his first scientific experimentation, which instantly enthralled him. During these early years he was in contact with Samuel Hartlib, Frederick Clodius, Sir Kenelm Digby, and others. But probably most influential of all was his association with George Starkey (alias Eirenaeus Philalethes) who in the early 1650s tutored him in chemistry and introduced him to the writings and ideas of → Joan Baptista van Helmont. Helmontian ideas would long prove important for Boyle's chemical thought.

In the winter of 1655-1656 he moved to Oxford, where he remained for twelve years. There he associated with the Philosophicall Club which included John Wilkins, Richard Lower, John Locke, and others interested in science, medicine, and anatomy. Much of Boyle's best-known work draws its origins from his Oxford period. In 1659, with the help of Robert Hooke, he built his famous air-pump, and studied the air, the vacuum, and pneumatics. In 1660 he acted as one of the founding members of the Royal Society. In 1668 he left Oxford and took up residence with his sister Katherine Jones, Vicountess Ranelagh, in London. There he lived and worked for the rest of his life – setting up an active laboratory, publishing at least one book nearly every year, receiving many visitors, and participating actively in the Royal Society. Throughout his adult life Boyle was sickly, suffering from weak eyes and hands, recurring illnesses, and probably one or more strokes. He was offered the Presidency of the Royal Society and the episcopacy but declined both. He died at age sixty-four after a short illness exacerbated by his grief over Katherine's death a week earlier. He left behind a huge accumulation of papers now at the Royal Society, and a bequest for the annual Boyle Lectures (in defense of Christianity) which continue to this day.

Boyle's work is characterised by its reliance on experiment and its reticence to formulate generalized theories. Boyle was particularly devoted to chemistry, arguing strongly for its usefulness in natural philosophy, and thus has sometimes been

called the "Father of Chemistry". His chemistry was based on a largely (but not entirely) mechanical "corpuscularian hypothesis" – a sort of atomism which claimed that material substances were composed of one universal matter divided into miniscule particles ("corpuscules") and differentiated only by the accidents of shape and local motion. He opposed the doctrine of the *tria prima* as presented by contemporary Paracelsian chymists [→ Paracelsianism]. This opposition, together with Boyle's celebrity as a "heroic figure" of the Scientific Revolution and an exaggeration of the impact and importance of his *Sceptical Chymist* (1661) has led to the simplistic conclusion that he opposed alchemy. In fact, Boyle maintained a life-long interest in and debt to traditional alchemy; while a few signs of this interest have long been known, many others have only recently been brought to light. Boyle's own secrecy regarding the subject, such as his extensive use of codes and ciphers in alchemical contexts, has contributed to the obscurity of his alchemical pursuits.

For example, Boyle believed in the reality of projective transmutation of the metals by means of the Philosophers' Stone. Indeed, Boyle endeavored to discover the secret of the Stone throughout his life, and claimed to have witnessed several transmutations. In the 1670s and 1680s he wrote a *Dialogue on Transmutation* which argued strongly in favor of the real existence of the Philosophers' Stone; only a fragment of this work was published, and that anonymously in 1678 as *A Degradation of Gold by an Anti-Elixir*. His early collaborative work on alchemical projects with Starkey/Philalethes provided him with a substance he believed to be the Philosophical Mercury necessary for making the Stone, and Boyle continued working with this substance for forty years, publishing a veiled account of it in the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1676. In 1689 he helped to effect the repeal of the Act against Multipliers, a 1404 statute outlawing transmutation. His interest in the repeal may stem from his belief that he had succeeded in preparing a transmuting powder – a "red earth" discussed after his death by John Locke and → Isaac Newton. He carried on extensive correspondence with alchemical practitioners throughout Europe.

Boyle considered his theological activities of at least equal importance with his scientific ones. His devotion to Biblical Christianity was the guiding principle of his life and work. Scientific study of God's creation was at heart a devotional activity; his last work, *The Christian Virtuoso* (1690)

treats the interdependence of scientific and religious knowledge for the scientist. Boyle wrote on the literary style of the Scriptures, explored the limits of human reason, and urged readers to theological study.

Boyle also showed a keen interest in occult phenomena [→ occult / occultism], particularly → witchcraft, spirit invocation, second sight, and → magic. In 1658 he funded the English translation of the *Devill of Mascon*, an account by François Perrault of a poltergeist in Burgundy. He later supported Joseph Glanvill's mission of collecting and verifying witchcraft accounts. In dictating autobiographical notes to his friend and confessor, Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, Boyle spent a considerable fraction of the time describing accounts of occult phenomena – magic, spirit invocations, clairvoyance, and so forth – to which he had been witness or about which he had received what he considered reliable testimony. He also amassed such accounts of the supernatural into a collection which he apparently planned to publish as an adjunct to the “Strange Reports” appended to his *Experimenta et Observationes Physicae* (1690). Perhaps most curiously, Boyle seems to have believed that the Philosophers' Stone of the alchemists might not only be able to transmute base metals into gold, but also be a means for attracting and communicating with angels. These ideas are detailed in a fragmentary dialogue recently edited and published (Principe 1998), although their origins remain rather obscure. One cause behind Boyle's interest in supernatural phenomenon was his desire to demonstrate the reality of the supernatural realm with its spiritual activity and spiritual denizens. Proofs for the existence of spiritual entities and agencies promised to provide not only a refutation of the creeping atheism so feared by Boyle and others in the late 17th century, but also a counterpoint to the mechanical systems Boyle promoted in his natural philosophy, which, when taken to extremes, ran the risk of denying spirits, souls, and God.

*The Works of Robert Boyle* (Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis, eds.), 14 vols., London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999-2000 ♦ *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle* (Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio, and Lawrence M. Principe, eds.), 6 vols., London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001.

*Lit.*: R.E.W. Maddison, *Life and Works of the Honorable Robert Boyle*, F. R. S., London: Taylor and Francis, 1969 ♦ John T. Harwood, *The Early Essays and Ethics of Robert Boyle*, Carbondale, IL: Southern

Illinois University Press, 1991 ♦ Michael Hunter, *Robert Boyle: By Himself and his Friends*, London: William Pickering, 1994 ♦ idem, “Alchemy, Magic and Moralism in the Thought of Robert Boyle”, *British Journal of the History of Science* 23 (1990), 387-410 ♦ idem, “How Boyle Became a Scientist”, *History of Science* 33 (1995), 59-103 ♦ idem, *The Occult Laboratory: Magic, Science and Second Sight in Late 17th Century Scotland*, Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2001 ♦ Michael Hunter (ed.), *Robert Boyle Reconsidered*, Cambridge, 1994 ♦ Lawrence M. Principe, *The Aspiring Adept: Robert Boyle and His Alchemical Quest*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998 [includes an edition of Boyle's previously unpublished *Dialogue on Transmutation* and *Dialogue on the Converse with Angels*] ♦ idem, “Robert Boyle's Alchemical Secrecy: Codes, Ciphers, and Concealments”, *Ambix* 39 (1992), 63-74 ♦ idem, “The Alchemies of Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton: Alternate Approaches and Divergent Deployments”, in: Margaret J. Osler (ed.), *Rethinking the Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 201-220 ♦ idem, “Virtuous Romance and Romantic Virtuoso: The Shaping of Robert Boyle's Literary Style”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995), 377-397 ♦ idem, “Newly-Discovered Boyle Documents in the Royal Society Archive: Alchemical Tracts and his Student Notebook”, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 49 (1995), 57-70 ♦ Antonio Clericuzio, “A Redefinition of Boyle's Chemistry and Corpuscular Philosophy”, *Annals of Science* 47 (1990), 561-589 ♦ Harold Fisch, “The Scientist as Priest: A Note on Robert Boyle's Natural Theology”, *Isis* 44 (1953), 252-265 ♦ Rose-Mary Sargent, *The Diffident Naturalist: Robert Boyle and the Philosophy of Experiment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 ♦ Jan W. Wojcik, *Robert Boyle and the Limits of Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

LAWRENCE M. PRINCIPE

**Boys des Guays, Jacques François Etienne le, \* 1794 Châtillon-sur-Loing (now Châtillon-Coligny, Loiret), † 1864 Saint-Armand-Montrond (Cher)**

Le Boys des Guays was the grandson of a special lieutenant in the bailiwick of Montargis (Loiret) who later became Procureur Général under the First Empire, and the son of a member of the military administration of Louis XVI. After earning a law degree, he became an advocate at the Royal Court of Paris, then decided for the magistracy, which he left in 1830 following his nomination as sub-prefect of Saint-Armand-Montrond. He was discharged from this office in 1831 because of his political opinions, marked by a liberalism that was deemed excessive. Nevertheless, for a brief period



he exercised the functions of municipal councillor in that town.

In November 1834, during a ceremony in the Néo-Temple in Paris, Le Boys met a Monsieur Caudron, a reader of the works of the theosopher → Emanuel Swedenborg. Caudron gave Le Boys Swedenborg's treatise on *Heaven and Hell*, in which, he told him, Le Boys would find the explanation of the magnetic phenomena which had motivated his journey. After reading this work, supplemented by other works of Swedenborg's, Le Boys decided to dedicate the rest of his life to the propagation of "Swedenborgism" both in France and abroad. On November 18, 1837, this ardent neophyte opened a public cult in his house at Saint-Armand-Montrond, where at 3 o'clock every Sunday afternoon the local Swedenborgian community would assemble, consisting for the most part of craft professionals. Le Boys was assisted in his tasks by his wife, born Clotilde Rollet, and by his brother-in-law Eugène Rollet, future deputy of the Cher.

Beginning in 1838, Le Boys des Guays undertook the publication of the monthly periodical *La Nouvelle Jérusalem, revue religieuse et scientifique* (The New Jerusalem, religious and scientific review), which held the attention of its readers for ten years. At the end of this period it was forced to cease publication, as a result of severe financial difficulties. Also in 1838, Le Boys began his major work: the translation of Swedenborg's theological works into French, a task brought to completion in 1850. This "orthodox" disciple of the "New Jerusalem" also published analytical tables and indexes, finding the model for the latter in the index of Swedenborg's *Apocalypse Revealed*.

Le Boys des Guays had inserted in his periodical, by way of apologetics, *Les Lettres à un homme du monde qui voudrait croire . . .* (Letters to a man of the world who wants to believe). These were reprinted separately in 1852. After translation, they were presented to the public in England and North America, with several editions in English and German. Intended for future members of the New Church, these *Letters* aroused undeniable interest among the public.

Some of Le Boys des Guays' works benefited from the collaboration of Auguste Harlé (1809-1876), whose knowledge of the Hebrew language was of great advantage. This "indefatigable evangelist", as Marguerite Beck Block calls him, bore witness through his voluminous correspondence to a lasting concern for lending all his energies to the "New Jerusalem". He never ceased to enlarge his acquaintanceship, both in France and abroad, so as to help the New Church to expand. Some of his vis-

itors came from England and Russia. They could see for themselves that Le Boys' proselytism was founded in Swedenborg's doctrine of "uses", which notably emphasized the practice of the "true" and the "good".

Manuscript collection known as "Fonds Chevrier" (Correspondence of J.F.E. Le Boys des Guays and various documents). The collection is in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

*Lit.*: [Un Ami de la Nouvelle Eglise, i.e. Ed. Chevrier], *Histoire Sommaire de la Nouvelle Eglise Chrétienne fondée sur les doctrines de Swedenborg*, Swedenborg Society: Paris, London, New York, 1879 ♦ Marguerite Beck Block, *The New Church in the New World: A Study of Swedenborgianism in America* (Studies in Religion and Culture, American Religion Series V), New York: Swedenborg Publishing Association, 1984 ♦ Inge Jonsson & Olle Hjern, *Swedenborg*, Proprius Förlag: Stockholm, 1976 ♦ Jean-François Mayer, *La Nouvelle Église de Lausanne et le mouvement Swedenborgien en Suisse romande, des origines à 1948*, Zurich: Swedenborg Verlag, 1984 ♦ Karl-Erik Sjöden, *Swedenborg en France*, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1985.

ANDRÉ BOYER

**Britten, Emma (Floyd) Hardinge**, \* 2.5.1823  
Bethnal Green (near London),  
† 2.10.1899 Manchester

1. LIFE 2. WRITINGS 3. THE ORPHIC  
CIRCLE 4. THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY  
5. IMPACT

One of the most influential figures in the early development of → Spiritualism in the United States and England, both as a medium and trance-lecturer and as a historian and theorist of that religious movement. A founding member of the → Theosophical Society and a member of its first Council. A powerful advocate for the revival of the study of → magic, and for its essential identity both with 19th-century mediumship and with medieval → witchcraft. A strong proponent of the mythological theory of Christian origins. A social reformer interested in marriage reform and in the abolition of slavery. Although her name and works are now largely forgotten, the combination of religious, magical, occult [→ occult / occultism], social and political ideals that she articulated has remained influential in the United States and Great Britain up to now, and has left its traces in several new religions, notably in Witchcraft (Wicca) and its cogeners.



## 1. LIFE

Britten wrote little about the first three decades of her life, which must therefore be painstakingly reconstructed from scattered data. She was the daughter of Ebenezer and Anne Sophia Floyd, and probably the granddaughter of a Baptist minister, William Williams. Her ancestors seem to have come from Somerset and Devon counties and more remotely from Wales. Even as a young child, Britten seems to have been a talented musician and vocalist, and also a visionary. Her father died when she was 11 years old. A year later she began to earn her living as a musician and vocalist, and also by serving as an entranced clairvoyant for the occult lodge that she calls the “Orphic Circle” (see below). It was probably aristocratic members of this lodge who enabled her to obtain some musical training in Paris in her late teens. In Paris, however, she damaged her singing voice; upon her return to England she turned to acting, which career she pursued (as a member of the Haymarket and the Adelphi companies) with modest success for almost a decade.

By 1850 Britten seems to have married E. Hardinge, a medical man, for in that year she began to appear on stage as Mrs. Hardinge. Also in 1850 she made or renewed her acquaintance with the enigmatic person whom she names “Chevalier Louis de B—”, an intimate of the Orphic Circle. In 1853 she seems to have begun serving as a spirit medium for Dr. Hardinge, following the example of two American spirit mediums who were holding public seances in London at that time. In 1854, however, she seems to have left Dr. Hardinge, for she next appeared on stage in Paris and then in New York, where she met with little success. Early in 1856, therefore, she resumed her former career as a spirit medium.

During the years 1856-1857 Britten was employed by the Society for the Diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge to hold free public seances in New York as a test medium, and also to edit the society’s journal, *The Christian Spiritualist*. After that journal ceased to be published (May 1857), one of the society’s trustees arranged for her public debut as a trance-lecturer. As a trance-lecturer, she proved extremely successful. During the next eight years, 1857-1865, she gave numerous trance-lectures in most of the United States, and soon became one of the most influential advocates for the controversial new religion of Spiritualism. During these years Britten also held strong views on several other major controversies of that era, advocating the abolition of slavery, reforms in the legal and social position of women, and – most notably! – that the

Bible should no longer be regarded as a divinely inspired book, but rather viewed as the confused remnants of myths and symbols from several very ancient religions that had venerated the sun, the human sex organs, and serpents.

In 1865 Britten returned to England for the first time in ten years. Among her first English trance-lectures was one advocating a revival of the study of ancient and medieval magic and witchcraft, which she supposed could shed much light on the phenomena of spirit mediumship. During the years 1865-1881 she shuttled back and forth across the Atlantic many times. In 1870, while in the United States, she married Dr. William G.P. Britten (ca. 1821-1894), like her a British subject. The years immediately after her marriage were ones of unusually diverse activities. Retiring for a while from the Spiritualist platform, Britten began to assist her husband in the practice of electrical medicine. Also, she and her husband edited and published two books for Chevalier Louis de B—, based on the doctrines and practices of the Orphic Circle: *Art Magic* (1876), a treatise on the history and theory of magic, and *Ghost Land* (1876), an occult biographical novel. In 1875-1876 she and her husband were two of the founding members of the Theosophical Society. In 1878 she returned to the Spiritualist platform, traveling overseas with her husband as far as Australia and New Zealand. In 1881 she and her husband returned to England for the last time, to spend their remaining years there.

## 2. WRITINGS

Britten was a prolific writer from her early years onward. Even before coming to the United States, she had contributed articles on musical and other subjects to several journals. From 1856 until the end of her life she was a frequent contributor to many Spiritualist journals, using several pseudonyms as well as her own name. She also edited several Spiritualist journals. In addition to *The Christian Spiritualist* at New York (May 1854-May 1857), which she edited only during the last year of its publication, she founded and edited *The Western Star* at Boston (July-December 1872) and *The Unseen Universe* at Manchester (April 1892-March 1893). More significantly, she edited the English Spiritualist journal, *The Two Worlds*, for the first four years of its long existence (November 1887-February 1892).

Britten was also the author of two massive histories of Spiritualism, *Modern American Spiritualism* (1870) and *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (1883). She presented her critique of Christianity in *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature* (1860), and with

somewhat greater sophistication in *The Faiths, Facts and Frauds of Religious History* (1879); these two works should be read in connection with Chevalier Louis de B—'s two books mentioned above, *Art Magic* (1876) and *Ghost Land* (1876).

Britten also wrote a few brief guides for Spiritualists, including *Rules to be Observed When Forming Spiritual Circles* (1870) and *On the Road; or, The Spiritual Investigator: A Complete Compendium of the Science, Religion, Ethics, and Various Methods of Investigating Spiritualism* (1878). Together with A. Kitson and H.A. Kersey she compiled a short manual for Spiritualist schools, *The English Lyceum Manual* (1887).

A small number of Britten's trance-lectures appeared as separate publications, beginning with two that she delivered at Boston in 1859 on *The Place and Mission of Woman* and on *Marriage*. They were shortly followed by her *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, delivered at Chicago in 1860. A series of trance-lectures that she delivered at London in 1865-1866 on various subjects was published under the title *Extemporaneous Addresses*. Britten also published a dozen of her short stories as *The Wildfire Club* (1861); many of them had first appeared in Spiritualist journals. And she was the author of a small book on the medical uses of electricity, *The Electric Physician; or, Self-Cure through Electricity* (1875). A few months after Britten's death, her sister, Margaret (Floyd) Wilkin-son, edited and published the *Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten* (1900).

### 3. THE ORPHIC CIRCLE

As noted above, for several years in her teens Britten was employed as an entranced clairvoyant by the occult society that she calls the Orphic Circle (not its real name, see below). Among the members of this society were Philip Henry, the fourth Earl of Stanhope (1781-1855), Richard James Morrison, also known as Zadkiel the astrologer (1795-1874), the writer → Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1805-1873), and in later years perhaps also the explorer → Richard Burton (1821-1890). If not a formal member, the renowned occultist Frederick Hockley (1808-1885) was at least a welcome visitor, as was Chevalier Louis de B—.

The Orphic Circle admitted women as well as men to membership. Its members met as a lodge presided over by a Grand Master (one of whose titles seems to have been "Venerable") and were sworn to secrecy. The true name of the society was one of the society's secrets (though Britten is reported to have said on one occasion that it was a

Rosicrucian society). At any given time it employed several young women and men (such as Britten had been) as entranced clairvoyants, also called *lucides* and *somnambules*. During its lodge meetings it undertook to project the double (i.e., to travel on the astral plane) and to invoke spirits into mirrors and crystals. It carried out these essential activities within a ritual practice that owed something to renaissance ceremonial magic as well as to mesmerism [→ Animal Magnetism] and that employed both hymns and specially prepared fumigations. However, it was not the members of the Orphic Circle themselves whose doubles were projected, or who saw and heard spirits in the mirrors and crystals, but the young entranced clairvoyants whom the society employed. Moreover, the spirits invoked into these mirrors and crystals were not, for the most part, spirits of dead men and women, but rather spirits that had never been human.

Such a synthesis of these three elements – Freemasonry, mesmerism and ceremonial magic – seems first to have been made at Lyon in the 1780s by a group of aristocrats and gentlemen. Among the most influential of these men were → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz and → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, both of whom were already members of the Order of the Elus Coëns, founded some decades earlier by Martines de Pasqually. From France this synthesis probably spread through aristocratic channels to England, where the Orphic Circle may have been just one of several groups formed to experiment with these new occult arts. The Orphic Circle seems already to have been in existence for some years when Britten began to work for it in 1835 or 1836; also she speaks of it as still in existence in the late 1880s, when most or all of its original members would have been dead.

The Orphic Circle clearly played an influential role in the development of magic and occultism in England during most of the 19th century; it is greatly to be regretted that so little is known of its history and membership, and only slightly more about its doctrines and practices. What is known so far comes exclusively from isolated comments that Britten made in several of her writings and from the two books and several articles published by Britten and her husband as the works of Chevalier Louis de B—. The true identity of the man behind that pseudonym, therefore, is of some historical interest. In the present author's monograph on Britten, it is argued that he is Ernest Christian Louis de Bunsen (1819-1903), second son of the renowned scholar and Prussian ambassador to England, Chevalier (later Baron) Christian Carl Josias de Bunsen

(1791-1860). Ernest de Bunsen was the author of a dozen substantial works in English and in German on the secret history of the world's great religions, on the occult symbolism and secret doctrine concealed in the Bible, and on the development of Christianity from a series of misunderstood myths and symbols originally pertaining to the cycles of heavenly phenomena, to sexuality and fertility, and to chthonic serpent worship. It remains to be seen whether this identification will stand the tests of further scholarly examination.

#### 4. THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Towards the end of 1875 a small group of occultists and Spiritualists met four times, twice in September at → H.P. Blavatsky's apartment and then twice in October at Britten's house in New York. At those four meetings the Theosophical Society was founded, its purposes determined, its organizational structure and bylaws devised and adopted, and its first officers elected. The society continued to meet twice a month from November 1875 to November 1876, generally in a rented meeting-room, but occasionally in a private home. Shortly after its formation the Theosophical Society adopted a policy of absolute secrecy about its activities. At this time it also seems to have begun a systematic program of occult training for its less qualified members, which was divided into three degrees (with a further six degrees said to be available "in the East"). However, in the following months several of its officers and most qualified members left New York for one reason or another, with the result that the society largely ceased to meet. Later its President (→ Henry Steel Olcott) and its Corresponding Secretary (Helena Petrovna Blavatsky), who both had moved to India in 1878, reestablished and revitalized it. Yet only a few of the founding members of the Theosophical Society took much part in its activities after 1878.

Just two of the founding members of the Theosophical Society were women, Britten and Blavatsky. Yet they not only had some of the strongest personalities, but also held some of the strongest credentials as occultists, in the fledgling society. Moreover, they seem to have held rather differing views concerning the purposes and program of the society. Blavatsky's views on this subject are well known from her voluminous writings, but Britten's must be inferred from scattered hints in her later articles and essays on occultism and in other texts (including the original records of the first years of the Theosophical Society). From all these sources it is very clear that Britten's views were strongly

influenced by Chevalier Louis de B—'s views on the nature of magic in general and by his program for establishing a "school of the prophets" that would train qualified young people in a wide range of occult disciplines (clairvoyance, mediumship, crystalgazing, magnetic healing, prophesy, ministry, magic, etc.), all of which disciplines were to rest on an advanced understanding of animal magnetism and psychology (*Art Magic* [1876], chapters 10, 20, 23). Reflecting this divergence of views, the original printed *Preamble and By-Laws of the Theosophical Society* (1875) opened with two ambiguous paragraphs, carefully worded so as to accommodate each woman's point of view equally well.

In light of all this, it is likely that Britten enrolled herself and her husband as founding members of the Theosophical Society, and that she became a member of its Council, not because she greatly esteemed the occult skills, much less the personality and character, of H.P. Blavatsky, but rather because she hoped to shape the Theosophical Society into just such a "school of the prophets" as Chevalier Louis had programmatically delineated in *Art Magic*. She was unable to achieve her aims because she and her husband moved from New York to Boston in late April, 1876; because after November, 1876, the Theosophical Society ceased to meet regularly; and finally because from 1878 onward Olcott and Blavatsky in India – and in the United States William Quan Judge (1851-1896) – were able to take decisive personal control of the society's affairs and to reformulate its purposes and program as they alone saw fit. In consequence Britten ceased to take much part in the business of the Theosophical Society. Eventually she resigned from its Council, and later she publically criticized its new purposes and its methods of achieving them.

#### 5. IMPACT

Britten lived and worked in close contact with esotericists, magicians and other occultists for nearly two-thirds of a century, with Spiritualists for nearly half a century, and with Theosophists for nearly a quarter of a century. By the end of her life, therefore, she had developed an extremely far-reaching network of acquaintances within these three overlapping groups of people, although it was largely limited to the United States and England. It is along this network that her direct and indirect influence made itself felt. Her original synthesis of religious, magical, occult, social and political ideas and ideals was an extremely powerful

and attractive one in its day, and retains considerable power even now.

The impact of this synthesis was all the stronger because of the force and charm of Britten's personality and also because of the theory that she had developed in various articles to explain and justify her work in the world. According to this theory, true spirit mediums (seers, magicians, prophets, witches, magnetic healers – they are all much the same thing in her view) differed *physiologically* from the common run of humanity, and it was this difference that enabled them to see and do what most people could never see and do, but at the same time endowed and burdened them with special callings that most people never had. Such a medium or magician 'must be born so from his mother's womb' (in principle ordinary people can bring about the necessary physiological changes in their bodies by training and self-discipline, but that way is so slow, painful and difficult as to be beyond the capacity of most people). Britten strongly claimed to be such a born medium and magician herself, as evidenced by the early development of her special powers and the seemingly fortuitous training that she received in the Orphic Circle. Yet this meant that Britten had also been set apart from other women and men by Spirit Powers more real than the empty deities preached in various churches, to present to the world their controversial messages of religious and social reform and the revival of magic. The difficulty of such a calling was well expressed by her chosen motto, 'The Truth against the World!'

Emma Hardinge Britten, *Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*, Chicago: n.p., 1860 ♦ idem, *Modern American Spiritualism*, New York: American News Co., 1869 ♦ idem, *The Faiths, Facts and Frauds of Religious History*, Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1879 ♦ idem, *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, Manchester: W. Britten, 1883 ♦ "Chevalier Louis de B—" and Emma Hardinge Britten, *Art Magic; or, Mundane, Sub-Mundane and Super-Mundane Spiritism*, New York: The Author, 1876 ♦ eidem, *Ghost Land; or, Researches into the Mysteries of Occultism*, Boston: The Editor, 1876.

*Lit.*: Robert Mathiesen, *The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten: Some Chapters in the History of Western Occultism* (Theosophical History Occasional Papers IX), Fullerton: Theosophical History, 2001 [with an extensive bibliography of her published books and articles] ♦ John Patrick Deveney, *Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society* (Theosophical History Occasional Papers VI), Fullerton: Theosophical History, 1997 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, esp. 200-212, 251, 273-274, 303-304, 360.

ROBERT MATHIESEN

**Bruno, Giordano (Filippo), \* January/February 1548 Nola, † 17.2.1600 Rome**

1. LIFE 2. PHILOSOPHY 3. MAGIC

#### 1. LIFE

Filippo Bruno was born in Nola, near Naples, as the son of Giovanni Bruno, 'uomo d'arme' (armiger), and Fraulissa Savolino. He first studied in Naples under the direction of Giovan Vincenzo Colle, known as "Il Sarnese", and the Augustinian father Teofilo da Vairano. In 1565 he entered the Neapolitan monastery of San Domenico Maggiore, taking the name of Giordano. Ordained priest in 1572, he completed his course of theological studies in 1575 with a dissertation on the *Summa contra Gentiles*. In June 1576 he was accused of having read and studied prohibited books. The seriousness of the accusation induced him to move to Rome, but after learning that the works he had surreptitiously used had been traced in Naples, he decided to quit the Dominican Order.

There then began a period of wandering through Italy: first to Savona, Turin, and Venice (where he published the small, lost work *De' segni de tempi* [On the Signs of the Times]), then to Padua and Brescia, where he appears to have cured a demoniac. In 1578 he passed into France, and after a stay at the monastery of Chambéry, moved to Lyon, then to Geneva. He was received by Gian Galeazzo Caracciolo, Marchese of Vico, and entered into contact with the Italian exile community. He worked as a proof-reader, and on March 20 matriculated at the University. In August 1578 Bruno was accused of defaming the Professor of Philosophy, Antoine de la Faye, and was arrested and brought before the Consistory Court. The incident caused him to abandon Geneva and return to France, where he stayed briefly at Lyon before settling in Toulouse. Here he obtained the title of "magister artium" (Master of Arts) and the post of "ordinary reader" in philosophy. The increasing bitterness of religious differences caused him to move to Paris, where he gave a successful course of lectures on the divine attributes. In addition, his courses on the Art of Memory [→ Mnemonics] aroused the interest of King Henri III, who, after having invited him to court to ascertain 'whether the memory he possessed and professed was [obtained] through natural art or through science', appointed him "extraordinary reader". In 1583 there appeared the works *De umbris idearum* (On the Shadows of Ideas), *Cantus Circaeus* (Circean Song), *De compendiosa architectura et comple-*



*mento artis Lullii* (On the Compendious Architecture and the Completion of the Lullian Art), and the comedy *Il Candelaio* (The Candlestick).

For motives that are not altogether clear, in 1583 he left France for England in the train of Michel de Castelnau, ambassador at the court of Elizabeth I. In the summer he held a course of lectures at Oxford, but on being accused of plagiarism, he was removed from the chair. In the same year appeared works on the subject of memory: *Ars reminiscendi* (The Art of Remembering), *Explicatio triginta sigillorum* (Explication of Thirty Seals), and *Sigillus sigillorum* (The Seal of Seals). Between 1584 and 1585 he composed the cycle of Italian dialogues: *La Cena de le Ceneri* (The Ash-Wednesday Supper), *De la causa, principio et uno* (On the Cause, the Beginning, and the One), *De l'infinito, universo et mundi* (On Infinity, the Universe, and the Worlds), *Lo spaccio della bestia trionfante* (The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast), *La Cabala del cavallo pegaseo* (The Cabala of the Horse Pegasus), and *De gl'eroici furori* (On the Heroic Furies).

Returning to Paris in October 1585, he undertook a detailed critique of Aristotelian doctrines, first with *Figuratio Aristotelici Physici auditus* (The Shape of Aristotelian Physics), an original exposition of Aristotle's physical writings in a mnemotechnical and mythological vein, then with the harsh criticism of *Centum et viginti articuli de natura et mundo* (120 Articles on Nature and the World), a short work published under the name of his disciple Jean Hennequin, into which was incorporated the material used by Bruno for a public disputation at the College of Cambrai. To this period also belong the polemic with the Salerno geometri- cian Fabrizio Mordente, evidenced in *Dialogi duo de Fabricii Mordentis Salernitani prope divina adinventione ad perfectam cosmimetriae praxim* (Two Dialogues on Fabrizio Mordenti the Salernitan on the Divine Invention for the Perfect Practice of World-Measurement) which Bruno issued with the publisher Chevillot.

The worsening of the religious situation prompted him to move to Germany. He passed through Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Marburg, then between 1586 and 1588 stayed in Wittenberg. Matriculated as "doctor italicus" (Italian Doctor), he held private courses on Aristotle, commenting on the physical and rhetorical writings. A cycle of lectures on *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Rhetoric to Herennius) was published in 1612 by Heinrich Alsted under the title of *Artificium perorandi* (The Art of Pleading). In 1587 Bruno published *De lampade combinatoria lulliana* (On the Lullian Combinatorial Lamp), *De progressu et lampade venatoria logico-*

*rum* (On the Progress and Hunting Lamp of the Logicians), and *Animadversiones circa Lampadem Lullianam* (Thoughts on the Lullian Lamp), and worked on the first version of *Lampas triginta statuarum* (Lamp of the 30 Statues) and *Libri physico- aristotelis explanati* (Aristotle's Books on Physics Explained), which were published posthumously in the edition of the *Opera* edited by Tocco and Vitelli. In 1588, after publishing a second edition of *Centum et viginti articuli*, entitled *Acrotismus Camoeracensis*, he left Wittenberg with the *Oratio valedictoria* (Farewell Oration).

Next he went to Prague, where he published *Articuli centum et sexaginta adversus huius tempestatis mathematicos atque philosophos* (160 Articles against the Mathematicians and Philosophers of this Time), dedicated to → Rudolf II, and *De lampade combinatoria R. Lullii* (On the Combinatorial Lamp of R. Lull). In 1589 he was in Helmstedt at the Academia Iulia: on the occasion of the death of Herzog Julius II von Braunschweig, founder of the Academy, he read an *Oratio consolatoria* (Consolatory Oration) that was printed in the same year. Beside this, he devoted himself to writing magical treatises: *De magia mathematica* (On Mathematical Magic), *De magia naturali* (On Natural Magic), *Theses de magia* (Theses on Magic), *De rerum principiis et elementis et causis* (On the Principles, Elements, and Causes of Things), and *Medicina lulliana* (Lullian Medicine). In 1590 he published at Frankfurt the trilogy of Latin poems, *De triplici minimo et mensura* (On the Triple Minimum and Measure), *De monade numero et figura* (On the Monad, Number, and Figure), and *De immenso et innumerabilibus* (On the Immense and Innumerable Things). Expelled from the city, in 1591 he went to Zurich, where he gave a cycle of lectures collected and published by his pupil Raphael Egli under the title *Summa terminorum metaphysicorum* (Summa of Metaphysical Terms). In the spring he returned to Frankfurt and published *De imaginum signorum et idearum compositione* (On the Composition of Images, Signs, and Ideas).

In August 1591 he was invited to Venice by Giovanni Mocenigo, who wished to learn the art of memory. On returning to Italy, Bruno stayed in Padua and Venice, and composed *De vinculis in genere* (On Bindings in General), *Praelectiones geometricae* (Geometrical Pre-elections), and *Ars deformationum* (The Art of Deformations). On May 23, 1592 Mocenigo denounced Bruno to the Venetian Inquisition; the philosopher was arrested and taken to the prison of San Domenico di Castello. On January 9, 1593 his trial began in



Rome. In 1599, at the end of a long and complicated legal proceeding, Bruno was invited to abjure eight heretical propositions, singled out by Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino. On December 21, Bruno's stubborn attitude precipitated the result of the trial: he was handed over to the secular arm and was burned at the stake in the Campo dei Fiori on February 17, 1600.

## 2. PHILOSOPHY

The pyre of Campo dei Fiori certainly marked the essential moment of creation for Bruno's reputation, and his myth. Beyond the myth, the "Nolan philosophy" turns out to have been based from the very beginning on a series of crucial motifs. Already in the first Parisian work, *De umbris idearum*, the exposition of mnemonic practice resolves itself into a lucid analysis of nature and man, in which Bruno underlines on the one hand the character of "vanity" and "shadow", and on the other, the capacity to grasp the "primal, true and good" even within the shadowed horizon of the manifested universe. In the Italian dialogues written in London between 1584 and 1585 (*La Cena de le Ceneri*, *De la causa, principio et uno*, *De l'infinito, universo et mundi*, *Lo spaccio della bestia trionfante*, *La Cabala del cavallo pegaseo*), the themes enunciated in *De umbris* flow together in a more profound theoretical context, deeply marked by fundamental theoretical acquisitions such as the doctrine of living matter and the "discovery" of Copernicus.

In the first Italian dialogue published in London, the *Cena de le Ceneri*, Bruno expounds the Copernican hypothesis in radical terms, showing how the doctrine of earthly motion presupposes the existence of a universe that is infinite, peopled by innumerable individuals and worlds, animated altogether and without distinction by a unique life-principle. The motion of the earth is in fact produced by the vital impulse that is innate in matter, and which drives every planet to revolve around its own sun, so as to draw life and nourishment from it: 'The cause of such motion', writes Bruno in *La Cena de le Ceneri*, discussing the earth's motion, 'is the renewal and the rebirth of this body, which cannot last forever under the same disposition. Just as things which cannot last forever through the individual (speaking in common terms) endure through the species, [in the same way,] substances which cannot perpetuate themselves under the same countenance, do so by changing their configuration. For the matter and substance of things is incorruptible and every part of it must be the subject of every form, so that every part can become every thing (insofar as it is able), and be every thing

(if not in the same time and instant of eternity, at least at different times, at various instants of eternity, successively and alternatively). For even though the matter as a whole is capable of all the forms at once, each part of the matter, nevertheless, is not capable of all the forms at once' (*Cena de le Ceneri*, dialogue V, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, p. 119, trans. Gosselin & Lerner). Change and mutation thus characterize reality at every level: 'So, everything within its own kind has every [possible] alternation of dominion and servitude, of happiness and unhappiness, of that state we call life and that we call death, of light and dark, of good and evil. And there is nothing to which it is naturally appropriate to be eternal, except for the substance which is matter, to which it is no less appropriate to be in continuous mutation' (*Cena de le Ceneri*, dialogue V, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, p. 120, trans. Gosselin & Lerner). The hierarchies and distinctions proper to the Aristotelian cosmos dissolve in view of the one living matter: there is no difference between the earth and the other planets. In the infinite universe, change figures as a fundamental structure of being at every level: man, like the worlds, is moved by a continual "transmutation".

Following the thread of this reflexion, Bruno touches on the delicate problem of the relationship between science and religion and defines the proper domains of each discipline, only to reaffirm vigorously the absolute autonomy of rational research. He observes, therefore, that a correct interpretation of Scripture must needs take account of the moral intentions of the prophets: 'those divine books which serve our intellect do not deal with demonstrations and speculations about natural matters, as if with philosophy. Rather, with a view to our understanding and feelings, the scriptures direct the practice of moral actions through laws. Having then this object before his eyes, the Divine Legislator did not bother, in addition, to discuss that truth which would not have helped the common people in turning away from evil and following good. Rather, he leaves this meditation to contemplative men, and speaks to the common people according to their way of understanding and speaking, so that they can understand what is most important' (*Cena de le Ceneri*, dialogue IV, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, p. 91, trans. Gosselin & Lerner). Theologians and prophets work on the plane of civil communication in order to control peoples who are still barbaric: thus they have to use a simple and direct language that suits the nature and beliefs of the individuals they are addressing. Philosophers and scientists, on the other hand, are not proposing to educate the people, but address-

ing a few intellectuals in order to communicate a truth that is often in clear contradiction to the common way of thinking. Thus it is altogether wrong to confuse the language of science and the language of morals, using the sacred writings to confirm or reject a given physical theory: prophets and scientists are addressing different publics and pursuing different ends. Resuming this argument, Bruno would conclude in his dialogue *De l'infinito*: 'This is why theologians no less learned than religious have never opposed the liberty of philosophers, while the true philosophers of civil worth and of good custom have ever fostered religions. For both sides know that faith is required for the rule of the rude populace who must be governed, while demonstration is for the contemplatives who know how to govern themselves and others' (*De l'infinito, universo et mundi*, dialogue I, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, p. 119, trans. Singer).

In the second dialogue published in London, *De la causa principio et uno*, Bruno's reflexion illustrates the theoretical core of the "Nolan philosophy" in the form of a vigorous debate between three speakers: he rethinks in fresh terms the problem of the matter of the universe, replacing the traditional notion of an inert receptacle of forms with the radically original image of a material principle endowed with life and inexhaustible vigor, from which new forms continually germinate. To this end, Bruno criticizes the Aristotelian distinction between potency and act, showing how the two terms are intimately linked: every act, in fact, can be explained only in relation to a pre-existing potency. But if that is true, then even the infinite act of the divinity appears linked inseparably to the infinite potency of matter. Emboldened by these theoretical premises, Bruno completely overturns the interpretation of matter, transforming it into an attribute of the divinity.

The cosmological problem of the first three London dialogues opens up in *Spaccio della bestia trionfante* to a closely-argued reflection of an ethical order that directly attacks the concept of religion. In the first three Italian dialogues, the phenomenon of religion appears as an instrument of government invented by the wise in order to control 'wild and ignorant peoples'. From this point of view, the reasoning of the *Spaccio* introduces a strongly original element: Bruno in fact defines the nature and function of civil law on the basis of the close link that joins human laws to the inaccessible divine truth. The point of departure of the argument developed in this work is the knowledge that the divinity never ceases to communicate with the world: thus the divine action is expressed either in the natural

universe, in the form of providence, or else in human society, in the historic forms of wisdom and laws: 'Above all things', Bruno writes, 'is situated Truth . . . That goddess who is joined to and close to Truth has two names: Providence and Prudence . . . Sophia is followed by her daughter, Law; and through Law, Sophia wishes to operate, wishes to be employed; through Law princes reign, and kingdoms and republics are maintained' (*Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, dialogue II, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, pp. 536-538, trans. Imerti).

In the light of the link which exists between human laws and the inaccessible divine truth, Bruno shows how the legislator's work is responsible for causing the principles that regulate the action of God in the universe to reverberate in the human community, selecting and favoring, beyond distinctions of titles, blood, and wealth, the action of those who can contribute in positive ways to social life. Civil law thus becomes the divine instrument that permits mankind to remove itself from the animal condition, to become, through community life and the practice of wisdom, the true "gods of the earth": 'the gods . . .' – as we read in the *Spaccio* – 'have instituted laws, not so much in order to receive glory, as to spread it among men. Thus the farther human laws and opinions are removed from the goodness and truth of Law and Judgment, the farther they remove themselves from regulating and approving that which is especially contained in the moral actions of men in relation to other men' (*Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, dialogue II, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, p. 542, trans. Imerti).

On this basis, Bruno reinstates the Machiavellian idea of civil religion and contrasts with the positive model offered by the Roman cult the sterile and inert preaching of Christianity. The political and religious crisis troubling Europe is thus no casual event, according to Bruno, but has deep theological roots and was born from none other than the reversal of values produced by Christianity, which put civil virtues in second place and exalted as supreme values humility, ignorance, and the passive obedience to the divine law. According to Bruno's interpretation, the seeds of decay introduced by Christian preaching culminated in Luther's Reformation, which represents the "evil angel" foreseen in the ancient Hermetic prophecy. Luther's theses, founded on the doctrine of predestination, have in fact severed every tie between divine justice and human justice: thus religion has lost its proper function of civil control and become a source of fanaticism and discord. The Reformers, Bruno writes, do not 'bring any fruits other than those

used to suppress discussions, to dissipate harmony, to dissolve unity, and to cause children to rebel against their fathers, servants against their masters, subjects against their superiors; to cause schisms between peoples and peoples, nations and nations, comrades and comrades, brothers and brothers; to create division among families, cities, republics, and kingdoms' (*Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, dialogue II, in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani*, p. 545, trans. Imerti).

In contrast to this politics centered on intolerance and violence, Bruno juxtaposes the enlightened action of Henri III of France, whom he evokes at the end of the dialogue as the model of the true "Christian prince", able to meet head on the deformities caused by Paul and Luther with an interpretation of Christianity in the spirit of civil law, resting on the values of peace and tolerance. In the closing passage of the *Spaccio*, Bruno adopts in secularized form the best inspirations of the Christian beatitudes, thus evoking themes on which he would long reflect. Analogous points recur in the preface to the *Articuli adversus mathematicos*, written in Prague in 1588. In this text, which may well be defined as Bruno's "profession of faith", the philosopher speaks one of the loftiest eulogies to freedom of thought: 'Everywhere', he writes, 'this law of love lies neglected, though so widely celebrated: this law born not of the malevolent demon of a single race, but in truth of God father of all, in that it conforms to the universal nature. It proclaims the love of the human race, whereby we should also love our enemies, hence not resemble the brutes and barbarians, but become the image of him who makes his sun shine on good and bad alike, and rains his grace on the just and the unjust. This is the religion that I follow without any controversy and prior to any disputation, whether by conviction of the soul, or through the ancient custom of my homeland and my people' (*La professione di fede di Giordano Bruno*, p. 69). Looking back to the tradition of Florentine → Neoplatonism and re-reading Erasmus, Bruno describes a model of religion that simplifies as far as possible its dogmatic and doctrinal apparatus and draws on the essential principles of the Gospels, interpreted ethically and free from any outside influence. Similarly in the civil realm, Bruno's religion serves as a place of unity, not of separation.

In the *Spaccio*, within an argument that dwells on the universal crisis, Bruno stresses the close connection of Christianity with decadence, and includes in his condemnation the whole Judeo-Christian tradition. He shows how the decadence of Europe has deep theological roots, derived from

the reversal of values produced by Christianity, which, as we read in the *Cabala del cavallo pegaseo*, has put civil virtues in second place and exalted as supreme values "asinine" ignorance and the passive obedience to the divine law. Finally, in the *Eroici furori* Bruno takes up again themes and images from *De umbris* to show how, by moving out of the limit and the shadow, it is possible to forge a new relationship with the absolute truth, so as to transform an environment that is structurally finite and limited into an experience of the infinite.

As can be seen from this, it is the doctrine of matter and the closely connected theme of change that, for all the plurality of starting-points and motives that vary from time to time, constitute the axis on which Bruno's research rests: in this sense, it is significant that the theoretical positions of the *Dialoghi italiani* animate the speculation that unfolds in the three Frankfurt poems: *De triplici minimo et mensura*, *De monade, numero et figura*, and *De innumerabilibus, immenso et infigurabilibus*. These three works mark the stages of a rigorous speculative movement: in *De minimo*, Bruno focuses on the infinite atoms whose ceaseless collisions mark the cycles of natural life; in *De monade*, the doctrine of Lucretius blends with the idea of universal animation to highlight the one and only motive principle that operates in the inmost part of every being; in *De immenso*, in the course of a close criticism of Aristotle and Ptolemy, he reconstructs the salient points of the cosmology illustrated in the Italian dialogues.

### 3. MAGIC

Bruno constantly grafts magical reflections onto his philosophical arguments. As evidence of this, it is worth noting that most of the problems treated in the magical works find their theoretical basis in the reflections of a work written in the same period, but on a very different subject from → magic: the *Lampas triginta statuarum*. It is apparently paradoxical, not only because kabbalistic and Hermetic themes are almost entirely absent from this work, but because the few allusions to magic are without exception negative in tone: rather than exalting the abilities of the magus, Bruno aims to mock the blind credulity of those who open themselves to suggestions from another's will, to the point of becoming "vessels" and "instruments" of extraneous forces. Magical doctrines, having no contact with true wisdom, play a completely irrelevant role within a reflection that is supposed to describe the structure of the manifested universe, following a program symbolized by the figure of the "natural scale". The image which pervades the treatise in a

series of close variations is not original in itself: it was sketched by Aristotle and filled out by the commentators of late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, who insisted on the hierarchical structure of the cosmos, in which every being is placed in an absolute ranking according to a rising scale that goes from the imperfection of matter up to the divine fullness, via ever-increasing degrees of perfection.

But Bruno rethinks the theme in a deeper way, modifying the traditional concept at two critical points. At the first level, Bruno dismantles the ontological structure erected by the Aristotelians by blending a series of elements taken from Aristotle's *Physics* with a conception of matter profoundly marked by the theoretical arguments arrived at in *De la causa*. At the base of the scale of nature, Bruno places not an imperfect and passive mass, but a matter animated by an insatiable desire for being, which compels it to make itself all and to become all. Between God and matter, or between the base of the scale and its summit, the only difference is given by the fact that matter can only act progressively, at different times and moments, to possess those infinite forms that coexist simultaneously in the divine plenitude. By placing the emphasis on matter and its "insatiable will", Bruno annihilates the hierarchical structure that is symbolized by the scale, which then becomes a simple metaphor for the "scientific method" described in the *Lampas*: to know nature it is not enough to grasp the profound unity underlying multiplicity, but one must first recognize the specific dignity of each being – for however small it is, it still participates in life and sense – and then comprehend one by one the relationships that unite it in infinitely varied ways to the other beings.

To describe such a process in imaginative form, Bruno takes one of the most suggestive personages of Greek mythology and shows through the figures of Thetis and Peleus the archetype of the action through which the human operator continually confronts the divine matter. Plunging deep into the rich fund of mythic material concerning Thetis, Bruno focuses on the long and laborious course which Peleus follows to conquer the goddess, alternating references to the episodes told in Apollodorus's *Bibliotheca* with direct quotes from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid: the latter being a work which he obviously knew and loved, for he uses it frequently both in his Italian and Latin writings. If it is no surprise that one of the most detailed sections of the *Lampas* is full of references to Ovid, it is still significant that Bruno chooses to cite and to comment analytically only on those verses devoted

to the difficult conquest of Thetis. His choice is anything but automatic or indifferent, for his choice of passages is limited to those in which Ovid gives original expression to the mythological data, suppressing the heroic element so as to highlight instead the strength of desire that spurs Peleus on to find, beyond the succession of metamorphoses, the true face of the goddess.

In the *Lampas triginta statuarum*, Ovid's poem becomes the poetic figure of the long apprenticeship through which the "efficient cause" and the "operator" learn to imitate the inexhaustible cycle of natural metamorphoses, with a procedure that is never linear or pacific, but perennially liable to failure: this is evidenced, as Bruno reminds us, by Peleus's adventures, in which his laborious efforts to conquer the watery goddess often go in unexpected directions, resulting in consequences that are the opposite of what was foreseen. In this sense, one of the cardinal concepts of the chapter devoted to Thetis refers specifically to "labor", to the concentrated and meditated effort required by all operations in which man seeks to control the inner dynamism of the material substratum. Again, in an implicit polemic against those who maintain that human artifice inevitably exhausts the vigor of nature, Bruno insists that the gift of perfection, rare and extreme as it may be, can only arise out of human art. The myth of Peleus, who progressively dissolves the horrible metamorphoses of Thetis until he captures the goddess in all her splendor, show that absolute perfection, absent in nature, is always born from the informed work of an artifex, who, molding matter, directs it towards those "best forms" which nature never produces spontaneously, and which in any case are encountered only 'exceptionally', 'rarely', and 'in few individuals'.

It is thus in the relationship with matter, and specifically in the attempt to attain perfection, breaking up the inexorable rhythm of change, that Bruno sees the element that distinguishes the specific "fate" of man. And thus, having dissolved the ontological foundations of the scale of nature as traditionally understood, he returns to this image and introduces a second and significant variation on the ethical plane, to demolish any vision inspired by a rigid determinism and to celebrate, instead, the importance of human responsibility and action. In a rigorous speculative gesture, Bruno first reduces to a minimum the distance that separates man from the animal, and instead posits the maximum disproportion between the various destinies open to man. As the fruit of the metamorphoses of a unique and identical material, man is not superior by nature to other animate beings,

with which he shares, albeit in different forms, sense and intellect. Nor does he stand out in his physical constitution, for animals exist, as Bruno reminds us, that have an affinity to him, such as the ape. Much less does man enjoy any superiority on the gnosological level, because many animals – and here he cites the classic examples of the horse and the elephant – know how to reason most acutely. Thus the primacy of man is not a natural given: on the contrary, it is the fruit of the assiduous effort that carries man beyond his own natural limit, transforming him into a “sage” and a “hero”. As Bruno recognizes, this is an extremely rare experience; however, it is only by virtue of this effort that access is gained to the highest class of living beings: beyond the plane of beings endowed with reason and intellect there is situated the “heroic” dimension, attained not by natural destiny, nor by divine beneficence, but only by conscious choice, after a long, laborious process of inner refinement.

Bruno is then able to use this carefully thought-out texture of variations for a profound rethinking of the concept of the scale of nature. In the *Lampas*, in fact, the symbol of the scale does not represent the finite steps of the descent of God into the sensible cosmos, because the communication between different levels of being is already guaranteed by matter, whose endless unfolding abolishes the traditional hierarchies. Nor does it allude to the orderly progression that goes from the animal to man, because the experience of man is configured in the very terms of a fracture with respect to his own natural role. Through these two important variants, the *Lampas* brings forth an extremely original image of nature: the universe is a living organism in which the incessant mutations of matter abolish every hierarchy and every order; combining with the work of man, it creates multiple orders that are different from those naturally given. The “scale of beings” is anything but stable and eternal (as Aristotle thought), but reveals a dynamic reality open to infinite mutations produced by the vitality of matter, which combining with the work of man opens up to diverse and unexpected forms and creates orders different from those naturally given. In the same way, the hierarchical order of beings can be subverted by the responsible action of man, who learns to know and to mold nature, and thereby learns to mold his own destiny, so that he can free himself from the animal condition and become wise and divine. From the speculations of the *Lampas* there emerges the primacy of knowing and of *praxis*, which allow one to comprehend and modify nature: and it is in the

light of this knowledge that Bruno decides to proceed to a confrontation with magic.

In the magical art, the philosopher sees the paradigm of a non-dogmatic knowledge, which, through the model of a cosmos that is animate and woven of relationships and consonances, teaches him to recognize and value the infinite differences between things, and the infinite variety of human sentiments, suggesting the most efficacious strategies to act on the relationships between the various beings, to change and control the course of metamorphoses and the play of emotions. From the start, the attention to the role played by *fides* (faith) in magical operations bears witness to the precise will to naturalize magical *praxis*, depriving it of any linkage with astrological or theurgical doctrines: the fulcrum of the magical operation is thus identified within man and his passions.

In fact, in the most interesting and original of his magical writings, *De vinculis in genere*, Bruno distances himself from a hierarchical vision of magic and politics, to show how the action of the magus – similar to that of the politician – can result in good effects only if it succeeds in breaking down the consolidated hierarchies, recognizing the nature and specific dignity of the subjects which it addresses, and elaborating, in the light of an experience that is infinitely varied and dissimilar, the most effective techniques for acting on the multiform play of emotions and serving as vehicle for this *consensus* on which every kind of magic is basically rooted: ‘It is necessary’, Bruno writes, ‘that he who would operate on reality by making use of bindings should possess in a certain way a universal theory of things, to be in the position of binding man, who of all things is so to speak the recapitulation. And this is so because – as we have said elsewhere – it is principally in the human species that one may discern the species of all things, especially through mathematics: thus some men resemble fish, others birds . . . Moreover, each man possesses a variety of customs, habits, intentions, inclinations, temperaments, and age, and, just as they imagine in the case of Proteus and Achelous that it is possible to take on a single material substratum capable of transmigrating into different forms, even so for binding one should continually use ever-varying kinds of knots’ (*De Vinculis*, in *Opere magiche*, pp. 416-417).

And it is significant that at the heart of this reflection, Bruno revives the precise system of symbols that he used in the *Lampas triginta statuarum*, to show how every magical action is based on the play of attraction and repulsion which successively join the operator – the hero Peleus – to a specific



material or a specific individual – the nereid Thetis – : ‘that which is subject to binding is something profound and scarcely apparent to the senses . . . , it is subject to transformations moment by moment, behaving towards him who would bridle it no differently than Thetis when she tried to escape from Peleus’s embrace: thus it is necessary to note the rhythm of its change, discerning beneath the preceding form the potentiality of the next one’ (*De Vinculis*, in *Opere magiche*, pp. 447-449). Whoever wishes to throw bonds around individuals or people must thus decipher the cycle of metamorphoses, so as to discern beyond the apparent chaos the order that allows him to see, time after time, the most propitious moment to throw the bond: ‘Therefore’, Bruno concludes, ‘after considering the subject’s disposition and quality at the present moment, Peleus prefigures and predisposes the bindings for this Thetis, before she flees to take a definite form, knowing well that it is one thing to bind a serpent, another to bind a lion, and yet another, a boar’ (*De Vinculis*, in *Opere magiche*, p. 449).

We are evidently dealing with a broad and articulate argument, in the course of which the philosopher recapitulates and elaborates in original fashion themes that were circulating in European culture, ranging from astrological concepts to Hermetic doctrines. The latter, which constituted an important point of reference for Bruno’s thought, have been interpreted by F.A. Yates as the sole key for understanding the sense of his biographical and intellectual environment. Recent criticism has amply dwelt on the limits of this interpretation, but the thesis of the English scholar in her now classic study, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, has had the merit of shedding new light on aspects generally overlooked by interpreters; and the suggestive image of Bruno as “Hermetic magus” thus represents an essential stage in the philosopher’s fortunes during the second half of the 20th century.

The passages from Bruno’s works quoted in the text are from the following English translations: *The Ash Wednesday Supper* (ed. & tr. Hamden), Ct.: Edward A. Gosselin & Lawrence S. Lerner, Archon Books, 1977. ♦ *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (ed. & trans. Arthur D. Imerti), New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964 ♦ *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*, (trans. Dorothea Waley Singer), in: D.W. Singer, *Giordano Bruno, His Life and Thought*, New York: Henry Schuman, 1950 ♦ Original editions of Bruno’s works: *Opera Latine conscripta* (ed. F. Fiorentino [F. Tocco, H. Vitelli, C.M. Tallarigo]), Naples/Florence 1879-1891 ♦ *De umbris idearum* (ed. R. Sturlese), Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1991 ♦ *Dialoghi filosofici italiani* (ed. and

intro. by M. Ciliberto), Milan: Mondadori 2000 ♦ *Opere magiche* (general ed., M. Ciliberto, ed. S. Bassi, E. Scapparone, N. Tirinnanzi), Adelphi: Milan 2000 ♦ *Opere italiane di Giordano Bruno* (ed. G. Aquilecchia, N. Ordine [et al.], appendices by L. Berggren, D. Mansueti, Z. Sorrenti), Turin: UTET, 2002.

*Lit.* For the bibliography of works by and about Bruno, the fundamental sources are V. Salvestrini, *Bibliografia di Giordano Bruno (1582-1950)*, 2nd ed., ed. L. Firpo, Florence: Sansoni, 1958 and M.E. Severini, *Bibliografia di Giordano Bruno 1951-2000*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002. A selective bibliography follows. E. Canone (ed.), *Giordano Bruno: Gli anni napoletani e la “peregrinatio” europea. Immagini. Testi. Documenti*, Cassino: Università degli Studi, 1992 ♦ L. Firpo, *Il processo di Giordano Bruno* (ed. D. Quagliani), Rome: Salerno, 1993 ♦ V. Spampinato, *Il processo di Giordano Bruno con documenti editi e inediti*, Messina: Principato, 1921 ♦ G. Aquilecchia, “Lo stampatore londinese di Giordano Bruno e altre note per l’edizione della ‘Cena’”, in: idem, *Schede bruniane (1950-1991)*, Rome: Vecchiarelli, 1993, 157-207 ♦ G. Aquilecchia, *Le opere italiane di Giordano Bruno: Critica testuale e oltre*, Naples Bibliopolis: 1991 ♦ M. Ciliberto & N. Tirinnanzi, *Il dialogo recitato: Per una nuova edizione del Bruno volgare*, Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2003 ♦ F. Tomizza, “Quattro varianti significative nel Dialogo I della ‘Cena de le ceneri’ di Giordano Bruno”, *Rinascimento* 36 (1996), 431-456 ♦ G. Bruno, *Corpus iconographicum: Le incisioni nelle opere a stampa*, catalogue, graphic reconstruction, and commentary by M. Gabriele, Milan: Adelphi, 2001 ♦ M. Ciliberto, *Lessico di Giordano Bruno*, Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo e Bizzarri, 1979 ♦ C. Lefons (ed.), *Indice dei nomi, dei luoghi e delle cose notevoli nelle opere latine di Giordano Bruno*, Leo S. Olschki: Florence, 1998 ♦ M. Ciliberto, *Giordano Bruno*, Rome/Bari: Laterza, 1990 ♦ idem, *L’occhio di Atteone: Nuovi studi su Giordano Bruno*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002 ♦ A. Corsano, *Il pensiero di Giordano Bruno nel suo svolgimento storico*, Florence: Sansoni, 1940 ♦ T. Dagron, *Unité de l’être et dialectique: L’idée de philosophie naturelle chez Giordano Bruno*, Paris: Vrin, 1999 ♦ G. Gentile, *Giordano Bruno e il pensiero del Rinascimento*, Florence, 1920 (new ed., intro. by E. Garin, Le Lettere, 1991) ♦ G. Sacerdoti, *Sacrificio e sovranità: Teologia e politica nell’Europa di Shakespeare e Bruno*, Turin: Einaudi, 2002 ♦ F.A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964 ♦ Hilary Gatti (ed.), *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2002.

MICHELE CILIBERTO

**Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George**  
(Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer), \*  
25.5. 1803 London, † 18.1.1873 Torquay

Novelist and statesman. Youngest son of General William Earle Bulwer and Elizabeth Barbara Lyt-

ton. He first went by the name of Edward Bulwer. In 1838 he was created a baronet, and became Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, Bt. In 1843, under the terms of his mother's will, he changed his surname to Bulwer-Lytton. In 1866 he was created 1st Baron Lytton of Knebworth, and was thereafter known as Lord Lytton.

Bulwer-Lytton's father died when he was four years old, leaving him to be raised by his mother in her ancestral home, Knebworth House, Hertfordshire. "Teddy" was a precocious child and, from an early age, a wide reader in his grandfather Lytton's library. As a boy, he came under the influence of the Rev. Chauncey Hare Townshend (1798-1868), an advocate of Mesmerism [→ Animal Magnetism], who remained a lifelong correspondent. After education at preparatory schools and by private tutors, Bulwer-Lytton attended first Trinity College, then the smaller college of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and won the Chancellor's Gold Medal for his poem *Sculpture*. He spent two years in Paris (1825/26), developing into an elegant social figure with a dandified air, yet with a need for solitude and a keen, ironic eye that laid the foundations of his career as a novelist.

As a young man, Bulwer-Lytton was of a high-strung, romantic temperament. The first woman he loved was forced by her father to marry another man. Three years later she died, after confessing that she had always loved him. She remained an influence on him, appearing in his last novel, *Kenelm Chillingly*, as Lily Mordaunt. Later, while at Cambridge, he was involved with Lady Caroline Lamb (1785-1828), formerly Lord Byron's lover, who introduced him to the literary circles around the novelist and reformer William Godwin (1756-1836). After his return from Paris, she also introduced him to a beautiful, penniless Irish protégée of hers, Rosina Doyle Wheeler (1802-1882). After a stormy engagement, Bulwer-Lytton married Rosina in 1827. Bulwer-Lytton's mother was strongly opposed to the match, and cut off her son's allowance. Henceforth he had to earn his living by writing.

The Bulwers had two children, Emily (1829-1848) and Robert (1831-1891). For some years they kept up a brilliant social façade, but in 1836 they were legally separated. Rosina Lytton devoted the rest of her life to harrasing her husband, writing a novel that cruelly lampooned him (*Cheveley, or the Man of Honour*, 1839) and heckling him at his election meetings. His attempt to have her certified as insane only backfired on him by alienating the public and his son. It is not known

whether Bulwer-Lytton had any later alliances, but he was close to Lady Blessington (1789-1849), who presided over a famous literary and social salon in Gore House, Kensington. Over a hundred of her letters to Bulwer-Lytton survive, dating from 1824-1849.

Bulwer-Lytton entered Parliament in 1831 as Liberal (Whig) member for St. Ives, Huntingdon, and a supporter of the Reform Bill. During the Prime Ministership of Lord Melbourne (Lady Caroline Lamb's husband), he caused a motion to be carried exempting the freed slaves in British colonies from a compulsory twelve-year apprenticeship. He left Parliament in 1841, to return as Conservative (Tory) Member for Hertfordshire from 1852-1866. His conversion was due to his friend Benjamin Disraeli (1st Earl of Beaconsfield, 1804-1881), who also had a career as a novelist. During 1858-1859 Bulwer-Lytton was Secretary for the Colonies, and presided over the incorporation of two important new colonies, British Columbia (Canada) and Queensland (Australia). After he was raised to the peerage in 1866 he sat in the House of Lords, but increasing deafness prevented him from debating. Although the conferral of a peerage satisfied a long-held ambition of the Lytton family, Bulwer-Lytton's last years were clouded by ill-health, depression, and unceasing troubles with his wife. Bulwer-Lytton left instructions that after his death he should be buried without Christian ceremony, next to his mother in unconsecrated ground. His son ignored these wishes, and took advantage of his father's fame to have him interred among the writers and politicians in Westminster Abbey.

Bulwer-Lytton's literary career was highly successful from the start. His first novel, *Pelham*, depicted the excesses of social life that he had witnessed in Paris, and is said to have started the fashion for masculine evening dress. His novels and plays, first published without disclosure of his authorship, assured him of a lifelong income and enabled him to lavishly restore his Tudor mansion, Knebworth. They also won him the friendship and respect of Charles Dickens (1812-1870), with whom he founded the short-lived Guild of Literature and Art (1854) for the benefit of poor authors. Bulwer-Lytton also edited literary magazines (*The New Monthly Magazine*, 1831-32; *The Monthly Chronicle*, 1841-?), and, less successfully, wrote poetry, including the epic poem *King Arthur* (1848). His baronetcy was awarded for services to literature. The subjects of his novels range over social satire and social criticism, crime, historical

fiction, politics, science fiction, and the occult [→ occult/occultism].

Bulwer-Lytton's involvement with the occult began in the atmosphere of Mesmerism, or "magnetism", which was popular in the 1830s both as a social diversion and as a field of scientific research. Bulwer-Lytton's friend C.H. Townshend was an authority in the matter, and wrote *Facts in Mesmerism* (1840). Lady Blessington's salon was a hotbed of crystal-gazing, in which an entranced medium would speak messages read or seen in a crystal or glass. Here Bulwer-Lytton met the 4th Earl of Stanhope (1781-1855), previously guardian of Caspar Hauser (1813-1833) and a keen researcher into Mesmerism and crystal mediumship, and the painter John Varley (1778-1842), astrologer and friend of → William Blake. Bulwer-Lytton himself practiced geomancy (using dots drawn randomly on paper) and → astrology, making horoscopes and predictions for his friends. He foretold through geomancy the political career of Disraeli at a time (1860) when the latter was still better known as a novelist.

During the 1850s Bulwer-Lytton conducted researches and experiments in → spiritualism and Mesmerism, joining Lord Stanhope in séances with the American rapping medium Mrs. Hayden (1852). Bulwer-Lytton probably received → Eliphas Lévi on the latter's first visit to England in 1854. In 1855-1856, Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886) gave séances for Lytton in London and at Knebworth. Bulwer-Lytton was one of three persons present at Lévi's 1861 evocation of "Apollonius of Tyana" on the roof of a Regent Street store. But Bulwer-Lytton disappointed the spiritualist and the nascent occultist movements by refusing to lend his reputation to their causes. *The Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, reported him as saying: 'All the experiments I have witnessed, if severally probed, go against the notion that the phenomena are produced by the spirits of the dead; and I imagine that no man, who can take care of his goods, would give up his property to a claimant, who could bear cross-examination as little as some alleged spirit, who declares he is your father or friend, and tells you where he died, and then proceeds to talk rubbish, of which he would have been incapable when he was alive. I can conceive no prospect of the future world more melancholy, than that in which Sellaires and Shakespeares are represented as having fallen into boobies – or at best, of intellects below mediocrity'. Bulwer-Lytton expressed a similar opinion when he consented to be interviewed for the 1869 Report of the London Dialectical Soci-

ety. His skepticism did not prevent him from using the themes of ceremonial → magic in his short story *The Haunted and the Haunters*, and of mediumship in his novel *A Strange Story*.

Contrary to later rumors and claims, Bulwer-Lytton is not known to have belonged to any secret society or Order. He was not a Freemason. The Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (S.R.I.A.), apparently unaware of this, elected him their "Grand Patron" in 1872, but without his consent, for which the head of the Manchester College, John Yarker, humbly apologised. Most likely Bulwer-Lytton was "self-initiated" through following practices he found in books. He wrote to a friend: 'I know by experience that those wizard old books are full of holes and pitfalls. I myself once fell into one and remained there forty-five days and three hours without food, crying for help as loud as I could, but nobody came. You may believe that or not, just as you please, but it's true!' (*Life*, II, 32) It has been claimed, without evidence, that Bulwer-Lytton contacted the → Asiatic Brethren, the Fratres Lucis, and/or the "Jewish Lodge" in Frankfurt during his travels in Germany (1841-1843). In a letter to → Hargrave Jennings (1872) he stated that, unlike current pretenders to → Rosicrucianism, he possessed the 'cipher sign of the "Initiate"', and that the Rosicrucian Brotherhood still existed, only not under any name recognizable by outsiders.

Lacking concrete evidence, Bulwer-Lytton's reputation as initiate rests on his novel *Zanoni*, which is the most significant occult novel of 19th-century English literature. He made the initial sketches for it as early as 1825. Themes from it appeared in a short story, *The Tale of Kosem Kosamim the Magician* (1832), and about half of the text as *Zicci* (1838), but the metaphysical doctrines are fully developed only in the complete novel of 1842.

The story of *Zanoni* purports to be transcribed from a ciphered manuscript acquired from an old gentleman encountered in a London bookshop. Later it emerges that the old gentleman was the artist Clarence Glyndon, one of the protagonists of the story. How far this fictitious author's opinions are Bulwer-Lytton's own is uncertain. The narrative is set in the period of the French Revolution and the Terror (1791-1793). It gives a clear sense of discrimination between good occultism and bad. The narrator rejects Mesmer and → Cagliostro as profiteers, associating them with the errors of the *philosophes* and deists; he praises → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin alone among the 18th-century illuminates. The initiates of the story hate the

Revolution for its impiety, atheism, and dogma of *égalité*. They hold that the whole of the universe is a hierarchy, from the archangel to the worm, and that it is human inequality alone that holds out the hope of progress.

Besides Glyndon, the narrator, artist, and neophyte, the characters of *Zanoni* include two Chaldean initiates, apparently the only two left on earth of a high and ancient Order. This is not the Rosicrucians, but an older and more illustrious Order of which the Rosicrucians are a branch. It pays special respect to the teachings of the Platonists, the Pythagoreans, and Apollonius of Tyana. Evidently it is not Christian. The two initiates are Mejnour, the senior one, and Zanoni, who has been on earth for 5000 years. While sharing in the same occult knowledge and possessing the secret of indefinite life, these two contrast in character. Mejnour inhabits the body of an old man, with every earthly passion extinguished, in order to accomplish the transmutation of man into superman. He works at his plans with 'cabala and numbers', residing in Olympian calm behind the scenes and cycles of human history, indifferent to others' weal or woe as he is indifferent to his own. Zanoni is an equally mysterious character, but one who becomes less superhuman as the plot unfolds. There is much of the Comte de → Saint-Germain about him: Zanoni is also a cosmopolite, a 'noble traveler' who has seen the world (his servants come from India) and its history, a man who has achieved the elixir of life, who gives away priceless gems and stuns the public with his mystery and his wealth, coming and going as he pleases. Zanoni's choice is to enter the maelstrom of human passion, losing his occult powers in the process but gaining what his master Mejnour has rejected: love and death. The message of the work is that the love of human beings for each other, and their acceptance of death, are things of incalculable value, not to be surpassed even by the highest initiate.

The novel is an encyclopedia of ideas about the occult sciences. In pointing out the extreme ugliness of the French Revolutionary leaders, it supports the thesis of physiognomy. Herbalism is mentioned reverently, along with the general value of research into the mysteries of nature. The doctrines of universal sympathy, of secret affinities in nature, and of hierarchical planes of being permeated by an omnipresent Mind are essential to *Zanoni*. The multiple planes include those that can only be explored out of the physical body. Therefore asceticism is necessary to the aspirant, refusing the demands of the flesh in order to live in the soul and work with the imagination. The artist can do this

as well as the mystic; a Platonic subtheme of *Zanoni* is the sacred nature of art, if only inspired by the "Ideal".

The world-view of *Zanoni* is of a universe populated by beings at every level: not just the physical series from galaxy to microbe that was currently exciting Victorian scientists, but an unseen hierarchy which could, by the proper means, be rendered perceptible. The lowest of them are the spirits of the four elements: the Gnomes, Undines, Sylphs, and Salamanders of → Paracelsus and of the *Comte de Gabalis*. No friends to humankind, these were believed by earlier magicians to be fiends, and their pacts with them to be drawn with the Devil. But no man can sell his soul, says Zanoni, for 'in every human creature the Divine One breathes; and He alone can judge His own hereafter, and allot its new career and home'. This immortal part of man is called by the Neoplatonic term *augoeides*, which manifests when 'the sphere of the soul is luminous, when nothing external has contact with the soul itself; but when lit by its own light, it sees the truth of all things and the truth centred in itself'. Thus man is tripartite, consisting of body, soul, and the *augoeides* or indwelling Divine Spirit. The magus can command the elemental spirits, but more importantly he can establish contact with higher beings. Zanoni twice summons a celestial apparition called Adon-Ai, from whom he has learned all his wisdom. Adon-Ai disputes with Zanoni at the point at which the initiate has decided to renounce his asceticism and embrace human love; when Zanoni is obdurate, the Son of Light smiles. On the second apparition of Adon-Ai, the spirit gives his blessing to Zanoni's decision, for by now Zanoni has also embraced human death, which Adon-Ai calls 'the sublimest heritage of thy race, – the eternity that commences from the grave'. Finally there is the famous "Dweller of the Threshold" whom both Glyndon the neophyte and Zanoni the adept have to face and overcome. This is a hideous personification of one's past thoughts and evil tendencies, which even if not perceived lures the aspirant towards disaster. The only way to conquer it, as Zanoni teaches Glyndon and demonstrates himself, is by overcoming one's fear and persisting in one's resolve to cling to virtue, come what may. Then two paths are open: one, the path to seraphic detachment such as Mejnour has achieved; the other, the path by which one becomes as a little child again, which is Zanoni's choice. *Zanoni* was Bulwer-Lytton's own favorite among his works. It was much read and discussed, especially in France and Germany, where many of Bulwer-Lytton's works were translated.



Bulwer-Lytton's late novel *The Coming Race* was influential in 20th-century science-fiction literature. It depicts a race with superior powers that has long lived beneath the surface of the earth. They have developed a force called "Vril" which they use for advanced technological and seemingly magical effects. In 1870, Lytton explained: 'I did not mean Vril for mesmerism, but for electricity, developed into uses as yet only dimly guessed, and including whatever there may be genuine in mesmerism, which I hold to be a mere branch current of the one great fluid pervading all nature'. Nonetheless, "Vril" has become a cliché of 20th century popular occultism, as has the notion of a hollow earth with its inhabitants.

Bulwer-Lytton's son Robert has sometimes been confused with him, especially by non-English writers, and merits a short note here. Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton joined the diplomatic service in 1850 and served in Washington and many European capitals. In 1873, on his father's death, he succeeded to the peerage as 2nd Baron Lytton. From 1875-1880 he had the difficult task of Governor-General of India. In 1880 he was raised to an earldom and became 1st Earl of Lytton (but still also styled "Lord Lytton"). He served as ambassador in Paris from 1887 until his death there in 1891. The Earl of Lytton was a prolific poet under the name of "Owen Meredith". His friendship with → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre appears in his translation of the latter's *Le Poème de la Reine* (published 1892), and may be a symptom of a deeper involvement with French esotericists than can be documented. Saint-Yves's personal mythology (as expounded in *Mission de l'Inde*, 1886) gives an important role to India and to a subterranean race with superior technology.

Novels relevant to esotericism: *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Zicci* (1841), *Zanoni* (1842), *A Strange Story* (1862), *The Coming Race* (1871).

Lit.: James L. Campbell, *Edward Bulwer-Lytton*, Boston: Twayne publ., 1986 ♦ Sibylla Jane Flower, *Bulwer-Lytton: An Illustrated Life of the First Baron Lytton 1803-1873* (Lifelines 9), Aylesbury: Shire Publications, 1973 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, 123-130, 192-196 ♦ 2nd Earl of Lytton, *The Life of Edward Bulwer, First Lord Lytton*, London: Macmillan, 1913 ♦ Robert Lee Wolff, *Strange Stories and other Explorations in Victorian Fiction*, Boston: Gambit Inc., 1971, ch. "The Occult Fiction of Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton".

JOSCELYN GODWIN

**Burton, Sir Richard Francis, K.C.M.G.,**  
\* 19.3.1821 Elstree, † 20.10.1890  
Trieste

Traveler and translator. Son of Lt.-Col. Joseph Netterville Burton and Martha Baker. Childhood in France and Italy, educated by private tutors. Learned several languages before attending Trinity College, Oxford (1840-1842; no degree). Burton was attracted to the occult while at Oxford, when the artist John Varley (1778-1842) drew his horoscope and introduced him to the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. As an officer in the Army of the East India Company (1842-1849), Burton qualified as interpreter for six Indian languages and also studied Arabic, Sanskrit, Pushtu, and Portuguese. On his return he published four books about India. In 1853, disguised as an Indian healer and magician, he made the pilgrimage to Mecca and entered the Ka'aba. His book about this adventure ensured his fame. From 1854-1859 the East India Company supported Burton's expedition to Somalia, where he was badly wounded. In 1856 he served in the Crimea, then began a series of expeditions, partly supported by the Royal Geographical Society, to discover the source of the Nile. On his return in 1859 he was awarded the Founder's Gold Medal of the R.G.S. In 1860 he visited Utah and interviewed Brigham Young. In 1861 he married Isabel Arundell (1831-1896), and joined the diplomatic service. He served as British Consul at Fernando Po in Portuguese West Africa (1861-1863) and at Santos, Brazil (1865-1868), both posts giving him the opportunity for explorations of the interior. From 1869-1871 he was Consul at Damascus; from 1872-1890 at Trieste (1872-1890), varied by journeys to Iceland, India, Egypt, and West Africa. On 12.10.1878 he was elected a fellow of the → Theosophical Society in London. In 1886 he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. His body was buried in a marble replica of an Arab tent in the Catholic cemetery of Mortlake.

Burton was a many-faceted individual, driven by curiosity to risk his life and ruin his health in some of the most dangerous parts of the world. His superb talent for languages and his retention of all that he saw and learned made him the equal, and the envy, of professional scholars, and his translations of Oriental literature became classics. His intelligence, cynicism, and wit made him as many enemies as friends and his promotion was repeatedly blocked. He was a considerate husband to his devout Catholic wife, who had married him against the wishes of her aristocratic family. Burton



frequently used his wife as a “magnetized” medium, asking her questions about absent persons or future events.

Burton’s interest in altered states of consciousness led him to the use of hashish, opium, and other drugs. He was notoriously well-informed about the sexual practices of non-European peoples. Before his marriage, he took advantage of his postings to explore these in person, and contracted syphilis. He continued throughout his life to add to his encyclopedic knowledge on the subject, much of which is scattered in his twenty-three travel books. In Trieste Burton translated the poetry of Luis Vaz de Camoens (1524-1579/80), the erotic classics *Kama Sutra* and *Kama-Shastra*, *The Perfumed Garden of the Cheikh Nefzaoui*, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (16 vols.), the *Pentamerone*, and Greek and Latin erotica. His translation of the “Arabian Nights” was glossed with a mass of erudition and a “Terminal Essay” on the sexual customs of the East that was a landmark in Victorian scholarship. Even more notorious was his book-length treatise *Human Sacrifice among the Sephardine or Eastern Jews* (1877), which has been blocked from publication to this day.

Burton had a sympathetic curiosity for all religions. In India he was inducted as an honorary Brahmin into the Nagar-Brahmin caste. In Karachi he was initiated as a Sikh, and underwent the long rituals to become an initiate of the Qadiri Order of Sufism. He probably had more knowledge of the religion and practices of Islam than any Westerner of his time. His published work, like that of the Theosophists, contributed to the growing appreciation of Oriental philosophy and culture in the later 19th century. Also Theosophical in spirit was his dispassionate acceptance of “occult” phenomena as evidence for the unknown powers of nature and of man, better understood in the East than in the modern West. In an address to the National Union of Spiritualists (1876) he asserted the existence of extra-sensory perception, but attributed it to unknown natural causes, rather than to spirits. As far as one can guess at Burton’s private convictions, they were metaphysical rather than religious, perhaps resembling those of his admired Sufis, for whom all religions are but veils before reality. His deliberate flaunting of taboos and fearless pursuit of knowledge align him with the warrior current within the esoteric tradition.

*Lit.*: William Harrison, *Burton and Speke*, London: W. H. Allen, 1984 ♦ James A. Casada, *Sir Richard F. Burton: A Bio-bibliographical Study*, Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990 ♦ Mary S. Lovell, *A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard & Isabel Burton*, New York &

London: W.W. Norton, 1998 ♦ Edward Rice, *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990.

JOSCELYN GODWIN

## Byzantium

1. WHY SHOULD A STUDENT OF WESTERN ESOTERICISM PAY ATTENTION TO BYZANTIUM?
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Byzantium has been defined by Western scholars in many different ways, by many different criteria and for many specific purposes. The later Byzantines themselves, however, found their world easy to define. Its irreducible cultural *center* consisted of two things: the doctrines and practices of the Orthodox Church, on the one hand; and on the other, the Greek language. It was a Byzantine’s mastery of the Greek language that distinguished him from the barbarian; it was his adherence to the Orthodox Church that distinguished him from the schismatic, the heretic, the pagan, and other such kinds of people.

But this was only the *center* of Byzantium, for Greek texts had also been translated into “barbarian” tongues. Thus Byzantium, more loosely defined, also encompassed other Christian peoples who were Orthodox in their doctrine and practice, but who had long celebrated the liturgy and read the Bible in languages other than Greek (notably, in Old Georgian and Old Slavonic). Moreover, in every culture there are always dissidents, and so Byzantium also contained individuals or groups of people who were not Orthodox, and others who were not even Christian.

Byzantium, so defined, first began to take shape during the fourth century CE on the territory of the Eastern Roman Empire. In the fifth century two major schisms divided the supra-national, multilingual Christian world into three disjunct communions: the non-Ephesian Church in Persia, the several non-Chalcedonian Churches in various lands of the East, and the combined Orthodox and Catholic Churches of Byzantium and Rome. In the seventh and later centuries Islam conquered large parts of the Byzantine Empire, as well as most of the lands where the non-Ephesian and non-Chalcedonian Churches were at home. In the eleventh

century another schism broke the communion that had hitherto prevailed between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, and the sack of Constantinople in 1204 by the Fourth Crusade widened this breach into a nearly unbridgeable chasm. Taken together, these developments massively reduced the linguistic and cultural variety of Byzantium, cutting it off from most of the Christian peoples that had long used Old Syriac, Old Armenian, Coptic, Old Ethiopic and Latin as their languages of liturgy and culture. On the other hand, Byzantium was able to extend its boundaries northwards, with the Christianization of Bulgaria in the ninth century, of Russia toward the end of the tenth century, and of other South Slavic realms in later centuries. In 1453, however, the last fortress of the Eastern Roman Empire, Constantinople itself, fell to an Islamic army, and the last Christian Emperor of Rome died fighting on its walls. Yet even after 1453 Byzantium continued to exist, albeit in attenuation, as a subjugated culture in Greek-speaking lands and as a transplanted culture in Orthodox Slavic lands.

#### 1. WHY SHOULD A STUDENT OF WESTERN ESOTERICISM PAY ANY ATTENTION TO BYZANTIUM?

There are at least three answers to this question, each more compelling than the previous one. Firstly, most of the oldest foundation texts of Western esotericism – the dialogues and letters of Plato, the works of the Neoplatonic philosophers [→ Neoplatonism] and theurgists (above all, Iamblichus's treatise *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians*), the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the manuals of the Hellenic astrologers [→ Astrology] and alchemists [→ Alchemy], the *Corpus Hermeticum* [→ Hermetic Literature], the writings of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, various Gnostic texts, and so on – were not only composed in Greek, but also have come down to us almost entirely through Byzantine channels of transmission, whether they are still extant in the original Greek or have now survived only in the form of old translations from lost Greek originals. Secondly, Byzantium never experienced – and never *needed* to experience – the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, or the Enlightenment. It is these four successive cultural movements that gave Western esotericism all of its present defining characteristics (as specified by Faivre 1994, 10–15), but the specified characteristics *cannot* serve to define Byzantine Esotericism. Thirdly, over many centuries profound and subtle differences in doctrine and practice developed between Christianity in Byzantium and Christian-

ity in Western Europe. In consequence, esoteric doctrines and practices came to occupy a different position and to play a different role in the Orthodox Churches of Byzantium than they did in the Catholic Church of Western Europe.

Because of these differences, one might legitimately ask whether Byzantine esotericism even exists. It does. Indeed, it is convenient to speak of *two* distinct Byzantine esotericisms. One of them may be termed *Orthodox Christian esotericism*. For over 1500 years this esotericism has been widely cultivated throughout the Byzantine world, especially in the great monasteries of the Orthodox Church such as those of Mt. Athos and Mt. Sinai. The other may be termed *Hellenic esotericism*. It has always drawn its inspiration directly from the pagan texts and traditions of Neoplatonic philosophy and theurgy. Therefore it has always been more or less problematic in Christian Byzantium. After the mandatory Christianization of all Byzantines in the sixth century, Hellenic esotericism seems to have been cultivated only sporadically, by a mere handful of highly educated Byzantines. Each of these two Byzantine esotericisms shares some important features with Western esotericism, although neither possesses all of the significant defining features of the latter (always here referring to Faivre's definition).

These differences between esotericism in Byzantium and esotericism in Western Europe enable a sensitive scholar to arrive at a deeper understanding of the latter by contrasting it with the former: light from the East often throws into very sharp relief, indeed, what could otherwise be only dimly seen in the West. Yet for this to occur, one must first become familiar with each kind of Byzantine esotericism on its own terms, not viewing it solely in terms of Western categories and theories.

One must also be careful to distinguish genuine Byzantine esotericism from various esoteric currents that have claimed to be Byzantine, but in fact have other historical roots. The most wide-spread of all these *pseudo-Byzantine esotericisms* are the ones pertaining to Sophia, the Wisdom of God. Though they are usually presented as genuine old esoteric traditions of the Orthodox Church, in point of historical fact they derive directly or indirectly from the work of the eccentric Russian lay theologian, Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ëv (1853–1900), who combined Orthodox Christian esotericism with elements of two other traditions. One of these other traditions was Western-European Sophiology (cf. → Jacob Boehme or → Gottfried Arnold), which came to Russia through Freemasonic [→ Freemasonry] and Rosicrucian [→ Rosi-

crucianism] channels during the eighteenth century and had an enormous impact on Russian spirituality. The other tradition was Late Antique → Gnosticism, insofar as it had been recovered by nineteenth-century scholarship. Solov'ev's synthesis of these three disparate traditions was presented with such skill and power, and satisfied the needs of its era so well, that it was believed to represent an authentic Byzantine esoteric teaching by many well-educated Orthodox laymen, and even by a few influential clerical theologians of the Orthodox Church.

## 2. WHAT DOES "ESOTERIC" MEAN IN BYZANTIUM?

To understand Byzantine esotericism in its own terms, we must begin with the word esoteric itself. In ancient Greek, the opposed adjectives ἐσωτερικός (esoteric) and ἐξωτερικός (exoteric) were relatively uncommon. The adjective ἐξωτερικός seems to have been the older of the two, originally meaning "exterior" or "foreign". It was derived from the adjective ἐξώτερος (outer), which was opposed to ἐσώτερος (inner); and those words in turn were derived from the twin adverbs ἔξω (outer) and ἔσω (inner). The adjective ἐσωτερικός seems to have been coined from ἐξωτερικός in order to create a pair of technical terms in philosophy. In philosophy, the use of these terms was originally limited to two contexts. They were used, first of all, to label the two orders into which the philosopher-magician Pythagoras (according to several later sources) appears to have divided his disciples: his *exoteric* disciples were those who might hear the master's teaching only in silence, never actually seeing him as he spoke from behind a curtain, whereas his *esoteric* disciples, tested by five years of silence, were privileged to go behind the curtain, to see Pythagoras himself and to speak with him (Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* I.2; Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.7; Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica* 17, 31, 32). Somewhat later, the writings of the philosopher Aristotle were said to have been divided into two classes: his *exoteric* writings were available for all to read, whereas his *esoteric* writings were restricted to members of his school (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* V.9, cf. Lucian, *Vitarum auctio* 26, Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* XX.5; as it happens, Aristotle's exoteric writings survive only as fragments; it is his esoteric treatises that have come down to us). In each case, whether applied to pupils or to treatises, the two terms express an opposition between the outer, common world of the general public and the inner, restricted world of favored or accepted students. Even later,

Galen termed certain Stoic teachings *esoteric* (*De Hippocratis et Platonis placitis* III.4).

Under the influence of Christianity the opposition between ἐσωτερικός and ἐξωτερικός was subtly altered. Although neither word occurs anywhere in the Greek Bible – neither in the Septuagint Old Testament nor in the Greek New Testament –, St. Paul (II Cor. 4:16) speaks of ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος (the inward man) and ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος (the outward man), opposing the spiritual to the mundane; later, some pagans came to use the same phrases with similar meanings. Henceforth *esoteric* people in the original sense of the term – privileged students – are implicitly also distinguished by their deeper spirituality, and *esoteric* writings – treatises restricted to such students – are implicitly also writings that convey deeper spiritual truths; the *exoteric*, in contrast, are common and mundane. The Neoplatonists, too, used the terms in this broader sense, e.g. Iamblichus in his *Protrepticus* (1, 4, 21), as does Origen with reference to Christian doctrines in his *Contra Celsum* (III.37). Moreover, in another of his works Iamblichus divides doctrines into *exoteric* and *esoteric*, that is, into ῥητά (effable) and ἄῤῥητα (ineffable) (*De communi mathematica scientia* 18). This idea that the deepest spiritual truths are not only *esoteric*, but also *ineffable*, that is, they are inherently beyond the power of any language to express, colors all subsequent use of the term *esoteric* in Byzantium.

## 3. BYZANTINE ESOTERICISM VERSUS WESTERN ESOTERICISM

In Western Europe, too, there were texts and people, doctrines and practices that a Byzantine observer might have labeled *esoteric*. Even so, the borrowed words *esotericus* and *exotericus* seem to have been hardly ever used in Ancient and Medieval Latin. When they were used before and during the Renaissance, they seem to have been used almost exactly as their Greek equivalents were in Byzantium, although perhaps sometimes without the Neoplatonic association between the esoteric and the ineffable.

Beginning with the Renaissance, however, the term *esotericus* came to be used more commonly in the West. Yet as its use grew, it acquired a new connotation, which the corresponding Greek word lacked: henceforth whatever was esoteric was necessarily *opposed* in one way or another to the prevailing judgement of the generally recognized experts. Thus in the West esotericists became proponents of rejected or forgotten knowledge (*wrongly* rejected or forgotten, they would claim), and Western esotericism eventually became – to

lapse into contemporary jargon for a moment – a radical challenge to the “dominant paradigm” of its age, a form of “counter-culture”. In the Byzantine world, by contrast, Orthodox Christian Esotericism always remained a fully integrated part of the “dominant paradigm”, and never formed the nucleus of any Byzantine “counter-culture”.

This contrast arose largely because of developments in Western Europe, not in Byzantium. During the final centuries of the Middle Ages, Aristotelian modes of knowledge and investigation came to dominate all the great universities and to shape the programs of education for all the learned professions. As a consequence of this, Platonic and esoteric modes of knowledge and investigation were widely rejected by these same universities and professions, and could be cultivated only outside of these institutions. Although the Renaissance challenged the dominance of Aristotle in the schools and professions, its challenge was only partly successful (chiefly in the liberal arts). Soon the Reformation and Counter-Reformation developed their own competing Protestant and Catholic forms of Aristotelian scholasticism. Also, from the late Middle Ages onward, the recovery of Roman law encouraged the development of powerful judicial institutions designed to investigate and repress all forms of deviance and dissidence. Individual or uncommon kinds of spirituality or → mysticism that had long been unchallenged now came to be severely repressed by the newly codified Protestant and Catholic orthodoxies, and this repression continued until the Enlightenment, which had its own radical views on the separation between Church and State. Despite its strong anti-ecclesiastical tendencies, the Enlightenment continued to reject Platonic modes of knowledge – along with → magic, occult philosophy [→ occult / occultism] and esoteric studies – as inconsistent with its own Cartesian principles, severely criticizing such things as works of deceit, delusion and folly. From this time onward, Western esotericism could only be cultivated as a radical challenge to the schools and professions, as a kind of counter-epistemology.

In Byzantium, however, everything was on a much smaller scale, especially during the latter centuries of its independence. Its schools and professions were less developed as institutions, Aristotle was never strongly privileged over Plato, and the line between Church and State was never as sharply drawn as it had long been in the West. Only among the very few Byzantine intellectuals who studied Hellenic esotericism after the sixth century does there seem to have been anything remotely like the Western impulse toward a counter-culture. It is

because of this likeness that we shall examine Hellenic esotericism first.

#### 4. HELLENIC ESOTERICISM IN BYZANTIUM

Hellenic esotericism drew its inspiration from the same Greek authors, texts and practices that originally nourished Western esoteric studies: from Plato, the pre-Byzantine Neoplatonists such as Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the other writings ascribed to → Hermes Trismegistus, astrologers such as Ptolemy, and alchemists such as Theosebia and → Zosimos of Panopolis. In another key, it also used manuals of divination [→ Divinatory Arts], books of omens, treatises on the construction of → amulets and talismans, the recipes of the *Kyranides*, and even a few texts of demonic ritual magic such as *Solomon's Magical Treatise* (Ἀποτελεσματικὴ πραγματεία Σαλομώντος) a Greek work related to the Western *Clavicula Salomonis*, and the *Testament of Solomon*.

From the late fourth through the sixth century, of course, many highly educated Greeks not only remained pagan, but also studied the above-mentioned texts (and other texts of the same sort that have now been lost). Among these men and women were Maximus of Ephesus and his disciple the Emperor Julian, Plutarch the Neoplatonist and his daughter Asclepiogeneia, and finally Proclus (cf. Marinus, *Vita Procli* 28). During those few centuries it was still lawful to be pagan in Byzantium, and pagans still could and did cultivate Hellenic esotericism, or even practice theurgy, without having to worry overmuch about the Church's censure.

Even after the sixth century, of course, some of these traditions survived in attenuated form, generally among less well educated Byzantines, who did not always know which notions and ideas about demons had been accepted by the Orthodox Church, and which had been rejected; or which exorcisms and small rites were permitted, which forbidden. Thus there arose what Richard Greenfield has termed ‘alternative traditions of belief and practice’ about demons, in contrast to the well-defined ‘standard tradition’ of the Orthodox Church; there are also alternative traditions for other rites and rituals. These alternative traditions, of course, were not clearly distinguished from the standard tradition by the masses, but what may surprise is the extent (as Greenfield has shown) to which even educated Byzantines combined the standard and alternative traditions during the last centuries of Byzantine independence. However, this was simply a matter of ignorance or confusion,

not a deliberate foray into forbidden territory. Deliberate forays into forbidden territory remained rare, even in the late Byzantine period.

No more than a handful of named Byzantines are known to have made a serious study of Hellenic esotericism after the final repression of paganism in the 6th century. The best known are Michael Psellus in the eleventh century and Georgios Gemistos Plethon in the 15th. However, there must have been others whose names have not come down to us, but for whom the various extant manuscripts of the relevant Greek texts were copied during the last centuries of Byzantine independence.

Michael Psellus (1018-1081) was one of the greatest polymaths in all Byzantine history, even serving for a time as a sort of philosopher-in-residence to the Imperial court. His surviving works treat history, law, rhetoric, logic, Platonic philosophy, theology – and include not quite a dozen short theoretical tracts on demonology, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Chaldaean Oracles* and theurgy! His principal sources seem to have been various works (some now lost) by Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus on these subjects. Indeed, Iamblichus's long work *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians* may owe its survival to Psellus's efforts, for he appears to have read it, and all extant manuscripts appear to descend from a single manuscript (now lost) that had been copied during or not long after his lifetime and also contained some of his treatises on esoteric themes. Yet despite his esoteric interests, Psellus remained thoroughly Christian in his own eyes, and in some of his writings justified such studies from a Christian perspective.

Georgios Gemistos Plethon (ca. 1360-1452) had many of the same esoteric interests as Psellus, but pursued them to a much more radical conclusion, for in his old age he went so far as to argue in favor of restoring Neoplatonic paganism and theurgy in place of Christianity. The work in which he made his strongest arguments for this, *On Laws*, was burned shortly after his death by order of Patriarch Gennadius II Scholarius, but significant fragments of it have survived (thanks in part to extracts made during Plethon's lifetime by several interested friends and students). Here and in other writings Plethon displays considerable interest in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, but the only source that he has for them is one of Psellus's commentaries on them. By the 15th century almost every earlier source – not only the complete *Chaldaean Oracles* themselves, but also various Neoplatonic commentaries on them – seems to have been lost.

When Plethon was almost 80 years old, he attended the great ecclesiastical council that met at

Ferrara and Florence in 1438-1439. Although his impact on the council's proceedings was relatively slight, he was able to meet a number of Florentine scholars and statesmen, and to impress them greatly with his passion for Plato and the Neoplatonists. Cosimo de' Medici's Platonic Academy owes something to Plethon's inspiration, as does the program of Latin translations from the Greek that Cosimo de' Medici commissioned from → Marsilio Ficino. Ficino's translations, it should be noted, included the works of Plato and Plotinus, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Iamblichus's *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians* (to which were appended translations of several short works by Porphyry, Proclus and Michael Psellus), and two of the works of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (*The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*) – in short, many of the most important Greek foundation texts of Western esotericism.

##### 5. ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ESOTERICISM IN BYZANTIUM

Although Hellenic esotericism developed somewhat in opposition to the prevailing norms of Byzantine culture, Orthodox Christian esotericism developed very much in agreement with these same norms, in sharp contrast to Western esotericism since the Renaissance. As noted above, this contrast owes much to specific developments in the cultural history of Western Europe. Yet the ease with which Orthodox Christian esotericism accommodated itself to the norms of Byzantine culture has a lot to do with certain characteristic features of the Orthodox Church, in particular, with some specific patterns of Byzantine liturgy and worship, with the privileged position that apophatic theology is given over cataphatic theology, and with the doctrine of *theosis*, or deification. We must consider these three points as we seek to present Orthodox Christian esotericism in its own terms.

One of the most significant characteristics of the Orthodox Church, for our purposes, is that a priest does not celebrate the eucharist by or for himself alone, apart from any congregation. This is a point of eucharistic theology and canon law. However, it is also a matter of simple necessity, for the worship of the Orthodox Church in all its complex fullness is the cooperative work of several different classes of people, lay as well as ordained – priests, deacons, rectors, singers, laity, and so forth – and the prescribed texts are scattered among a considerable number of liturgical books, several of which must be used together during any service. In the course of an entire year's worship, most of the texts in these various books must be woven together in a



very complicated pattern. This pattern, moreover, changes somewhat from year to year according to the date of Easter, which moves back and forth along a range of thirty-five consecutive days according to a complex cycle that lasts 532 years from start to finish.

Instead of liturgical work, what the Orthodox Christian – whether a priest or not – does in solitude is to pray. Even though a near-by church may happen to be unlocked and empty, the traditional place for private prayers remains one's home, one's room or one's monastic cell. Even a parish priest – who is a married man – will use his home for this purpose, and a priest-monk will use his cell (in the Orthodox Churches most monks are not priests).

There is nothing, therefore, anywhere in the traditional practice of the Orthodox Church that corresponds very well to a Catholic priest as he celebrates a Low Mass by himself from a Missal, or as he reads his daily office from a Breviary in private, or as he offers up his personal prayers before a consecrated altar in solitude. This Catholic pattern has greatly influenced Western esoteric practices, which as often as not employs a consecrated altar before which initiates work their esoteric rituals in private and in a somewhat priestly manner. In Orthodox Christian esotericism, however, this priestly pattern played no role: rather, the dominant pattern was that of a solitary monk at prayer in his unadorned cell. In principle, therefore, Orthodox Christian esotericism does not need either ceremonies or ceremonial objects as foci for its practice. Additionally, it is an esotericism of solitude that one ideally practices by oneself, not in a group. It operates, therefore, without temples or lodges, and its practitioners are not quasi-priests, much less members of some esoteric priesthood or consecrated order that answers to a higher authority than any institutional church. Indeed, such a person is not part of any secret institution or organization at all, but just a simple Christian man or woman who seeks in solitude and silence to attain the most esoteric *mysteria* (μυστήρια) of all, which are also Divine.

However, these mysteries are ineffable (ἄρρητα), that is, they lie far beyond the power of any language to express. Indeed, they are incomprehensible, that is, they lie far beyond 'all things that can be perceived and understood (αἰσθητὰ καὶ νοητὰ), that are not or that are' (pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystica theologia* I.1), and must therefore be experienced by other means than words, concepts or even ordinary percepts. To express these other means, the same author says that they are to be attained 'in the hyper-luminous darkness

of a hidden silence' (*ibidem*). Indeed, he even says that they are 'beyond all being (ουσία) and knowledge (γνώσις)', a matter of θεοσοφία (theosophy) as well as of θεολογία (theology) (*ibidem*).

This kind of theology, which leads the reader upward by means of denials rather than affirmations, is called *apophatic* (from Greek ἀπόφασις, denial), in contrast to the other kind, *cataphatic* theology (from Greek κατάφασις, affirmation). The two kinds loosely correspond to what in the West are usually called *negative* and *positive* theology, but the correspondence is not exact. If the Catholic Church (especially since Thomas Aquinas) has favored an Aristotelian sort of positive theology, and has used negative theology mostly to supplement positive results, it is otherwise in the East. The Orthodox Church, much less wedded to Aristotelian modes of knowledge, has long delighted in apophatic theology. In this one point it favors the Neoplatonists, although it otherwise diverges enormously from them in matters of doctrine and practice.

The best way into this 'brilliant darkness of a hidden silence' is precisely specified in several works by Gregory of Sinai (ca. 1265–1346) and especially in an anonymous treatise of unknown age sometimes titled *The Three Methods of Prayer* (the latter treatise is attributed to Simeon the New Theologian, but is not by him). The tradition of practice expounded in these works is at least as old as the 4th century. In the 14th century it became, for a few decades, a subject of great controversy, which called forth the brilliant writings of Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1359) on the theory behind the practices. The tradition later came to be called *hesychasm*, derived from Greek ἡσυχία, *tranquility, quietness* and ἡσυχάζειν, to practice hesychia (despite the similarity in their names, there is no close relation between hesychasm and Western quietism).

The first of pseudo-Simeon's three methods of prayer demands the careful cultivation of what some esotericists now call the imaginal world. The second demands an equally careful withdrawal from this same imaginal world and from the senses and the mental processes that nourish it. These two methods are emphatically *not* recommended. On the one hand, the careful cultivation of the imaginal indeed results in sensible visions, but sensible visions are always delusions, simply because they are *sensible* (αἰσθητὰ). This method is sure to produce a visionary whose desires have been inflamed and whose heart is exalted, and very often it will derange him in the end. On the other hand, a careful withdrawal from the sensible and imaginal

worlds produces false impressions of the opposite character, for which there is no good name in English: let us call them “certainties” for lack of a better term. These “certainties”, in contrast to visions, derive their form and content from understanding (νοησις) rather than from sense-perception (αἰσθησις). Just as visions are delusions simply because they are sensible, so “certainties” are delusions simply because they are *understandable* (νοητά). Sense-perception (αἰσθησις) and understanding (νόησις) are equally dangerous, are equally productive of delusions, and equally need to be transcended (cf. pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, as quoted above).

The third of these methods, and the only one which is free from the dangers of these two kinds of delusion, requires neither that one cultivate the imaginal world in one’s heart nor that one uproot it. Instead, one fills one’s heart with attentiveness and constant prayer, which soon crowd out the imaginal entirely. If at first this constant prayer may be verbal, with repetition it becomes automatic and then it soon ceases to need words or images at all. It is this absence of words and images alone that prepares the heart for the ineffable mysteries that lie ‘in the hyperluminous darkness of a hidden silence’, and that constitute the theosophy ‘beyond all being and knowledge’, to use the words of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (in this tradition of practice, as in the Old Testament, the *heart* is the site of human knowledge and understanding, the place where words, concepts and percepts operate).

If this sounds easy to do in principle, it is extremely hard in practice, and usually requires the assistance of an experienced guide. One should not undertake it at all until one has first learned how to be free of every anxiety and care, how to keep one’s conscience wholly pure, and how to take no thought for anything worldly, not even one’s own bodily comforts and discomforts. Having learned how to do these three things, one can begin one’s practice of attentiveness and constant prayer, aided by a simple specified stable posture and method of regulated breathing. At first one experiences delusions of sense-perception and understanding. When these delusions have all finally been dispelled, one next experiences empty, heavy darkness (which, perhaps, may be regarded as the last delusion). Persevering in one’s practice, this darkness is replaced at last by an experience beyond all understanding and sense-perception, beyond all words and images, beyond all concepts and percepts, beyond all previous experience of the body and mind. It is said to be an experience of something that may be called φῶς, *light*, but even that word is

greatly inadequate to convey what is experienced: pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite has coined the word ὑπέρφωτος, hyperluminous, to refer to it (*Mysica theologia* I.1).

This experience transforms one completely, in a way that is precisely specified by the Orthodox Church. One undergoes a process that is called *theosis* (θέωσις) in Greek, a word which means *becoming God*, but may conveniently – yet somewhat misleadingly! – be rendered as *deification*. According to the blunt words of Athanasius the Great, the Word of God ‘became man that we might become God’ (Athanasius of Alexandria, *De incarnatione Verbi* 54; cf. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus haereses* IV.38-39, V.praef.). This is the ultimate goal of human life, which every member of the Orthodox Church is allowed to pursue from birth to death: an esotericism that is wholly integrated into Byzantine culture.

It is these ineffable mysteries, this hyperluminous realm that lies ‘beyond all being and knowledge’, it is this precisely specified, difficult method of practice that opens the way into these mysteries and that realm, and finally it is this possibility of becoming God, that constitutes the open secret of Orthodox Christian esotericism – an esotericism that is freely offered to every inquirer. Despite the brevity and simplicity of the present summary, it is an extremely rich and subtle tradition of doctrine and practice, which cannot easily be rendered in any other language than its original Greek. It is also Byzantium’s single most interesting contribution to the esoteric currents and traditions of the world.

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*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991 (s.vv. Chaldean Oracles, Dionysios the Areopagite (pseudo-), Divination, Exorcism, Gregory Sinaites, Hesychasm, Hesychia, Iamblichos, Incantation, Magic, Magicians, Mysterion, Mysticism, Neoplatonism, Palamas (Gregory), Plato, Plethon (George Gemistos), Plotinos, Porphyry, Proklos, Psellos (Michael), Solomon, Symeon the Theologian, Theurgy) ♦ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (1963), London/New York: new ed. Penguin, 1993 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, New York: SUNY Press, 1994 ♦ Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995.

ROBERT MATHIESEN

**Cagliostro, Alessandro di** (ps. of Giuseppe Balsamo), \* 2.6.1743 (?) Palermo (Sicily), † 26.8.1795 San Leo (Rimini)

A legendary Italian adventurer and magus, the self-styled Alessandro Count of Cagliostro first appeared in London in 1776. He claimed to have been born in a noble Italian family in 1749, and to have been initiated into the highest esoteric secrets by a Master Althotas in Malta. In London, he rapidly gained popularity for his accomplishments as a healer, and was initiated into → Freemasonry in 1777. He also managed to make some powerful enemies, who accused him of being none other than Giuseppe Balsamo, an adventurer born in Palermo, Sicily, on June 2, 1743, who had disappeared in 1775, when the Sicilian police were about to arrest him as a professional con man. In 1777, Cagliostro established in Naples a new Masonic rite, the High Egyptian Freemasonry. As extraordinary a traveller as he was a healer, Cagliostro moved in the 1770s and 1780s from England to Italy, and from the Netherlands to Germany, Poland, and Russia.

In France, he was befriended by Louis René Edouard Cardinal de Rohan (1734-1803). This friendship facilitated Cagliostro's introduction at the Court of the French King Louis XVI (1754-1793), from which circles a number of dignitaries were initiated into his Egyptian Freemasonry, the Supreme Council of which was established in Paris in 1785. In the same year, however, Cardinal de Rohan was arrested in connection with the infamous affair of the diamond necklace. The Cardinal, more naive than dishonest, had been duped by Countess Jeanne de La Motte (1756-1791) into believing that Queen Marie Antoinette (1755-1793) wanted him to purchase, on her behalf, a diamond necklace of enormous value. The jewels were subsequently stolen, and Cagliostro was accused of being La Motte's accomplice. He was

arrested in 1785 together with Serafina Feliciani (1754-1794), a young and beautiful Italian whom Cagliostro claimed was his wife, the "Countess of Cagliostro". The *affaire du collier*, about which not everyone was convinced that Marie Antoinette was completely blameless, played a role in the run-up to the French Revolution.

Eventually, both Cardinal de Rohan and the Cagliostros were found innocent at the 1786 trial, although they both fell from favour, and were counselled by the King himself to keep a low profile. Increasingly controversial, Cagliostro lost many followers, and tried to revive his Egyptian Freemasonry in England, Germany, and Italy. In 1789, he was persuaded that Rome would be a promising seat for Egyptian Freemasonry (the Vatican's prohibition of Freemasonry notwithstanding), and that he would probably be protected there by the Order of Malta, amongst which he had some friends and followers. In Rome, Cagliostro also met Serafina's parents. He kept his distance from them, however, because they were not the kind of people a Count was supposed to associate with. This upset both Serafina's family and the "Countess of Cagliostro" herself, who ended up writing to the Pope and co-operating with the Papal police who, in the meantime, were investigating Cagliostro as a Freemason and a heretic. After the French Revolution, Rome's police were particularly nervous, and Cagliostro was arrested on December 27, 1789. Serafina, who would ultimately be Cagliostro's main accuser at the trial, did not escape arrest herself; she was taken into custody at the Convent of Saint Apollonia, where she underwent a mild form of imprisonment until her premature death in 1794.

Cagliostro was found guilty in 1791 both of Freemasonry and of heresy, as well as of past petty crimes committed under the name of Giuseppe Balsamo. On April 7, 1791, a death sentence was imposed on him, but Pope Pius VI (1717-1799), following the recommendation of the Court's large majority, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment in the fortress of San Leo, near Rimini. Conditions in the dreaded fortress-prison were extremely harsh, and Cagliostro's physical and mental health quickly deteriorated. He was a frequent victim of hallucinations but, nonetheless, stubbornly refused, right to the end, to admit guilt and be converted. After five years of imprisonment, he died at 3 a.m. on August 26, 1795. That, in any case, is what the official documents said, but Cagliostro's legend was so persistent that many did not believe he was really dead. In fact, it was rumoured in certain occult and Theosophical milieus well into the

19th century that no prison could ever hold Cagliostro and that he was still alive as an immortal and ascended master. Followers also refused to believe that Cagliostro was actually Giuseppe Balsamo, but many contemporary historians would disagree with them.

Cagliostro's legend has been perpetuated in countless novels and several movies. He shows up frequently in popular literature, and even the immensely popular Arsène Lupin (the gentleman-thief created by French novelist Maurice Leblanc, 1864-1941) crossed swords with a Countess of Cagliostro, a fictional daughter of the adventurer. It is much more difficult to establish exactly how much the historical Cagliostro really contributed to modern Western esoteric tradition. He did not write much; during his lifetime, he only published ten memoirs in defence of various accusations made against him, none of them particularly rich in esoteric details. Marc Haven (pseudonym of medical doctor Emmanuel Lalande, 1868-1926) collected Cagliostro's rituals of High Egyptian Freemasonry and the related "catechisms", published in their most complete form only in 1948, after Haven's death. Most rituals were probably written down in 1784, when Cagliostro was in Lyon, France. Not everything here is original work by Cagliostro, since he liberally included portions of earlier rituals of high degree Freemasonry, a movement flourishing in 18th century France and Germany.

Different rituals were intended for men and women. Central tenets in the rituals included the existence of God and the immortality of the soul (firmly placing Cagliostro in the spiritualist camp within 18th century Masonic controversies, against rationalists and atheists). There was also a concept of the fall from grace of human beings, originally spiritual, into the darkness of the material world, and the need for a restoration. This restoration comprised three stages: spiritual, intellectual, and physical. Spiritual restoration would be achieved through charity and the love of God, although Cagliostro spoke of a "natural religion" and an "eternal Christianity" which was more kabbalistic than it was Christian in the conventional sense of the word. Intellectual restoration meant that humans could enter the "sanctuary of nature" through a "natural philosophy" (in the German sense of *Naturphilosophie*, and including → alchemy), theurgy, and a technique for invoking the names of God. Cagliostro also recommended the use of a small child ("dove" or "pupil"), who would gaze into a water mirror and obtain visions, which were then interpreted by the initiated. Finally, mention was made of a mysterious physical restoration,

which would grant the magus some visible advantages, but also carried a symbolic meaning.

Thrice restored, the initiated became an "elected master", capable of prodigious facts of both theurgy and healing. The initiated could also transfer powers magically to his or her own pupils. As a consequence, in Cagliostro's system, the members of High Egyptian Freemasonry themselves possessed the power to heal and to perform the evocation of various spirits, but these powers were derivative and dependent on their continuing link with the order's "Grand Copte" (i.e. Cagliostro himself). As for Cagliostro, his powers were not presented as natural abilities, but as coming from God.

Marc Haven, whose interpretation of Cagliostro was mostly Christian and mystical, regarded his two "quarantines", or magical retreats of forty days, as the weakest part of the Italian magus' system. The 19th and 20th century occult milieu has been enormously influenced by them, however, and claimed that the quarantines were regarded by Cagliostro and his immediate disciples as his *Arcana Arcanorum*, or greatest secrets. The first of the two quarantines was a magical retreat of forty days devoted to rituals and prayers. After thirty-three days, the retreatant would begin to 'enjoy the favours of visible communications with the seven primeval angels and know the seals and the numbers of these immortal Entities'. After the fortieth day, he or she received the first 'Pentagon, that is the virgin paper, on which the primeval angels place their numbers and seals', together with seven other 'secondary Pentagons on which only one of the seven angels has placed its seal'. Through the Pentagons, the retreatant 'commands the immortals in the name of God', with the 'effect to bind or to command the aerial spirits, and to effectuate many wonders and miracles'. This constitutes a typical theurgical ritual; Cagliostro's aim was to 'obtain the Pentagon and become morally perfect'. Although it also included original elements, parts of it were derived from the German Order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and from its schism (or, according to others, its "inner circle") known as the Order of the → Asiatic Brethren, founded by Baron Hans Heinrich von Ecker-und-Eckhoffen (1750-1790). The evocation of angels, or "guardian angels", on the other hand was quite common in 18th century occult movements. It may be concluded that Cagliostro's *Arcana Arcanorum*, in the first meaning of the term, included the theurgical evocation of one or more angels through talismans, seals, pentagons, and other techniques.

In the second quarantine, the second forty days, the intention was to 'become physically [rather



than morally] perfect'. Although the texts of Cagliostro's quarantines in Manuscript No. 245 of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome, and in the version conserved at the library of Musée Calvet in Avignon, include some variants, the second quarantine in both versions required the retreatant to retire to a secluded place in order to 'seriously fast'. On the seventeenth day, he or she 'gives a small emission of blood' and 'begins to take certain white drops, that one cannot explain what they are made of', increasing the dose until on the thirty-second day, when, with 'another small emission of blood', the retreatant 'begins to take the first grain of *Materia Prima*'. The next day, 'a second grain of *Materia Prima* will produce a strong fever or delirium, and will cause the retreatant to loose his skin, hair and teeth'. After other rituals and practices, on the thirty-sixth day, the last grain of *Materia Prima* 'will cause the hair, teeth and skin to grow back', until the fortieth day when the retreatant 'returns home rejuvenated and perfectly recreated'.

All this might well seem, even to admirers of Cagliostro, an extremely bizarre practice destined, above all, to create sensation – an attitude not at all alien to the Italian magus. In reality, however, this is not the case. When we consider the second quarantine historically, with reference to its antecedents in the German Gold- und Rosenkreuz and within the context of a broader magical tradition (although some unclarity remain about it) it becomes possible to interpret the ritual at various levels. In fact the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, in a text entitled *Thesaurus Thesaurorum* (dated 1580, but certainly more recent), propagated a similar ritual. This, in turn, was interpreted (and probably practiced) in two different ways. At the level of "laboratory" alchemy, a "philosopher's stone" is obtained from the alchemical distillation of one's own blood, adding other components (in the *Thesaurus*, gold and urine), and consuming the result in the form of grains or drops. At the second level, of "internal" or sexual alchemy, the "laboratory" is the magician's body, and the main component is the male semen. Whether Cagliostro personally taught and practised both techniques is unclear, but certainly the text of the second quarantine makes sense only within the context of an already-existing occult tradition, and it was interpreted in both ways in the 19th and 20th century.

In the history of modern magical movements, Cagliostro's *Arcana Arcanorum*, as understood by a subsequent magical tradition in which the Italian magus is venerated as the founder, stands for three different things. Firstly, it indicates a theurgical system of evocation, by use of various techniques, of

the Holy Guardian Angels, or other angels. Secondly, it means a practice of laboratory alchemy, in which dew drops, blood, gold and urine were variously combined. Thirdly, it means a practice of inner alchemy, i.e. of sex magic.

Cagliostro ultimately taught (to the obvious annoyance of his Catholic critics) that immortality was not for everybody. His system proposed a form of self-redemption in which the magical will of a person captured his or her own immortality, and achieved eternal life. It is here, rather than simply in his tragical larger-than-life adventures, that lies Cagliostro's continual fascination.

*Lettre du comte de Cagliostro au peuple anglais pour servir de suite à ses mémoires*, n.e.: Paris, 1786 ♦ *Lettre au peuple français, traduction d'une lettre écrite à M. . . . par M. le comte de Cagliostro, de Londres, le 20 juin 1786*, n.e.: Paris, 1789 ♦ *Mémoire pour le comte de Cagliostro, accusé, contre M. le Procureur général, accusateur*, Paris: Lottin, 1786 ♦ *Mémoire pour le comte de Cagliostro, demandeur, contre M.e Chesnon, et le Sieur de Launay, gouverneur de la Bastille*, Paris: Lottin, 1786 ♦ *Requête au Parlement des chambres assemblées signifiée le 24 février 1786 par le comte de Cagliostro*, n.e.: Paris, 1786 ♦ *Requête à joindre au mémoire du comte de Cagliostro*, n.e.: Paris, 1786 ♦ *Réponse à la pièce importante dans l'affaire De Launay*, Paris: Lottin, 1787 ♦ *Requête au Roi pour le comte de Cagliostro contre MM. Cheson et De Launay*, Paris: Lottin, 1787 ♦ *Deuxième requête au Roi pour le comte de Cagliostro contre M. Chesnon*, Paris: Lottin, 1787 ♦ *Rituel de la Maçonnerie égyptienne* (annoté par le Dr. Marc Haven et précédé d'une introduction de Daniel Nazir), Nice: Éditions des Cahiers Astrologiques, 1948.

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## Cainites

The Cainites are presumed adherents of a Christian gnostic sect named by several of the church fathers. They are associated with "Ophians" or → "Ophites" by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*,



VIII, 17), Hippolytus (*Refutatio*, VIII, 20), and Origen (*Contra Celsum*, III, 13), but these authors provide no discussion of the sect's teachings. Tertullian (*De baptismo*, 1) refers to a female 'viper of the Cainite heresy' trying to subvert Christian baptism. The author of Pseudo-Tertullian's treatise, *Adversus omnes haereses*, a 3rd-century document possibly based on a lost work by Hippolytus, is the first to describe a system of teachings explicitly associated with the heresy of the Cainites (c. 2). But his account is manifestly dependent upon a system of teachings earlier described by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses*, I, 31, 1-2). Irenaeus adds to his account of the system of the "Gnostics" (I, 29) related material ascribed to unnamed 'others' (I, 30), to which he then appends a short account of beliefs held by still 'others' (*alii*, I, 31, 1).

These "others" are said to regard Cain as a superior being and to confess such other biblical anti-heroes as Esau, Korah, and the Sodomites, all of whom were protected by the intervention of Sophia. Judas is honored for accomplishing the 'mystery of the betrayal', and they use a document called the *Gospel of Judas*. Irenaeus claims to have access to writings of theirs that promote the destruction of 'Hystera' (the womb), associated with the creation of heaven and earth. They are also alleged to advocate the libertine behavior also attributed to the → Carpocratians (cf. *Adv. Haer.*, I, 25). Each misdeed is associated with an angel ceremonially invoked, which they refer to as 'perfect knowledge'. This account, in context, can be taken as referring to a sub-group of the "Gnostics" earlier described by Irenaeus.

It is the author of the aforementioned Latin treatise, falsely attributed to Tertullian, who expressly attributes such teachings to a special group of heretics called "Cainites". In chapter 2 of his work, he gives an account of heretics he identifies as "Ophites", partially summarizing Irenaeus' account of the unnamed 'others' in *Adv. Haer.* I, 30. Later in the same chapter he refers to 'another heresy', that of the Cainites. In his account of the Cainites he closely follows Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I, 31, 1), but he leaves out the material beginning with the reference to Hystera (I, 31, 2). Instead, he elaborates on the motivations of the betrayer Judas, one group claiming that Judas betrayed Christ because he was subverting the truth, the other saying that Judas betrayed Christ so that human salvation could be effected.

Epiphanius of Salamis has a lengthy description of the Cainites (*Panarion* 38, 1, 1-3, 5), manifestly based on Irenaeus and Pseudo-Tertullian, to which the bishop has added numerous vituperations.

Only a few extra details emerge: the Cainites honor the wicked, and repudiate the good. Cain's superiority to Abel is based on his having been begotten of a higher power. The angels invoked by the Cainites are the same ones who blinded → Moses, and protected Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16). They use a book called the *Ascension of Paul*, which is also used by the "Gnostics" (or "Borborites", cf. *Pan.* 26).

Two questions emerge from these patristic accounts: 1. Is there any primary evidence that Christian heretics, of whatever sort, honored the biblical Cain? 2. Was there ever a sect of people who called themselves "Cainites"? In answering the first question, the primary evidence to which we must turn consists of that found in the Coptic sources making up the so-called "Nag Hammadi Library". It turns out that all of those texts that mention Cain at all portray him in a negative light: the so-called "Sethian Gnostic" texts [→ Sethians] (*Apocryphon of John* II, 10, 34; 24, 8-25 and parallels; *Hypostasis of the Archons* II, 91, 12-28; *Gospel of the Egyptians*, III, 58, 15; cf. *Apocalypse of Adam*, V, 66, 25-28 [Cain unnamed]), and Valentinian texts [→ Valentinus and Valentinians] (*Valentinian Exposition*, XI, 38, 24-27; cf. *Gospel of Philip*, II, 61, 5-10 [Cain unnamed]). Of these the passage comprising *Ap. John* II, 24, 8-25 requires further elaboration. There we read that the 'chief archon' Yaldabaoth, after the banishment of Adam and Eve from paradise, seduced Eve and begot in her two sons: Eloim-Cain, and Yave-Abel. The demonic origin of the biblical murderer Cain (but not of Abel) is a Gnostic interpretation of a Jewish exegetical tradition, interpreting the difficult passage in Genesis 4:1, the Hebrew text of which can be translated: 'I have gotten a man, namely Yahweh'. The Aramaic *Targum Ps-Jonathan* Gen. 4:1-2 contains an ancient exegetical tradition to the effect that Cain was the product of a liaison between the angel of death Sammael and Eve, who proclaims, 'I have acquired a man, the angel of the Lord'. The aforementioned passage in *Ap. John* reflects this Jewish tradition, but reinterprets it, although still presenting Cain in a negative light.

There is, however, one text which presents Cain in a positive light. The treatise *On the Origin of the World* contains an interesting passage which narrates the birth of 'the Instructor', who then enlightens Adam and Eve in paradise. The reference here is to the serpent of Genesis 3. The text goes on to state that Eve is the 'first virgin', who bore a son without her husband. In a hymnic passage featuring Eve, several 'I am' sayings end with the exclamation, 'I am the process of becoming; yet I have

borne a man as lord' (II, 114, 14-15). In this passage Cain and the 'Instructor'-serpent are virtually identified, and Cain is honored as the lordly revealer of gnosis. Thus, it turns out that there is primary Gnostic evidence for associating Cain with the gnosis requisite for salvation. Moreover, the specific association of Cain with the biblical serpent, in a positive evaluation, is found in Hippolytus' description of the teachings of the "Peratae" (*Refutatio* V, 16, 8-9).

As to the second question, whether there ever was a sect of people who called themselves "Cainites", a complete analysis of all of our evidence must lead to a negative answer. The "Cainite" sect is, finally, an invention of the church fathers. There were evidently some Gnostics who honored Cain, but none who called themselves "Cainites".

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BIRGER A. PEARSON

**Camillo, Giulio**, \* ca. 1480 Portogruaro (?), † 15.5.1543 Milan

Camillo was born around the year 1480 in Friuli, a region in the northeastern part of Italy, perhaps in the town of Portogruaro. It seems that the family originally came from Croatia (according to → Francesco Patrizi, both he and his father were also

called "Delminio" after the ancient Dalmatian town of Delminium). After pursuing his literary studies in Venice and Padua, Camillo taught rhetoric and logic in several towns in Friuli and later in Bologna; he also spent long periods in Rome and Genoa. He is best known for his "theatre of memory" (see below), an ambitious project for the construction of a universal memory system [→ Mnemonics] which won the admiration of intellectuals all over Europe, although it eventually also became the object of criticism and ridicule. Francis I of France expressed an interest in the project, and so Camillo set off for France in 1530. The king agreed to finance the realisation of Camillo's theatre on the condition that the author reveal its secret to him alone. Thus encouraged, Camillo went to Venice to commission a scale model of his theatre in wood, which was seen and described by a friend of Erasmus, Viglio Zuichem, in February 1532. Between 1533 and 1538 Camillo remained in France, apart from trips to Italy as part of the entourage of Cardinal Jean of Lorraine in 1534 (for the election of Pope Paul III) and in 1536. As time passed and his remarkable theatre failed to materialise, however, Camillo began to lose favour at court; his enemies multiplied as the king's interest in the interminable project waned. In 1538, advanced in years, tired and in ill health, Camillo left France and returned home to Italy, hoping to find a new sponsor for his theatre. An attempt some years earlier to gain an invitation to the court of the new lord of Ferrara, Duke Ercole II d'Este, had already failed. Finally Camillo managed to attract the interest of Alfonse d'Avalos, the governor of Milan, and in 1543 he entered into his service. The universal theatre was destined never to be realised, however, for Camillo died unexpectedly on May 15th in Milan.

During his lifetime, Camillo had a wide circle of friends and admirers: artists such as Titian, Lorenzo Lotto and Pordenone, the architect Sebastiano Serlio, with whom he had maintained close ties, and writers such as Ludovico Ariosto, Pietro Aretino and Torquato Tasso, all of whom praised him in their works. We have seen that Camillo had begun his career as a master of rhetoric, and he shared the classicist ideals of his friend Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), who believed that in order to write well one must imitate the great authors – Cicero and Virgil if one was writing in Latin, and Petrarch and Boccaccio if one was writing in Italian. According to Camillo, the imitation of great literary models was an attempt to capture the idea of eloquence that was present, even if in imperfect form, in the works of the greatest masters.

Thus, rhetoric would be transformed into a metaphysical art which could teach the user how to ascend from the particular to the universal and descend from the universal to the individual. Whoever mastered this art of rhetoric would be able to manipulate words and rhetorical artifices at will and subject them to an infinite variety of transformations. Camillo included rhetoric among the three arts of metamorphosis, together with → alchemy (the art of transforming physical objects) and deification (the art of transforming the human mind into a divine one).

To imitate his literary models and to create variations upon them, Camillo applied a series of procedures based on two principles: the first was the use of topical places, a traditional component of both rhetoric and logic; and the second was the Spanish philosopher → Ramon Llull's *clavis universalis*. In his analysis of a literary model, Camillo tried to identify the device or artifice used and break it down into its separate parts, each one of which could lead the user back to an original universal category (to *locus*, topical place). At this point the author would have before him all the possible combinations of arguments and artifices that might be used for his text. Thus, literary procedures also had a metaphysical dimension, and both were closely intertwined with the techniques of rhetoric.

From a philosophical point of view Camillo was fundamentally a syncretist; like → Pico della Mirandola, he was engaged in a search for the common elements that united different philosophical and religious traditions, the first principles that lay hidden between the lines of the text and which only a select few, versed in the neoplatonic, hermetic and kabbalistic traditions, were capable of reading. Camillo was less interested in abstract philosophical principles, however, than in the results that could be obtained by their application; the goal of his reinterpretation of philosophical traditions was to demonstrate that his theatre could actually work.

Camillo's theatre was conceived as a universal memory system, containing not only all the words and rhetorical artifices necessary to compose persuasive texts, but all of man's knowledge as well. He called it a "theatre" because its intent was to make visible the images which usually lay hidden in the mind. The basic scheme consisted of 49 loci generated by the permutation of two different orders; one acting in the vertical dimension (seven columns representing the seven planets); and one acting in the horizontal dimension (corresponding to the seven degrees of the cosmos). As the user

passed from locus to locus and viewed the images placed in each, he could learn and "remember" the first principles of the cosmos, and see how they manifested themselves in the material world. The seven columns symbolised not only the planets but also seven of the ten Sefiroth, the secret names of God in the kabbalistic tradition. These passed across the seven degrees of the cosmos, and thus from the principles of the divine world to those of the natural world, of man and the arts and sciences. Camillo's theatre was designed to function on various levels: as a kind of data bank for those wishing to write poems or orations; as an easy-to-use encyclopaedia; or – on its most rarified and secret level – as a guide to the opus of alchemy and deification. We have seen that Camillo's theatre was never finished. We may read a summary description of it in his *Idea del teatro*, which was published posthumously (1550). To reconstruct the project in all of its parts and to understand its secret meanings, we must refer to several texts which have remained unedited for many centuries.

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**Campanella, Tommaso, \*** 5.9.1568 Stilo (Calabria), † 21.5.1639 Paris

Tommaso Campanella, one of the most original philosophers of the 16th-17th centuries, tried to reconcile the natural philosophy of the Renaissance with a radical reform of the sciences and of society. He was born at dawn on September 5, 1568, at Stilo in Calabria (then under Spanish rule), to a very modest family: his father, Geronimo, was an illiterate cobbler. At fourteen, Tommaso decided to enter the Dominican Order because this seemed to him the best way to pursue his studies, for which he had shown a keen disposition from his earliest years. He gives rare glimpses of his youthful development in the *Praefatio* to his *Philosophia sensibus demonstrata*, written when he was not yet 21. Describing the period spent in the Dominican monasteries of Calabria, the young Campanella recalls how the Aristotelian teaching-texts seemed to him full of contradictions, and unable to offer convincing answers to the most important philosophical and metaphysical problems. Their reading had left him deeply unsatisfied, arousing in him more doubts than certainties. The teachers were unable to clear up his doubts, and the young student found himself in a parlous state of fear and loneliness, until the intuition dawned within him of a new philosophy, drawn not from books or from the minds of Aristotle and his commentators, but from the direct reading of the great “book of nature”. He was accused of holding doctrines similar to those of a certain Telesio; but this judgment, intended as a severe censure, filled him with joy at having finally found a companion and a guide. He traveled to Cosenza, the home of Telesio, and was able to read the first edition of *De rerum natura iuxta propria principia*. From the first pages he felt the novelty and coherence of a doctrine which, in conformity with his own aspirations, derived its truth not from words written in books but from the direct examination of natural facts. Campanella was not able to meet Telesio in person (he had died in October 1588), but he paid homage to his bier in the cathedral and attached verses to the catafalque. It was an idealized encounter in which the young Dominican seemed to receive the spiritual legacy of the new philosophy; and in the sonnet no. 60 of the 89 poems which constitute the *Scelta di alcune poesie filosofiche* (1st ed. 1622), he did not fail to celebrate “Cosentine Telesio” who with his arrows had struck and slain Aristotle, the ‘tyrant of the intellectuals’, restoring to man the *libertas philosophandi* which is inseparable from the truth.

Campanella had written the eight disputations of

the *Philosophia sensibus demonstrata* in the first eight months of 1589, to defend the Telesian philosophy from the attack on it by the Neapolitan jurist Giacomo Antonio Marta in his *Pugnaculum Aristotelis*. In his work, Campanella lays out a systematic criticism of Aristotle on the physical, cosmological, and metaphysical planes, in the light of the Telesian principles. These are integrated, in the first place, with motives derived from Plato’s writings, from the Neoplatonic philosophers [→ Neoplatonism], and from the Hermetic tradition [→ Hermetic Literature] that had been made accessible through the Latin translation of → Marsilio Ficino; also with Campanella’s knowledge of the medical works of Hippocrates and Galen, naturalists such as Pliny, atomists and Stoics – all the reading that had nourished him and rendered ever more intense his enormous appetite for knowledge. The *Philosophia* appeared in 1591 in Naples, to which Campanella had been transferred, residing in the palace of the Marchese Del Tufo. In the Viceroy’s capital he was able to frequent aristocratic and intellectual society, especially the circle of Giovanni Battista Della Porta, author of celebrated works on natural → magic and physiognomy, whose palace was a place of pilgrimage for students from all over Europe. At Naples, however, the suspicions against Campanella grew, and in spring 1592 he was imprisoned in the convent of San Domenico, accused on the grounds that his exceptional knowledge had a diabolic origin, though the real imputation was that of supporting the “new” doctrines of Telesio against the scholastic and Aristotelian ones. Acquitted from the charges, before returning to Calabria Campanella went to Rome, then to Florence, where he was received cordially by the Grand Duke. However, the Duke did not confer on the young friar the hoped-for chair at a Tuscan university, having heard reports that were not altogether positive about him. During a stay at Bologna, the Inquisition caused the manuscripts of the works Campanella carried with him to be sequestered; he would see them again two years later in the Holy Office in Rome, when he was summoned to clear himself of the doctrines contained in them. Settling at Padua, he came to know Galileo, and this early meeting marked the beginning of a constant admiration and friendship for the scientist whose discoveries would contribute to the fall of the Aristotelian cosmos. There was no lack of disagreement between Campanella’s and Galileo’s doctrines, but as Campanella wrote in a late letter to Grand Duke Ferdinand II, ‘the discord of intellects can cohabit with the concord of their wills’.



A fruitful period followed at Padua, as Campanella pursued his studies and wrote various works (all of them lost), until he became involved in another, more serious trial. He was arrested at the beginning of 1594, together with two friends, by order of the Inquisition. After a failed attempt to escape in the summer, he was transferred to the prison of the Roman Inquisition, where for some time the Florentine “heretic” Francesco Pucci and → Giordano Bruno had been incarcerated. In one of the sonnets of the *Scelta*, he compares the dark palace to ‘Poliphemus’s cavern’, to the ‘Labyrinth of Crete’, and to the ‘Palace of Atlas’, in which, as though by fateful appointment, the free spirits meet who have abandoned the stagnant waters of conventional knowledge in order to venture boldly on the ‘sea of truth’. Accused of having written a sonnet against Christ and a short atheistic work, *De tribus impostoribus* (which, he said, had been printed thirty years before he was born), and of having held Democritean doctrines, he was sentenced in 1595 ‘on the gravest suspicion of heresy’ to make a solemn and public abjuration. At the end of 1597 he was consigned again to the Superiors of the Dominican Order, who enjoined him to return to Calabria.

On the return journey, Campanella spent some months in Naples, where he completed the *Epilogo magno*, in whose first five books he expounded his own system of natural philosophy, inspired by Telesian principles, while the sixth and last book treated ethics. The work, translated into Latin, became the *Physiologia*, the first of the four parts of the *Philosophia realis*, which would be published at Frankfurt in 1623; the other parts comprise *Ethica*, *Politica*, and *Oeconomica*, dealing with the conduct of home and family. The editions of Campanella’s works which appeared at Frankfurt between 1617 and 1623, contributing greatly to his European reputation, were made possible thanks to the work of Tobias Adami, a German savant who during a stay in Naples between 1612 and 1613 had managed to make contact with the friar, then prisoner in the city jail, and had been given the manuscripts of his works.

The *Physiologia* develops Telesio’s principles of natural philosophy, beginning with the affirmation that when the first Being, omnipotent, wisest and best, decided to create the world, defined as his ‘statue’ and ‘image’ of his infinite wealth, opened up a ‘quasi-infinite’ (*pene infinitum*) space in which to place it. This occurred at the beginning of that duration and vicissitude of things that we call Time, and which is the image of the Eternity from which it flows. Space, defined as ‘primal substance,

or seat, or immobile and incorporeal capacity to receive every body’, is homogenous (“high” and “low,” “back” and “forward,” “right” and “left” are human terms referring to located bodies). If the world did not exist, we would have to imagine it as void; but in fact it desires fullness and is invested with an attractive force such that it ‘rejoices in sustaining beings’ and abhors emptiness. The bodies, on their part, ‘rejoice in mutual contact’ and hate the void that separates them. In space, God collects matter, which is considered as a physical entity, lacking form, shape, and action, but fit to extend, divide, and unite itself and to take on every shape, just as wax can receive every seal. This is in clear contrast to Aristotle’s and Averroes’s conception, which defines matter as privation and a pure *ens rationis*. Campanella calls matter ‘a second substance, the basis of forms, the passive principle of the composition of things’. Into this corporeal mass, God inserts heat and cold, two principles that are active and diffusive in themselves, incorporeal but unable to subsist without bodies. From their conflict – derived from the fact that each wants to dominate and occupy the greatest possible quantity of matter – originate the two first bodies or elements of the world: heaven, which is hottest, subtle, mobile, being formed from matter transformed into heat; and earth, made from matter rendered immobile, dark, and dense from cold. All the secondary beings take their origin from the fight between heaven and earth, heat and cold, and God uses the oppositions of the primal elements for the production of natural beings, which in their infinite multiplicity and diversity realize the infinite degrees of the primal, divine Idea.

Heaven, being unitary and not divided into spheres as in the traditional view, moves because it is hot, in virtue of its own intrinsic operation which conserves and vivifies it, without any need for recourse to extrinsic motivating intelligences. The motions of the heavenly bodies and the sun, extremely various and complex, transmit to the earth all these degrees of heat and light which constitute the essence of every single thing. In the light of these principles, Campanella explains every aspect of the natural world, from the celestial and meteorological phenomena to the formation of the waters, the constitution of minerals and that of plants, analyzing with particular attention animals and men. To explain the origin and the formation of these more complex organisms, he draws on a fundamental element of his philosophy: *spiritus*. This is made from material rendered extremely subtle by the solar heat; it is a sort of hot breath, which due to its subtlety and movement is capable of separating



from the portion of matter in which it finds itself enclosed, and of acting upon it. Not being able to exhale from matter and return to heaven, as it would wish, the *spiritus* organizes and shapes matter from the inside in the best manner for its needs, and being aware of the dangers that threaten it from without, it constructs the bodily organs which are the instruments that guarantee its conservation and life.

On August 15, 1598, approaching his thirtieth birthday, Campanella returned to Stilo after a decade-long absence. The following year he became embroiled in the most dramatic events of his life, which would condition all the years to come. The reading of astrological [→ Astrology] and prophetic texts announcing a profound renewal of the Church; the appearance of signs in the heavens and of unusual natural events like eclipses, comets, earthquakes, invasions of locusts, torrential rains, and overflowing rivers; above all, the conditions of misery and injustice affecting the populace and the severe social and political disorder, convinced Campanella that with the end of the century there would come a period of tremendous changes. Thus a grand conspiracy was organized, of which he was the indisputed spiritual head, which proposed to turn the province into a republic, removing it from the tyranny of the King of Spain, while Campanella, regarded by his accomplices as a new legislator and Messiah, would promulgate 'new laws and restore every man to his natural liberty'. The plot failed at birth, for on August 10, 1599 it was denounced to the Spanish authorities by two of the conspirators. An army was immediately dispatched, leading to harsh repression. After frantic efforts to escape, Campanella was arrested, and in November four galleys reached the port of Naples laden with dozens of prisoners, some of them hanged to instill terror. Thus began the Neapolitan trials, whose course was much complicated by the double charge of rebellion and heresy against the accused, who were both laymen and ecclesiastics. In the 19th century the trials were reconstructed by Luigi Amabile, who has left an impressive documentation of these events that is still fundamental.

To avoid capital punishment, which could not be inflicted on the insane, Campanella resorted to the expedient of faking madness, which was ratified through the dreadful torture of the *veglia* [deprivation of sleep], which he evokes at the close of the *Città del sole* and in later pages, as proof of the freedom of the human spirit which cannot be forced or constrained even by the most extreme physical pressures. During his first period in prison he wrote his most famous short work, the *Città del*

*sole*, in the form of a "poetic dialog" between one of Columbus's sailors and a knight, which has been seen both as the program of a failed insurrection and as its philosophical idealization. The work was published in Latin translation in 1623, in the Appendix to the third part of the *Philosophia realis* mentioned above, and in presenting it to the readers, Tobias Adami states that this ideal republic is superior to the model proposed by Plato in antiquity, or by Thomas More in recent times, because it is inspired by the great model of nature. In fact, the return to nature, understood as the expression of God's intrinsic "art" and wisdom, and the criticism of existing society, unjust and unhappy because divorced from that model, is the simplest and most convincing key to the reading of Campanella's utopia. It depicts a "political body" in which the parts are integrated so as to make a unitary organism, and the separate members, many and various according to their functions, are all coordinated for the common good. Political reflection is a primary and constant aspect of Campanella's thought, present from his youth until his last years of exile in Paris. He also treats other themes than those of utopia and prophecy, especially the relations between religion and politics, temporal and ecclesiastical power, and between the prospect of a universal monarchy and the reunification of humanity in 'one flock under one shepherd'. In his *Monarchia di Spagna* he emphasizes the universalist and providential function of the Catholic king, identified with the biblical Cyrus, liberator of the Church from the infidels and gatherer of the people in a single faith.

Campanella was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in 1603, but in view of an exceptional astral event, the "great conjunction" of Jupiter and Saturn in the fiery sign of Sagittarius, he expected great changes and devoted himself to the practice of magic and demonic invocations, confident that he would soon be released. His hopes were dramatically disappointed. In June of the following year, after a plan of escape had been discovered, the prisoner was transferred to a harsher prison, the "pit" of Castel Sant'Elmo: an underground cell, damp and lightless, where he lived for the most dreadful years of his imprisonment. But it was from this darkness that came some of the most exalted and intense poetic compositions of that extraordinary songbook, the *Scelta*.

The composition of the *Senso delle cose e della magia* also dates from this period. Here Campanella expounds his vision of the natural world as a living organism whose single parts have life and sensibility. Every natural being aims at its own conser-

vation, and to this end is endowed with “sense” according to various degrees and modalities. This sense is its capacity to distinguish what is positive and beneficial to its own life, which it thus pursues and seeks, from that which is perceived as negative and destructive, which is thus fled and avoided. Some beings, such as the heavenly bodies and light, possess a sense that is much more acute and pure than that of animals, while others, such as minerals and metals, have a more obtuse and obscure sense because of the weight of matter. As already said, the vital and cognitive functions in animal organisms are connected with the *spiritus*. Hot, mobile, passive, identified with the organic soul, the *spiritus* has its seat in the brain, whence it runs through the finest of nervous canals to fulfill its multiple vital and cognitive functions. As it enters, via the sense organs, into contact with external reality, it undergoes those modifications from which come all its passions and knowledge. All aspects of the cognitive process, from memory to → imagination, from discursive thought to the intellect itself, are attributable to the activity of the *spiritus*, which is capable of preserving the modifications and impressions it receives, of re-using them when similar situations occur, and of confronting and extending them.

The dimension of sensible knowledge is where the animal and the human levels can be compared, in order to learn their affinities and differences. Campanella rejoiced in the extraordinary powers of animals, which know how to achieve marvelous works and are endowed with forms of reasoning, language, natural prophecy, and perhaps even religiosity. But such analogies should not obfuscate or cast doubt on the difference and special quality of man, who is furnished with a *spiritus* far more refined and pure than the animal sort, capable of moving with agility between more spacious brain-cells, which allows him to construct far more complex chains of arguments. The true and radical difference between the two levels consists in the fact that man is also endowed with an incorporeal *mens*, divine in its origin, which constitutes and underlies his specific dimension and his excellence. His capacity to extend himself through thought and desire to infinity – and such a leap is not vain imagination, as Aristotle thought – proves that he is not the child of sun and earth alone, but of a pre-eminent and infinite cause. The connection of man with a supernatural world is confirmed by the fact that he can go beyond bodily possessions and the limits of natural self-preservation, turning, as philosopher and religious man, to higher possessions and ends. He can achieve higher forms of prophecy and ecstasy, not explainable by physiological or medical theories. Above all, man is

endowed with a free will, thanks to which he can resist outside pressures, can value the objects of his choice, choosing the greater good even if no immediate advantage or utility results from it.

The fourth book of the *Senso delle cose* is devoted to natural magic. Della Porta, while listing the most curious occult properties of minerals, plants, and animals following the magical tradition, maintained that it is impossible to give a rational explanation for the relations of sympathy and antipathy, affinity and repulsion, that exist between natural entities. Campanella, on the contrary, proposes a re-reading and re-interpretation of this tradition in the light of the doctrine of the sense of things and of the *spiritus*. The magus is he who knows the specific quality of sense inherent in every entity, and is capable of using it in the appropriate way and of imposing specific alterations and passions on the *spiritus*. He knows how to potentialize the vital energies, suggesting food, drinks, ambiances, sounds, herbal and animal remedies which rejuvenate and increase them. He knows the secrets of generation and of diseases, and can arouse passions sufficient to achieve definite goals. Moreover, he knows how to explain strange phenomena such as the premonitions in dreams, seeing that the causes that prepare determined events are already present in the air (which is a shared “soul”) and can be perceived before the events themselves occur. He knows the true and exact metamorphoses that take place in those who are bitten by a rabid dog, or in Apulian peasants bitten by tarantulas: the physical and psychological changes derive from the fact that the vital temperament in such unfortunates is hindered in its diffusion and dominance of their organism by the spirit of the animal which attacked them. Always resorting to the doctrine of sense, which in some cases may even persist in entities after their death, and to the capacity of the air to join persons and actions that are far apart and to preserve the passions in latent and dormant form, which can be reawakened on certain occasions, he can explain facts such as the bleeding of a corpse in the presence of its murderer. The same accounts for the possible efficacy of the “weapon salve”, thanks to which it is believed possible to cure a wound by acting on the instrument that caused it, or the reason why (to cite a famous example repeated in every book on magic) a drum made of sheepskin shatters when a drum made of wolfskin is beaten, as an ancient terror reawakens in it.

Still in the pit of Sant-Elmo, Campanella composed the work that the German scholar Kaspar Schoppe suggested he call *Atheismus triumphatus*, and to which the author would also refer as *Anti-machiavellismo*. He intended to prove in it that

religion is not a human invention, as politicians and supporters of state agendas maintain; it is not a useful fiction invented by priestly cunning and by rulers for maintaining their power, but a *virtus naturalis* that is intrinsic in man and in all of nature. Campanella also wrote the *Articuli prophetales*, in which, amplifying a document of his self-defense, he collected the texts of saints and prophets, literary writers and philosophers, astrologers and sibyls, which prove that it is legitimate to expect the coming of an epoch of renewal and the age of gold.

After being transferred to more comfortable prisons, during his long years of detention Campanella sent petitions and memoranda to popes and sovereigns in which he proclaimed his own innocence and pleaded for release, promising to undertake useful and marvelous tasks and books. Above all, he was dedicated to that grandiose work of reform and re-foundation of the entire encyclopedia of knowledge which had blazed within him since his early years. Beside the known works and numerous lost small works and texts, we mention the literary writings which were collected in the five parts of the *Philosophia rationalis* (Paris 1638); the *Theologia* in 30 books, finished in 1624 and left unpublished, whose publication, begun and continued by Romano Amerio, is still in progress; an *Astrologia* in six books, in which the author aims at freeing the doctrine from the superstitions of the Arabs, in order to re-establish it as a natural and conjectural doctrine; the *Medicine* in seven books, which was published at Lyon in 1635 thanks to the French savant Jacques Gaffarel, who had already prepared for the press an *Index* to the philosopher's works (Venice 1633), warmly emphasizing its novelty; and above all the most grandiose work which the author defined with justifiable pride as "the Bible of philosophy", the *Metaphysica*. The latter work, sketched in Campanella's youth and rewritten in subsequent years, finally appeared as an imposing folio edition of 18 books subdivided into three parts, published in Paris in 1638, a few months before the author's death. The work is extremely complex and various in its themes; here we must mention at least the distinction between knowledge *innata*, in virtue of which every entity knows and loves its own self, and knowledge *addita*, which derives from contacts and relations with the multiple objects of the external world. This latter knowledge can obfuscate the original knowledge that the soul has of itself, inducing a sort of self-forgetfulness in it; and the doctrine of the "primality", according to which the first, infinite Being is constituted from the infinite principles of Power, Wisdom, and Love, and all the sec-

ondary, finite entities which derive from it are constituted, as beings, from this very primality following their different modalities and proportions, and inasmuch as they are finite, from infinite degrees of non-entity. Nothingness does not exist either in God or outside him, but God makes use of it to give beings their distinction and finitude.

On January 13, 1611, after reading Galileo's *Sidereus nuncius*, Campanella wrote an elaborate Latin epistle to the scientist that reflects the emotions aroused by the extraordinary celestial messenger: a mixture of enthusiasm and perplexity, of praise and reservations. During the years that followed, he showed the greatest interest in Galileo's teachings about sunspots, floaters, and comets (and at the end of 1618 was able to observe those which spawned the debate of the *Saggiatore*). This fervid dialogue reached its climax in the drafting of the courageous *Apologia pro Galileo*. Written in 1616, when Galileo's teachings were arousing the first difficulties of a theological nature, and printed at Frankfurt in 1622, the *Apologia* was an act of great courage and intellectual honesty on its author's part, not only because Campanella took up this delicate question while he was in prison (and as he recorded later, his was the only voice in Europe that was raised in defence of the astronomer), but also because he was defending doctrines that were not his own. His image of a living and organic book of nature was, in fact, quite different from Galileo's idea of a book written in mathematical characters. Besides, Campanella had reservations about the Copernican doctrine, hard to reconcile with Telesian physics especially regarding the earth's motion. The *Apologia* is not so much a defense of the heliocentric system, as a defence of Galileo's *libertas philosophandi* and in general of the Christian scientist, whose first right and duty should be to set the reading of the book of nature above that of books by men. With great lucidity, Campanella touches on the nub of the problem, identifying it as the marriage of Aristotelianism with theology. Aristotelian philosophy does not contain a dogmatic and absolute truth, but, like every human doctrine, is modified and corrected in the light of reading the book of nature. When it no longer corresponds to experience, it should be discarded and replaced with a new doctrine that better reflects the data, exactly as Galileo has done, without fearing that this dismissal of Aristotelianism should have negative repercussions for theology.

After alternate hopes and failed promises, exhausting negotiations and delays, finally on May 23, 1626, after almost 27 years of prison, Campanella left Castel Nuovo, and a month later, by order of the Holy Office, was transferred secretly to

Rome and incarcerated in the palace of the Inquisition. The first period of his time in Rome was marked by disappointment and bitterness which even caused him to regret the last years of his Neapolitan imprisonment, due to the hostility towards his person and even more towards his books, pursued with ceaseless accusations and censures. But the most sensational episode of his Roman period was connected to Campanella's astrological skill, and the desire of Pope Urban VIII, secretly interested in such doctrines, to exploit it. The Pope wished to silence the rumors, already current in 1626 and becoming ever more insistent in the succeeding years, of his imminent death due to ill-omened astrological aspects. Campanella did not only reassure him about the length of his life, but, summoned to the papal palace, put into action those practices of natural magic described in the short work *De fato siderali vitando*. If the Pope seemed to gain reassurance from such counsels, the scandal exploded in 1629 when the book appeared in print at Lyon as the seventh and last volume of the *Astrologici*, risking compromising the Pope himself with accusations of superstitious practices. Campanella insisted that the work had been printed without his permission, as part of a plot organized by powerful enemies within his own Order who wanted to ruin him and destroy the Pope's favor towards him. Urban VIII hastened to promulgate in the first months of 1631 the most severe Bull *Inscrutabilis* against astrologers, and to imprison and put to death Don Orazio Morandi, abbot of Santa Prassede, in whose monastery astrological practices had become mixed up with political intrigues; but the scandal of the publication of *De fato* inexorably cooled Urban's sympathy for Campanella. It little helped that the friar hurriedly wrote an *Apologeticus* in defense of the astrological work, in order to demonstrate that the practices suggested in *De fato* were licit and natural.

In the political field, the Roman years saw Campanella's transference, at first cautious, then ever more obvious, to the French position. In a *Dialogo politico* he deplored the dissensions within the royal family, which risked enfeebling the energies of the whole nation, and praised the policies of Cardinal Richelieu. In his judgment, the Cardinal was not intent on egotistic personal power, as his enemies wanted to make believe, but on the reinforcement and centralization of the powers of the state, in order to make the nation stronger, more prosperous and coherent. But between 1633-1634 new and dramatic events brought the Roman period to a brusque end. In August 1633 one of Campanella's disciples, a young Dominican friar from

Calabria called Tommaso Pignatelli, was imprisoned in Naples on the charge of having hatched an anti-Spanish plot. When the following year Pignatelli, condemned to death, was strangled in prison, the situation suggested an opportunity, approved by the Pope himself, for Campanella's expatriation to France. On the night of October 21 he fled from Rome as far as Livorno in the carriage of the French ambassador, François de Noailles. There he embarked for Marseilles, continuing stage by stage through Aix-en-Provence, where he was warmly welcomed by his erudite friend Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, at whose house he was able to meet Pierre Gassendi. Resuming the voyage to Paris, on November 15 he stayed at Lyon, where he saw with satisfaction that the first four books of his *Medicina* had been printed, and reached the capital on December 1st.

Campanella was received warmly and sympathetically by Richelieu and Louis XIII, and enjoyed the favor of the learned. During his Parisian years he resumed his philosophical activity and devoted himself to the printing of his own *Opera omnia*, which despite innumerable obstacles began to appear, to his great satisfaction. During 1635-1636 he was involved in an intense resumption of political reflections, aimed at demonstrating that France, for all its difficulties and conflicts, was positioned in a rising phase of "waxing fortune", whereas the Hispano-Habsburg power was traversing the downward parabola of an inexorable decline. Nor did Campanella neglect the prophetic prospects, always dear to him. In a letter to the Grand Duke Ferdinand II, recalling his links with the Medicean house and his constant friendship towards Galileo, he affirmed his own faith that the messages of prophets survive their death: 'The coming century will judge us, because the present one always crucifies its benefactors, but then they are resurrected on the third day, or the third century'. On the occasion of the much hoped-for birth of the Dauphin, the future Sun King, which came on the same day as Campanella's own 70th birthday, he composed an inspired *Ecloga* in Latin. Taking up astrological and prophetic themes, he begs the Muse of Calabria to free him from old age, so that he can communicate his faith in the approach of a new epoch, in which the 'dark colors, signs of mourning and ignorance' will be shed, and immaculate hearts will put on white garments; an epoch in which 'impiety, fraud, lies, and strife will be exiled, the lambs will no longer fear the wolf, nor the herd fear the lion; the tyrants will learn to rule for the good of the people, and idleness will cease, after which hard labor will also cease; work shared

by many in friendship will be play, for all will acknowledge one father and God'. Seized by dark presages at the approach of a solar eclipse, he tried to foil its threats, but died at dawn on May 21, 1639.

The only available resource for a complete description of Campanella's works and their complicated interrelations is still the volume by L. Firpo, *Bibliografia degli scritti di Tommaso Campanella*, Turin 1940. Because of the editions, discoveries of documents, and literature of succeeding years, both by Firpo himself and by other scholars, we must warn that this bibliography, while still valuable, needs many additions and corrections. There is an exhaustive compilation of Firpo's Campanella editions and studies in E. Baldini, "Luigi Firpo e Campanella: cinquant'anni di ricerche e di pubblicazioni", *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, II (1996), 352-358. This journal (from Year 1, 1995) should be consulted both for its updating of the editions and texts of Campanella since 1990, and for recent studies and documents about him.

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GERMANA ERNST

**Canseliet, Eugène Léon,\*** 18.12.1899  
Sarcelles (France), † 17.4.1982  
Savignies (France)

Eugène Canseliet, alchemist and writer, was born to a modest family of Belgian origin that settled in the Paris suburbs at the end of the 19th century. As



a youth, he was interested in art, especially drawing, and competed for entrance into art schools. During World War I he attended that of Marseille, where his family had moved to protect him from the war. Canselier never lost his passion for painting and drawing.

At Marseille he met → Fulcanelli, who, according to Canselier's account, was already an old man; he made a habit of visiting him, listening to him, and running errands for him, while beginning to study the classic texts of → alchemy. At Fulcanelli's, Canselier met Jean Julien Champagne (1877-1932), who is often presented as having been the real Fulcanelli. Champagne was a gifted painter, versed in practical alchemy, and close to some of the Parisian esotericists; he exercised a profound influence on Canselier.

On returning to Paris from Marseille, Canselier worked variously as an office employee, book-keeper, etc., while continuing his alchemical studies. He visited Fulcanelli, who had returned to Paris after the Armistice in 1918, and Champagne, who from 1925 to 1932 occupied a room adjoining Canselier's. Some paintings survive from this period of Champagne's life. Canselier spent part of his income on acquiring old alchemical books, and those he could not obtain, he copied himself at libraries or in private collections such as Lionel Hauser's.

At the beginning of the 1920s, Fulcanelli invited Canselier to a strange rendezvous. At the Sarcelles gas factory he asked his pupil to perform a transmutation, using materials that he himself provided. This operation, according to Canselier, produced a small quantity of gold that was later cast into a ring. After this experiment, Fulcanelli handed Canselier three manuscripts and entrusted him with preparing them for publication. The first, *Le Mystère des cathédrales et l'interprétation ésotérique des symboles hermétiques du Grand Œuvre* (The mystery of the cathedrals and the esoteric interpretation of the Hermetic symbols of the Great Work) appeared in June 1926 from Jean Schemit (1867-1945), a publisher specializing in erudite and artistic works. At Fulcanelli's request, Canselier added a preface, and signed as "F.C.H." (i.e. Frère Chevalier d'Héliopolis), referring to a secret society of alchemists to which Fulcanelli had supposedly belonged. The illustrations that accompany Canselier's redrafting of the text are all by Champagne.

Fulcanelli's second book appeared four years later: *Les demeures philosophales et le symbolisme hermétique dans ses rapports avec l'art sacré et l'ésotérisme du Grand Œuvre* (Philosophic residences

and Hermetic symbolism in its relationship to sacred art and the esotericism of the Great Work). But the third manuscript, entitled *Finis Gloriarum Mundi* (The end of the world's glory) was taken back by Fulcanelli and kept from publication.

During the 1930s, Canselier made lasting contacts and friendships, such as with the Christian alchemist André Savoret (1898-1977); Paul Le Cour (1876-1954), founder of the journal *Atlantis*, to which Canselier contributed for the rest of his life; the polyglot philosopher Philéas Lebesgue (1869-1958); and Claude d'Ygé (alias Claude Lablatinière, 1912-1964). In 1945, Jean Schemit's widow honored her husband's promise and published Canselier's first book. Although issued under difficult postwar conditions, the result was successful. From 1946 onwards, Canselier lived in Savignies, near Beauvais.

In 1953, Canselier was unexpectedly invited to make a journey by car from Paris to Spain. In Seville he was received by Fulcanelli, then aged about 114 by Canselier's calculations. The purpose of this meeting, according to Canselier, was for Fulcanelli to give his disciple advice and new information of a practical nature; in brief, to guide him in his research. Thenceforth Canselier followed the so-called "dry way", re-reading in this spirit the works of Basil Valentine, → pseudo-Nicolas Flamel, A.T. Limojon de Saint-Didier, and Eirenaeus Philalethes (the "dry way" in alchemy is supposedly an accelerated process of obtaining the Philosopher's Stone that dispenses with the lengthy procedures of the more common "wet way", but is more difficult and hazardous).

In 1955, Canselier began his collaboration with a new journal founded by Robert Amadou, *La Tour Saint-Jacques* (1955-1963). Other contributors included René Alleau (born 1917), Henri Hunwald (1908-1961), and Claude d'Ygé. Thanks to the latter, Canselier was introduced to Jean Lavritch, owner of *Omnium Littéraire* (a branch of Editions des Champs-Élysées), a house specializing in esotericism and notable for publishing the journal *Initiation & Science* (1945-1963). In 1957 and 1960, Lavritch re-issued Fulcanelli's two books, augmented by Canselier with new Introductions and two hitherto unpublished chapters. However, after differences arose between author and publisher, Canselier was introduced to Jean-Jacques Pauvert, already well known for publishing the Marquis de Sade, André Breton, etc. Pauvert was convinced of the value of Fulcanelli's and Canselier's writings, and agreed to publish them. The third edition of Fulcanelli's works (1964, 1965) and a volume of collected articles by

Canseliet (1964) met with immediate success. Thanks to Fulcanelli's literary qualities, but also to Canseliet's own writings, alchemy suddenly became respectable in the French literary world. The press and radio took hold of the phenomenon, and from then onwards, Canseliet was frequently solicited by journalists.

The 1970s were rich and active years for Canseliet. He wrote many articles, especially in *Atlantis*, then from 1977 in *La Tourbe des Philosophes*, a journal founded by Jean Laplace. He wrote several introductions, re-published Fulcanelli's works, completed his own *Alchimie expliquée sur ses textes classiques* (Alchemy explained on the basis of its classic texts), prepared augmented editions of his other books, published in facsimile the alchemical treatises he had copied in the 1920s, and co-authored a volume of interviews with Robert Amadou (see Bibliography). These efforts came to a dramatic close when Canseliet suffered a heart-attack in 1974. His long convalescence (during which he treated himself with dew) forced him to reduce his visits to Paris.

In his last years, Canseliet was busily giving interviews, answering the many letters he received, and ensuring that Fulcanelli's works remained in print; he also wrote his memoirs, which remained unfinished. His death, following a winter attack of influenza, left his work with no designated heir. It remains inseparable from that of his master, which in many respects it clarifies or completes. For nearly 60 years, this combined corpus has continued to have a strong influence, especially in France, where it has brought about a veritable renaissance of laboratory alchemy.

In the English-speaking world, Canseliet is best known as Fulcanelli's one and only disciple through Kenneth R. Johnson's biography of the latter; also through the publications of Frater Albertus (pen-name of Albert Richard Riedel). In an interview with Albertus (1976), Canseliet emphasizes the role of harmony in all alchemical endeavors: harmony with the material, with oneself, and with the cosmos. He mentions the difficulty of achieving the Great Work today because of pollution in the atmosphere and changes in the weather: these hinder the performance of alchemical operations, which are crucially timed by season, moon phase, and the state of the sky. Worst of all, he says, is the pollution of the human brain. A similar animus toward the modern age appears in his censure of the post-conciliar Catholic Church, particularly of its sanctioning cremation (Preface to 3rd ed. of *Le Mystère des cathédrales*, 31-33).

Unlike many 20th century interpreters, and even

self-defined practitioners of alchemy, Canseliet insisted that it is first and foremost a physical activity requiring laboratory work. He had little tolerance for the symbolic interpretations of Gaston Bachelard, the pontifications of → René Guénon on the 'merely cosmological' and theoretical nature of the Hermetic tradition, and the psychologized alchemy of → Carl Gustav Jung (*L'Alchimie expliquée*, 75-90). On the other hand, he was ready to read alchemical wisdom into the literary works of François Rabelais and Jonathan Swift. The key to this reading lies in the supposed secret language of the alchemists, the *langue des oiseaux* (language of the birds) revealed by phonetic equivalents: thus the name of Swift's hero Gulliver conceals the words *gueule* (Fr., "throat") and *ver* (Lat., "spring"), which Canseliet eventually translates as 'the philosophic vase' (*L'Alchimie expliquée*, 109). Alongside this creative hermeneutics, Canseliet continued Fulcanelli's practice of discovering and interpreting symbolic programs found in the architecture of French buildings of the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Yet despite such a wealth of information, the essential mysteries are guarded: the aspiring alchemist must deduce for himself, with the help of prayer if lacking that of an accomplished master, the actual nature of the materials and what is practically to be done with them. In this respect, Canseliet's teaching contrasts with the tendency to openness and the setting of modest and accessible goals, as in the "alchemical" schools of Frater Albertus or of Jean Dubuis' "Philosophers of Nature".

*Deux logis alchimiques en marge de la science et des arts*, Paris: Jean Schemit, 1945; second ed. revised and enlarged: Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1979; third ed., revised, reshaped and enlarged by R. Caron, Paris: Jean-Claude Bailly, 1998 ♦ *Alchimie: Etudes diverses de symbolisme hermétique*, Paris: J.J. Pauvert, 1964; second ed., enlarged, Paris: J.J. Pauvert, 1978 (followed by several new eds.) ♦ *L'alchimie et son Mutus Liber*, Paris: J.J. Pauvert 1967; republished 1986; Paris: enlarged ed., J.Cl. Bailly, 1996 ♦ *L'alchimie expliquée sur ses textes classiques*, Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1972; second ed., enlarged, Paris: J.J. Pauvert, 1980 (several new eds.) ♦ *Trois anciens traités alchimiques*, Paris: J.J. Pauvert, 1975 (new ed. in facsimile, Paris: Fayard 1996) ♦ *Le Feu du soleil: Entretiens sur l'alchimie avec Eugène Canseliet*, Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1978 (in collaboration with Robert Amadou) ♦ *L'Hermétisme dans la vie de Jonathan Swift*, Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1983.

*Lit.:* Frater Albertus, *The Alchemist of the Rocky Mountains*, Salt Lake City: Paracelsus Research Society, 1976 ♦ idem, "An Interview with Eugene Canseliet", *Parachemy* 4:4 (1976), 366-371 ♦ "Hommage au

Maître Alchimiste Eugène Canselier, F.C.H. 1899-1982”, *Atlantis* 322 (1982) ♦ “Alchimie: Centenaire de la naissance d’Eugène Canselier”, *Atlantis* 398 (1999) ♦ Atorène, *Le laboratoire alchimique*, Paris: Trédaniel, 1981 ♦ Richard Caron, “Postface”, in: E. Canselier, *Deux logis alchimiques* (etc.), Paris: J.C.I. Bailly, 1998, 321-333 ♦ Judith Henry, *En hommage au plus grand alchimiste du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, Eugène Canselier* F. C. H., et en souvenir de la plus touchante et fidèle amitié qu’il lui porta, Paris: Editions Judith Henry, 1999 ♦ Jean Laplace, *Index général des termes spéciaux, des expressions et des sentences propres à l’alchimie se rencontrant dans l’œuvre complète d’Eugène Canselier*, Paris: Editions Suger, 1986 ♦ idem, “En hommage aux 80 ans de M. Eugène Canselier”, *La Tourbe des Philosophes* 10 (1980).

RICHARD CARON

## Carpocratians

The Carpocratians belong to the broad spectrum of Christian schools in the 2nd century that teach Christianity as a philosophy. Their founder, the Alexandrian Christian Carpocrates, was married to a lady called Alexandria who came from the island of Kephallenia in the Adriatic sea. They had a son called Epiphanes who received from his father an “encyclopaedic education”, wrote some treatises and died at the age of seventeen. Clement reports that the deceased Epiphanes was given divine honours: a temple and a *mouseion* were erected in Same on the island of Kephallenia and every new moon a celebration commemorated his divinization (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, III, 5, 1-3). Clement does not assign a date to either Carpocrates or Epiphanes. Irenaeus of Lyons, however, who discusses the Carpocratians in *Adversus Haereses* (AH), I, 25, provides some elements of chronology. He refers to a Roman group that was headed by a certain lady called Marcellina. According to Irenaeus, Marcellina came to Rome in the time of bishop Anicetus and ‘exterminated many’. Thus Irenaeus sees Marcellina as a contemporary of Polycarp (AH, III, 3, 4) and Valentinus [→ Valentinus and Valentinians], who, having come to Rome under bishop Hyginus, lived until the time of Anicetus (AH, III, 4, 3). Cerdo, who arrived in Rome under Hyginus (AH, I, 27, 1), is older, as is probably Marcion. Whether Irenaeus is correct in connecting Marcellina and her group with the Carpocratians is not quite certain: the pagan philosopher Celsus distinguished in his anti-Christian treatise the *True Doctrine* between ‘Marcellians’ as followers of Marcellina and ‘Harpocratians’ as followers of Salome (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 62).

Another contemporary of Marcellina is Hegesip-

pus who likewise came to Rome under bishop Anicetus. He wrote a work comprising five books; there he mentions the Carpocratians among the Christian sects that have sprung from the Jewish sects. He enumerates Menandrians, Marcianists (?), Carpocratians, Valentinians, Basilidians and Satornilians (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 22, 5). It is, of course, impossible to draw any chronological conclusion from the sequence presented by Hegesippus. We can only surmise that Carpocrates and his son lived in the first half of the 2nd century and that Marcellina came to Rome sometime after ca. 160 C.E. Justin Martyr who wrote between 150 and 160 C.E. nowhere mentions Carpocratians. The Roman group was probably still active when Irenaeus composed his *Adversus Haereses* about 185 C.E.

Irenaeus relates some further details about the Roman Carpocratians, the followers of Marcellina: they called themselves “gnostics” and tattooed the back of their right ear with a red hot iron. Moreover, they possessed images of Christ as a human being, executed in different materials, amongst them a portrait of Christ made by Pilate. They placed Christ’s image among those of other philosophers like Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle and paid them the kind of homage customary among pagans. This last piece of information is important because it suggests that the Carpocratians, like other philosophical schools, celebrated their founder as a divinized philosopher hero. This seems to confirm Clement’s report mentioned above according to which Carpocrates’ son Epiphanes was honoured as a deified philosopher-child prodigy in Same on the island of Kephallenia.

As to Carpocratian literature and doctrine, our knowledge is scarce and confined to the reports and quotations offered by Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus of Lyons. Both writers evince a definite heresiological perspective: they wish to demonstrate that the Carpocratians are libertinists. Accordingly, they highlight those features of Carpocratian teaching that they consider as evidence for Carpocratian libertinism.

1. Epiphanes is the author of a work called *On Justice* of which Clement of Alexandria has preserved three fragments (*Strom.*, III, 6, 1-9, 3). There Epiphanes develops his concept of divine justice: divine justice is defined as ‘community combined with equality’ and as manifesting itself in the cosmic order. Every living being gets an equal share of e.g. light or food; no one has more than the other or something in which the others have no share. The law of divine justice is unwritten. Human laws that introduce private property violate this princi-

ple of divine justice. For example, the grapevines are for everyone; the idea that they are anyone's private property creates the thief. Epiphanes quotes Rom. 7:7: 'It is through the law that I got acquainted with sin'. The same applies to the union of male and female: since God has created the male with sexual desire in order to ensure the continuous existence of the human race, the commandment not to desire what belongs to your neighbour (including his wife) is absurd and ridiculous. Hence no one can lay exclusive claim to his own wife, for this would manifestly contravene the will of the divine creator.

In these fragments Epiphanes is not primarily interested in proposing the Platonic ideal of the community of wives. He rather presents an interesting example of a non-dualist rejection of the God of the Old Testament. Clement, *Strom.*, III, 5, 3 designates Epiphanes as the founder of the 'monadic gnosis'. Perhaps this means that Carpocrates – like Marcion's disciple Apelles (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 13, 5) – assumes one principle rather than two. For him, God is, according to the platonic phrase, the 'creator and father of all' (Clement, *Strom.*, III, 7, 1; cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 28 c3); his will manifests itself in the order of the kosmos. The Mosaic law is ridiculous. It does not even reveal, *pace* Marcion, a lower God who is legislator and creator. Here Epiphanes again seems to agree with Marcion's disciple Apelles who in his *Syllogisms* also tried to prove that the Old Testament with its many contradictions does not contain divine revelation.

2. It is not quite clear how the information Clement offers us about Carpocrates and Epiphanes can be combined with Irenaeus' report about the Roman (?) Carpocratians. There is some likelihood that Irenaeus is paraphrasing and summarizing an original document, but we cannot be sure whether Carpocrates himself or one of his followers is the author of this source. According to Irenaeus, the Carpocratians believed that Jesus was an ordinary human being, the son of Joseph. However, since his soul had not forgotten that in its pre-existence it had contemplated the sphere of the unbegotten father (cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c), it was exceptionally strong and pure. Therefore God the Father sent him a force that allowed him to escape the angels that have created this world and to ascend to God. The soul of Jesus received a Jewish education, but despised it. It was granted the power to eradicate those passions that it had acquired as a punishment for its sins. All those that, like Jesus, despise the angels that created the world will, like him, receive the power to do as he did.

Those human beings that are endowed with souls from the same sphere as that of Jesus can achieve the same or an even higher degree of perfection.

Here it is interesting to observe how the Carpocratians conceptualize Christ as a philosopher hero by proposing a Christian reinterpretation of the Platonic doctrine of the soul: according to them there are special souls that remember their pre-existent state. However, the ascent to the highest God is not simply a function of that memory with its consequent strength and purity, but is rather dependent on the gift of a divine *dynamis* that allows them to escape the creator angels. To follow Christ, then, means to take part in the Carpocratian variety of the late antique "cult of learning" (Zanker), to imitate Christ the philosopher hero in one's own life.

Apart from this report concerning the main tenets of Carpocratian doctrine, Irenaeus has also preserved a Carpocratian exegesis of the parable in Luke 12:58-59 / Matthew 5:25-26 (*AH*, I, 25, 4; the text quoted by the Carpocratians is a mixture of Matthaean and Lukan readings). The Carpocratians identified the adversary with the devil who is one of the creator angels. The diabolical psychopompus leads the souls to the Archon, the first of the creator angels. He exercises the function of the judge and delivers the soul to a third angel, a bailiff, who imprisons the soul in a new body. Jesus' saying: 'You will not leave until you have paid back the last penny' is taken to mean that the soul will have to wander from body to body until it has 'carried out all the actions that are in this world'.

Irenaeus gives this Carpocratian gloss a robustly libertarian reading: according to him, the Carpocratians wish to suggest that the soul can only be liberated if it devotes itself to all possible misdeeds, blasphemies and debaucheries. If it realizes its total freedom in one life, it does not have to return into the body. This reading, however, presses the Carpocratians' doctrine too far: they probably read Jesus' saying as teaching the transmigration of the souls [→ Reincarnation], not as proposing a new ethics. Moreover, Irenaeus himself is doubtful as to whether it is correct to view the Carpocratians as endorsing libertinism (*AH*, I, 25, 5).

This Carpocratian exegesis must be seen in context: the so-called *Sentences of Sextus*, a collection of Christian ethical aphorisms that originated probably in Alexandria in the 2nd century, allude to the same parable (*Sent.* 39 Chadwick): after death the sinner will be punished by a demon 'until he has paid the last penny'. Origen agrees with the Carpocratians that the persons mentioned in the parable are to be identified as angels: the adversary



is a personal demon that accompanies every human being tempting him or her to sin. The archon is the highest angel of every nation, the adversary tries to subject the human being in his care to him. Only those who practise the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, courage and self-restraint can hope to get rid of their personal demon. The judge to whom the adversary escorts the human being is Christ himself who determines the appropriate punishment (Origen, *Homilies on Luke*, 35). Tertullian has read Irenaeus; in *De anima*, 35, he discusses the Carpocratian exegesis of Luke 12:58f. / Matth. 5:25f.

3. Finally, we must mention the fragment of a letter ascribed to Clement of Alexandria which the American scholar Morton Smith discovered in the Mar Saba monastery near Jerusalem (Clemens Alexandrinus, IV, ed. Stählin-Treu, XVII-XVIII). The letter is addressed to a certain Theodorus. It starts with a polemical injunction against the Carpocratians and informs us that Carpocrates had forced an Alexandrian presbyter to deliver to him a copy of the second, secret gospel of Mark. Carpocrates allegedly then altered this gospel and used it as the basis for his own teaching. The letter quotes fragments from the secret gospel of Mark that suggest that Jesus was involved in a homoerotic relationship. The authenticity of this letter is doubtful; it agrees with the heresiology of both Irenaeus and Clement insofar as it suggests that Carpocrates was a libertinist. However, neither Irenaeus nor Clement suggest homosexual libertinism.

*Lit.*: P. Boyancé, *Le culte des muses chez les philosophes grecs: Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, Paris: De Bocard, 1937, 1972<sup>2</sup> ♦ F.J. Dölger, "Die Sphragis als religiöse Brandmarkung im Einweihungsakt der gnostischen Karpokratianer", *Antike und Christentum* 1 (1929), 73-78 ♦ H. Finé, *Die Terminologie der Jenseitsvorstellungen bei Tertullian* (Theophaneia 12), Bonn: Hanstein, 1958, 103-112 ♦ W. Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (R. McL. Wilson, trans.), vol. I: Patristic Evidence, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 ♦ R.M. Grant, "Carpocratians and Curriculum", in: G.W.E. Nickelsburg (ed.), *Christians among Jews and Gentiles: Festschrift Krister Stendahl*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, 127-136 ♦ A. Hilgenfeld, *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums, urkundlich dargestellt*, Leipzig: Fues, 1884 (repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1963, Hildesheim: Olms, 1963, 1966) ♦ H. Liboron, *Die karpokratianische Gnosis: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Anschauungswelt eines spätgnostischen Systems*, Leipzig: Jordan & Grauberg, 1938 ♦ W.A. Löhr, "Epiphanes' Peri diakiosynês", in: H.C. Brennecke et alii (eds.), *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski zum 8. Juli 1993*, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1993, 12-29 ♦ idem, "Karpokratianisches", *Vigiliae Christianae* 49 (1995), 23-48 ♦ Chr. Marksches, "Carpocrates", in: *Lexikon*

*der antiken christlichen Literatur*, Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1998, 119 ♦ S. Petersen, "Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!" *Maria Magdalena, Salome und andere Jüngerinnen Jesu in christlich-gnostischen Schriften* (Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies XLVIII) Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1999 ♦ C. Scholten, "Karpokrates (K.) / Karpokratianer (K.ner)", forthcoming in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 19 ♦ M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1973 ♦ G.G. Stroumsa, "Gnostic justice and antinomianism: Epiphanes' On Justice in context", in: idem, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 112), Tübingen: Mohr, 1999, 246-257 ♦ H. Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest*, Bonn: Cohen, 1911<sup>2</sup>, Bouvier, 1969<sup>3</sup> (Repr. in: idem, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Hildesheim/New York: Olms, 1972), 30, 111-117 ♦ M.A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, 167-169, 185-187 ♦ P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

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## Catharism

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BELIEFS 8. THE END OF CATHARISM

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Catharism was a dissident movement in medieval Western and Southern Europe, considered heretical by the Church. The name Cathar, which derives from the Greek *katharos* (pure), was first used in 1163, by the German monk Eckbert of Schönau. Heresiological literature also employed terms such as Neo-Manichaeans, Patarins (Italy), *Albigensis* (Languedoc, Lat. *Albigenses*), *Bougres* (Lat. *Bulgari*) and *Texerants/Tisserants* ("weavers"). Members of the sect called themselves "Good men" or "Good Christians".

The origin of Catharism is very controversial. Some scholars are convinced that → Bogomilism played a determinant role in the genesis of Catharism, since Bogomil and Cathar beliefs and rites are very similar. Others think that Catharism intensified dualistic tendencies within Christianity itself, and is in fact an attempt to return to the spirit of apostolic times. G. Volpe emphasized that the Cathars adhered to a religiosity that was close to the Gregorian Reform, characterized by nostalgia for primitive Christianity. R. Morghen put Catharism back in its contemporary Christian context,



defining it as a reaction against the temporal ambitions of the Church, itself claiming to be a spiritual Church. Some scholars go even further: according to A. Brenon, who almost completely neglects its dualistic aspects, Catharism is an “ordinary Christianity”. Today, a hypercritical approach of the sources sometimes even leads to doubts about the real existence of Catharism: some scholars present Catharism as a “construction by orthodoxy”. According to this interpretation, partisans of a rigorous spiritual reform were incited by the Church to radicalize their ideas.

As far as the social aspects of Catharism are concerned, there was no question of marginality whatsoever. The Cathars penetrated all strata of urban and rural society and were often recruited from the middle class (merchants, lawyers, physicians, etc.). In the South of France, their protectors belonged to the chivalry of the castles, and in Italy members of the Ghibelline party were among their defenders. The involvement of women in the movement was important; they could also become Perfects, wholly initiated members of the sect.

## 2. SOURCES

Catharism is known through a considerable number of writings composed by its enemies and through only a few original Cathar documents. Among the indirect sources, anti-heretical treatises and “sommès” (summaries of heretical beliefs and practices for inquisitorial use) were written especially in Italy, from about 1200 onward. The acts of the inquisitorial tribunals also give abundant information about persons, places, practices and beliefs. Finally, passages in historical writings, political correspondence and anti-heretical laws and decrees throw light on the historical circumstances of the development of Catharism and on the reactions it provoked.

Among the original Cathar sources, there are two rituals (one in Latin and one in Occitan), a theological treatise, *The Book of Two Principles*, attributed to John of Lugio, and another one, reconstituted from Durand of Huesca’s anti-heretical treatise. A Latin apocryphon entitled *Interrogatio Iohannis* (“Questions of John”), used by the Italian Cathars in particular, has probably a Bogomil origin.

## 3. HISTORY

Since the 11th century, chroniclers mention Neomanichaeans, but they describe them so insufficiently that we cannot know whether we are dealing here with proto-Cathars or with partisans of a return to apostolic times, beyond the objectives of the actual movement of ecclesiastical reform. Catharism can

be clearly identified only from the second half of the 12th century onward. From the 1160s onward, Cathars often appear in the documents because of the repression they provoked from the side of both civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

According to the treatise of Anselme of Alessandria (*Tractatus de hereticis*, c. 1270), Western (French) people became acquainted with heresy in Constantinople during the Second Crusade. After returning to their country, they ordained there a bishop. Later on, the new heresy was diffused South of the Loire and in Lombardy.

Eckbert, abbot of Schönau, is the first author who described the Cathars with many details. In his *Sermons* (1163), he denounced Cathars who rejected the Catholic sacraments, marriage, the consumption of meat, and the intercession for the dead. He also revealed some of their beliefs, for example the creation of the human body by Satan, the negation of Christ’s Incarnation, or the idea that human souls originated from rebelling angels.

The last three decades of the 12th century are characterised by a great expansion of Catharism. A document of which the authenticity is disputed gives an account of a heretical council at Saint-Felix-de-Caraman (between Carcassonne and Toulouse), held in 1167. On this occasion, a heretical dignitary, named Papas Nicetas (Niquinta), who went here from the East, confirmed the already existing episcopal boundaries in Languedoc and consecrated Cathar bishops. It is a fact that in 1177 a letter of Raymond V, count of Toulouse, sounded the alarm against the heresy. Religious missions first began in 1178, with the participation of Cistercian monks.

By this time, legal documents inform us about the Church’s reaction against Cathars and other heretics, who are condemned to be deprived of their goods and to be reduced to servitude if they do not convert (council of Tours, 1163; council of Lateran, 1179). In 1184, at Verona, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Pope Lucius III take severe measures against heretics (banishment, infamy, civil incapacity). It is also the inauguration of the inquisitorial search for heretics. North of the Loire, the first heretics are burned at the stake (1172, Arras; 1182-1184, Campagne); in the realm of Aragon, kings Alphonse II and Peter II promulgate grave sanctions against heretics (1194, 1196).

Repression seems very efficient in the North, but in the North of Italy and in Languedoc the Cathar movement is still growing. According to the anti-heretical treatises, Italian Catharism was characterized by a great doctrinal diversity, which also reflected corresponding struggles for power. Pope Innocent III tried to impose anti-heretical measures

in Lombardy, in Sicile and in Saint Peter's Patrimony, but, just as the Emperor Frederick II, he encountered fierce resistance in many cities of Lombardy and Venetia. Because of constant more or less exacerbated tensions between the partisans of the Emperor and the Pope (Ghibellines and Guelfs), the heretical communities persisted in Italian cities, where Cathars from Languedoc could take refuge until the end of 13th century.

But after the failure to convert the Cathars by preaching, Innocent III wanted to incite a military expedition in order to eradicate heresy in Languedoc, and he promised a crusade indulgence for participants. After the murder of his legate Peter of Castelnau (1208), the pope redoubled his efforts to organise a crusade in a Christian country. Though the French king Philippe Auguste did not participate in it personally, he allowed 500 knights to take the cross. The "Albigensian Crusade" began in the summer of 1209. Its first phase ended in 1215: at the IVth Lateran Council, Innocent III decreed that the town of Toulouse and the whole country which had been conquered would be conceded to count Simon of Montfort, the crusaders' commander-in-chief. But the political and religious resistance was revived by count Raymond VII. After a long series of struggles, the French king Louis IX imposed his conditions on Languedoc (Treaty of Paris, April 1229). In the same year, a council held at Toulouse specified the methods of religious repression, establishing the proceedings of inquisitorial inquiry. Shortly after this (1233-1234), the Papal Inquisition, an exceptional tribunal for the persecution of heretics, was created, for which Dominican friars became responsible. The last places of Cathar resistance fell in 1244 (Montségur) and in 1256 (Quéribus). The county of Toulouse was annexed to the French kingdom in 1271. Since the beginning of the Crusade, many people – Cathars and also their protectors – were arrested, imprisoned and burned.

Hunted by the Inquisition, the Cathars of Languedoc could still take refuge in Lombardy or in Aragon. The last Cathars were arrested round about 1320, during the meticulous enquiry of Bishop Jacques Fournier (future Pope Benedict XII), charged with the Inquisition in the diocese of Pamiers.

#### 4. BELIEFS

Cathar beliefs are known through anti-heretical writings, depositions and confessions before the Inquisition and through two theological treatises and an apocryphal writing of the Cathars themselves.

The anti-heretical treatises invariably present Cathar beliefs in a systematic arrangement, emphasizing their contradictions with Catholic doctrine.

At the same time, they underline the diversity and divergences between the Cathar currents, opposing them to the unity of orthodox faith. Confessions and depositions recorded by the Inquisition indeed testify to varying features of Cathar myths and beliefs, which were almost exclusively orally spread. For Cathars, the principal preoccupation was the salvation of the soul. But they generally rejected the Catholic solution and emphasized the duality between Good and Evil, soul and flesh, proposing a new interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Medieval heresiologists distinguished two principal currents within Catharism, which, already in 1849, the German scholar Ch. Schmidt designated as "absolute dualism" (radical current) and "mitigated dualism" (moderate current, closer to Catholic orthodoxy).

"Absolute dualism" characterized the Catharism of Languedoc and of the Church of Desenzano (near the lake of Garda) as well as that of the order of Drugunthia in the East (Macedonia or Thrace). According to this system, there existed from the beginning two realms: that of God, who is invisible and without evil, and that of the God of darkness, who is material and perishable. The equilibrium between them was broken by an intrusion of Satan into the divine world. The son of the God of darkness invaded the celestial court and seduced a part of the angels. Thrown out of heaven by God, together with his cohort, he created the material world and imprisoned the fallen angels in human bodies.

Moderate Cathars, who were particularly numerous in Italy (Church of Concorezzo) and more close to the Bogomils, believed that God had created angels and the elements of material world. Lucifer was an angel created by God, but moved by pride he raised a rebellion at the celestial court. Expelled to the world here below, with its still unorganized matter, he moulded the visible world and the body of the first human couple, with the permission of God. Like the radical Cathars, the moderate ones imagined that the evil creator had imprisoned two fallen angels in them.

The story of the fallen angels was spread in multiple variants and the modalities of Lucifer's promises were embellished with many imaginative details. In some versions, Lucifer imprisoned the angels after his fall, in order that they should forget their celestial origin. According to radical Cathars, the souls were condemned to migrate from one body to another (metempsychosis; → Reincarnation) until they arrived in the body of Perfects where they could be saved.

Christ played an essential role, but in compari-

son to Catholicism, there was an important difference: since they despised matter and flesh, Cathars could not agree with the dogma of the Incarnation. According to them, Christ had not a real but a phantom body. He went through Mary's body without taking on anything of her flesh. He did not suffer on the cross and did not bodily arise from death. All these beliefs restricted Christ's role; he was considered a messenger of God rather than the sacrificed Redeemer.

In the same way, the Cathars did not accept the dogma of the resurrection of the bodies after the Last Judgement. Concerning the fate of human souls, there were divergent opinions among the Cathars. The majority believed that all souls would go back to heaven; others thought that only the angels who had been forced to rebel but did not really sin would return to their celestial home. According to others, souls that could not be saved after nine incarnations would perish definitively.

The Cathars based their beliefs on the authority of the Bible. They made use of biblical texts that did not differ from those of the Catholic Bible. But they rejected the major part of the Old Testament, identifying the God of Genesis with Satan. Nevertheless, they accepted some books of the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms, the prophets, Job and the Books of Wisdom. Among the Gospels, they appreciated mostly that of John, of which they also made use in their rituals.

The Cathars had their own writings but most of them have disappeared. The treatise entitled *Book of Two Principles*, probably by John of Lugio, a radical Cathar, attributed the origin of the evil to the evil principle and denied free will as well.

The apocryphal *Interrogatio Iohannis* ("Questions of John"), used by Italian Cathars, is conserved in two Latin versions. According to Anselme of Alessandria, Nazarius, assistant ("greater son") of the bishop of Concorezzo, received this writing from the bishop and greater son of the Church of Bulgaria around 1190. The myths and beliefs expressed in this apocryphon are very close to those of the Byzantine Bogomils as they are described at the beginning of the 12th century. The text is qualified "secret" by Nazarius himself and also by the Inquisition: it means that its contents were reserved to initiated members of the sect. The apocryphon contains all major themes of sacred history, from the creation of the world to its end. Satan, head of the celestial powers, seduced by pride a great part of the angels, up to those of the fifth heaven; after their fall from the celestial world, God permitted Satan to organise matter for seven days. Satan arranged the visible world, and then he

made the bodies of the first human couple, into which he introduced two angels. He seduced Eve in the shape of the snake. God authorised Satan, that is the God of the Old Testament, to reign for seven centuries. He deceived Henoah and → Moses, and sent John the Baptist to baptize in water. Christ was sent by God the Father to redeem humanity; his mother, Mary, was also an angel sent by God. Christ entered into Mary through her ear and came out in the same way. The apocryphon condemns baptism in water, emphasizes the special value of the Lord's Prayer and extols chastity. Its eschatology is essentially based on the New Testament. The Cathars also used the apocryphal *Ascension of Isaiah*.

## 5. RITUALS

Cathars recommended a return to the ritual of the first Christians and, at the same time, rejected the material components of the sacraments. For them, baptism in water did not have any value, and the Eucharist consisted of ordinary bread, without the real presence of Christ's body.

They practised their own rites: the daily breaking and blessing of bread, in the manner of the first Christians, and the monthly collective confession of faults (*apparellamentum*). Their principal rite, called *consolamentum*, was a spiritual baptism and an ordination of the "Perfects", who devoted themselves entirely to the Cathar faith, renouncing the pleasures of the world, and promising to observe chastity, truth, humility, obedience, and abstinence from meat of animal origin. When administering the *consolamentum*, the officiant laid the Gospel on the head of the new initiate and all the Perfects laid their right hand on his head or shoulder. The ceremony comprised also the sevenfold recitation of the Lord's Prayer and a lecture of St. John's Gospel.

## 6. HIERARCHY

The basis of the Cathar Church was formed by simple sympathizers, the "Believers", who could be married and have children, even though Catharism severely condemned procreation because of the imprisonment of the souls in human bodies. The Believers were necessary to support the Perfects in their mission, but also because they once could become Perfects themselves. One can imagine that many Believers waited until their last hour to renounce the pleasures of the world and to be "consolated" with the certainty of salvation. Only those who had received the *consolamentum* became full members of the Cathar Church. Before the systematic persecutions, these initiates or "Perfects" were wearing black clothing and for that reason were called "clothed heretics". Perfects had the mission

to preach Cathar faith and to administer the *consolamentum*, and they were travelling from place to place even during the persecutions. According to Cathar belief, souls could be saved only in the body of a Perfect; thus the Perfects played a decisive role in the process of salvation. But if a Perfect or a bishop committed a grave sin, he lost his spiritual power, and the persons whom he had consoled or ordained should be reconsoled or reordained.

The Cathar dioceses were administrated by bishops, assisted by a "greater" and a "lesser son". In Italy, dissensions between bishops and their orders often crystallized around doctrinal questions.

Ca. 1250, Raynier Sacconi, a former Cathar who had become inquisitor, established a list of Cathar Churches, specifying their doctrinal filiation. In Lombardy, he distinguished three orders: *Albanenses*, *Concorrenses* and *Baiolenses* (the two first ones corresponding to absolute and moderate Catharism, and the third to an intermediary current), and he specified that everywhere in Italy and in the Provence, the Cathars followed one of these currents. Raynier estimated that in his time there were 4000 Perfects in Italy.

#### 7. DIFFUSION OF CATHAR BELIEFS

Even after the beginning of the persecutions, Catharism continued its proselytism. Nevertheless, the Cathars did not immediately reveal the core of their faith to their listeners and believers. Their preaching method was a progressive one and only the Perfects were initiated into all their secrets. According to Bernard Gui's *Handbook for the Inquisitor* and to testimonies registered by the Inquisition, the Cathar manner of preaching consisted of three steps. Firstly, they emphasized that their behaviour was in accordance with the evangelic ideal, even asserting that they held the position of the Apostles. Then they opposed their attitude to the bad way of life of the Roman Church, which was characterized by pride, cupidity, avarice, and dishonesty. Because of the moral decline of the Church, God had deprived catholic priests of their power to absolve sins and He had given it to the heretics. They underlined that nobody could be saved outside their sect. Having made their listeners sensitive to the problem of salvation, the Cathars began to reveal their beliefs, starting generally with their opinions about the sacraments. Anti-heretical treatises make mention of some of their "secret" beliefs. According to Eckbert of Schönau, new heretics could know the true doctrine only after 15 years. Some other authors enumerate several secret Cathar beliefs, for exam-

ple that of the sin of Lucifer in heaven, the creation of four creatures by the evil God, Christ's body, and metempsychosis.

#### 8. THE END OF CATHARISM

The Albigensian Crusade, the Inquisition and the anti-heretical measures progressively weakened the Cathar Church. In Italy, Catharism persisted without too much difficulty until the decline of the Ghibelline party (mid-13th century). After the 1280's, because of political changes and increased persecutions Catharism lost ground in the Italian towns. The last Cathar bishop (Cione di ser Bernardo) was captured in 1321. In Languedoc, a revival of Catharism can be observed between 1295 and 1310 in the mountains of Ariège, which came to an end with the action of the Inquisition in 1318-1325. The last Perfect, Guillaume Belibasta, was arrested and burned in 1321.

The disappearance of Catharism can also partly be explained by the introduction of new pastoral methods of the catholic Church, particularly by the activity of the Preaching Orders, i.e. the Dominicans and Franciscans. By involving laymen to a great extent in religious life, the Church also proposed to them new forms of piety and new structures (religious fraternities, new feasts, and processions) to practise them.

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EDINA BOZOKY

## Catharism, Neo- → Neo-Catharism

Cayce, Edgar, \* 18.3.1877 Hopkinsville, Kentucky, † 3.1.1945 Virginia Beach, Virginia

Known to the American public as the “sleeping prophet”, Edgar Cayce became an influential forerunner of New Age spirituality [→ New Age Movement] through the voluminous body of clairvoyant “readings” he left behind at his death in 1945. The transcripts of these trance sessions were catalogued and organized by the Association for Research and Enlightenment, the institution Cayce created in June 1931. Through the publishing initiatives of Cayce’s son, Hugh Lynn Cayce, books discussing everything from alternative health therapies to the lost continent of Atlantis, and from the Dead Sea Scrolls to → reincarnation flooded the occult/metaphysical book market beginning in the 1950s, bringing a hodgepodge of Eastern and Western esoteric and alternative reality teachings to the American public.

Cayce’s rural Kentucky early life inculcated into him the values of family loyalty, Bible study, and dedication to Christ. He was fascinated by the Bible and developed a habit of reading it from cover to cover each year. Cayce’s biographers all relate stories of his budding clairvoyant abilities, including imaginary playmates, visions of deceased relatives, and the memorization of books he slept on. When he was thirteen, he had a vision of a beautiful woman to whom he confided that his deepest desire was to help the sick, especially children.

Cayce quit school early to help with the family finances. He worked as a farm laborer, bookstore clerk, and traveling salesman. His life took a sudden turn in 1900 when he came down with severe laryngitis that left him unable to speak or work for a year. He found a job as a photographer’s assistant in Hopkinsville and resigned himself to his seemingly chronic disability. A traveling hypnotist heard about Cayce’s condition and convinced him to be hypnotized. To the amazement of his family, Cayce was able to speak normally while in the trance



state. Upon regaining normal consciousness, however, his disability returned. A New York specialist and a local amateur hypnotist convinced Cayce to diagnose his own condition while under hypnosis. This first “reading” claimed that his illness could be healed by suggesting, while unconscious, that blood circulation be increased to his throat area. The treatment was successful, and after some initial hesitation, Cayce began giving “health readings” for local people with intractable health problems. It was discovered that Cayce needed only the person’s name and location in order to give the reading. He refused to accept payment for these services. One of the most remarkable of the readings was for a five-year-old girl who was suffering from convulsions and arrested mental development as a result of a spinal injury and influenza. After Cayce had diagnosed her condition, the girl was completely healed by means of osteopathic adjustments. Cayce married Gertrude Evans in 1903 and moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky. There he opened a photography studio with a partner.

Cayce gained national fame in 1910 after meeting Dr. Wesley Ketchum, a homeopath, who published a paper on Cayce in the *American Society of Clinical Research*. In October, the *New York Times* published an article summarizing the journal piece, and Cayce began receiving requests for readings from around the world. Cayce, Ketchum, and several others formed the Psychic Reading Corporation to handle these requests. Some of the therapies suggested in the readings were unorthodox, but most proved successful and Cayce’s fame spread. In order to address the difficulty of finding doctors willing to carry out his unorthodox treatments, Cayce began formulating plans to build a hospital dedicated to his patients.

In 1923, Cayce gave his first reading mentioning → reincarnation. It would take much soul-searching before he could reconcile reincarnation with his Christianity, but eventually he was able to do this. Out of this development came the first “life readings”, whose purpose was to assess a person’s past lives in order to give guidance on the present life’s course. It was out of the life readings that Cayce’s teachings on meditation, dream interpretation, ancient civilizations such as Lemuria and Atlantis, spiritual development, and reincarnation would emerge.

Cayce moved his family to Virginia Beach, Virginia in 1925. He founded the Association of National Investigators in 1927 to conduct research on the information given in the readings. In 1928, with the assistance of a New York businessman named Morton Blumenthal, he opened the Edgar

Cayce hospital. Patients at the hospital obtained readings, diagnoses, and recommendations for treatment. Cayce’s medical philosophy was that all schools of medicine should be consulted and that whatever was best for the patient should be employed to assist in the healing process. The hospital and Atlantic University, begun in 1930, were forced to close in 1931 because of the Great Depression. What remained was the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc. (A.R.E.), whose purpose was to both investigate and make public the information in the readings. The A.R.E. has survived until the present time and has been responsible for the worldwide dissemination of Cayce’s peculiar mélange of theosophy, Eastern religions, mysticism, alternative healing therapies, dream study, and Christ-centered spiritual development.

Many skeptics came to Virginia Beach to debunk Cayce’s work. One of them, a Catholic writer named Thomas Sugrue, became convinced of Cayce’s authenticity and wrote *There is a River* (1943), the first and most popular Cayce biography. *Coronet* magazine published an article shortly thereafter on Cayce, “Miracle Man of Virginia Beach”, and this greatly increased Cayce’s notoriety and influence.

Cayce was besieged with requests for readings during World War II and felt a deep obligation to help all those who came to him for assistance. As a result of this overwork, he began to suffer from nervous exhaustion. In 1944, he suffered a stroke, and died on January 3, 1945. His wife died three months later. It was Cayce’s loyal secretary, Gladys Davis, who assumed responsibility for cataloguing and indexing Cayce’s 14,000 readings. Her work was not completed until 1971, by which time a new generation of spiritual seekers had discovered Cayce’s legacy and joined the A.R.E. In time, the complete set of readings was made available on CD-Rom. The readings are also available for study at A.R.E. headquarters in Virginia Beach.

The present-day organizations that study and disseminate the Cayce readings include the A.R.E., the Edgar Cayce Foundation, Atlantic University (reactivated in 1985), the Health and Rejuvenation Research Center, and the Cayce/Reilly School of Massotherapy.

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PHILLIP CHARLES LUCAS

Cazotte, Jacques, \* 17.10.1719 Dijon,  
† 25.9.1792 Paris

A Catholic all his life, Cazotte was educated at a Jesuit school in Dijon. He went on to study Law, and went to Paris in 1740, where he took up a position in the Administration of the French Fleet. In 1741 he published some original fairy tales (*La patte du Chat*), and in 1742 a number of fantastic “oriental” tales such as *Les Mille et une fadaïses*, inspired by the French translation (by Galland, 1704) of the *Arabian Nights* (in French, *Les Mille et une nuits*). His professional duties obliged him to sojourn in various French harbours (such as Le Havre and Brest) between the years 1743 and 1747. Appointed in 1747 by the French Administration as “Contrôleur” in Martinique, he was to serve there only for a few months. Back in Paris he frequented the artistic and literary milieu, published ballads, and dabbled in music criticism, taking the side of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on behalf of French music (*Observation sur la lettre de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 1753). Later, he was sent to Martinique again, where he remained at his post from 1754 to 1759. He had married a native woman of the island, Élisabeth Roignan, and had two children by her. He was, however, plagued by financial problems, due in part to expenses he had incurred in a lawsuit against the Jesuits. Suffering ill health as well, he returned to France. But Cazotte’s fortunes improved with the inheritance of his brother’s estate. This provided him sufficient income to become a full-time writer. In this capacity, he and his family settled in Pierry, a village near Epernay, in Champagne in 1761. There, he wrote a long poem in twelve prose cantos intermixed with verse, entitled *Ollivier* (2 vols., 1763), followed by another romance, *Le Lord Impromptu* (1771), and what was to become by far the most popular of his works, *Le Diable amoureux* (1772). Other tales by Cazotte followed. Notable among them was a series of “oriental” works, entitled *Continuation des Mille et une nuits* (1788). Cazotte opposed the French Revolution during its earliest phases because he saw in it a great incarnation of Satan. Several personal letters he had written to friends

were seized in August 1792 by the revolutionary authorities. On the 18th of August in the same year he was imprisoned, but he made a brief escape thanks to the courage of his daughter. Captured again soon after, he was sentenced to death on September 24th, and guillotined on the following day.

Both *Le Diable amoureux* and some activities of its author pertain to the esoteric current called → Illuminism. The plot of *Le Diable amoureux* concerns a young man, Alvare, who has learned how to conjure spirits, and one night succeeds in summoning the Devil. The Devil appears, first with an ugly camel’s head, then with the head of a spaniel, and finally with that of a young page who turns out to be a very attractive girl, with whom he quickly falls in love. Like Mephistopheles in the Faust story, she offers Alvare the power of ruling over ‘mankind, all the elements and the whole of nature’. She says she can do so, thanks to a ‘higher science’, the knowledge of which she swears to teach him. In the end, Alvare never attains the promised powers, for although he wants to marry the lovely page, she suddenly vanishes and abandons him forever. This novel heralds the development of the literature of the fantastic and can claim to have inspired a number of poets. Indeed, its influence has been far-reaching and lasting, beginning with E.T.A. Hoffmann, → Gérard de Nerval and Charles Baudelaire, and proceeding through to Guillaume Apollinaire. The narrative of the invocation and corporal presence of a spirit – albeit a satanic one – attracted the attention of many readers of the time: not only people with refined tastes in literature, but also Illuminists fascinated with “theurgy” in relation to theosophical speculations.

In a long letter dated 6 February 1790 (see *Correspondance* ed. by Décote, 132), addressed to an unidentified correspondent, Cazotte explains that he had written *Le Diable amoureux* in a playful mood, inspired by stories he had heard from Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] dabbling in occult sciences [→ occult / occultism]. However, after its publication he was visited by numerous serious “seekers” after the secrets of the occult, who sought his advice because they believed him more knowledgeable than they were themselves. Some of these devotees of the occult suggested that he read *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité* (1775) by → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. Shortly thereafter, in 1777 or 1778, he agreed to be initiated into the Order of the → Elus Coëns founded by the theosopher and theurgist → Martines de Pasqually. The letter continues by relating how he eventually became disillusioned with the Martinists [→ Martinism], and joined the Marquise de La Croix in a crusade

against them and the disciples of → Cagliostro. In the same letter he calls → Swedenborg ‘the most extravagant of all visionaries’.

It is well documented, by two of his letters, that Cazotte did in fact belong to Pasqually’s fringemasonic and theurgic Order. Additionally, Saint-Martin’s autobiography, *Mon portrait*, attests to him having known Cazotte personally, and gives details of Cazotte’s initiation by the Elect Coën Duroy d’Hauterive. Finally, two documents listing the names of members of the Order also mention Cazotte. He seems to have been an Elect Coën until 1781 or so. Several possibly interconnected reasons may account for his decision to tender his resignation. He may have deemed Pasqually’s teachings too great a departure from the tenets of his strict Catholic creed. He may have been disappointed with his own inability to conjure up angels. Or, again, he may have considered that → Freemasonry in general held certain political dangers, especially for the monarchy – a political stance he shared with his son, the Illuminist Scévole. Interestingly enough, the latter wrote in a letter to Cazotte, dated 15th July 1792 – the very day after the Revolution’s Fête de la Fédération had taken place on the Champ de Mars – that a day earlier he had performed certain magical operations ‘designed to put [the Champ de Mars] under the protection of the Lord’.

A previously unpublished text, brought to light in 1806 and written by the literary critic J.F. La Harpe, provides details about a story that circulated shortly after the Revolution. The setting is Paris at the beginning of 1788, at a banquet in the house of an unnamed member of the French Academy. A number of famous persons were present, among whom, besides La Harpe and Cazotte, were Nicolas-Sébastien Chamfort, Antoine-Nicolas Condorcet, Jean-Sylvain Bailly, and the Duchess of Gramont. All of them were rapturous about the great Revolution that was under way, because they felt that superstition and fanaticism would be replaced by enlightened philosophy. Cazotte jumped into the conversation, and addressed each guest face to face, predicting in detail his or her death by execution or suicide during the aftermath of the Revolution. True to his predictions, during the reign of the Terror, each of the guests died precisely as he had said they would. Over the past two hundred years, this text has been reproduced in various forms and commented upon many times. Scarcely two years after its first publication, → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling translated it into German in his famous *Theorie der Geister-Kunde* (*Theorie of the Science of Spirits*, 1808). In the

extensive commentary which accompanies the translation, Jung-Stilling claimed to have met people who were able to attest to the accuracy of La Harpe’s story, and went on developing the theory that Cazotte’s prophecies were inspired by spirits with whom he communicated. ‘Has there ever been’, Jung-Stilling wrote, ‘since the time of the Apostles any testimony more remarkable and more important bearing witness to the existence of the world of spirits and its action upon the visible world?’ Sir → Edward Bulwer-Lytton contributed to the popularity of the prophecy by introducing it into *Zanoni* (1842), the most celebrated esoteric novel of the 19th century. The hero, Zanoni, is said to have been present at the banquet and prompted Cazotte to make the prophecy. Historians, however, tend to suggest that La Harpe only wanted to write an attractive literary piece that expanded on a tiny incident or even upon a simple rumour.

Published in 1852, → Gérard de Nerval’s book *Les Illuminés* contains several chapters, each devoted to an Illuminé. Along with Cagliostro, → Rétif de La Bretonne, Quintus Aucler and others we find in this gallery the author of *Le Diable amoureux*. Nerval gives a slightly romantic biography of Cazotte, along with a laudatory presentation of his literary work. He dwells extensively on both the esoteric milieu to which Cazotte had belonged for some time, on *Le Diable amoureux*, and, not surprisingly, on the prophecy reported by La Harpe. In addition to that portrait drawn by the pen of the great Romantic, the place that → Eliphas Lévi devotes to him in his *Histoire de la Magie* (1860, Book V, Chapter 2) has contributed in no small measure to Cazotte’s reputation as not only a poet and a novelist, but as mostly a man endowed with mysterious gifts.

*Le Diable amoureux suivi de la Prophétie de Cazotte rapportée par La Harpe, de ses Révélations, d’extraits de sa correspondance ainsi que d’Ollivier et de l’Histoire de Maugraby* (Georges Décote, ed.; Collection Folio Classique), Paris: Gallimard, 1981 ♦ *Jacques Cazotte Le Diable amoureux* (Annalisa Bottacin, ed.), Milan: Cisalpino/ La Goliardica, 1983 ♦ English: Cazotte, with Gérard de Nerval, J.L. Borges, *The Devil in Love, Followed by Jacques Cazotte: His life, Trial, Prophecy, and Revelations*, Venice: Marsilio, 1994 ♦ J.F. La Harpe, “Prédications de Cazotte”, in: La Harpe, *Œuvres choisies et posthumes*, Paris: Migneret, 1806 ♦ idem, *Correspondance de Jacques Cazotte* (Georges Décote, ed.), Paris: Klincksieck, 1982.

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son: Jacques Cazotte and the demons”, *French Review* 49: 1 (1975), 68-75 ♦ Nadia Minerva, “Jacques Cazotte, *Il diavolo in amore*”, *Spicilegio Moderno* (Parma-Milano: Ricci) 9 (1978), 201-202 ♦ idem, “Des Lumières à l’Illuminisme: Jacques Cazotte et son monde”, *Transactions of the Fifth International Congress on the Enlightenment* (Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation) 3 (1980), 1015-1022 ♦ idem “Demonologia e profetismo in Jacques Cazotte”, *Spicilegio Moderno* 15-16 (1981), 217-228 ♦ idem, “Démonologie tératologique et Lumières: Un aspect de l’imaginaire fantastique et de l’anti-philosophie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Transactions of the Sixth International Congress on the Enlightenment* (Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation) (1983), 10-23 ♦ idem, “Diables et prophètes: Jacques Cazotte entre les Lumières et l’Illuminisme”, in: Mario Matucci (ed.), *Lumières et Illuminisme*, Pisa: Pacini, 1985, 211-220 ♦ Jean Richer, *Aspects ésotériques de l’oeuvre littéraire*, Paris: Dervy, 1980, Chapter 3 ♦ idem, *La passion de Jacques Cazotte: Son procès*, Paris: G. Tredaniel/La Maisnie, 1988 ♦ Dietmar Rieger, *Jacques Cazotte: Ein Beitrag zur erzählenden Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Studia Romanica 15), Heidelberg: Winter, 1969.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

## Cerdo, before 150

Cerdo was a Christian teacher who worked in Rome during the episcopate of Hyginus (ca. 136-142). The main sources for his life and teaching are the anti-heretical works of Irenaeus (ca. 180) and some later authors, who might be dependent on Hippolytus (ca. 220). Their information possibly derives from local Roman traditions but is very problematic. According to Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, III, 4, 3, Cerdo came under Hyginus ‘repeatedly back to the church as a penitent: now teaching in secret, then doing penance, then again being convicted of heretical teaching on certain points and leaving the community of the brothers’. Though the same is told of more famous teachers such as → Marcion and → Valentinus (Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 30, 2f.: ‘semel et iterum eieci’), there is no reason to doubt the reliability of this report. It perfectly fits the evidence that the Roman church in the fourth and fifth decade of the 2nd century was still in a process of defining its theological identity and communal boundaries. Just as Valentinus and Marcion, Cerdo obviously considered himself a good Christian and wanted to be a member of the Church, but became a “heretic” because the church was closing its previously open border.

Of Cerdo’s specific ideas very little is known. Irenaeus, *AH*, I, 27, 1, says that he was connected with the followers of → Simon Magus and makes

him the forerunner and teacher of Marcion, which is repeated by Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VII, 37. He is said to have taught ‘that the god proclaimed by the law and the prophets is not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the one is known and the other is unknown, one is just and the other is good’. As a matter of fact, this is the core of Marcion’s doctrine of the contrast between the ignorant but just God of the Jews and the God of love, the Father of Jesus Christ. The alleged connection with the Simonians is determined by Irenaeus’ idea of a Gnostic genealogy and his wish to present Cerdo as a Gnostic. The later anti-heretical tradition, recorded by Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses*, 6, Filastrius, *Diversarum haereseon liber*, 44, and Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 41, who possibly all reflect the section on Cerdo in Hippolytus’ lost *Syntagma*, has a lot to say about Cerdo. The only reliable element in this tradition may be the information, transmitted by Filastrius and Epiphanius, that Cerdo came from Syria. For the rest these authors ascribe to Cerdo a complete Marcionite theology. He is said to have taught he doctrine of the two gods (including the rejection of the creator-god and the Jewish bible), the resurrection of the soul only and a docetic Christology. Moreover, he would have accepted as authoritative scripture the expurgated Gospel of Luke and some of the letters of the apostle Paul only. The doctrine of scripture is typically that of Marcion, but for the rest Cerdo is described in these sources as a full-fledged Gnostic.

This presentation of a rather obscure Christian teacher as a proto-Marcion and a Gnostic [→ Gnosticism] served an anti-Marcionite aim. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the Marcionite church became a forceful rival of the early-catholic church. It was in the interest of the anti-heretical writers to strip Marcion of his originality. Therefore, they tried to show that he was no more than an ordinary Gnostic and that even his most characteristic doctrines, about the two gods and about scripture, were not his own but had been borrowed from his teacher Cerdo.

This biased attitude of our sources makes it virtually impossible to come to firm conclusions about the nature of Cerdo’s teaching, especially his doctrine of God. According to Irenaeus, Cerdo taught that the god of the Hebrew bible was just (*dikaïos*) and Pseudo-Tertullian says that he was cruel (*saevus*). Both characteristics apply to the Jewish god as Marcion described him: he is just, but his justice is that of a despot. If it is true that Pseudo-Tertullian reflects Hippolytus’ *Syntagma*, then we may assume that the latter also had described Cerdo’s creator god in Marcionite terms.



Filastrius and Epiphanius, however, who also belong to the conjectured “Hippolytan” tradition, simply say that the lower god is evil (*malus, ponēros*), which makes him identical with the Gnostic Demiurge. This may be due to their intention to describe Marcion and his alleged teacher as ordinary Gnostics.

In the middle of the 2nd century there was a fierce debate on the interpretation of the Jewish bible in the context of the Christian message concerning Jesus the Saviour. The positions taken in this debate were strongly determined by the participants’ assessment of the relationship between God, Jesus Christ and the creation. It is conceivable that Cerdo took a radical stance in this debate and in some way denied the authority of the Jewish bible for the Christian church, with a degradation of the Jewish god as its corollary. Since Marcion developed his radical “Gospel of the Alien God” from a similar starting point, in retrospect Cerdo may have been considered Marcion’s teacher. It is unlikely, however, that the latter’s very original doctrine of the two gods was no more than a further development of Cerdo’s ideas.

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*Lit.*: A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte und Grundlegung der altkatholische Kirche*, 2nd. ed., Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924 (reprinted: Darmstad Wissenschaftlichen Buchgesellschaft, 1960), 31\*-39\* (“Beilage II: Cerdo und Marcion”; with all relevant sources) ♦ D.W. Deakle, “Harnack & Cerdo: A Reexamination of the Patristic Evidence for Marcion’s Mentor”, in: G. May et alii (eds.), *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung – Marcion and his Impact on Church History*

(*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 150), Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 2002, 177-190 ♦ G. May, “Markion und der Gnosticker Kerdon”, in: A. Raddatz & K. Lüthi (eds.), *Evangelischer Glaube und Geschichte: Grete Mecenseff zum 85. Geburtstag* (Aktuelle Reihe des Reformierten Kirchenblattes, 26), Vienna, 1984, 233-246.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

## Cerinthus, ca. 100

Cerinthus was a Christian teacher who lived in Asia Minor at the end of the first or the beginning of the 2nd century. The reports about his teaching are contradictory, and as a result modern scholars have described him either as an early Gnostic [→ Gnosticism] or as a primitive Christian who had been strongly influenced by Judaeo-Christian ideas.

Cerinthus appears as an arch-heretic in the first document that mentions his name, the so-called *Epistula apostolorum*, which was written ca. 150, most probably in Asia Minor. It claims to have been composed ‘because of the false apostles Simon and Cerinthus’ (1), who are ‘enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in reality alienate those who believe in the true word and deed, namely Jesus Christ’ (7). That Cerinthus is mentioned here together with → Simon Magus does not necessarily imply that Cerinthus was considered a Gnostic too. But that he was seen as a serious heretic at an early date also emerges from a curious story told by Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, III, 3, 4, on the authority of Polycarp (ca. 150). The apostle John once went into the bathhouse at Ephesus and, seeing that Cerinthus was within, he rushed out of the bathhouse without bathing, exclaiming: ‘Let us fly, lest even the bathhouse fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within’. According to the same Irenaeus, John had ‘proclaimed the Gospel’ in order to refute the error that had been promulgated by Cerinthus (*AH*, III, 11, 1), but it seems possible that Irenaeus has simply inferred this from the bathhouse story. Irenaeus is also the first, in *AH*, I, 26, 1, to give more detailed information about Cerinthus’ ideas. According to him, Cerinthus separated the creator god from the highest god and Jesus from Christ. The world was not made by the supreme God but by ‘a certain Power’, which was far removed from the ‘Principality’ that transcended the universe and of which the creative Power was ignorant. Cerinthus denied the virginal birth of Jesus and considered him the natural son of Joseph and Mary who surpassed all other human beings in righteousness, prudence and wisdom. At his baptism Christ descended upon Jesus, who from then on



proclaimed the unknown Father. But at last Christ flew away from Jesus, who 'suffered and rose again while Christ remained impassible, being a spiritual being'. Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 220) has only one new element to add, namely that Cerinthus 'was trained in the education of the Egyptians' (*Refutatio*, VII, 33, 1; X, 21, 1: 'trained in Egypt'), which most probably was Hippolytus' own invention (Markschies, 59f.).

According to many New Testament scholars, the first Epistle of John can be read as an indirect source for Cerinthus' ideas, since there are indications that the opponents combated in this letter adhered to some kind of 'separation Christology' (see e.g. 1 John 2, 22; 4, 2f.). It is by no means certain, however, whether or to what extent this view was comparable to that ascribed to Cerinthus by Irenaeus. If the opponents of 1 John were actually Cerinthus and his disciples, one would expect a clear reference to Cerinthus' explicit separation between Jesus and Christ, which, however, is not the case.

Irenaeus and Hippolytus apparently saw in Cerinthus no more than an early Gnostic, but Eusebius, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, has preserved a tradition on Cerinthus that points in quite another direction. According to Gaius, a Roman anti-Montanist writer (ca. 200), Cerinthus appealed to revelations, 'said to be written by a great apostle' (probably the Apocalypse of John). He taught that 'after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be set up on earth, and that in Jerusalem the body will again serve as the instrument of desires and pleasures'. There would be 'a marriage feast lasting a thousand years' (Eusebius, *HE*, III, 28, 2). Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (ca. 250), in a lost work called *On the promises*, related that according to some of his predecessors Cerinthus had written the Johannine Apocalypse himself. Dionysius denied this, but had to admit that Cerinthus had taught a radical millenarianism, which included the expectation that the millennium would be characterized by 'festivals and sacrifices and the slaying of victims' (Eusebius, *HE*, VII, 25, 3 and III, 28, 4-5). This would imply that Cerinthus expected that in the thousand years of Christ's kingdom the Jerusalem temple and its sacrifices would be restored, which points to a strong Jewish-Christian influence. Similar ideas are attacked in Origen's polemic against simple Jewish or Judaizing Christians who claimed that in the millennium 'their destroyed and collapsed city' would be rebuilt and that the resurrected would enjoy the pleasures of the body, including marriages and the begetting of children (*De principiis*, II, 11, 2). It is conceivable that Dionysius' description was coloured by Ori-

gen's polemic, but there are no compelling arguments to doubt the trustworthiness of the tradition that Cerinthus was a radical chiliast. This view is much more likely than the idea, suggested by Hill, that Cerinthus was not a millenarian himself but, just as → Marcion after him, expected a millenarian kingdom of the Jewish Messiah.

The millenarian expectation has its roots in Jewish eschatological speculations. It might simply have been because of this background that the chiliast Cerinthus became depicted as a radical Jewish Christian. This picture is first found in the 4th century, in Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion*, 28), who remarkably enough does not make any mention of Cerinthus' millenarianism. Unfortunately, as so often, Epiphanius' report is a curious mixture of earlier literary traditions, hearsay, unwarranted assumptions and slander. He ascribes to Cerinthus everything he knows or thinks to know about the Jewish Christians and makes him a contemporary of the apostles and their main opponent in all the controversies with Jewish and Judaizing Christians that are reported in the New Testament.

Is it possible to harmonize the conflicting traditions concerning Cerinthus' teaching? The first observation to be made is that the expectation of a millennial kingdom of Christ on earth, characterized by marriages and procreation, is incompatible with the Gnostic view of the body and of matter in general. In the first two centuries, chiliastic expectations were widespread, especially, but by no means exclusively, among Jewish Christians. That Irenaeus does not mention Cerinthus' millenarian ideas may be due to the fact that he was a chiliast himself. Moreover, the idea ascribed to Cerinthus by Irenaeus that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary and that he was adopted as Son of God at his baptism in the river Jordan, was also a common Jewish Christian view. That Jesus allegedly proclaimed the Unknown God after his baptism may be no more than an inference by Irenaeus from his assumption that Cerinthus was an early Gnostic. At the turn of the 1st century AD, there was not yet a clearly distinguishable Christian Gnosticism over and against a non-Gnostic, ecclesiastical Christianity. As testified by the Johannine writings and Ignatius of Antioch, there was at that time, especially in Asia Minor, a fierce debate about the Christian interpretation of Jesus Christ and about the identity of the Creator. Most probably, Cerinthus took part in that debate from a Jewish-Christian position. The creation of the world by lower divine beings had already been discussed by Jewish and Greek theologians and philosophers. In the Gospel of John (1:3) it is ascribed to the Logos.

Cerinthus may have taught the more Jewish view that the world had been made by one or more angelic powers. With respect to Jesus, he apparently made a clear distinction between the human person Jesus and the divine Christ, the spirit who descended to him at his baptism. Cerinthus remains a shadowy figure, but it seems quite certain that his position in Irenaeus' catalogue of early Gnostics is unjustified.

All relevant texts with translation in A.F.J. Klijn & G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, XXXVI), Leiden: Brill, 1973.

*Lit.*: Ch.E. Hill, "Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliast? A New Solution to an Old Problem", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000), 135-172 ♦ Klijn & Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 3-19 ♦ Chr. Marksches, "Kerinth: Wer war er und was lehrte er?", *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 41 (1998), 48-76 ♦ B.G. Wright III, "Cerinthus *Apud* Hippolytus: An Inquiry into the Traditions about Cerinthus' Provenance", *The Second Century* 4 (1984), 103-115.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

**Champier, Symphorien, \* early 1470s**  
**Saint-Symphorien-le-Château,**  
 † 1539 or 1540 Lyons

French humanist, neoplatonist, physician, and author on medicine and occult sciences. Champier's father was a notary and apothecary. Symphorien studied for some time at the university of Paris, and next attended medical school in Montpellier, where he matriculated in 1495. Soon after, he was practicing medicine and teaching the liberal arts in the Dauphiné and probably the Bourbonnais. In 1498 he published his first book, *Janua logicae et physicae*, largely devoted to Plato and Aristotle and their commentators → Lefèvre d'Étapes (a friend of Champier and a major influence on his thought) and → Marsilio Ficino. It was followed in the early years of the 16th century by two companion volumes concerned with moral advice to members of the aristocracy, that would remain his most well-known ones: the *Nef des Princes* (1502) and the *Nef des Dames* (1503). Both *Nefs* (ships) again show the strong influence of Ficino, and together with Champier's earlier work are among the first books that introduced Florentine Platonism in Renaissance France. The first contains French translations of editions and commentaries on Plato by Ficino, and the *Livre de Vraye Amour* (book four of the *Nef des Dames*) is largely based on Ficino's *De Amore*. Champier had hoped by

these books to find patronage at the Bourbon court, but without success.

In 1503 in Lyons Champier wrote a *Dyalogus . . . in magicarum artium destructionem* which discusses the origins and nature of → magic and divination [→ Divinatory arts], frenzies, dreams and visions, the magical effects of the → imagination, and the supposed activities of witches and demons, including incubi and succubi. From a pronounced Christian-orthodox perspective, and quoting multiple authorities, it attempts to separate truth from fiction in these matters, insisting that stories about demonic activities are often based upon delusion, and that many phenomena attributed to supernatural agency can in fact be explained along naturalist lines. In the same year 1503 Champier married a noble lady, Marguerite de Terraille, and returned to Montpellier to study for his doctorate in medicine, which he obtained in 1504. In the following years he published various small books on medical subjects, which together with his new title brought him increasing recognition.

The very titles of Champier's *De quadruplici vita* (1507) and *De triplici disciplina* (1509), two of his most important works, reflect the influence of Ficino's *De vita libri tres*, often referred to as *De triplici vita*. Like Ficino, Champier based his choice to combine medical with theological/philosophical discussion on the concept of *spiritus*, understood as the medium that joins body and soul and is therefore relevant to doctors as well as priests. In addition to Ficino, one notes a strong influence of → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola as well as his nephew Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola; and *De quadruplici vita* contained the first printed version of → Lazzarelli's Latin translation of the last three tractates of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (under the title *Diffinitiones Asclepii*; it does not contain the *Asclepius* itself, as one might infer from Walker 1958, 169). Indeed, Champier's books of 1507 and 1509 are largely compilations based on other authors' works, and are filled with references to authorities such as e.g. Pliny, Isidore of Sevilla, and platonic, hermetic and orphic sources. They are important not for any innovative ideas (Copenhagen [1978, 56] emphasizes Champier's 'undeviating unoriginality'), but for the role they have played in the transmission of the new Italian neoplatonic and hermetic philosophy to French intellectual circles. Champier is a typical example of how the *prisca theologia* associated with Ficino was received in France: with considerably more caution than in the Italian context, particularly regarding the dangers of → astrology, astral magic,

and idolatry. While rejecting the notorious hermetic “god-making” passages (*Asclepius* 23-24, 37-38) as idolatrous, Champier believed them to be written by Apuleius, not → Hermes Trismegistus.

Around 1509 Champier was appointed as chief physician to Duke Antoine of Lorraine, whom he would henceforth follow on his many military expeditions. The year 1515 was of great importance to him: his Lord bestowed the order of chivalry on him, and he was honourably invited to join the medical college of Pavia. During this period and up to the end of his life he continued writing numerous books, most of them on medical subjects, and by the 1520s he had gained an international scholarly reputation. Having returned to Lyons, he became a member of that city’s ruling council of twelve. Due to a tax recommendation that was taken badly by the populace, his house was sacked by a mob during the great *rebeine* (probably a food riot) of 1529 – an event that Champier believed was caused by heresy rather than economic despair. The last ten years of his life he kept writing and practicing medicine. He died in Lyons, leaving a daughter and two sons.

*Liber de quadruplici vita . . .*, Lyon, 1507 ♦ “Commentarium in diffinitiones asclepij cum textu eiusdem” (from *Liber de quadruplici vita*), modern edition in: *Umanesimo e esoterismo*, Padova: Cedam, 1960, 248-289 ♦ *Dyalogus . . . in magicarum artium destructionem* (ca. 1503), modern edition with Engl. trans. in: Copenhaver, *Symphorien Champier* (see below), 243-319.

*Lit.*: M.P. Allut, *Étude biographique & bibliographique sur Symphorien Champier*, Lyon: Nicolas Scheuring, 1859 ♦ Brian P. Copenhaver, “Lefèvre d’Étaples, Symphorien Champier, and the Secret Names of God”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977), 189-211 ♦ idem, *Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France*, The Hague, Paris, New York: Mouton, 1978 ♦ Margaret I. Holmes, “Italian Renaissance Influence in the Early 16th century, with Particular Reference to the Work of Symphorien Champier”, M.A. thesis Univ. of London, 1963 ♦ idem, “A Brief Survey of the Use of Renaissance Themes in Some Works of the Lyonese Doctor, Humanist and Man of Letters Symphorien Champier”, in: *Cinq études lyonnaises*, Geneva: Droz, 1966 ♦ A. Potton, “Études historiques et critiques sur la vie, les travaux de Symphorien Champier”, *Revue du Lyonnais* 1 (1864), 7-32, 114-140 ♦ Cesare Vasoli, “Temi e fonti della tradizione ermetica in uno scritto di Symphorien Champier”, in: *Umanesimo e esoterismo*, Padova: Cedam, 1960, 235-247 ♦ D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (1958), repr.: University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, 167-170 ♦ idem, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University

Press, 1972, esp. 66-83, 88-90, 106-117 ♦ Frances Yates, “The Fear of the Occult”, *The London Review of Books, with the New York Review of Books* 26:18 (1979), 37-39.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

**Charbonneau-Lassay, Louis**, \* 18.01.1871 Loudun, † 26.12.1946 Loudun

Born Louis Charbonneau (Lassay being a village near Loudun, wherefrom came several of his direct ancestors), he began his career as a member of a Roman Catholic congregation mostly dedicated to teaching, the “Frères de Saint Gabriel”. On his own, as well as in the company of some competent local scholars, he was to gain proficiency in the historical disciplines which were later to occupy most of his intellectual activity: archeology, numismatics, sigillography, heraldry, folklore and local traditions of the areas surrounding his native Poitou. In 1921, having in the meantime been allowed back into laity and achieved for himself a solid scholarly reputation, he began to contribute to the Catholic monthly *Regnabit*, the main purpose of which was the enhancement of the symbolic and theological status of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Most of his *Regnabit* articles are concerned with the many-faceted emblematics of Jesus Christ and illustrated with quaint, neomedieval woodcuts in his own hand; for the most part, these texts along with many others were later incorporated into his main work, *Le Bestiaire du Christ* (1940).

It was in a 1929 *Regnabit* article about the dove (‘La colombe’) as an emblem of Christ that Charbonneau-Lassay first disclosed the informations about certain “mystic-hermetic fraternities” (‘fraternités hermético-mystiques’) which have made him conspicuous in esoterically-minded circles to our day. Briefly told, our author claimed to be in contact with a few restricted *milieux* of scrupulous Roman Catholic orthodoxy, still in possession of materials pertaining to what he considered a valid expression of authentic Christian esotericism. Supposedly dating back without interruption to late medieval or early modern times, and having furthermore remained essentially secluded until then, the groups in question (mainly the “Chevaliers et Dames du Divin Paraclet” and “Estoile Internelle”) had nevertheless taken the initiative, through the agency of their leader, Canon T. Barbot of Poitiers (1841-1927), of lending him some documents containing symbolic and “hermetic” elements, which he made use of in the book which was to become the above-mentioned *Bestiaire*. Somewhat later it

was disclosed that Charbonneau-Lassay had in fact also been entrusted with the actual continuation of the first of these fraternities, that is, with its ritual transmission, which he bestowed on a few chosen individuals (mostly selected in parisian “guenonian” circles) just before the Second World War (this particular story is dealt with in specific studies mentioned below).

The original archives alluded to by our author being hitherto unavailable to scholars, it seems difficult (to say the least) to form a square opinion about the purely historical aspects of these fraternities, not to mention the exact nature and contents of their alleged esoteric teachings. Even as regards their real impact on Charbonneau-Lassay’s work, we are in fact only made aware of it when he happens to explicitly quote these arcane sources along the way. It must, nevertheless, be kept in mind that he was in no way attracted to occultism [→ occult / occultism] as such, shared the rejection of → Freemasonry common to so many Roman Catholic writers of his time but, notwithstanding, looked favourably upon the practice of symbolism, which he conceived of as a convenient and lawful way of deepening one’s understanding of the faith. For this very reason, he was – up to a point – an admirer (and personal friend) of → René Guénon, whom he had been instrumental in roping in for collaboration to *Regnabit* (1925-1927). To most occidental readers and members of the “traditionalist” French school, the main attraction of Charbonneau-Lassay’s disclosures has been, however, to suggest a decidedly Christian alternative to Guénon’s incitements to pursue one’s quest for a ritual initiation preferably within a Sufi environment.

*Le Coeur rayonnant du donjon de Chinon attribué aux Templiers*, Paray-le-Monial: Secrétariat des Œuvres du Sacré-Cœur/Beaux Livres, 1922 (reprint Milano: Archè, 1975) ♦ *Simboli del Cuore di Cristo* (P.L. Zoccatelli, ed.), Roma: Arkeios, 2003 ♦ *Le Bestiaire du Christ*, Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1940 (reprint Milano: Archè, 1974; english, spanish and italian trans.) ♦ *L’ésotérisme de quelques symboles géométriques chrétiens*, Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1967 (1994<sup>2</sup>) ♦ *Etudes de symbolique chrétienne*, Paris: Gutenberg Reprints, 1981-1986 (2 vols) ♦ *Il Giardino del Cristo ferito* (P.L. Zoccatelli, ed.), Rome Arkeios, 1995 ♦ *Héraldique Loudunaise*, La Roche Rigault: PSR, 1996 ♦ *Le Pietre misteriose del Cristo* (P.L. Zoccatelli, ed.), Rome: Arkeios, 1997.

*Lit.*: J.P. Brach, review of P.L. Zoccatelli, *Le lièvre qui rumine* (see below), *Politica Hermetica* 16 (2002), 269-274 ♦ idem, “L. Charbonneau-Lassay”, in: J.-P. Chantin (ed.), *Les marges du christianisme: “sectes”, dissidences, ésotérisme*, Paris: Beauchesne, 2001, 46-49 ♦ J.P. Brach & P.L. Zoccatelli, “Courants renaissants de

réforme spirituelle et leurs incidences”, *Politica Hermetica* 11 (1997), 31-43 ♦ M.F. James, *Esotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et christianisme aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles: Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1981 (2 vols.), 68-71 ♦ S. Salzani & P.L. Zoccatelli, *Hermétisme et Emblématique du Christ dans la vie et dans l’oeuvre de Louis Charbonneau-Lassay (1871-1946)*, Milano: Archè, 1996 ♦ *Société Historique du Pays de Loudunais*, 1 (1998) ♦ L. Toth, “Le bestiaire du Christ”, *Charis: Archives de l’Unicorne* 4 (2003), 49-62 ♦ P.L. Zoccatelli, “Louis Charbonneau-Lassay”, in: J. Servier (ed.), *Dictionnaire critique de l’ésotérisme*, Paris: P.U.F., 1998, 287-288 ♦ idem, *Le lièvre qui rumine: Autour de René Guénon, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay et la Fraternité du Paraclét (avec des documents inédits)*, Milano: Archè, 1999; site internet: <http://www.paraclét.org>

JEAN-PIERRE BRACH

Chester, Robert of → Robert of Chester

## Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte

The Order of the “Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte” (CBCS) is the “Inner Order” (“Ordre Intérieur”) of the Rectified Scottish Rite, and its character and history cannot be understood without taking into account the history of its insertion in this masonic-chivalric System (or “rite”). The Rectified Scottish Rite was founded about 1780 by a group of French freemasons under the leadership of → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz (1730-1824) who intended to reform → Freemasonry, which they deemed had lost touch with its essential nature and aim. This reformation was carried out in the so called “Convent des Gaules” held in Lyons in 1778 and in the subsequent Convent of Wilhelmsbad held in 1782, and the foundation of the Order of the CBCS was part of it. The Rectified Scottish Rite, as it emerged from the Convent des Gaules, was (and has been up to now) an original system of Freemasonry consisting of two classes: a “symbolical” class and a chivalric one. The symbolical class comprises the three common degrees of “Craft” Freemasonry – Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason – plus a fourth and last degree called “Maître Ecossais de Saint-André”. This is a synthesis of the essential contents of several French “higher degrees”, namely the various degrees of “Ecossais” and the degree of “Chevalier d’Orient”, the elements taken from these degrees (which are found independently in Royal Arch Masonry) being reworked according to the special perspective of the Rectified Scottish Rite. The Mason who has moved through the four symbolical degrees may



then, if judged apt, be admitted in the “Inner Order”, that is, the Order of the CBCS. He is first admitted in the quality of “Novice”; then, after the end of his novitiate, he may eventually be armed Knight after having made a profession of Christian faith, for the Order of the CBCS is a Christian Order of chivalry. The way this chivalric Order is related to the “symbolic” class is well marked in the ritual of the fourth degree. This ritual – and with it the whole symbolical teaching of the four degrees – culminates in a vision of the celestial Jerusalem; at the same time the candidate is warned that he has reached the end of his symbolical career, and that he is at the door of a new temple in which a new career may begin for him. The mention of the “Holy City” in the name of the Order of the CBCS thus refers to Jerusalem, which means both the terrestrial Jerusalem and the celestial one, of which the candidate in the fourth symbolical degree has had the vision.

This structure of the Rectified Scottish Rite as a masonic-chivalric system takes its origin from the previous but analogous German system which was called “Rectified Masonry” or (after 1764) “Strict Observance” (SO). This system was founded in the 1750s by Baron von Hund (1722-1776) and, after years of struggle with competing systems, it obtained a rather large extension and brilliant standing in Germany and in other European countries, having as its *Magnus Superior* the Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick. This system, like the Rectified Scottish Rite later, consisted of a masonic class and a chivalric one, the latter having the status of an “Inner Order”. A notable feature of this chivalric Order is that it claimed to be a revival of the Order of the Knights Templar which, although suppressed by Pope Clement V under the pressure of the King of France Philip the Fair, was supposed to have survived in secret; and the SO went as far as contemplating an official restoration in itself of the said Order. By the time when the SO was expanding in Europe, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz was looking both for a convenient setting in which he could carry out his intended reform of Freemasonry and – already being a disciple of → Martinez de Pasqually (1727-1772) – for a source of further esoteric knowledge. He entered in connection with the SO in the early 1770s and obtained admission in it for himself and his team. In 1774 the SO “re-established” what was supposed to be the Templar Province of “Auvergne” (with headquarters at Lyons), and Willermoz along with eleven other French Brethren was admitted in the Inner Order, as Knight. A little later, the SO similarly re-established the “Templar” Province of “Occitania” with headquarters at Bor-

deaux, but this Province was not very active, while the brethren of Strasburg, belonging to the previously existing Province of “Burgundy”, collaborated efficiently with Willermoz in the work of reforming Freemasonry, which he took up in the newly-established setting of the French branch of the SO. As we have already seen, this task was essentially carried out in the national Convent of Lyons of 1778 (gathering representatives of the Provinces of Auvergne, Burgundy and Occitania); it was the work of the French Brethren, to be confirmed and completed at the general Convent (which gathered representatives of all the Provinces of the SO throughout Europe) held at Wilhelmsbad in Germany in 1782. It is at the Convent of Lyons that the Inner Order received the new name of Order of the CBCS (or, more completely, “Ordre Bienfaisant des Chevaliers Maçons de la Cité Sainte”, a name which makes explicit the connection of this chivalric Order with Freemasonry). The structure of the SO was conserved, but it must be emphasized that its spiritual content was changed considerably. On the one hand, Willermoz and his companions worked out new rituals and instructions which carried out, under the veil of symbols, a spiritual doctrine strongly influenced by Martinez de Pasqually’s doctrine of the “reintegration of beings”. On the other hand – and this concerns the Order of the CBCS more in particular – the claim to the historical and temporal succession of the Knights Templar was given up; only some kind of spiritual kinship was maintained (see below). Although this reformation was approved (not without difficulty) at the Convent of Wilhelmsbad, this did not have many consequences in Germany, because the Strict Observance did not survive the troubles of the wars of the French Revolution and of the Napoleonic wars. But the Rectified Scottish Rite – and in particular the Order of the CBCS – survived, and is now well alive in several countries, mainly in Switzerland (which was at one time the conservatory of the Rite extinct in other countries), Belgium and France.

The Order of the CBCS has a double aspect, an exoteric and an esoteric one. The exoteric aspect is expressed by the word “bienfaisant”. Each member is bound, as he already was as a Mason, to practice beneficence in all its forms, but he is all the more vowed to this because he is also a Christian Knight. As such, he has vowed to defend the Christian religion; but at being admitted into the Order, he is taught that he no longer has to do so by the sword, as was the case for the medieval Knight: he must ‘defend it by his speech, when in his presence it suffers undeserved attack; he causes it to be loved



and respected by a mild and enlightened tolerance, by good morals, by a regular conduct and by the good examples he gives'. In one word, the exoteric content of the Order essentially consists in the same moral teaching as that of Freemasonry, but in a more explicitly Christian setting. It is interesting to notice, from an historical point of view, that this exoteric content is a synthesis, which intends to be harmonious, of Christian spirituality and of an Enlightenment humanism rid of its anti-Christian aspects. But this remark is not of merely historical interest: for the CBCS, this synthesis is still valuable as a directive in one's present everyday life.

The esoteric aspect of the Order is in continuity with that of the symbolical degrees, which essentially consists in teaching, under the veil of symbols, a doctrine of the spiritual destiny of man, the main moments of which are the primordial state, the fall, and the reintegration – the present condition of man being located between the second and third moment. In the Inner Order, this symbolic teaching, which has culminated in the fourth degree of the symbolic class, has been brought to an end; the member of the CBCS, who is supposed to have assimilated the teaching with his intelligence and his heart, is vowed to make it work in his inner spiritual life as well as in his outer life, striving to obtain his personal reintegration and making a contribution to the universal one by using all the means which divine Providence and masonic initiation put at his disposal.

It is important to understand clearly the conception which the founders of the Order of the CBCS had of its relation with the Order of the Knights Templar. They assumed without restriction that the latter had possessed an important esoteric knowledge, and even that, after their suppression, they had transmitted that knowledge to lodges of operative masons, from which it later passed to speculative Masonry. This is what they kept of the current "templar legend". But the founders purified (so to speak) the legend in two ways. First, they did not insist on aspects of that knowledge which were especially attractive to many Masons – namely the art of making gold – but put the emphasis on the most spiritual aspects – those which concerned the essential term of masonic initiation, namely, according to their fundamental doctrine, the reintegration of all beings. On the other hand, as we have said, they renounced the claim, which had been that of the SO, to historical succession from the Knights Templar. This was partly due to prudence since, in France, such a claim would likely be judged subversive by the Crown, but it also had a deeper motivation, which is clearly expressed in the ritual of the admission to the novi-

tiate and in the corresponding instruction. The founders of the Order of the CBCS held that there is a transhistorical and hidden Order which goes back to the origin of the world, which carries the primordial and perfect initiation, and from which all historical Orders and all historical initiations are issued – whether chivalric or not (since at the level of that primordial Order this distinction is transcended). For that reason, a historical link with the Order of the Knights Templar was of no interest to them, the only important thing being the mystical link with the transcendent Order: 'Do not', says the instruction of the novitiate, 'mistake the sublime, secret, primitive and fundamental Order for the Order of the Knights Masons of the Holy City, nor for the Order of the Knights Templar. All are issued from this hidden Order; Masonry owes it its existence, and we are placed between the symbolic initiation and the perfect initiation, to help those whom the divine Providence calls to it to return back to this primitive Order'. This concept indicates to which level of transcendence the spirituality of the Order of the CBCS reaches. The place of the Order in this scheme must be carefully noted: it does not pretend to be able to confer the perfect initiation, and the only role it claims is to help each Knight to reach this level by himself, under the guidance of divine Providence.

Edmond Mazet, "Les actes du Convent des Gaules", *Travaux de la Loge Nationale de Recherche Villard de Honnecourt* 11 (2<sup>e</sup> semestre 1985), 57-106 ♦ Jean-François Var, "Les Actes du Convent de Wilhelmsbad", *Les Cahiers Verts* 7 (1985), 27-52.

*Lit.*: André Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris et Nauwealerts, Louvain: Aubier-Montaigne, 1970 ♦ J. Webb, "The Scottish Rectified Rite", *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge* n° 2076, 100 (1987), 1-5.

EDMOND MAZET

## Christian Kabbalah → Jewish Influences III

### Christian Theosophy

1. FIRST PERIOD (17TH CENTURY) 2. THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD (FIRST HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY) 3. FROM PRE-ROMANTICISM TO ROMANTICISM, OR THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE: 1750-1850
4. EFFACEMENT AND PERMANENCE (CA. 1850-2000)

For the historian of modern Western esoteric currents, “theosophy” is not to be understood in an essentialist sense, which would be based, for example, on its etymology (*Theo-Sophia*, wisdom of God), but in the sense commonly accepted within the academy. As such, it designates either a specific esoteric current in the wake of the emergence of modern Western esotericism from the end of the 15th century onward (e.g., neo-Alexandrian → hermeticism, Christian Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → Rosicrucianism, “spiritual” → alchemy, etc.), or matters pertaining to the much more recent history of the → Theosophical Society (established in 1875). It is in the former sense that “theosophy” is used in this article.

There is very little doctrinal unity among the representatives of the Christian theosophical current, but besides the fact that they are Christians they do share some common traits:

1. *The God/Human/Nature Triangle.* The inspired speculation of the theosopher bears simultaneously on God and the nature of God (intra-divine processes, etc.), on Nature (whether external, intellectual, or material), and on Man (his origin, his place in the universe, his role in the workings of salvation, etc.). Essentially, it deals with the relations between these three. Between the three components God–Man–Nature a complex network of relationships/correspondences is believed to exist, characterized by dramatic processes closely related to the narratives of Scripture; it is through “active imagination” that the theosopher believes he is capable of apprehending these → correspondences (see further below: 3).

2. *The Primacy of the Mythic.* The theosopher practices an ongoing, creative hermeneutic of authoritative religious texts (in most cases those pertaining to the Judaeo-Christian Revelation, i.e. the Bible), whereby he privileges the most mythic elements of the latter (for example, those found in Genesis, the vision of Ezekiel, the book of Revelation, etc.). Thus, great emphasis is placed on the roles of such characters as Sophia and the angels, which are present in the Bible, but to which they give further developments in “completing” the latter with stories about the Falls of Lucifer and of Nature, the adamic androgyne, etc.

As Pierre Dehaye has felicitously written, ‘Theosophy is a kind of theology of the image’. One could speak here of a multi-faceted imaginary originating in the same primary material used by theologians (in the strict sense of the term), but which they usually present in a rather rational or conceptual mode.

3. *Direct Access to Superior Worlds.* According to the theosophers, man possesses in himself a faculty – generally dormant but always potentially

present – that enables him to connect directly with the divine world or generally with superior beings, and that is able to “branch out” to them. This faculty is due to the existence of a special organ within us, a kind of *intellectus*, which is none other than our → imagination – understood in quasi-magical fashion as a force of creation as well as perception. Once achieved, this contact (1) permits an exploration of all levels of reality, (2) assures a kind of co-penetration of the divine and the human, and (3) gives our spirit the possibility of “fixing” itself in a body of light, that is to say, of effectuating a “second birth”. Here we can see a rapport with the mystical experience (understood here as an experience of union, or as a quest for union with a personal God or the Godhead). However, the mystic *stricto sensu* purports to abolish images whereas, to the contrary, for the typical Christian theosophers the image signifies accomplishment.

None of these three traits is exclusive to theosophy, but the simultaneous presence of all three makes for the specificity of the theosophical discourse. Moreover, in terms of literary style the discourse of theosophy appears to adapt itself remarkably to the literary styles of its contemporary contexts. For example, in 17th-century Germany it espoused the baroque style, and in → Saint-Martin’s writings (see below) either the style of the pre-Romantic writers (see his *l’Homme de désir*), or that of the philosophers of the Enlightenment (see his *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité*).

The theosophical current appeared at the beginning of the 17th century and went through four distinct periods: (1) The period from its appearance at the beginning of the 17th century and its development throughout that century, which may be called its first “Golden Age”. (2) A modest, albeit specific and influential, prolongation lasting through the the first half of the 18th century. (3) The revival of theosophy in the pre-Romantic and Romantic eras, which can be considered a second “Golden Age”. (4) The period of its decline from the mid-19th century onward.

#### I. FIRST PERIOD (17TH CENTURY)

The theosophical current is not without forebears. Born in Germany at the beginning of the 17th century, it has a great deal of affinity with → Paracelsianism. → Paracelsus, whose works had not been published until the end of the 16th century, had introduced a new, specific mode of reflection on Nature: a cosmology comprised of → magic, medicine, chemistry, experimental science and complex speculations about the networks of → correspondences uniting the different levels of reality in the universe. However, for the most part,

Paracelsus remained within the limits of an immanent philosophy of Nature (strongly tinged with alchemical notions). Subsequently, it fell to a few inspired thinkers to fit that cosmosophy into a more global vision, thus ensuring a transition from Paracelsian thought to theosophy proper. These thinkers, all of them Germans, can be seen as “proto-theosophers”: → Valentin Weigel (1533-1588), → Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) and Johann Arndt (1555-1621).

Weigel, a Saxon pastor whose works were written from 1570 to 1584, may be considered one of the foremost direct precursors of German theosophy. He is the first, indeed, to have blended together the Rheno-Flemish mystical tradition, rather intellectual and abstract in character, and the colorful and concrete thought of Paracelsus. He was, indeed, very familiar with both. For example, his thoughts on the spiritual body of the new birth (a kind of celestial naturalism grafted onto the mystical tradition) introduced into the history of German thought the theme of the corporeality of the spirit, which the theosophers of the ensuing centuries (with the notable exception of → Swedenborg) would develop. His influence upon → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, → Franz von Baader and many others could hardly be overestimated.

Khunrath's *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae aeternae* (Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom; first ed. 1595) has most likely influenced → Jacob Boehme, not least with regard to the theme of the Divine Wisdom (Sophia). As for Arndt, he formulated, particularly in Book IV (1610) of his *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christenthum* (Four Books on True Christianity) what would come to be known as “mystical theology”. Arndt's system, not unlike Weigel's, brought medieval mysticism together with both the Paracelsian legacy and the alchemical tradition, and furthermore elaborated a theory about the possibility for the elected soul to acquire a “new body”. Other names could be added to the list, like → Gérard Dorn (ca. 1530-ca. 1584), in whose alchemical writings we find a richly developed Philosophy of Nature – a visionary, highly elaborated *Physica* that in some essential aspects foreshadowed that of Boehme.

With Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), a shoemaker from Görlitz in Silesia, the theosophical current acquired its definitive characteristics, the Bohemian work representing something like the early nucleus of what would constitute the “classical” theosophical corpus proper. One day in 1610, while contemplating a pewter vessel, he is said to have had an experience that determined his spiritual vocation. He had had the impression of grasping at one stroke the networks of correspondences

and implications between different worlds or levels of reality (terrestrial, celestial, etc.). He then wrote his first book, *Morgen Röte im auffgang* (Morning-Glow Arising) also known as *Aurora*, which emerged from this enlightenment, and in which it is permissible to see the birth certificate, as it were, of the theosophical current strictly speaking. It was followed by many others, all written in German, but only *Der Weg zu Christo* (The Way to Christ) appeared during his lifetime, in 1624. From his abundant production, one of the most astonishing in Baroque German prose, mention should be made of *De tribus Principiis* (On the Three Principles; written in 1619), *De signatura rerum* (On the Signatures of Things; written in 1621), and *Mysterium Magnum* (The Grand Mystery; written in 1623), only the titles of which are in Latin. Even more strikingly than Weigel's and Arndt's, Boehme's system is a kind of amalgam between the medieval mystical tradition as continued in 16th-century Germany and a cosmology of the Paracelsian, alchemical type, along with some neo-kabbalistic ingredients. Not only Judaeo-Christian in character, but strongly Lutheran more specifically, given its historical, cultural roots, it presents itself as a visionary hermeneutic applied to biblical texts. Germanic in language, it is “barbaric” in character, in the sense that it owes practically nothing to ancient Greek or Latin “esoteric” currents such as Alexandrian → hermetism (a trait shared by Paracelsus too, for that matter). In contrast to medieval and even Neoplatonic concepts of the Divine, Boehme did not see the latter as static but rather envisaged it as a passionate struggle of opposing principles. His God is never *in esse*, but always *in fieri*, He is the Supreme Being who ontologically “sees” in His living mirror, i.e. the Divine Wisdom or Sophia, all the potentialities of the worlds He creates. The theme of Sophia leads into the major visionary avenues of Boehme's works, which are built up like a great Baroque cathedral: the Fall of Lucifer and Adam, the spiritual corporeality of the angels, the idea that all exterior form is language or *Figur*, the seven “spirit-sources” existing from all eternity, etc. This “prince of German theosophy”, as he has often been called, contributed in large measure to the formation of a specific spiritual conscience in the general religious turmoil of 17th-century Germany.

Animated by Boehme's spirit and thinking, theosophy henceforth flourished in other countries as well. Its success at its beginnings was due to a number of factors. First, it emerged from Lutheran soil. Lutheranism allows free inquiry, which in certain inspired souls could take a prophetic turn. Second, Lutheranism is characterized by a paradoxical

blend of mysticism and rationalism, whence the need to put inner experience under discussion, and inversely to transform doctrinal discussions into inner experience. Third, at the beginning of the 17th century, less than a hundred years after the Reformation, the spiritual poverty of Protestant preaching and the dryness of its theology were sorely resented by some, whence a need for spiritual revitalization. The fourth factor which came into play presented itself as a challenge. Indeed, if in the milieu where theosophy was born there was a certain freedom vis-à-vis ministers of the cult, prophetic activity was nevertheless not well tolerated (Boehme was a scapegoat of the Lutheran minister in his town of Görlitz). Hence the “reformist” slant of the theosophers (in the general sense, not in the protestant one) – and of most esotericists, for that matter –, which was fostered as a reaction against the religious intolerance and theological feuds of the time. The fifth factor is linked to a strong desire among most intellectuals for a unity of sciences and ethics – a need to unify thought. The idea of a solidarity of thinkers, and of a “total” science, formed part of the spiritual and intellectual climate of the 17th century. Theosophy appeared to respond to that need, because of its globalizing character. It represents a tendency to integrate everything within a general harmonious whole. The same is true in the same period for → Rosicrucianism (see *Fama Fraternitatis*, 1614, and *Confessio*, 1615) and for the pansophic current linked to the latter. Pansophy also presented itself as a system of universal knowledge: → Amos Comenius (1592-1670) held that all things are ordained by God and classified according to analogical relations; knowledge of divine things is gained by starting from the concrete world, from the entire universe, whose “signature” or hieroglyphs it is first a matter of deciphering. Bound up with such a theosophical and pansophical program is the need of proposing an alternative worldview opposed to the emerging mechanistic view of the universe, i.e. to an epistemology that seemed to end up emptying the universe of its “correspondences” and living, spiritual complexity. Theosophy thus reaffirmed the place of the microcosm in the macrocosm; in so doing it was not “scientific” in the modern sense of the word, and never went beyond the project stage. Nevertheless, it appeared to many people as a promise, a hope, a new dawn of thought. Moreover, the poetic aspect of its discourses favored a co-penetration of literature and science, and by virtue of this indirectly contributed to the development of the popularization of science.

In the century under discussion, the main representatives of theosophy and some of their main

writings are, in Germany (besides Boehme): → Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710), *Theosophia Practica* (Practical Theosophy; published in 1722, but written much earlier); Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651-1689), *Kühlpssalter* (1677); → Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), *Das Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia* (The Secret of the divine Sophia; 1700); Aegidius Gutmann (1651-1689), *Offenbarung göttlicher Majestät* (Revelation of divine Majesty; see above) and Julius Sperber (? - 1616), *Exemplarischer Beweiss* (Exemplary Proof . . . ; 1616). In the Low Countries, → Joan Baptista van Helmont (1618-1699), *The Paradoxical Discourses concerning the Macrocosm and the Microcosm* (1685). In England, → Robert Fludd (1574-1637), *Utriusque Cosmi . . . Historia* (History of both Cosmoses; 1617/26); → John Pordage (1608-1681), *Theologia Mystica, or the Mystic Divinitie of the Æternal Invisibles* (1683); → Jane Lead (1623-1704), *The Laws of Paradise given forth by Wisdom to a Translated Spirit* (1695); → Henry More (1614-1687), the main “Cambridge neo-Platonist”. In France, → Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), *L'Économie Divine, ou Système universel et démontré des œuvres et des devoirs de Dieu envers les hommes* (The Divine Economy . . . ; 1687), and → Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), *Œuvres* (edited by Pierre Poiret in 1679 and 1684).

Many of these authors were prolific, and many of their works have not been cited here. With rare exceptions (like Fludd), they did not write in Latin but in the vernacular, their mother tongues being more advantageous than Latin for the expression of visions and feelings. And alongside writings proper, it is appropriate to call attention to the existence of a rich theosophical iconography – a “theosophy through images” –, which Khunrath’s *Amphitheatrum* (see above) had inaugurated in a particularly lavish and radiant way, and which is also found beautifully exemplified in e.g. Gichtel’s 1682 edition of the complete works of Boehme. More generally, this period is rich in esoteric engravings, a fact which is attested to by the numerous illustrated alchemical books published throughout the first half of the 17th century. Likewise, at the turn of the century, Freher (see further below) would draw a beautiful series of thirteen figures, also illuminating Boehme’s works.

## 2. THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD (FIRST HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY)

During the second period an additional theosophical corpus was constituted, primarily in the German language. This continuity was favored by the same factors that were enumerated above with

respect to the 17th century, because the same or similar questions continued to be asked on philosophical, political and religious levels. This new theosophical output was characterized by two main tendencies or families:

(1) A tendency that appears to qualify as traditional in that it is closely akin to the original Boehmean current. It was represented notably by the Swabian → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782), whose first book was dedicated to Boehme (*Aufmunternde Gründe zur Lesung der Schriften Jacob Böhmens*; Cheering reasons for reading the writings of Jacob Boehme; 1731), and whose production for the most part overflowed from this period into the third (see below, “Three Areas”). It is also represented by the English Bohemian → William Law (1686-1761), the author of *An Appeal to All that doubt, The Spirit of Prayer* (1749-1750) and *The Way to Divine Knowledge* (1752). A German who had emigrated to England, Dionysius Andreas Freher (1649-1728) proved to be one of Boehme’s most inspired interpreters. His writings in English, and his translations from German into the same language, enjoyed a wide circulation. This was also the period of Gichtel’s *Theosophia Practica* (1722), of *Le Mystère de la Croix* (The Mystery of the Cross; 1736) by the German → Melchior Douzetemps, and of *Explication de la Genèse* (Explication of Genesis; 1738) by the Swiss Hector de Saint-Georges de Marsais (1688-1755), who was akin to spiritual thinkers from the city of Berlebourg (the famous Bible of Berlebourg is an edition of the Bible that is rich in both theosophical and quietist commentaries).

(2) The second tendency was of a more paracelsian and alchemical orientation. Four German authors stand out here. → Georg von Welling (alias Salwigt, 1655-1727), *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum* (1719, reprinted several times with additional chapters); A.J. Kirchweger (?-1746), *Aurea Catena Homeri* (The Golden Chain of Homer; 1723); Samuel Richter (alias → Sincerus Rensus), *Theo-Philosophica Theoretica et Practica* (Theoretical and Practical Theo-Philosophy; 1711); and → Hermann Fictuld (several works, among which *Aureum Vellus* [The Golden Fleece], 1749). Welling and Richter were extremely influential, mostly in Germany where they became part and parcel of the referential corpus of the neo-Rosicrucian fringe-masonic Rites in the second half of the century and well into the 19th.

With few exceptions, the theosophy of these two tendencies no longer evinces the visionary outpouring which characterized the beginning of the first period (exemplified by Gichtel, for instance).

Of course, we are dealing here with similar speculations about Scripture and Nature, but this dampened theosophy, more intellectual in character, hardly springs forth from a personally experienced *Zentralschau* (“central vision”) like in Boehme, Gichtel, Jane Lead, etc. Not until the next period will such a personal “central vision”, linked to strong intellectual speculation, reappear, in Saint-Martin and a few others. In any case, for the theosophers in the following decades, the new corpus produced during the second period would serve as a reference, albeit less than would the corpus of the first one.

During this second period, theosophy became the object of many discussions among scholars who were themselves, for the most part, aloof from the esoteric current, but who through their presentations contributed to ensuring its presence within the cultural and philosophical landscape of Europe. Among the forerunners of this critical output, mention should be made of two authors. Ehregott Daniel Colberg (1659-1698), a Protestant minister from Greifswald, attacked theosophy in his *Das Platonisch-Hermetisches [sic] Christenthum* (Platonic-Hermetic Christianity; 1690-1691, 2 vols., reprinted in 1710), also targeting Alexandrian Hermetism, Paracelsus, → astrology, → alchemy, etc. And Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), a theosopher himself (see above), who authored *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie . . .* (Unpartial History of Churches and Heretics; 1699-1700, reprinted in 1729) and *Historie und Beschreibung der mystischen Theologie oder geheimen Gelehrtheit . . .* (History and Description of the Mystical Theology or Secret Knowledge; 1702). Arnold’s first book contains a wealth of information (it remains an oft-consulted reference work on the subject of Western spiritual trends, not only on theosophy) and is something of a response to Colberg’s book. Less critical of theosophy than Colberg and less laudatory than Arnold are Friedrich Gentzken (*Historia Philosophiae* [. . .] (1724) and Johann Franciscus Buddeus (*Isagogoge . . .*, 1729). More critical, but extremely knowledgeable and erudite is Jacob Brucker, a pastor of Augsburg, one of the founders of the modern history of philosophy, who authored a voluminous *Historia critica Philosophiae . . .* (1742-1744) in Latin, preceded by a shorter version in German, *Kurtze Fragen aus der philosophischen Historie . . .* (Short Questions from Philosophical History; 1730-1736). Never before had theosophy been made the object of such systematic treatment as was the case in these two treatises. A few years after Brucker’s books, the great *Encyclopédie*, edited by



Denis Diderot (see vol. XVI, 1758, new ed. 1765, article “Théosophes”), dedicated a twenty-six-page entry to the subject. Diderot himself wrote the article, therein plagiarizing Brucker. The presence of theosophy in the *Encyclopédie* is all the more interesting as the word does not seem to appear in the dictionaries of the time.

### 3. FROM PRE-ROMANTICISM TO ROMANTICISM, OR THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE: 1750-1850

After a fifty-year period of latency, interrupted only by Swedenborg’s writings (see below), theosophy once again began to come to life during the 1760s, and experienced a second Golden Age that lasted until the mid-19th century. Such a renewal was connected with the continuation and recrudescence of other esoteric currents (like Paracelsianism and Rosicrucianism), which, along with theosophy, constitute what is generally called → Illuminism, over the period ca. 1760 to 1820. Not a surprising occurrence, indeed, in a period pervaded by both optimism and uneasiness, a spirit of enterprise and one of meditation. Some specific factors can at least partly account for this renewal of theosophy. First, the increasing importance that was given to the idea of the “invisible” Church, understood by many people as the intimate experience of the believer, independent from any confessional framework. Man does not find God in any outward temple but only in the temple of his heart, which was often understood as an organ of knowledge. Second, a widespread interest in the problem of Evil, and more generally in the myth of the Fall and reintegration, which may be considered the great romantic myth *par excellence*. This myth was explicated through secularized art forms and in political projects, as well as in theosophical discussions. Quite a few masonic or fringe-masonic organizations became intent on “building the New Jerusalem” or “reconstructing Solomon’s temple”. Third, an interest in the sciences, not least in → animal magnetism, on the part of an increasingly wide public. Indeed, Newtonian physics had encouraged speculations of a holistic type, the main business being here to reconcile science and knowledge. Besides, experimental physics was popularized and introduced into the salons, in the form of picturesque experiments with electricity and with magnetism well suited for stimulating the imagination, because they hinted at the existence of a hidden life or an invisible fluid that traverses all the material realms. Eclecticism is inseparable from this third factor, a trait which also characterized the preceding period, which likewise had been fond of

*curiosa* and of anything likely to harmonize the data of knowledge. Within the theosophical scene that stretches over these eight decades or so, it is possible to distinguish three different areas (although these appear to be more or less interconnected).

(1) The first area is occupied by some authors located in the wake of the 17th century, in the sense that they are more or less Boehmian in outlook. Even when they do not claim allegiance with Boehme or even ignore him, their works generally bear on the same themes as his. → Martines de Pasqually somehow inaugurated the renaissance of European theosophy in this third period, with his *Traité de la Réintégration des Êtres créés dans leur primitives propriétés, vertus et puissances spirituelles divines* (Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings created in their original properties, virtues and spiritual and divine powers). Written in the 1750s and 1760s, it was read almost exclusively by the Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] who were the author’s disciples and it remained unpublished until 1899. But during the period it had considerable influence, albeit mostly indirect.

Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, one of Pasqually’s disciples in the fringe-masonic Order of the → Elus Coëns, made some important elements of Pasqually’s esoteric work known through his books *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité* (On errors and the Truth; 1775), and then *Tableau Naturel des rapports qui unissent Dieu, l’homme et l’univers* (Natural tableau of the connections that unite God, man and the universe; 1781). Saint-Martin’s own theosophy took a different turn after he had come across the works of Boehme, in 1789-1791. He henceforth blended together Pasqually and Boehme, and considered himself mostly a follower as well as interpreter of the latter, by means of the translations of his works into French. But Saint-Martin’s own works are no less original for that (*L’Homme de Désir* [The man of desire], 1790; *Le Ministère de l’Homme-Esprit* [The Ministry of Spiritual Man], 1802; *De l’Esprit des Choses* [On the Spirit of Things], 1802; etc.). Within the history of the theosophical output of that time, his originality is twofold. First, he was the most productive and creative theosopher of the period, authoring treatises, essays, poems, and a novel, and taking an active part in philosophical discussions with representatives of the Enlightenment. He was also the most original one; for example, his book *De l’Esprit des Choses* (2 vol., 1802) stands out as the only one in French which pertains to *Naturphilosophie* in the German sense of the term. Indeed, we find in it less visionary speculations than in his other works;

instead, it is mostly devoted to precise observations concerning animals, plants, natural phenomena, etc., along with theosophical interpretations of them. Second, Saint-Martin may be rightly considered the theosopher whose reception was the strongest throughout the 19th century in Europe, with the exception of Swedenborg's (see below). This was due not only to his literary qualities, but quite as much to the fact that he translated works of Boehme into French. These translations sparked a renewed interest in Boehme in Germany – where most cultivated people read French – and were influential on German → Romanticism, in particular, and German philosophy, in general. Conversely, Saint-Martin's major works were translated into German in the first half of the 19th century.

Among the other theosophers of some importance in the pre-romantic French-speaking area, mention should be made of at least two of them. → Bathilde d'Orléans, duchess of Bourbon, authored two works (*Opuscules, ou Pensées d'une âme de foi sur la religion chrétienne* [Opuscules, or thoughts of a believing soul about the Christian religion], 1811; *Correspondance entre Mad[ame] de B[ourbon] et Mr. R[uffin] sur leurs opinions religieuses* [Correspondences between Mme. De B. and Mr. R. on their religious opinions], 2 vol., 1812), strongly inspired by her friend Saint-Martin. She played the part of *inspiratrice* among various members and groups of the theosophical family. In Switzerland, → Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini (alias Keleph Ben Nathan, 1721–1793), wrote *La Philosophie Divine, appliquée aux lumières naturelle, magique, astrale, surnaturelle, céleste, et divine* (The Divine Philosophy, applied to the natural, magical, astral, supernatural, celestial and divine lights; 2 vol., 1793), a book which owed little to Boehme and even less to Saint-Martin.

In German-speaking countries, within a new, abundant production a few names come to the fore. Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (see also above, second period) is one of the “Fathers” of Swabian → Pietism, but primarily the main German theosopher of the second half of the 18th century. He was also the most erudite in terms of esoteric literature in general. He was a great commentator on various theosophical works, like those of Boehme and Swedenborg, and of Kabbalistic works (e.g., *Lehrtafel [der] Prinzessin Antonia* [Educational Tableau of the Princess Antonia; 1763]). → Karl von Eckartshausen, a native of Munich, was a polygraph (author of novels, short stories, political pamphlets, physical and alchemical treatises, etc.) whose most interesting theosophical writings were published posthumously (*Über die Zauberkräfte*

*der Natur* [About the Magical Powers of Nature], 1819; *Ueber die wichtigsten Mysterien der Religion* [About the most important mysteries of religion], 1823). → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling, in Marburg (*Blicke in die Geheimnisse der Naturweisheit* [Views into the mysteries of the wisdom of Nature], 1787), also stands in that wake, and so does → Frédéric-Rodolphe Saltzmann, in Strasbourg (*Alles wird neu werden* [All will become new], 1802–1812), a disciple of Pasqually and Saint-Martin through → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, to whose Masonic circle he belonged.

Later, and even more importantly, the Roman Catholic → Franz von Baader (1765–1841), a native of Munich (Professor at that University and a friend of both Friedrich Hegel and → Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling), stands out as the most important theosopher of the 19th century. Furthermore, he is the best commentator on both Boehme and Saint-Martin. He is also the major representative (along with Schelling) of the romantic *Naturphilosophen*, and probably the most powerful and original thinker of them all. His publications range between 1789 and 1841. Interestingly, one sees the receptions of these thinkers operating in several directions: Saint-Martin has greatly contributed to Boehme's reception in Europe during the pre-Romantic and Romantic period. Furthermore, Saint-Martin's marked influence on Baader's thought (himself a highly influential philosopher) resulted in the introduction of both Boehme and Saint-Martin into German philosophy. To wit, the twelfth (published in 1860) of the sixteen volumes of Baader's *Sämmtliche Werke* (Complete Works) is entirely devoted to reflections on Saint-Martin, and is preceded by a long foreword by Friedrich von Osten-Sacken, which likewise has contributed to the Unknown Philosopher's reputation among German philosophers.

If Baader can rightly be taken as an accomplished theosopher within the German romantic *Naturphilosophie*, some other authors representative of the latter have shown to be deeply influenced by theosophy. For instance, Friedrich von Hardenberg (alias → Novalis, 1772–1801); Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776–1810); → Gottfried Heinrich von Schubert (1780–1860); Carl Gustav Carus (1789–1869); Carl August von Eschenmayer (1758–1852); Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–1887), → Johann Friedrich von Meyer (1772–1849). As a matter of fact, the Romantic *Naturphilosophie* has features that connect it more or less directly to theosophy, namely: (a) a conception that Nature can be viewed as a text that must be deciphered with the help of correspondences, (b) the postulate

that the universe is a living being comprised of several levels of reality, and (c) the affirmation of an identity, or at least a co-naturality, between Spirit and Nature.

(2) The second area, which cannot be said to be of a Boehmean kind, is original for at least two reasons. First, it can be summed up by evoking the name of one single author. Second, it seems to owe nothing to the theosophy that preceded it or was contemporaneous with it. The author in question is Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), a learned Swedish scientist and renowned inventor who, in 1745, interrupted his properly scientific activities on account of dreams and visions, which had come to him quite suddenly and transformed his inner life. Henceforth, he gave himself up to the study of Holy Scripture and wrote his *Arcana Cœlestia* (Secrets of Heaven; 1745–1758), followed by many other books (like *De Nova Hierosolyma* [The New Jerusalem], 1758; *Apocalypsis revelata* [The Apocalypse Unveiled], 1766; *De coelo et ejus mirabilibus, et de inferno* [Heaven and its Wonders and Hell], 1758; *Vera Christiana Religio* [True Christian Religion], 1771).

If we consider the three main features of theosophy (see above: the triangle God-Man-Nature; the pre-eminence of the mythical; and the idea of direct access to the higher worlds), certainly we find all three to be present in Swedenborg's thinking. However, Swedenborg's theosophy differs from that of most other Christian theosophers by the following characteristics. First, it is devoid of dramatic elements. Second, we do not find the mythical figures that make the stories of "classical" theosophy. Third, and consequently, the entire framework of Fall and Reintegration of Eternal Nature by means of "alchemical" processes of transmutation (for example, the new birth or fixation of the spirit in a body of light) is absent. Swedenborg's universe is interconnected by innumerable correspondences, but given these three characteristics he sees them in a way which is different – more static – from that of most other theosophers. His works leave more an impression of meandering through a garden than of participating in a tragedy. Sophia is conspicuous by her absence; angels are merely the souls of deceased humans. But Swedenborg's views and works are of no less arresting interest for that. In terms of creative power he is the equal of Boehme and one of the most formidable thinkers of his century. Significantly enough, Oetinger and later Saint-Martin as well have been unsparing in harsh criticisms against Swedenborg, in whose theosophy they lamented the lack of notions like "spiritual corporeality", incarnation of the Spirit, and

the like. Jean-Jacques Bernard, in his *Opuscules Théosophiques* (1822), attempted to unite the theosophy of Swedenborg with that of Saint-Martin. As might be expected, the attempt fell rather short of being convincing, but the manner in which he tackled that task is nevertheless interesting. Indeed, it seems that the attempt was never seriously renewed. Be that as it may, the Swedenborgian theosophy, both more accessible and more "reassuring" than the ones otherwise prevailing, promptly met with tremendous success. Even more than the other aforementioned theosophical "areas", it influenced the works of such artists and writers as → William Blake, Charles Baudelaire, Honoré de Balzac, etc., and had a strong impact on initiatory societies in the Anglo-Saxon world and elsewhere. In terms of reception, it is certain that Swedenborg's success was very instrumental in overshadowing the other important theosophers, thereby limiting their reception in European culture.

(3) The third theosophical area of this period is occupied by a number of initiatory societies. Indeed, the last third of the 18th century witnessed a rapid proliferation of such organizations, particularly Masonic Rites (or "Systems") with "side degrees", otherwise called "higher grades" (i.e., those that include degrees above the three Masonic ones proper: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason). In quite a few Masonic Rites of this kind, the side degrees borrowed from the literature of such esoteric currents as Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, alchemy, and not least, theosophy. For this reason it is appropriate to speak of the presence of esotericism within → Freemasonry. That said, in making such borrowings, some of these Rites not only introduced theosophical elements into their rituals and instructions; not unfrequently they also engaged in publishing enterprises, thus contributing in no small measure to the dissemination of theosophical elements among the wider public. This is the case of the Order of the → Elus Coëns (established by Pasqually) whose teachings were in part made accessible through Saint-Martin's books. Other Masons, for example those who belonged or had belonged to the Rite called Rectified Scottish Rite (created in Lyon around 1768 by → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz) wrote books containing perspectives more or less inspired by that Order. Such is the case of Saltzmann (see above) and of → Joseph de Maistre (*Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, 1821). The Rectified Scottish Rite soon spread throughout Europe and Russia, and contributed strongly to propagating the theosophy of Saint-Martin and Pasqually among an ever

widening public. Russia occupies a peculiar place within that context. In Moscow, the publishing companies of Christian Freemasons like → Nicolas Novikov and → Vladimir Lopukhin, from the 1780s to ca. 1820, had many books of theosophy translated into Russian. In this connection, it seems appropriate to recall that the term “Martinism” [→ Martinism: First Period] in the Russia of that time has at least three connotations. It may refer either to Saint-Martin or Pasqually; to the Rectified Scottish Rite; or to a general and vague notion encompassing these three names together. That said, most Masonic Rites in Europe had hardly anything of a “Martinist” blend, despite their oftentimes strong theosophical inspiration at the level of the side degrees, which were rather inspired by the works of authors like Welling and Sincerus Renuatus (see above, “Second period”). This is the case, for example, of the Order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, established around 1777 in Germany; of the Order of the → Asiatic Brethren, created around 1779; of the Order of the “Illuminated Theosophers”, born around 1783, which was of a Swedenborgian type; and of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, created in France around 1804.

#### 4. EFFACEMENT AND PERMANENCE (CA. 1850-2000)

During the second half of the 19th century (beginning with → Eliphas Lévi) appeared an esoteric current known as occultism [→ occult / occultism], which continued well into the 20th. One of its main characteristics is that it sought to combine the findings of both experimental science and the occult sciences cultivated since the Renaissance. Its representatives thereby wanted to demonstrate the emptiness of materialism. Occultism essentially restricted itself to the domain of “secondary causes”, but its strong propensity for eclecticism caused it to touch on a number of diverse fields, including various earlier esoteric currents, among which theosophy. Hence the sometimes fluid boundary between occultism and theosophy. Such is the case, in France, with Albert Faucheux (alias → Barlet, 1838-1921) and Gérard Encausse (alias → Papus, 1875-1916). This is also why some theosophically inspired initiatory societies flourished, albeit in limited number, within the occultist current; for example, the Martinist Order [→ Martinism: Second Period] founded by Papus in 1891. As its name indicates, that Order was inspired by the works of Saint-Martin, and in that sense it was also close to the Rectified Scottish Rite (see above), which had continued to be very much practised in Masonic Obediences. Furthermore, a number of

the representatives of the occultist current edited books of or on theosophy. Pasqually's *Traité de la Réintégration* was published for the first time in 1899, edited by one of them. Papus edited texts by, and comments on, Saint-Martin and Pasqually.

Among works in Russian, those of some theosophically-tinged Orthodox philosophers are noteworthy: Vladimir Soloviev's (1853-1900) *Conferences on Theantropy* (1877-1878), *The Beauty of Nature* (1889), *The Meaning of Love* (1892-1894); and Nicholas Berdiaev's (1874-1945) *Etudes sur Jacob Böhme* (1930, in French). They are traversed by a sophiological inspiration and in some not negligible aspects stand in Boehme's wake.

There would be little to say about theosophy in the first half of the 20th century, besides the fact that it was (and still is, for that matter) present in the aforementioned initiatory societies. It was present, furthermore, through a few noteworthy authors, like → Leopold Ziegler (1881-1958) in *Überlieferung* (Tradition; 1948) and *Menschwerdung* (Humanization; 1948), and Auguste-Edouard Chauvet (1885-1955; *L'Esotérisme de la Genèse* [The Esotericism of Genesis], 1946-1958). As a matter of fact, the continuation of the theosophical current seems to have been (and still to be) hampered by the appearance of a new one, widely represented in the esoteric scene: perennialism (otherwise called the Traditionalist School) [→ Tradition], founded on the idea of a “primordial Tradition” overarching all the traditions of the world. It began to come to the fore with → Edouard Schuré's *Les Grands Initiés* (1889) and → Mme Blavatsky's first works when the occultist current was flourishing. It made great headway in France as early as the 1920s with → René Guénon, and later on in the United States with → Frithjof Schuon. To a large extent due to the ever-growing influence of perennialism, the theosophical current (always understood here, of course, in the sense of Christian theosophy and its developments), which over the preceding hundred years had been fading away, practically dried up.

Guénon himself was not interested in the western theosophical corpus of the past, first, probably because of its Germanic roots (he was not a great admirer of German culture), and second, because he hardly dealt with the Western esoteric currents proper. It seems that the only text in which he portrayed modern western theosophy in positive terms consists of four lines only, in a book (*Le Théosophisme, histoire d'une pseudo-religion* [Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion], 1921) which, as it turns out, is dedicated to a radical demolition of the Theosophical Society founded by H.P. Blavatsky –



part of whose roots are embedded in the occultist current and which has only tenuous connections with the theosophical one. In his introductory part, Guénon quotes as genuine theosophers Jacob Boehme, Johann Georg Gichtel, William Law, Jane Lead, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, and Karl von Eckartshausen. Obviously, the “classical” theosophical current only serves as a foil here. Guénon almost never mentioned it anywhere else, and was probably barely knowledgeable about it. Granted the difference in terms of contexts, it seems permissible to consider his influence to have been at least as instrumental as Swedenborg’s had previously been, in overshadowing theosophy and thereby limiting its reception and continuation.

The Anthroposophical Society [→ Anthroposophy], originally a schism of the Theosophical Society, and founded by → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) in 1913, can be viewed as another competing movement by virtue of its goals and its large membership. Steiner’s thought plunges its threefold roots into Early Rosicrucian literature, German Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, and the Theosophical Society of Mme Blavatsky, more than into the theosophical current proper.

Could the renowned Islamicist → Henry Corbin (1903-1978) be considered a Christian theosopher? For many years an active participant of the Eranos Conferences in Ascona, he was a philosopher and a savant interested not only in Islamic theosophy (Isma‘ilyya, Shi‘ism, Suhrawardi, Ibn ‘Arabi, etc.), but also in the theosophy of the West. His scholarly work (for example, *L’Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d’Ibn ‘Arabi* [Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi], 1958; *Terre céleste et corps de resurrection* [Celestial Earth and Body of Resurrection], 1960; *En Islam iranien* [In Iranian Islam], 1971-1972) is pervaded by an outspoken personal – religionistic – approach of a theosophical character. Corbin was the proponent of the idea of a “comparative theosophy” among the three great religions of the Book; but it is very telling that his main reference in terms of Western theosophy was, in line with the very nature of his Islamic preferences and his docetist slant, Emanuel Swedenborg.

Apart from Corbin, special mention should be made of an esotericist who, after having sojourned for a long time within the hothouse of the Anthroposophical Society and eventually left it, may be considered one of the rare contemporary representatives (and actually, an outstanding one) of the theosophical current. This is → Valentin Tomberg (1901-1973), a Russian of Baltic German origin, whose *Méditations sur les Arcanes Majeurs du*

*Tarot* was written directly in French, published first in German in 1972 and then in several other languages, and represents one of the most outstanding books in 20th century Western esotericism.

In conclusion, the history of theosophy has had a development and a destiny similar to those of other esoteric currents. It appeared in a specific cultural milieu – the Baroque of the late Renaissance, late German Lutheranism – from which it cannot be divorced. Given the essentials of its specificity, its very nature disposed it to find a new impetus during the Enlightenment, then in the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods. Later on, it has survived through some epigones and only a few original thinkers as well; but its persisting influence within the esoteric landscape could and still can be seen operating in several directions, albeit mostly indirectly, in the form of its various migrations and derivations.

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## Church Universal and Triumphant → Summit Lighthouse

### Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens), † before 215

Clement was a Christian teacher who worked in Alexandria and left us some important writings, but about whose life only little is known. He was born in a pagan family, probably in Athens. After his conversion he studied with Christian teachers in Greece, Southern Italy, Syria and Palestine, and finally settled in Alexandria (ca. 180), where he became a pupil of Pantaenus, a non-Gnostic Christian teacher. According to Eusebius, *Church History*, VI, 6, Clement became Pantaenus' successor as head of the so-called Catechetical School, but that is by no means certain, since the existence of this ecclesiastical institution before 200 is far from being an established fact. Everything in Clement's preserved works suggests that he was an independent lay teacher and thinker, without any official connection with the Alexandrian church. About 203, under the pressure of a persecution, he fled from Alexandria to Asia Minor, where he died shortly before 215.

Clement may be called the first Christian scholar: he had a vast knowledge of Scripture and of Greek and Christian literature (more than 360 different quotations from Greek literary and philosophical works). His eagerness to show how learned a Christian could be sometimes tends to pedantry. He was well read in at least Homer and Plato, but, like many of his contemporaries, he knew most of the authors from whose works he is quoting only through anthologies and excerpts. Sometimes he obviously borrows a passage from another author's work without any notice. An interesting example of this procedure is his report on a procession of Egyptian priests who carry forty-two fundamental Hermetic books (*Strom.*, VI, 35-37; → Hermetic literature). The most important of his own works are: *Exhortation to the Greeks*, an apology which proclaims the supremacy of the Christian religion; *Paedagogue*, in three volumes, about Christian ethics; *Stromateis*, "Miscellanies" (lit. "Patchwork", "Carpets"), his most important work, in eight volumes; and *Excerpts from Theodotus*, quotations from the Valentinian [→ Valentinus and Valentinians] Gnostic Theodotus and others, with Clement's own comments.

In 2nd-century Alexandria, Christian intellectuals were almost exclusively found on the side of the Gnostics [→ Gnosticism]. Clement was a non-

Gnostic Christian intellectual and he had to defend his position against Gnostics and pagan critics of Christianity on the one hand and simple ordinary church members on the other. The Gnostics held that faith (*pistis*) was in fact irrelevant and that only knowledge (*gnōsis*), in the sense of esoteric insight in things divine, led to salvation. Clement's answer was that every believer who had been baptised was saved and that, therefore, Gnosis was not necessary. With the help of Greek philosophical ideas about the activity of the mind he defined the concept of *pistis* and defended its indispensability. This was not only directed against the Gnostics but also against Greek intellectuals who reproached the Christians for accepting everything by faith and not on the basis of rational reasoning. The simple believers, for their part, held that faith was all-sufficient: the faithful had simply to accept on authority what was taught by the church, and, therefore, philosophical or Gnostic speculations were suspect and had to be avoided. Against them, Clement argued that faith is indeed sufficient and even indispensable for salvation, but that personal knowledge is better than belief on authority, since it brings the believer to a higher level of religious comprehension and makes spiritual growth possible. For that reason, Clement defended the use of philosophy in theological speculation. He even went as far as to sustain that Greek philosophy and the Old Testament were equal preparatory stages for the Christian message. His religious thinking was strongly influenced by Jewish Alexandrian philosophy (Philo), Middle-Platonism, and Christian Gnosticism. He shared with these currents the idea that the highest doctrines about God, the world and man cannot be revealed to everybody but should be reserved to a small circle of initiates who are worthy to comprehend them. In his *Stromateis*, Clement set himself the task 'to speak hid-ingly, to expose concealingly, and to point out silently' (I, 15, 1). From Philo of Alexandria he learned, *int. al.*, that by means of allegorical exegesis all kinds of philosophical and religious truths could be found in the divine scriptures. Middle-Platonism provided him with a philosophical framework that directed his thinking about God and Christ. Christ was for him the divine Logos, the Pedagogue and Teacher of mankind, who had revealed the divine truth, first and only partly to Greek philosophers and Hebrew prophets, and then completely when he himself became man in Jesus Christ. With Christian Gnosticism Clement was convinced that there existed a secret and esoteric Christian tradition alongside that which was openly transmitted by the Church: 'This knowl-

edge (*gnōsis*), handed down in unwritten form from the apostles through a succession of teachers, has come to a few people' (*Strom.* VI, 61, 3). Clement attacked the Gnostics for their claim to be the only true Christians and their rejection of faith as a sufficient base for salvation, but he had also much in common with them. He quotes many Gnostic teachers from the 2nd century, and not always disapprovingly. One of the scholarly problems of his *Excerpts from Theodotus* is the difficulty to distinguish clearly between the Gnostic quotations and Clement's own comments.

Clement's religious thinking culminates in his description of the ideal Christian, the "True Gnostic", to which especially books VI and VII of the *Stromateis* are devoted. A first and indispensable characteristic of the true Gnostic is his moral perfection and detachment from worldly things (strong influence of Stoic ethics). His knowledge not only concerns God and good and evil, but also the whole world: 'He possesses the most precise truth about the world from its creation to its end, having learned it from the Truth itself' (*Strom.* VI, 78, 5). It is a spiritual knowledge, which derives from revelation and is to be found in the words of the Logos, i.e. in the divine scriptures. Therefore, an important part of the esoteric tradition is the capacity to read the hidden meaning of Scripture by means of allegorical exegesis. This provides the Gnostic with a perfect knowledge of past, present and future, and leads him to an ever-deeper understanding of the divine world and to the contemplation of God.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

Comenius (Komenski), Jan Amos,  
\* 28.3.1592 Niwitz (Moravia),  
† 15.11.1670 Amsterdam

Comenius' family belonged to the Fraternity commonly known as the Moravian Brothers and named *Jednota Bratska* in Czech, that is, Unity of Brethren. From the 15th century, this *ecclesiola* had greatly developed despite persecutions, and it had received some of the Vaudois driven out of Brandenburg. After studying Latin and theology, Comenius went to Hess, in Herborn, then to the Palatinate, in Heidelberg, and experienced the double influence of Calvinism and the millenarianism professed notably by Johann Heinrich Alsted. Returned in 1614 to Moravia, Comenius was ordained pastor in 1616 and got married. However, the victory of Tilly, commander of the Catholic League, at the White Mountain, over the Bohemian army commanded by the Palatine Frederick V – the *Winterkönig*, king of Bohemia for a single winter (1619-1620) – would change the course of Comenius's life. Having lost his wife and children, he was henceforth constrained to lead a wandering life throughout Europe. In 1624, an imperial edict issued a ban on all non-Catholic priests and forced Comenius to take refuge in Lissa, on the Silesian border, where he could enjoy the protection of the powerful family of the Lezycynski. He was able to remain there until 1641, surrounded by a community of Moravian Brothers, of whom he was the bishop. It was there that his passionate interest in problems of pedagogy developed, which manifested in writings such as *Janua linguarum reserata* or *Didactique, Conatum*

*Comenianorum Praeludia* and *Conatum pansophicorum dilucidatio*. Invited to London by Samuel Hartlib in 1641, he traveled to Sweden the following year, then to Elbing in Prussia. In 1643, Comenius published *Irenica quaedam scripta pro pace ecclesiae*, an ecumenical work before the term existed. After the peace of Westphalia, he fell under the influence of a visionary and went to Hungary with the idea of establishing a *Schola Pansophica* there. If he did not succeed in this, he at least completed an encyclopedic collection under the title *Orbis sensualis pictus* and an innovative method of teaching languages entitled *Schulus ludus seu encyclopedia viva*. During the many conflicts between Poland and Sweden, Comenius, who had returned to Lissa, suddenly had to leave this city captured and destroyed by the Polish, because he had sided with the king of Sweden. He spent the last years of his life in Amsterdam and further published his *Opera didactica omnia* (1657), *De irenico irenicorum* (1660) and his beautiful literary testament *Unum necessarium* in 1668.

Of the many works by this man of an often-tragic destiny, and beyond his priestly activities with the Moravian Brothers, we mainly retain his pedagogical innovations partly inspired by Ratichius (Wolfgang Ratke, 1571-1635). In fact, his interest in didactics was only a means for him to arrive at the “general reform of the world” through “pansophy”, that is, a total science, universal knowledge making it possible to decode the “signatures” of the divine realities inscribed in the concrete world. Now, these ideas preoccupied a number of minds in the first half of the 17th century. The *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*, completed in 1610 by Johann Arndt, and the different plans for Christian society proposed by the celebrated Swabian theologian → Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654) after the vogue of the Rosicrucian myth [→ Rosicrucianism I], aimed to “reform the Reformation” toward a pansophic Christianity. The utopian story of *Christianopolis*, published by Andreae in 1619, described its pedagogical program. It is thus not surprising that Comenius should have seen himself as a disciple of Andreae who, according to him, had been able in his writings both to detect the ills from which the Church, the State and culture were suffering, and to suggest the appropriate remedies. Comenius had read the main works published by Andreae between 1616 and 1619. From 1628, Comenius and Andreae established an exchange of correspondence, which accompanied the sending of Comenius’s *Christianae Societatis Imago* (1620) with a commentary that evoked both the “ludibrium” of the *Fama Fraternalis* and its efforts,

engaged as early as 1614, to create a true *societas christiana*, with the purpose of “cleaning the Augean stables”. Having been prevented from achieving this vast project, Andreae suggested to Comenius, in a letter of 16 September 1629, that he pick up the torch and promote an authentically Christian pansophy, one that is thus not content to ally the creator God with nature-philosophy. Comenius was indeed strongly subject to J.V. Andreae’s influence, to the point of repeating in his *Labyrint sveta a raj srdce* (Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart), composed in 1622/23, entire passages from *Peregrini in Patria errores*. However, he granted the Christianization of pansophy a much broader sense in his plan to establish a universal alliance of Men of good will. His *Panegersia* aspired to the creation of a “Collegium Lucis ad fundandam Ecclesiam vere Catholicam philadelphiam” whose prelude he saw in the Rosicrucian brotherhood. In his *Pansophiae templum ad ipsius supremi Architecti, Omnipotentis Dei ideas, normas legesque extruendum*, Comenius divided pansophy into seven parts, making it possible for the mind to pass through successive stages from the knowledge of nature to the contemplation of the supreme God.

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*Lit.*: Martin Brecht, “‘Er hat uns die Fackel übergeben . . .’: Die Bedeutung Johann Valentin Andreaes für Johann Amos Comenius”, in: *Das Erbe des Christ-ian Rosenkreuz*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1988, 28-47 ♦ Klaus Gossmann & Henning Schröer, *Auf den Spuren des Comenius*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992 ♦ Jaromir Cervenka, *Die Naturphilosophie des Johann Amos Comenius*, Hanu: Dausien, 1998 ♦ Richard Van Dülmen, “Johann Amos Comenius und Johann Valentin Andreae”, *Bohemia: Jahrbuch des Collegium Carolinum* 9 (1968), 73-87 ♦ Carlos Gilly, “Comenius und die Rosenkreuzer”, in: Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (ed.), *Aufklärung und Esoterik*, Hamburg: Felix Meiners, 1999, 87-107 ♦ J.L. Criegern, *Johann Amos Comenius als Theologe: Ein Beitrag zur Comenius Literatur*, Leipzig-Heidelberg, 1881 ♦ Ludwig Keller, “Johann Valentin Andreae und Comenius”, *Monatshefte des Comenius-Gesellschaft* I (1892 1893?), 229-241 ♦ J. Kvacala, *Johann Amos Comenius, sein Leben und seine Schriften*, Berlin, 1903-1904 ♦ idem, “Die pädagogische Reform des Comenius in Deutschland bis zum Ausgange des 17. Jahrhunderts”, in: *Monumenta Germaniae Paedagog-*

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ROLAND EDIGHOFFER

**Constant, Alphonse Louis** → Lévi, Éliphas

**Corbin, Henry**, \* 14.4.1903 Paris, † 7.10.1978 Paris

A philosopher by training, as early as 1925 Corbin developed a strong interest in Islamology, under the influence of Étienne Gilson, whose course on Latin Avicennism in the Middle Ages he took at the École pratique des Hautes Études (Vth section). A graduate in scholastic and general philosophy, with diplomas from the École pratique des Hautes Études and the École des langues orientales, librarian at the Bibliothèque Nationale, friend of, among others, Louis Massignon, Alexandre Kojève, Alexandre Koyré, Denis de Rougemont, and Joseph and Jean Baruzi, he concurrently studied and translated works by Sohrawardî, Karl Barth and Heidegger. From 1939 to 1945 he was at the French Institute of Archaeology in Istanbul, before joining the Franco-Iranian Institute of Teheran, where he created the Department of Iranology and then the collection of the Iranian Library. From 1949 he was a regular participant in the Eranos meetings in Switzerland, where he was in significant contact with → Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Gershom Scholem. In 1954, having recently published *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire*, he was appointed Professor of “Islamism and Religions of Arabia” at the Vth section of the École pratique des Hautes Études. From the following year on, until 1973, he directed the Department of Iranology that he had created, and taught history of Islamic theology and philosophy at the faculty of literature of the University of Teheran. In 1958 appeared *L’imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d’Ibn ‘Arabî*; in 1961, *Terre céleste et corps de résurrection*; in 1962, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*; in 1971, the first two volumes of *En Islam iranien* and *L’homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*. In 1973 he became a member of the very recent Iranian Imperial Academy of Philosophy and founded the International Center for Comparative Spiritual Research, better known as the Université Saint Jean de Jérusalem. The same

year he published the last two volumes of *En Islam iranien*, and in 1977 *Philosophie iranienne et philosophie comparée*. He died on 7 October 1978. During all these years he was intensely active in the publication and translation of texts (besides Sohrawardî, Barth and Heidegger: Hamann, Heschel, → Avicenna, Sejestâni, etc.) and contributed to many periodicals, colloquia, and miscellaneous collections. Some of the latter contributions later appeared grouped together in posthumously published volumes.

Corbin’s first text devoted to Iranian Sufism, and more particularly to Sohrawardî, was published in 1933 in *Recherches philosophiques*. Here he emphasized the connection established by Sohrawardî between an illuminative philosophy of Platonic inspiration, a hermeneutics of myth and an angelology – all tied together in a mystical experience of the assumption of Man into a higher reality. Most of his later works would relate specifically to this point, as developed by Ismaelian gnosis. At the same time, refusing categorization, he ceaselessly engaged and promoted a comparative approach, illustrated with particular clarity in his study ‘Herméneutique spirituelle comparée’ (1964) that is devoted to Swedenborgian theosophy [→ Swedenborg] and Ismaelian gnosis. Corbin explains here that the object of his hermeneutics is ‘a *spiritual fact*, . . . a phenomenon of *understanding*’. He readily admits his debt to Heidegger, who provided him with the key to understanding first Shi’ite gnosis, and then ‘the Christian gnosis and . . . the Jewish gnosis that are its immediate neighbors’. The task of spiritual hermeneutics is different from that of the historian, for it is not a matter of simply rediscovering and understanding the past, but of personally “taking charge” of it. For Corbin, this means interpreting historical materials in terms of “hierohistory”, which he believes reveals ‘the hidden esotericism under the phenomenon of the literal appearance . . . of the Holy Books’ which is fulfilled in each believer. For Corbin, spiritual hermeneutics is thus a path of personal spiritual realization under the aegis of theosophy. This hermeneutics is considered to be equivalent to the Sufi *ta’wil*, and to reveal hidden and spiritual esoteric meanings to which correspond as many degrees of being as are felt by the hermeneut’s own conscience. Thus Corbin is in fact concerned with what he calls, in commenting on Avicenna, an ‘exegesis of the soul’.

Here we encounter a basic notion in Corbin’s thinking: the → imagination. Drawing inspiration from Ibn ‘Arabi and Sohrawardî as well as from → Ficino, → Bruno, → Boehme and Swedenborg,



Corbin draws a distinction between the imaginary, which is utopian and unreal, and the imagination, which is cognitive and creative. The imagination constitutes an autonomous world, the *Mundus imaginalis* or the imaginal, the place of theophanic apparition, vision, and prophecy; this is what he calls the “disjoined imagination”. But it is also the response of the cordial and prayerful imaginative awareness of the subject, who perceives the imaginal in his beliefs and perceives himself through it as a moment of the theophanic imagination; this he calls the “conjoined imagination”. By this double movement of the imagination, a union of subject and object (a *unio sympathetica*) and a reversal of interiority and exteriority are accomplished. The spiritual interiority supports the exteriority and, through its “magical” and creative operation, gives it body: ‘In short, because there is imagination, there is *ta’wil*; because there is *ta’wil*, there is symbolism; because there is symbolism, there are two dimensions in beings’.

The centrality of this conception of the imagination as a faculty of *coincidentia oppositorum* and of *unio sympathetica* is not without its consequences for the notion of esotericism upheld by Corbin. He attaches a very special importance to the notion of *significatio passiva* as understood by Luther, and even makes it one of the main keys of his hermeneutics. It means that the divine attributes can be understood only insofar as they are in relationship with us, and insofar as the divine “*esto*”, the “Be!”, makes us be (‘the being that we are has this same imperative, but in its *significatio passiva*!’). The two dimensions in each being are present in a docetist manner: ‘. . . the *mysterium conjunctionis* uniting the two terms is a theophanic union (from the Creator’s viewpoint) or a theopathic union (from the creature’s viewpoint), but in no case a “hypostatic union”. Incarnation takes place only in a *caro spiritualis*, and not as “physical incarnation”: ‘. . . the *subjectum incarnationis* is not God or man, but a middle term between the two, an extra-divine divine person, as well as an extra-human human person’, in other words, the Angel, archetype of the person and self-revelation of the divine Being. Docetism is thus the foundation of the imagination, since by elevating material realities to the rank of an apparition it restores their value as image of the true spiritual reality – precisely that to which the hermeneut who follows the path of *ta’wil* aspires. Hence, Corbin clearly denies any esoteric potential to “orthodox” Christianity, for as a religion of Incarnation it closes the door to prophetism: ‘. . . the Incarnation is a unique and irreversible fact; it exists in the web of material

facts; God has personally incarnated at a moment in history; this “occurs” in the chronology with definite dates. There is no more mystery, therefore no more esotericism necessary’. Esotericism even becomes impossible, as soon as dogmas are irretrievably fixed, thus closing the door to ‘any possibility of a new prophetic revelation dispensed by the Angels, but also [to] any initiative of a prophetic hermeneutics’. This docetist foundation of Corbin’s spiritual hermeneutics is certainly the reason why he clearly favors, in the domain of Western esotericism, the figure of Swedenborg.

Given these foundations, although at one occasion he called on ‘esotericists of all religions’ to unite, Corbin in fact proved remarkably exclusive. In Christianity, only those who place themselves (or whom Corbin places) outside the dogmatic and institutional boundaries of the Great Church can be qualified as “esotericists” and can appeal to his “Inner Church” that requires no act of belonging for one to belong’ and which is ‘the community, the *omma*, of esotericists from everywhere and for always’. Along the same lines, Corbin also refers to the ‘Church of John [that] can be neither secularized nor socialized, just like it is impossible to secularize and socialize the esoteric community of the Friends of God’. Thus, Corbin’s definition of “esotericism” (understood, in terms of its etymology, as “interiorism”) is, on the one hand, very comprehensive – even to the point of being applicable to phenomena completely different from esotericism in a historical sense – but, on the other, ultimately very restrictive as well. For in addition to his exclusion of Christian “orthodoxy” he also wants to demarcate himself from “pseudo-esotericisms” (undoubtedly the occultist currents, although he never names them explicitly). Since Corbin introduces into the heart of his approach a process in which the commentator identifies with his subject, he ends up creating a spiritual hermeneutics, not a hermeneutics of spiritualities. In studying and commenting on theosophers from East and West, he would clearly like, to some extent, to be a theosopher himself: ‘. . . one cannot remain a stranger [to the spirituality that] one wants really *to understand* and *to make understood*’. This method of hermeneutics, that Corbin claims to discover among the theosophers, he appropriates for himself to make of it, if not a universal method, at least a workable method for interpreting the religions of the Book (inasmuch as they are prophetic religions, that is, that they are ‘professing the necessity of superhuman mediators between the divinity that inspires them, and common humanity’). Hence the comparativism that Corbin brings into play has as its



prime vocation the rediscovery of the similarities and convergences that are revealed by the spiritual hermeneutics of each religion of the Book, and that are based upon the archetypes common to different spiritual worlds.

In this respect Corbin, since he makes the theosophers' approach into his own, deserves being studied as an esotericist probably more than as an "esoterologist". His perspective permits him to posit a very broad definition of esotericism (interiorism), while retaining from the actual history of esotericism only what agrees with his definition. Nevertheless, Corbin's contribution to the history of religions is undeniable: besides having been one of the principal initiators of Iranian studies in France, his works have greatly contributed to the legitimization of university research in esotericism. Moreover, his involvement in the Eranos meetings and his establishment of the "research community" called the Université Saint Jean de Jerusalem have undoubtedly stimulated interdisciplinary studies in this area. Finally, while the methodological assumptions underlying his spiritual hermeneutics are certainly subject to criticism, his deepening of the notions of the imagination and the *mundus imaginalis* have contributed to the development of a criteriology of esotericism as heuristic as that of Antoine Faivre – who, on this point, recognizes his debt to Corbin while distinguishing himself from him in other respects.

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JÉRÔME ROUSSE-LACORDAIRE

Correggio, Giovanni da, \* ca. 1451? Bologna?, † after 1503 place unknown

Apocalyptic prophet and hermetic messiah. We know about Correggio's activities from an anonymous "Epistola Enoch" and three dedicatory epistles written by his pupil → Lodovico Lazzarelli, and from scattered references in the works of contemporaries, including the famous abbot → Johannes Trithemius. Correggio's year of birth cannot be established with any certainty: all we know is that Lazzarelli describes him as being 'about thirty-three years old' in 1484, but this may reflect an attempt on Lazzarelli's part to emphasize parallels between the ages of Jesus and Correggio at the time of their public entrance in Jerusalem and Rome respectively (see below). Most probably Correggio was a bastard son of Antonio da Correggio (?-1474), which means he came from an old and powerful family belonging to the higher nobility. Although in his later life Correggio and his entire

family were roaming through Italy and France while begging for their daily bread, he may have done this for spiritual reasons; there are indications that he had a house in Bologna, and suffered no serious financial problems.

Nothing is known about Correggio's life prior to his first appearance in Rome, on November 12, 1481. The cardinals were gathering for a consistory meeting, and Correggio appeared on the stairs of the papal palace holding up a Bible 'mystically closed with seven seals': an obvious reference to Revelation 5:1. He held an apocalyptic sermon and called for repentance. One of the bystanders was the young poet Lazzarelli, who followed him as his first pupil. Lazzarelli has left us a much more detailed description of Correggio's second appearance in Rome, on Palm Sunday, April 11, 1484. He first attracted a crowd by riding through the streets of Rome to the Vatican, clothed in rich garments and accompanied by four servants. Having left the city he changed his clothes, putting on a blood-stained linen mantle and a crown of thorns. Over his head was fixed a silver-plated disk in the shape of the crescent moon, with a text that identified him as God's or Jesus's servant Pimander and contained a quotation from the alchemical *Tabula Smaragdina*. Decked out with various symbolic paraphernalia, described in detail by Lazzarelli, he mounted a white ass and entered the gate of Rome, surrounded by his servants on horseback. He headed towards the Vatican, but made several stops to proclaim the coming judgment, identifying himself as 'Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio, the Angel of Wisdom Pimander'. People leaving the churches, with in their hands palm branches that they had received during high mass, started following him through the streets, thus greatly amplifying the similarity with Christ's entrance in Jerusalem. According to Lazzarelli's account, the guards at the gate of the St. Peter made way for him and allowed him to enter. Having dismounted, Correggio is said to have walked to the altar, offered up his mystical apparel and a paper entitled "The Eternal Gospel", prayed to God, and left the St. Peter. We know from the contemporary Jewish author Abraham Farissol that at one time Correggio was imprisoned in Rome. Although Lazzarelli describes him as freely entering and leaving the St. Peter, this is hardly credible. It is more likely that he was arrested at this particular occasion, without ever making it to the altar. He is said to have escaped from prison, and to have fled together with his friends and devotees. Back in Bologna he was imprisoned anew, on suspicion of heresy, but was apparently released.

In 1486 Correggio made another prophetic

appearance, this time in Florence. He was on his way to the court of king Ferdinand I (Ferrante) in Naples, who had requested to see him, undoubtedly at Lazzarelli's suggestion. But Lorenzo il Magnifico ordered his arrest and imprisonment, and he was severely harassed by a Franciscan inquisitor. Ferrante obtained his release, but we do not know whether Correggio ever made it to Naples. We then again lose track of him for several years, but sometime after 1492 he must have visited Rome with a considerable following, calling himself "the younger Hermes". In 1497 he preached in Venice; and in 1499 he passed through Cesena on his way from Milan, dressed in sackcloth and accompanied by his entire household, including his wife and five children. In 1501 he traveled to Lyon, still with his family, where he was granted an audience with king Louis XII, whom he impressed with his learning and with promises about sensational alchemical and magical secrets. Sometime later Correggio seems to have returned to Rome, where he claimed to possess an alchemical cure against the plague. His last writing was addressed to pope Julius II, and suggests that he was now in urgent need of a protector: 'Protect, protect me . . . and I will protect you. Bestow your help on our Giovanni Mercurio . . .'. And that is the last glimpse we have of Correggio: we do not know what became of him and his family, or where and when he died.

It is likely that Correggio started out as a Christian apocalyptic prophet, and that his striking self-proclamation as "Pimander", "Mercurio" and "the younger Hermes" reflects the influence of his pupil Lazzarelli. Lazzarelli believed that the great being Poimandres who appeared to Hermes in *Corpus Hermeticum* I was in fact no one else but Christ, who had now returned in the person of Correggio: the hermetic Christ. According to Farissol, in the years after 1484 Correggio referred to himself as 'Son of God, Mercurius, Trismegistus, Enoch and Methuselah', described himself as 'a son of God emanating from the Godhead with the divine spirit sparkling in him', and taught that 'whoever elevated himself and endeavored to gain perfection would attain . . . the status of a son of God'. Correggio seems to have continued calling himself "Mercurio" to the end of his life, but his writings—several of which were published during his lifetime—show only scant hermetic references, and the later accounts contain no evidence that he kept presenting himself as Christ. In his meeting with king Louis XII in 1501 he presented himself, rather, as a great alchemist and magus, modeled after Apollonius of Tyana.

All Correggio's writings, written in a characteris-

tic excited and ponderous style, are heavily apocalyptic and frequently call on worldly and spiritual leaders to take the lead in the final battle between good and evil. His last works, notably his as yet unpublished *De Quercu Iulii Pontificis sive de lapide philosophico* (The Oak of Pope Julius, or the Philosopher's Stone), show an increasing preoccupation with → alchemy: an aspect of his activities that has not yet been studied in sufficient detail. Likewise his indebtedness to Christian eschatological traditions, and to Joachimism in particular, requires further investigation. It remains that Correggio's self-presentation as a hermetic messiah makes him a striking example of how Christian hermetism could be integrated in the popular apocalypticism of the late 15th century.

Giovanni da Correggio, "Oratio ad sanctam crucem" (Rome, 1499), modern edition with English translation in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff & Ruud M. Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents*, Phoenix: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 2005 ♦ "Exhortationes in Barbaros Thurcos Scijthas Johannis mercurij corrigiensis perornate" (Lyons, 1501; no modern edition) ♦ "Sonetto", modern edition with English translation in: Hanegraaff & Bouthoorn, o.c. ♦ "Contra pestem [etc.]" (n.p., n.d.), facsimile with English translation in: W.B. McDaniel, "An Hermetic Plague-Tract by Johannes Mercurius Corrigiensis", part I, *Transactions and Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, ser. IV, vol. 9 (1941-1942), 96-111 ♦ "De Quercu Julii Pontificis sive de lapide philosophico" (after 1503), British Library, ms Harley 4081 ♦ Lodovico Lazzarelli, "Three Prefaces" and "Epistola Enoch", and Johannes Trithemius, fragment about Correggio (1690): modern editions with English translation in: Hanegraaff & Bouthoorn, o.c.

*Lit.*: Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Lodovico Lazzarelli and the Hermetic Christ: At the Sources of Renaissance Hermetism", in: Hanegraaff & Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli* (quoted *supra*) ♦ Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Ancora per Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio", in: idem, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* 1, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956, 249-257 ♦ idem, "Lodovico Lazzarelli e Giovanni da Correggio, due ermetici del Quattrocento, e il manoscritto Il. D. I. 4 della Biblioteca Comunale degli Ardentì di Viterbo" (1960), repr. in: idem, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* 3, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura 1993, 207-225 ♦ W.B. McDaniel, "An Hermetic Plague-Tract by Johannes Mercurius Corrigiensis", 2 pts., *Transactions and Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, ser. IV, 9 (1941 & 1942), 96-111, 217-225 ♦ Kurt Ohly, "Johannes 'Mercurius' Corrigiensis", *Beiträge zur Inkunabelkunde*, n.F. 2 (1938), 133-141 ♦ David B. Ruderman, "Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio's Appearance in Italy as Seen Through the Eyes of an Italian Jew", *Renaissance Quarterly* 28 (1975), 309-322 ♦ idem, "Observations

on a Christian Prophet and a Florentine Luminary: Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio", in: idem, *The World of a Renaissance Jew: The Life and Thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol*, Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1981, 35-56 ♦ Fabio Troncarelli, "Il profeta di Correggio", in: Vincenzo de Caprio & Concetta Ranieri (eds.), *Presenze eterodosse nel Viterbese*, Archivio Guido Izzi, 1996, 9-26.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

## Correspondences

1. INTRODUCTION 2. CORRESPONDENCES FROM ANTIQUITY THROUGH THE RENAISSANCE 3. CORRESPONDENCES SINCE THE ENLIGHTENMENT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The idea that reality consists of multiple "levels" which in some manner mirror one another is extremely widespread in all traditional societies: it is basic to the various → divinatory arts, → magic, and → astrology; but can also be found e.g. in the architectural design of premodern villages, cities, temples and court complexes; in the ways that the orders of gods, angels or demons are imagined; in systems of → number symbolism; and in various cosmologies, including notions of the human being as microcosm mirroring the structure of the macrocosm. In the wake of Marcel Granet's *La pensée chinoise* (1934) and the second volume of Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China* (1956), the fundamental importance of "correlative thinking" to traditional Chinese culture has come to be widely recognized by sinologists, but its role in other premodern cultures has been curiously neglected, even to such an extent that it is often considered to have been unique to premodern China. In fact, however, correlative thinking is ubiquitous in all pre-modern and even early modern cultures, and its expressions (such as e.g. the elaborate systematic tables of correspondences that can be found in Chinese, Indian, Middle-Eastern, Mesoamerican as well as in pre- and early modern European contexts) are often strikingly similar. Rather than considering correspondences as a "doctrine" that can be traced back to specific philosophical sources and authors, correlative thinking may therefore be considered a spontaneous tendency of the human mind; in fact, neurobiological research suggests that its ultimate foundations may lie in the way the human brain uses "topographical maps" to organize data into functional hierarchies (Farmer, Henderson & Witzel 2000 [2002]). While taking this into

account, the following overview will be restricted to correspondences in Western culture specifically, and focus on the philosophical and theological frameworks that were developed here to account for and systematize correlative thinking.

Ancient and medieval cosmology was steeped in theology, in the sense that a primary importance was awarded to cosmogony and to an ontological perspective: philosophically considered either as a divine creation, or as an emanation of the highest Principle, the world was primarily understood as a reflection of the Godhead, meant to reveal its will and wisdom and, although closed and consisting of a finite (even if innumerable) number of components, expressing something of its supernal origin. Seen from such an angle, any interest in the universe (and/or its contents) was bound to assume the essential shape of an inquiry into the divine mysteries, conceiving of the world in terms of an ontological ladder leading back up to the divine sphere; or of a scrutiny of the symbolic “signs” which the natural world displays for the spiritual and moral edification of mankind.

The gradual development of these views into the notion of a “Book of Nature”, complementing the “Book of Scripture” – that is to say, the emergence of a partially autonomous concept of “nature” (and consequently of “physics”, or “natural philosophy”) as such – required a concept of “secondary causes” mediating between God’s will and its creation. The actual working of the universe (prior, of course, to the emergence of any sort of “mechanistic” insights, or to any concept of natural “laws”) was maintained and regulated according to divine ordinance *by* and *through* these intermediary causes, whether they were regarded as angelic entities, celestial influences, numbers or otherwise. As is well known, this shift in philosophical outlook was inspired by the 12th-century commentaries on the book of *Genesis* and Plato’s *Timæus* (stemming for instance from the School of Chartres, mainly Thierry of Chartres and William of Conches) and by the progressive assimilation, during the following century, of arabic and aristotelian cosmology by the Scholastics (commentaries of → Albertus Magnus on Aristotle’s *Physics* and *De cælo*). Historically, these conceptions mediate in turn between the earlier perception of the world as theophany, and the later, Renaissance view of nature as a living garment or organic expression of the divine being. The same period also witnessed the gradual substitution of a mathematical paradigm for a metaphysical one within natural philosophy, partly owing to the emphasis on the idea of a cosmic numeric harmony.

## 2. CORRESPONDENCES FROM ANTIQUITY THROUGH THE RENAISSANCE

Theoretical formulations of correspondences reflect several tenets which, until (and well into) the Renaissance, were among the mainstays of the dominant world picture(s) of Western culture.

(1) The first is *the unicity of creation*, which implies that a perfect ontological continuity connects all levels of the universe, throughout the overall hierarchy of being. This theme of the “great chain of being”, to which no precise historical origin may be assigned (it is present in Plato’s *Ion* but certainly antedates Greek civilization), is perhaps one of the most important metaphysical foundations of ancient cosmological systems.

(2) Second comes *the doctrine of “participation”*, of platonic origin, in which “love” constitutes the universal link or bond between the constituents of the universe, in a horizontal sense as well (*Symposium*, 186b-188d). Frequently understood as more or less equivalent to the stoic scheme of *sympatheia/antipatheia*, the cosmic pattern of attraction/repulsion which determines the relations and interactions of all things, properties and beings within the world, it may be construed as some kind of “immanent determinism” permeating the cosmos, and as one of two main driving forces at work behind its active dynamisms.

(3) The second driving force, as well as the third tenet, consists in seeing *the universe as a living being*, endowed with an animating soul, and whose parts are utterly complementary and interdependent, exactly like the limbs of a body. Again, the unicity and “wholeness” of its structure is frequently understood as an organic image of the human body.

(4) This leads us to the fourth tenet, *the doctrine of universal analogy*. Through analogy, which refers to a primarily “vertical” perspective, all levels of existence within the hierarchy of being (or, for that matter, all things they comprehend) actually mirror each other, in the sense that the lower in ontological rank is considered as a “symbol” of the superior, essentially endowed with the same virtues, features and properties, the main difference between them being one of scale (or of “proportion”, the original meaning of the Greek *analogia*). One of the most fundamental and widespread of these analogies is precisely that of the macrocosmos/microcosmos, which harks back to Plato’s *Timæus* (although, in itself, it certainly dates from time immemorial and is also found in non-Western contexts, e.g. Taoism), envisaging the world as a “grand man” and man as a synthetic abridgement of the universe.



In a restricted sense, correspondences may be interpreted as the “horizontal” counterpart of the network of universal analogies; but according to a more encompassing understanding, they overreach from one natural realm or plane to another and, moreover, overlap quite frequently with analogies proper. Such ambiguities are rather common in this domain; one may think, for instance (and *mutatis mutandis*) of the equally ambivalent conception of the elements, often presented as both the foundations *and* the components of reality.

The network of correspondences appears as the outward expression of the hidden dynamics of *sympatheia/antipatheia*; as a system of “signs” canvassing the qualitative interactions of natural things and beings, and manifesting the manner of their distribution; as well as the practical means of their philosophical understanding, and of their magical or therapeutical use. Life and death, good and evil, illness and cure, and the general complementarity of natural qualities in bodies, result on the cosmological level from such a network, on the basis of which Plotinus described nature as “the great sorceress”.

Correspondences were considered to possess in themselves a dual aspect, external and internal. The external one was based on plain outward resemblance in shape or characteristics – for example between a plant and a human limb, or between a given animal and a natural body, both being considered to stand under the dominion of the same astral influence and therefore to manifest (each in its own way) similar properties. The inner aspect refers to some internal “essence” of things, which is supposed to be at the root of all corporeal features, either of one single natural item or of a number of them, to which it is common. The external features, being visible, “manifest” the inner principle, and lead on to an easier and better knowledge of it.

Whenever such a “hidden” essence is being considered, the notion of “sign” – understood both in a natural and in a semantic way – is called upon to mediate between the internal and external properties. Yet the “sign” as such essentially denotes or indicates the presence of an invisible counterpart to the outwardly observable characteristics, whereas the term (and concept) of *signatura* (made famous by → Paracelsus [*Astronomia magna, Von der natürliche Dinge*] and, later, → Jacob Boehme [*De signatura rerum*]) applies to the very *relation* between occult (→ occult /occultism) and manifest, and constitutes an attempt to explain it in terms of the “imprint” or translation of an archetype into material reality. It must be noted that this relation

works, and therefore must be accounted for, in both directions: from the invisible to the visible, but from the visible to the invisible as well. The latter is the case when Paracelsus recommends close observation of “astronomy” as revealing the outward, visible manifestation, on a large scale, of what is hidden and inscrutable within man or natural things on a smaller scale, that is to say their inner essence and “occult qualities”, thus postulating a fundamental connaturality of internal archetype(s) between the two orders. Occasionally *signatura* is taken to mean the mere external resemblance mentioned above between two different natural bodies, in which case it likewise points to a relation, albeit a different and more “superficial” one.

Conceptions of causality implied by the theory of correspondences are, again, nuanced, varied and ambiguous. Envisaged as depending on the cosmic network of sympathies and antipathies, correspondences may be understood in terms of a “preestablished harmony”, or “immanent determinism”, embedded as such in material reality and independent, for this reason, of causality in a strict sense. Yet, as we have seen, the doctrine cannot be cleared from astrological implications. In that context, the “occult” relation between celestial bodies and configurations and terrestrial beings may be interpreted – in line with the non-causal notion of “preestablished harmony” just mentioned – as purely dynamic and interactive, based on a common set of components (elements and qualities) held in common by the different realms; but it may also be seen as based on one of the many available conceptions of a physical, although invisible, astral influence (this might be referred to as a notion of “occult causality”), or as based on the presence of an invisible *archè* at work within all natural things (this may be referred to as “ontological” causality, with a cause being seen as transcending its effects, similar to the “essence” and its corporeal transcriptions, referred to above).

Seen from any such perspective (or from several of them at the same time), correspondences expressed an important understanding of how life was believed to be infused into the whole universe, and of the ontological intentionality which made it possible for “signs” to convey the properties of being along with those of structure, and fully reveal the invisible through the manifest (and vice versa).

### 3. CORRESPONDENCES SINCE THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The explicit worldviews and implicit assumptions that made it natural in pre-modern and early



modern contexts to think of reality in terms of correspondences gradually came to be compromised and called into doubt under the impact of the scientific revolution and, especially, of Enlightenment rationalism. Since the assumptions basic to the newly emerging world picture(s) were largely incompatible with correspondences, the nature and internal logic (in terms of its own guiding assumptions) of the latter was no longer understood; as a result, a new generation of scholars, in studying pre- and early modern cosmologies, found itself deeply puzzled by what seemed to them obvious “irrationalities” and “absurdities”. Friedrich Max Müller’s reference to the Brahmanas as ‘the twaddle of idiots, and the raving of madmen’, or E.B. Tylor’s description of magic as a ‘monstrous farrago’ and a ‘contemptible superstition’ based upon incorrect thinking [→ Magic I], are only two well-known examples that demonstrate the failure of 19th-century scholars and intellectuals to understand correspondences in terms of its own premises. With respect to systems of correspondences in Western culture specifically, and with considerably more sophistication, 20th-century historians of science such as Brian Vickers (1984, 1988) have analyzed them as based upon a failure to recognize the distinction – formulated in terms of Saussurian linguistics – between signifier and signified; referring to Plato’s *Cratylus*, Vickers correctly draws a parallel between correspondences and the concept of natural signs on the one hand, and modern scientific worldviews and the understanding of signs as conventional, on the other. In short, concepts of correspondences as based upon a non-causal connection, as well as notions of “occult causality” (see above), are deeply problematic from the alternative perspective of “instrumental causality” basic to modern scientific and rationalist worldviews; and the latter’s implicit or explicit “nominalist” assumptions are no less incompatible with the “realist” ones that underly traditional correlative thinking.

→ Emanuel Swedenborg’s famous “doctrine of correspondences” is a particularly good example of how traditional and modern notions clashed during the Age of reason. On the one hand, Swedenborg’s doctrine is clearly based upon non-causal connections and formulated in a deliberate attempt at overcoming the limitations of instrumental causality, and his Biblical exegesis is grounded in an extreme version of linguistic realism; but on the other hand, Swedenborg thinks about correspondences along post-Cartesian lines, and about biblical exegesis in terms of a rationalist protestantism that relies exclusively on direct divine revelation for unveiling the real meaning of

linguistic signs (Hanegraaff 1996/1998; 2005). The result is a streamlined scholastic system that formally exemplifies traditional correlative thinking, but is curiously presented in Protestant and rationalist language.

While Swedenborg developed his system of correspondences with considerable intellectual sophistication, the same can hardly be said about most other authors who have defended or used it since the 18th century. Due to its incompatibility with the instrumental causality, rationalism and nominalism basic to modern science and philosophy, correspondences became a typical example of “rejected knowledge” seldom taken seriously by others than esotericists; and the latter, in turn, were mostly so influenced by the very worldviews to which they sought to find an alternative, that they unintentionally ended up interpreting correspondences in modern (rationalist, nominalist, quasi-materialist) terms. Tables of correspondences used by 19th- and 20th-century occultists (with → Aleister Crowley’s volume 777, consisting largely of such tables, as perhaps the ultimate example) tend to be used quite pragmatically, on the nominalist assumption that its various terms – names of gods, angels, demons, colours, substances, numbers etc. – are mere conventional signs that can be rearranged or replaced by others according to the user’s individual preferences (Hanegraaff 2003).

The major exception is → Carl Gustav Jung’s theory of synchronicity. Explicitly presented as a principle of acausal connection between nature and the psyche (that is to say, as an alternative to a worldview based upon instrumental causality), and with many references to the major representatives of esoteric currents from antiquity to the Renaissance, it is in fact a sophisticated restatement of correspondences in modern psychological terms. In the general context of → New Age spirituality, Jung’s theory has strongly contributed to a new popularity of correspondences – very seldom presented explicitly as a worldview, but broadly accepted in practice. Whereas 19th- and early 20th-century occultists were highly conscious of positivism and materialism as a serious threat that had to be countered by alternative worldviews, since the 1960s and increasingly since the 1980s one may observe a pragmatic attitude that implicitly assumes the presence of correspondences (for example in the use of → tarot or astrology) but seldom bothers to try and work out their theoretical implications or convince critics. In the wake of Jung himself, participants in the New Age milieu may sometimes invoke modern scientific theories, especially in the field of quantum mechanics, in support of correspondences or syn-

chronicity; but such theories are seen less as “proof” than as additional confirmation of a perspective that would have been adopted in any case, with or without scientific support. Such a relaxed and pragmatic acceptance of correspondences may well reflect a post-modern relativism that fails to see why scientific naturalism should be more credible than a “spiritual” worldview of correspondences. This phenomenon may well be seen as confirmation of the perspective (referred to in the introduction) that sees correlative thinking as a spontaneous and perhaps neurologically-based tendency of the human mind, which may clothe itself in theories or worldviews, but ultimately does not need them to assert itself.

*Lit.:* Rudolf Allers, “Microcosmus: From Anaximenes to Paracelsus”, *Traditio* II (1944), 319-407 ♦ M.L. Bianchi, “Occulto e manifesto nella medicina del Rinascimento: Jean Fernel e Pietro Severino”, *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia toscana di scienze e lettere La Colombaria* 47 (1982), 183-248 ♦ idem, *Signatura rerum: Segni, magia e conoscenza da Paracelso a Leibniz*, Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1987 ♦ George Perrigo Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1922 ♦ S.A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses. The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems*, Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998 ♦ Steve Farmer, John B. Henderson & Michael Witzel, “Neurobiology, Layered Texts, and Correlative Systems: A Cross Cultural Framework for Premodern Studies”, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 72 (2000 [2002]), 48-89 ♦ M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, Paris: Gallimard, 1966, ch. 2 ♦ R. Gorris Camos (ed.), *Macrocosmo/Microcosmo: Scrivere e pensare il mondo nel Cinquecento tra Italia e Francia*, Fasano: Schena, 2004 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden etc.: E.J. Brill, 1996/Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, 424-429 ♦ idem, “How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World”, *Religion* 33:4 (2003), 357-380 ♦ idem, “Swedenborg's *Magnum Opus* and its Reception”, in: Emanuel Swedenborg, *Secrets of Heaven*, vol. 1, West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005 ♦ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (1936), Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1964 ♦ E.P. Mahoney, “The Metaphysical Foundations of the Hierarchy of Being according to Some Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophers”, in: P. Morewedge (ed.), *Philosophies of Existence, Ancient and Modern*, New York, 1982, 165-257 ♦ idem, “Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), 211-230 ♦ G. Simon, “Porta, la physiognomonie et la magie: Les circularités de la similitude”, in: M. Jones-Davies (ed.), *La magie et ses langages*, Lille: Presses de l'Université de Lille III, 1980, 95-106 ♦ idem, *Sciences et savoirs aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires

du Septentrion, 1996 ♦ Kocku von Stuckrad, “Entsprechungsdanken als Grundform esoterischer Wirklichkeitsdeutung: Das Beispiel Astro-logie”, *Spirita* 13:1 (1999), 12-17 ♦ C. Vasoli, “L'analogie dans le langage de la magie à la Renaissance”, in: M. Jones-Davies, *La magie et ses langages*, o.c., 43-56 ♦ Brian Vickers, “Analogy versus Identity: The Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580-1680”, in: idem (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 95-163 ♦ idem, “On the Function of Analogy in the Occult”, in: Ingrid Merkel & Allen G. Debus (eds.), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, Washington & London/Toronto: The Folger Shakespeare Library/Associated University Presses, 1988, 265-292.

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**Court de Gébelin, Antoine (Antoine Court), \* 1725 near Nîmes, † 12.5.1784 Paris**

Son of a pioneer of Protestant restoration in France, Antoine Court (1695-1760), Court is a figure typical of the late European Enlightenment. He lived in Lausanne until 1763, when he moved to Paris. In Switzerland he associated with Charles Bonnet and Isaac Iselin. The latter maintained relations with → Lavater and → Kirchberger, and was a member, like Court and Johannes Rudolf Frey, of the Economic Society of Bern; his theories on anthropology inspired Court de Gébelin and, after him, Chavannes. From that period on, Court de Gébelin had affiliations with a secret society connected to the “Order of the Knights of the Star”, a para-Masonic order dedicated to the restoration of Protestantism in France. This so-called “Céphalégie” had been founded officially in 1749 by J.-Ph. Loys de Chéseaux, and was established in Paris, Berlin, and Dresden.

From 1763 on, Court de Gébelin played a major role in the Masonic lodges in Paris. In 1777, the Mother Lodge of the Philosophical Scottish Rite complimented him for his teachings on ‘the most credible allegories contained in the grades of the Freemasons’. The general chapter of France probably used his work in 1784 for the thirty-first and the thirty-third degrees of the Scottish and Accepted Rite. Although not one of its founders, he was a member of the United Friends (Les Amis Réunis), probably from 1778 on. He was a twelfth-class Philalèthe and a commissioner to the archives (10 Feb. 1781), until his removal by Savalète de Lange (for absenteeism; actually illness) in 1783. His participation in the Lodge of Saint John of Scotland and his membership of the Elus Coëns (mentioned

by Robert Amadou in an article “Court de Gébelin” in the *Encyclopédie de la franc-maçonnerie* are disputed; he did correspond, however, with → Willermoz and → Saint-Martin. Court most distinguished himself in the Lodge of the Nine Sisters (between 1778 and 1781), of which he was a very influential member, secretary, and eventually second supervisor (1778). He also founded the academic offshoot of this lodge, the Museum of Paris (1780), whose president he remained until his death. Court became a patient of F.A. Mesmer and proselytized on his behalf (presenting a *Lettre sur le magnétisme* to the king, and joining the Société de l’Harmonie). He died while undergoing therapy with Mesmer, thus ruining all the good publicity he had provided him.

Court is especially known for his main work, *Le Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne* (The Primitive World Analyzed and Compared with the Modern World), published in nine volumes between 1773 and 1782. Strongly influenced by → Neoplatonism, this book aims to revive the ancient world and its lost harmony through rediscovery of the original, perfect language. This language, in which signs and things are perfectly related, is believed to be still in existence; it is hidden, but once revealed it will be accessible to everyone. By researching the common roots of all ancient and modern languages, Court believed he could recover the words of the original language, which are similar to onomatopoeia (in this he is clearly influenced by Warburton, Vico, and especially Charles de Brosses; he in turn influenced Nodier). His philological enterprise is supported by a decipherment of ancient traditions, which are seen as allegories; thus we see him interpreting myths (vol. I), calendars and rites (vol. IV), blazons, ancient history, and the → Tarot (vol. VIII). To prove his theories, Court relied on the Church fathers, the *Hieroglyphica* of Hor-Apollo, the → Hermetic literature, and his knowledge of kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences].

Court thus attempts to establish a link between ancient and modern knowledge, and between academic and hidden learning; and in renewing the study of Antiquity, he seeks to revive an interest in the Egyptian mysteries (his French etymologies suggest an Isiacal origin for the city of Paris). Nonetheless his interpretations are most often marked by a rationalist and utilitarian approach. Numbers are considered figures of the universal harmony, marking the rhythm of time-reckoning; myths are stories about the invention of agriculture and astronomy. Until 1783 (*Lettre sur le magnétisme*), he was adamantly opposed to → astrol-

ogy. The Tarot is presented with great prudence as a game of the Egyptians, in which we find their ‘civil, political and religious’ ideas and an ‘emblem of life’. He mentions its use by the Egyptians for purposes of divination [→ Divinatory Arts] only as a matter of curiosity and in referring to a text, which he reproduces at length, by another author (the count of Mellet, according to J.-M. Lhote). This rationalist tendency (or posture) seems to have progressively weakened under the pressure of various influences, such as that of Saint-Martin, who sought to win him over to his own worldview in their conversations at the time when Court was writing the final volumes of *Monde primitif*. Its first volume, on the one hand, and the *Lettre sur le magnétisme*, on the other, represent the two extreme poles of this evolution.

Finally, Court was an important link in the history of the relationship between → Illuminism and Protestantism: vacillating between a strict interpretation of the Scriptures, on the one hand, and → Pietism, on the other, and likewise between a condemnation of prophetic inspiration (and of divination) and a conviction that the lineaments of the future are contained in the sacred texts, he affirmed that vestiges of all previous knowledge can be recovered by deciphering “the harmony of the world”.

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ANNE-MARIE MERCIER-FAIVRE

**Crowley, Aleister** (born Edward Alexander), \* 12.10.1875 Leamington, † 1.12.1947 Hastings

One of the main figures in the history of English occultism [→ occult / occultism]. Despite his bad reputation and the controversies that have marked his life, his ideas have heavily influenced contemporary new religious movements of a magical [→ Magic] and neo-pagan bent [→ Neopaganism]. Crowley has left an enormous literary output, including almost any genre: from poetry and fiction to essay and autobiography. Apart from his occult interests and activities he is also remembered as a poet, mountaineer, and chess player of some talent.

The scion of a wealthy family of brewers, Crowley's early life and education were those typical of a member of the middle upper class in England of his time, but for the fact that both his parents were strict Plymouth Brethren (the fundamentalist evangelical sect founded by John Nelson Darby [1800-1882]). This element would play an important role in his future intellectual development. In fact, even if Crowley would eventually repudiate Christianity

altogether, he always remained bound to the legacy of symbols and images of the Bible, especially its apocalyptic parts. Crowley seems to have been at ease with his parents' religious persuasion until 1887, when his father died prematurely. This event provides us with one of the keys for understanding Crowley's psychology, as it is probably at the origin of his unquenchable desire for revolt against traditional social and religious values. He had much admired his father, who, according to Crowley's later autobiographical account, does not seem to have held narrow views concerning his upbringing and education. But after his father's death, his mother and her family, whom Crowley accuses of sheer bigotry, began to have a much stronger influence over his life. This development, coupled with some unpleasant experiences he had in some of the schools he attended later, was certainly at the origin of his hatred of Christianity.

In 1895 Crowley entered the prestigious Trinity College, Cambridge, as an undergraduate student. Even though he did not conclude his studies, his university years would have a profound influence on him. In this period he publishes his first books of verses at his own expenses, which receive some favourable press reviews. He also begins to feel attracted by spirituality, and in particular by the occult. The turning point in his early life comes when, in 1898, he meets two members of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (GD), who introduce him into the Order. He is initiated as a Neophyte in the Isis-Urania Temple of the GD, in London, in the autumn of that year. This is the first crucial event in Crowley's spiritual career. He dedicates himself with enthusiasm to the study of the teachings imparted by the Order, and rapidly climbs the initial steps of the Order's initiatic system. He also decides to follow the instructions contained in *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*, a grimoire which had been edited and published in that same year by → S.L. Mathers, then the leader of the Order. In the context of the GD he meets two persons who will have a strong influence on him. The first one is Allan Bennett (1872-1923), who would later convert to Buddhism and become one of the first Buddhist missionaries in England. Bennett teaches Crowley the first rudiments of ceremonial → magic, and, during their experiments together, Crowley begins taking drugs in the context of magical practice – something that will remain an important aspect of Crowley's life in the subsequent years and, indeed, up to his death. The second important person is Mathers himself. In 1900 Crowley is directly involved in the feud which opposes Mathers, then



living in Paris, to the London high-ranking members of the GD. He decides to side with Mathers and is therefore expelled, together with his mentor, by the London faction. The impact of the GD system on Crowley would remain fundamental, however.

The end of Crowley's experience in the GD marks the beginning of a period of travels around the world, which would last, with some interruptions, until 1906. He spends a long period in Mexico, and then in India, where, together with his friend Bennett, he discovers the practice of yoga and Buddhist doctrines. In 1902 he takes part in an important, but unsuccessful, expedition to conquer the K2, the second highest peak in the world. On his return to Europe he spends several months in Paris, getting acquainted with artists and intellectuals in the bohemian circles of Montparnasse. In 1903 he marries Rose Kelly (1874-1932), sister of his close friend, the painter Gerald F. Kelly (1879-1972). The couple then leaves for a long journey through the East. During their return journey occurs the second fundamental event in Crowley's spiritual career. In Cairo, in the Spring of 1904, he is reportedly put in contact, through the mediumship of his wife, with a præter-human entity named Aiwass. He receives from him the text of the *Book of the Law* (*Liber Legis*, also called *AL*), which he would later consider the sacred text of a new religion called "Thelema" (ancient Greek for "will").

After another unsuccessful expedition on the Kangchenjunga, in 1905, Crowley makes a long tour across southern China. During this travel he performs the ritual of the *Augoeides*, which is a continuation, in another form, of the ritual of Abramelin for the attainment of the knowledge of his Holy Guardian Angel. The ritual lasts thirty-two weeks, and has the peculiarity of being performed only in an imaginative – or rather "astral" – form. This means that Crowley, while travelling on horseback, imagines himself being in a magical temple and performing all the ritual acts necessary for this kind of working.

After his return to England, he publishes a collection in three volumes of his youthful works, mostly poetry (*Collected Works*, 1905-1907), a collection of essays (*Konx Om Pax*, 1907), and an important synthesis of his system of → correspondences, developed on the basis of the GD system (777, 1909). In this period he also meets an English officer, John Frederick Charles Fuller (1878-1966), who had spent a long time posted in India and had become interested in his works. Fuller writes the first critical work on Crowley, *The Star in the West* (1907), and in 1909 helps Crowley to found his

own magical Order, the A.:A.: (the initials are usually interpreted as "Astrum Argentinum", or "Argenteum Astrum", i.e. Silver Star). In relation to this project, Crowley also starts the publication of a biannual periodical, *The Equinox* (1909-1913, 1919), which is presented as the official organ of his Order. In it he publishes its official teachings, but also poetry and fiction, both by himself and by other authors belonging to his circle. Also in 1909, together with his disciple Victor B. Neuburg (1883-1940), he "explores" the magical system of → John Dee, through an important series of invocations and astral travels in the desert of Algeria. The account of these magical experiences would be published in 1911 in *The Equinox* (I, 5) as "The Vision and the Voice".

Around 1910, rumours begin to find an echo in the press about Crowley's homosexuality and the alleged immorality of his Order's activities. It is the beginning of a campaign of vilification which will continue practically for the rest of Crowley's life, and will reach its climax after World War I. The A.:A.: suffers from these exposures, and several members decide to resign. In the same period Crowley meets the journalist and occultist Theodor Reuss (1855-1923), a figure very active in the European fringe-masonic and occultist scene. Reuss wishes to launch a new fringe-masonic Order, whose main purpose is the teaching and practice of sexual magic: the → Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO). He asks Crowley for his collaboration and the latter accepts, in 1912, to create and run a British section of the Order under Reuss's authority. Crowley, now definitely convinced of his prophetic role in relation to Thelema, undoubtedly looks at the OTO as a convenient channel for the propagation of his new religious message. After having published, in 1912, the first two parts of his *Book Four*, where for the first time he systematically expounds his theories on magic, he begins in the following year to experiment with sexual magic, whose basic technique had been transmitted to him by Reuss.

Crowley spends the period of World War I in the United States. He has by then exhausted his financial resources, and at times finds himself close to destitution. He works as a journalist and editor for the German propaganda in America, an activity that will later cause him to be reproached for betraying his country. In this period he works with the American astrologer Evangeline Adams (1859-1932) on a project of writing a comprehensive treatise on → astrology. However, their collaboration ends prematurely, and Adams eventually, in the 1920s, publishes the result of their joint efforts



under her own name. Crowley's astrological writings related to this project would not be published until 1974 (a more complete edition, restoring previously missing parts, has been published in 2002).

In this period, the number of his disciples (whether in the OTO or in the A.:A.:) has shrunk considerably. Among them, however, is the important figure of Charles Stansfeld Jones (1886-1950), who would come to play a significant part in the doctrinal development of Thelema, and would later (especially under the pseudonym of Frater Achad) gain some reputation as an author in his own right. Crowley himself writes, among several other works, the novel *Moonchild* (published in 1929), in which many figures of his past experience in the Golden Dawn are lampooned. In 1918 he meets Leah Hirsig, a schoolteacher, who will remain his lover and partner for several years afterwards. In 1919 he publishes the first volume of a new series of *The Equinox* (the so-called "Blue Equinox"), largely devoted to the OTO. Soon afterwards he leaves the United States and returns to Europe. In 1920 he settles in Cefalù, Sicily, where he establishes his "Abbey of Thelema", a sort of commune with Hirsig and other disciples, in which he tries to put into practice the principles of his new religion. It is a very productive period. He publishes another novel, *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* (1922); writes his enormous "autohagiography", *The Confessions* (partially published in 1929); and works on the third part of his *Book Four*, intended to be his *magnum opus* on magic (published between 1929 and 1930 as *Magick in Theory and Practice*). Crowley's experiment at the Abbey lasts only three years. In 1923 he is expelled by the Italian authorities, probably because of a renewed campaign of attacks in the English press. Subsequently he moves to Tunis, and later to Paris. In this period he also succeeds Reuss, who had died in 1923, as leader of the OTO. In 1925 there is a meeting in Weida, Germany, aimed at establishing his leadership of a German Rosicrucian movement, closely related to the German OTO, and led by the bookseller Hermann Tränker (1880-1956). But only a portion of the persons involved decide to follow Crowley and accept his new religious message. Among them are the businessman Karl Germer (1885-1962), who in the following years supports Crowley financially and will succeed him, after the latter's death, as head of the OTO.

During the years 1926-1929 Crowley's headquarters are mainly in Paris. Around 1928 two new young disciples join him, after having been in correspondence with him for some time: Israel Regardie (1907-1985) and Gerald Yorke (1901-

1983). They collaborate closely with Crowley until the early 1930s, when they part ways with him. Regardie would later become an influential author on magic and esoteric subjects in his own right, also contributing in the 1960s and the 1970s to the rediscovery of Crowley's ideas through new editions of his writings and an important study (*The Eye in the Triangle*, 1970). Yorke, for his part, would later become the owner of the largest collection of Crowleyana in the world (rare first editions, manuscripts and documents), thereby playing a fundamental role in the preservation of Crowley's intellectual legacy. His collection is now housed in the Warburg Institute, London.

In March 1929 Crowley is forced to leave France as well. He moves first to England, and then to Germany. In 1930 he makes a short trip to Portugal and meets the poet and esotericist → Fernando Pessoa, with whom he is on friendly terms, and whose esoteric ideas have been influenced to some extent by Crowley.

In 1932, at the eve of the nazi seizure of power in Germany, Crowley moves back to England. He will not leave the country again. In 1934 he is defeated in a libel suit against a publisher. Unable to pay the costs, he is declared bankrupt. He now lives almost entirely on the allowances sent to him by his disciples, especially the members of the only surviving body of the OTO at the time, the Agape lodge in California. But despite his material difficulties, he continues to write and publish extensively. Among the significant publications of this period, mention must be made of *The Equinox of the Gods* (1936), in which he narrates the events related to the revelation of the *Liber Legis* in 1904, and *The Book of Thoth* (1944), in which he expounds his personal interpretation of the → Tarot. This is also implemented by the design, made jointly with the artist Frieda Harris (1877-1962) of a new Tarot deck, which incorporates Crowley's peculiar symbolism and attributions. The deck would be published only posthumously in 1971. It has become one of the most widespread tarot decks in the world, frequently used also by persons who are not acquainted with – let alone accept – Crowley's philosophical or religious ideas.

Crowley spends the difficult years of World War II first in London, and then in various country retreats. His last resort is a boarding-house near Hastings, where he dies in 1947. Some other important works have been published after his death, such as *Magick Without Tears* (1954), written in his last years and containing an introductory exposition, in epistolary form, of his doctrine; the *Liber Aleph* (1961), a compendium of teachings originally

written during the American period for his disciple C.S. Jones; and an edition of the *Confessions* (1969) including the hitherto unpublished volumes.

Because of his controversial reputation Crowley has often been dismissed, without adequate analysis of his works and ideas, as a mere quack or charlatan. One of the most popular misunderstandings has led to him being labelled a Satanist, which, if we exclude theological definitions of → Satanism, he was not (although he has certainly influenced contemporary Satanist movements). From a symbolical point of view, Satan plays no significant role in Crowley's ideas. His mythical and symbolical references went well beyond Christianity, and his aim was to propose a full-blown, original religious alternative to it. Despite the prominence of anti-Christian elements, his system can hardly be considered as a mere reversal of Christianity, as the classic definition of Satanism would require.

Crowley's doctrine, expounded in a large number of writings, is considerably more complex than it would appear at first sight. His works require careful study and analysis, especially as Crowley's literary style is sometimes – more or less on purpose – quite obscure. In the context of English occultism he was one of the very few authors to have received formal higher education in a traditional university, and all his life his cultural interests remained extremely wide and eclectic. As a result, he drew ideas and inspiration from many disparate sources, both Western and Eastern, and blended them into his own peculiar system. His Western sources include ceremonial magic, astrology, the Tarot, Kabbalah, Egyptian lore, John Dee's Enochian system, and → alchemy; his Eastern ones include yoga, Buddhism, Taoism, and the I-Ching. Two aspects stand out as fundamental in his work: magic (which, for various reasons, he chose to spell “Magick”) and Thelema.

In a general sense, Crowley saw magic as a convenient term to define his doctrine as a whole, including Thelema. More specifically, Crowley understood magic mainly in two ways, both of which are far from uncommon in the context of occultist literature. The first one is mostly pragmatic in nature, and considers magic as a technique for achieving specific goals by means which cannot as yet be explained scientifically, but the results of which can (in theory at least) be tested in an empirical way. Gaining considerable sums of money or the effortless acquisition of extensive knowledge in a particular field could be mentioned as classic examples. Crowley's most famous definition of magic, which was subsequently adopted by a plethora of authors, is closely related to this idea:

“Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” (*Magick in Theory and Practice*, 1929-1930, xii). According to this definition any intentional act could be defined as magical, which would of course seem to reduce the specificity of magic as a particular field of action. In reality, in referring to magic in this context Crowley usually had in mind a rather precise set of practices and ideas, based mostly on traditional ceremonial magic. He had learned their fundamentals during his membership in the GD, and considerably developed them on the basis of his subsequent experiences. In later years, his discovery of sexual magic led him to significantly change his understanding and practice of magic; in fact, sexual magic made most of the material apparatus of ceremonial magic superfluous. Sexual magical workings, based on notions of subtle physiology mostly borrowed from Eastern doctrines (in particular *haṭha yoga*), may use only the body of the magician as a magical tool, eliminating the need for external implements such as a temple or the traditional “weapons” of ceremonial magic. The aim of magic in this sense is not necessarily material in nature: magic can also be used to obtain communications from spiritual entities, or to explore the “astral plane” by means of the techniques of astral travel that Crowley had learned in the GD. The messages that he received through these magical practices often had a meaning that was specific to his own spiritual evolution (but they could also be on a grander scale and concern the evolution of mankind, as in the case of *Liber Legis*). By the same token, through these practices Crowley thought he could improve his knowledge of the symbolic network of correspondences, which are supposed to create a unifying link between all the parts of the universe. It is to be noted that, especially in relation to this first, pragmatic sense of magic, Crowley claimed to have a scientific, rational approach – again, something far from uncommon in the context of occultist literature.

The other sense in which Crowley understood magic was certainly seen by him as the most important, although it can be considered to be complementary to the first one. According to this second perspective, magic is not so much oriented towards immediate ends, but rather becomes a way to achieve what Crowley considered the supreme goal of one's life: spiritual attainment. Magic then loses its instrumental character, and becomes instead a practice and a worldview which encompass all aspects of a person's life. It is not so much a matter of different practices, but of a different interpretation of them. Traditional ceremonial and sexual

magic could be used, in Crowley's vision, both for immediate purposes and as a means to achieve the ultimate spiritual goal. Ideally, in the latter case, the individual should fully dedicate himself to this pursuit, and be ready to sacrifice all his earthly possessions and affections for its sake. Crowley uses various expressions to define the aim of magic in this spiritual sense. In some passages he describes it as comparable to the mystical "union with God", but he also equates it with the ultimate goal of classic yoga practice, i.e. the ecstatic trance of *samādhi*. But perhaps his most famous definition describes it as the attainment of the "knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel", a notion taken from the *Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin*. Among the members of the original (pre-1900) GD, Crowley was certainly the one most influenced by this book (which, it should be noted, was never a part of the official curriculum of this Order). He is probably also the only one who actually tried to put its instructions into practice. Crowley claimed to have attained the goal described in the book in 1906, and this was certainly a very important step in his spiritual career.

It has sometimes been assumed that his Holy Guardian Angel corresponded to Aiwass, the entity who had dictated to him the text of the *Liber Legis* in 1904, but this is not entirely correct and requires some qualifications. In fact, Crowley's notion of the Holy Guardian Angel evolved with time. At the beginning, it corresponded for him to the idea of "Higher Genius", "Higher Self", or "Augoeides" – a notion that was prominent in GD teachings and had been borrowed originally from theosophical literature. The Higher Self was not considered as an independent entity, but as the superior, spiritual element present in every human being. The aim of magical (or "mystical") practice was therefore to open one's consciousness to that higher part of oneself, which is normally not perceived by the non-initiate. Aiwass, on the other hand, was always seen by Crowley as a personal being, not necessarily discarnate, and completely independent from his own consciousness or psyche. In that sense Aiwass rather resembled the "Secret Chiefs" of the GD, or the "Mahatmas" of the → Theosophical Society. Subsequently, however, Crowley's ideas about his Holy Guardian Angel began to shift, and he came to identify it more and more with Aiwass. This evolution might be interpreted as a sign of Crowley's increasing personal identification with his own mission as the prophet of Thelema.

It is important to note that this "mystical" notion of magic is closely related to the idea of an

initiatic path, which is another fundamental aspect of Crowley's magical doctrine. The stages through which the aspirant must proceed in order to achieve spiritual attainment correspond to the system of degrees in Crowley's own Order, the A.: A.:, which was modelled on the one of the GD. But apart from the similarities, there were also significant differences between the two systems. One has already been mentioned: the added emphasis in Crowley's Order on Eastern doctrines and practices, especially yoga. Another difference lies in the fact that, in the original GD system, initiatic advancement was effected through a formal ceremony, akin to a masonic ritual. This made group meetings between members a common feature of the Order's activities. In Crowley's Order, on the other hand, this social aspect was increasingly reduced, the only form of contact between members being an individual relationship between the aspirant and his immediate superior in the Order's hierarchy. By the same token, initiation was supposed to take place mostly on the astral plane, which made the actual performance of a dramatic ritual less important than it was in the GD. But perhaps the most important difference between Crowley's Order and the original GD is that, in the latter, only the two first Orders which compose it (the GD proper and the Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis [RR et AC]) were in principle accessible to members. It was assumed that the Third Order, including the three final grades of the system, was so elevated that only the "Secret Chiefs" could have access to it. But Crowley's ambition to reach the highest peak of initiation could hardly be restrained by this theoretical limitation. Therefore, not only did he introduce into his system a whole new doctrine concerning the import of these last degrees for the initiate; but he eventually claimed to have attained, in the early 1920s, the last degree, which he chose to call "Ipsissimus" (in the original GD system this grade had been left unnamed). For him, attaining this grade was equivalent to becoming a god. In this respect, an important element should be considered. The "union with God", or the knowledge of the Holy Guardian Angel, only correspond to an intermediate grade in Crowley's initiatic system, i.e. that of Adeptus Minor. After it, there remain several grades before the highest one is achieved. This would seem to imply that if the knowledge of the Holy Guardian Angel is the final goal of magic, as Crowley states on several occasions, the highest goal of initiation transcends it and goes much further. In reality Crowley was not particularly consistent on this point, and it can be concluded that magic, understood in its widest

sense, included for him both the knowledge of the Holy Guardian Angel *and* the process leading to the highest step of initiation.

The other fundamental aspect of Crowley's doctrine is Thelema. Indeed, this complex religious element is what mainly differentiates Crowley from previous occultists. The doctrinal principles and beliefs fundamental to Thelema are combined with the practice of magic, so as to form an organic and coherent worldview. According to Crowley, the revelation of the *Book of the Law* in 1904 marked the beginning of a new "æon", i.e. a new cosmic age. The old age of Christianity, and more generally of paternalistic religions, symbolised by the image of the "Dying God" (borrowed from J.G. Frazer), was at its end. The new age is symbolised by the Egyptian god Horus, whose image as "son" is contrasted to that of his "father" Osiris (symbolising the previous age), and also to that of his "mother" Isis (symbolising a yet older, matriarchal age). The rebellious, individualistic, and iconoclastic energy of youth is therefore opposed to the decaying power of authority and tradition. The clearest example of an old-fashioned religion destined to swift extinction is of course Christianity, which for Crowley represents all that he rejects, both from a social and a moral point of view. Despite the prominence of images borrowed from the New Testament, Thelema and Christianity are seen as largely incompatible, and almost as exact opposites. Indeed, anti-Christian attacks are a recurrent theme in Crowley's writings. The negative charge of some biblical images (some examples of which will be given below) is reversed in Crowley's system, and becomes essentially positive.

The transition from the old to the new æon is concomitant with the activity of enormous cosmic energies, and is not supposed to take place quietly or peacefully. The effects of this cosmic storm on earth are a period of violence and wars, and Crowley saw a confirmation of his doctrine in various historical events that took place during his lifetime, notably the two world wars. As our planet enters the new æon, the old morality will expire, and will eventually be replaced by a new one based on Thelema.

The principles of this new religion are obviously taken from the *Liber Legis*, the holy scripture of Thelema. We mention here the three fundamental ones. The first is: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" (AL, I, 40). According to Crowley's interpretation, this principle does not justify the satisfaction of mere whimsical fancies or desires, and does not imply a notion of absolute individual freedom either. On the contrary, it

implies that every human being is called to accomplish his/her "true Will", i.e. to follow his/her real nature and fulfil the role that the universe has assigned to him/her, whatever that may be. The second principle is: "Every man and every woman is a star" (AL, I, 3). The true Will of any individual is similar to the trajectory of a cosmic body, such as a star or a planet. If all human beings would follow their proper trajectory, conflicts would disappear, for they actually result but from ignorance of this trajectory. The ultimate goal of an initiate thus consists firstly in discovering his/her own true Will, and then in following its lead. It is at this point that magic plays a fundamental role in the system, since it is through magic that this process of discovery and accomplishment can be achieved.

Magical work also aims at the reunification of the opposites which, on a cosmic plane, are represented by a feminine and a masculine force, referred to respectively as Hadit and Nuit. The polarity between the two notions is not purely sexual: Hadit represents mostly the infinitely small, whose image is the geometrical point, full of still unfolded potentialities; Nuit represents the infinite space of the universe, whose image is the starry night sky. These macrocosmic notions appear already in the *Liber Legis*. Clearly of Egyptian origin, they correspond on a microcosmic plane with notions derived from biblical images, in particular the book of Revelation. Crowley in fact came to identify his role as prophet of Thelema with the image of the Great Beast described in Revelation, related to the number 666 (Rev. 13:1-18). Especially since the early 1920s, Crowley publicly used "The Great Beast 666" (or its Greek equivalent, "To Mega Therion") as his main alias. To complete the polarity, a female figure accompanies the male prophet figure; she is referred to as "Babalon" (obviously a slightly modified spelling of "Babylon") or the "Scarlet Woman", the prostitute who rides the Beast in Revelation (17:1-7). This role was actually fulfilled, during Crowley's life, by his partners. The two most significant "Scarlet Women" were undoubtedly his wife Rose and, later in his life, Leah Hirsig. Fundamental to the work of unification of these two poles, both on a macrocosmic and on a microcosmic level, is the third basic principle of Thelema: "Love is the law, love under will" (AL, I, 57). Love is seen by Crowley as the force that makes the union of the opposites possible. But this aspect of thelemitic doctrine can also be considered the theoretical basis of sexual magic. The "Will" that controls love is in this case the concentration of the magician focused on the aim of the magical working during the sexual act.

What has been said so far concerning the basic tenets of Thelema should be complemented by another important element. It is possible to detect an influence on Crowley's doctrine of the solar-phallic theories which had become fashionable in England particularly in the second half of the 19th century. According to these theories, all religions had originally developed from the worship of the generative powers represented by the sun and the phallus. Most living religions supposedly still bore the remnants of this ancient legacy, and their symbolism could be interpreted accordingly. In Crowley's doctrine, great importance is given to the image of the Sun as giver of life, which corresponds on the human plane to the phallus. The correspondence between the two is completed by a strict analogy – certainly not original with Crowley – between light (radiated by the Sun) and semen (ejaculated by the phallus). Crowley, especially in his role as the “Great Beast 666” sees himself as a mediating figure between the two, incarnating a solar and phallic force at the same time. Finally, it must be noted that the prominence of the male-female polarity in Thelema does not in itself exclude other forms of sexuality than the heterosexual. In his personal development of sexual magic, Crowley made frequent use of practices based on homosexual intercourse, even if these could not be explained in terms of his doctrine of polarity.

No assessment of Crowley's importance in contemporary esotericism would be complete without a consideration of his legacy. Crowley's “Magick” and Thelema have both exerted an enormous influence on subsequent occultist and magically-oriented literature, so that it is sometimes impossible to understand aspects of the latter without an elementary grasp of Crowley's doctrine. Crowley's influence can be seen in the work of major authors such as → Dion Fortune, and that of his ex-disciples Israel Regardie and Kenneth Grant (b. 1923). Gerald Gardner (1884-1964), the founder of the neopagan movement known as Wicca, was certainly influenced by Crowley's writings on magic as well. The same can be said of the most prominent authors of contemporary Satanism, Anton Szandor LaVey (1930-1997) and Michael Aquino (b. 1946). The two magical Orders of which Crowley was the leader, the OTO and the A.:A.:, still exist today despite recurrent schisms, and are among the major vehicles for the transmission of his ideas.

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MARCO PASI

## Cryptography

1. INTRODUCTION
2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS
3. CLASSIFICATION
4. AN EXAMPLE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cryptography in the context of Western esotericism can be understood simply as a means to



preserve the confidentiality of a message (as in 18th-century → Freemasonry, which used ciphers deprived of any specific magical meanings as a means of communication). In its more specific sense, however, it aims at establishing a contact between the earthly realm and the heavenly one. Angels and men are supposed to use cryptography, understood in this sense, as a medium enabling them to achieve such contact or communication, especially since the physical and the spiritual worlds are different by nature. Therefore, cryptography has been considered the instrument as well as the necessary foundation for establishing connections between these two realms.

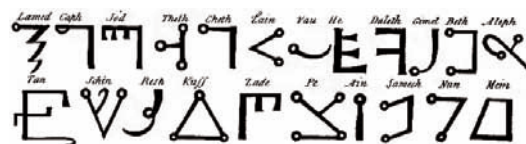
The methods used to encrypt or decrypt are always simple. They are usually based on mono-alphabetical substitution, i.e. the replacement of each letter within a message by a sign or symbol, while the order of the letters remains the same (as in the International Morse Code, for instance). This may be done by using either a simple list (as in e.g. → Martines de Pasqually's list of the 2.400 names of angels and archangels, see below), or a double entry chart (as in → John Dee's so-called "Enochian alphabet": the spirits, by means of a medium, indicate a cell in a matrix containing the letters of this alphabet). Such systems need to be simple in order to enable an instantaneous decipherment of the signs.

Cryptographic writings fall under the heading of → magic, inasmuch as they are rooted in the unifying system of the *philosophia occulta* [→ occult / occultism] as understood from the end of the 15th to the 17th century: a universe comprised of analogical mirrors in which all things endlessly reflect one another in a wide array of interrelations. In such a context, the sign drawn by the magus is intrinsically linked to the celestial entity invoked, or to the heavenly body of which it is the receptacle. The sign is considered to be, as it were, a written manifestation, or the direct expression, of an angel. For example, in Martines de Pasqually's system (18th cent.), the theurgist, in his "chamber of operations", drew on a linen carpet a sign or, as it is called in Martinesian parlance, a "hieroglyph", which was supposed to "correspond" to an angel and which was chosen among the 2.400 hieroglyphs of a list provided by Martines (this list is still extant in the legacy "Prunelle de Lière" at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble). If the operation was correctly performed, this hieroglyph or another one was expected to appear a moment later within the chamber, in a luminous form, to the eyes of the theurgist. If another hieroglyph appeared, this meant that, later on, the theurgist

would have to consult the list in order to find in it the hieroglyph which had appeared to him. During his next operation he would then use this second hieroglyph, because the latter apparently corresponded to the angel who had actually manifested himself to the theurgist in the chamber of operations. In sum, such glyphs are understood – in Pasqually's system as well as in other, similar ones – as signs to be drawn and used by the theurgist during the ritual, and as signs sent out by the angels invoked during that ritual.

The perspective under discussion might be called holographic in the sense that the entire correspondences network in question has a multi-dimensional character. A sign becomes the graph of a spiritual entity, that is, the latter's projection or coagulation into matter. Much prior to Pasqually, → Paracelsus, while describing a *magia characterialis* in his *Astronomia Magna* (1571), claimed that engraved signs or characters have the same power as speech. The names or words formed by such cryptographic procedures are themselves considered to be vectors inseparable from the essence of the entities or the angels they refer to, and possessed of the latter's magical virtues and properties. In keeping with the concepts of *magia naturalis*, such cryptographic writings may be considered, therefore, as one application, among others, of the theory of signatures and universal → correspondences.

One of the most commonly shared ideas in such contexts is that the words (figures and characters) used in magic are all the more efficacious if they are drawn from the original divine language spoken by Adam in paradise. Commentators and magi alike, inspired by the belief in a *philosophia perennis* [→ Tradition], have lavishly written about this perfect language – a language capable of reflecting the very essence of things, and purported to be the genuine, true mirror of the innermost reality of our multi-layered universe. Along this line, the history of cryptography appears to have been closely bound up, particularly since the beginning of the medieval period, with that of the quest for a perfect and secret language. Here is a typical sample of this writing, the magic alphabet "Passing the River", based on the twenty-two Hebrew letters, included by → Agrippa in book III of his *De Occulta Philosophia*, (chapter XXX):



## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

A proposal for tracing the development of various forms and manifestations of cryptography in the West has been presented by Le Pape (1999). From the 10th to the 12th century, due to the numerous translations of hermetic and related writings from Arab into Latin, a domain for mutual fertilization between the three Scriptural Religions was created, which was instrumental in fostering esoteric and scientific ideas in general and, by the same token, the emergence of a *philosophia occulta* in particular (see e.g. the numerous Arabic magical alphabets reproduced in Hammer [1806]). The most interesting type of cryptographic writings to be found in this literature, and undoubtedly the most typical one, is known and referred to, in English, as “ring-letter writing(s)” (or ring-writing, ring-alphabet[s]; in French, *écriture[s] à lunettes*), since their baroque characters are partly made of tiny balls or rings. Such writings already appear in some Greek papyri of the 3th-5th centuries (see Ruelle [1913], in which few of the alphabets are complete, and Kenyon [1893], Nrs. CXXI-CXXV) but their sources might well be more ancient. They were widely disseminated during the Middle Ages, but occasionally at the expense of their actual purpose, since they came to be used without restraint in the fashioning of objects such as talismans. A series of small books, frequently ascribed to → Albertus Magnus (1206-1280), have punctuated their historical development. They are known as *Claviculae Salomonis* (see many examples in Thorndike [1923-1958] II, 279ff.), and have remained popular throughout the centuries. We find echos of them in Cornelius Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia* (1533), where planetary magic and demonic magic meet up again. In modern times this abundant heritage has undergone several modifications, and has been, as it were, polished and refined: the medieval “formulas” were, for the most part, rejected in favour of a more “noble” theurgy. For instance, Pasqually’s cryptographic signs appear to be used mostly as instruments for attaining a redeeming personal gnosis, based on communication with angelic beings.

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

Within the esoteric context that interests us here, it is not so much the formal characteristics of cryptographic writings which matters, but rather their actual purpose, the needs they are supposed to meet. Hence the following classification is based upon a distinction between three main types of magical communication. It still remains, however, that a sharp borderline between such categories is

not possible (as will become particularly clear in the case of the first category).

A. *Talismanic communication*. This category implies a communication with the celestial world from the perspective of the terrestrial, i.e., a communication based upon and subject to man’s initiative. This appears to be the most frequently used type. For example, the signs engraved in talismans are closely linked to the nature of the celestial influences that one seeks to attract. The talisman, therefore, acts as a catalyst or receptacle for the radiance of the stars or of the angels. It is supposed to operate by means of identification, i.e. by assuming the characteristics of the celestial things to which it corresponds. This entails the necessity of knowing the affinities (patterns of sympathy and antipathy) which govern the relations between all parts of the universe, i.e. the ability of deciphering the book of Nature. Moreover, signs usually have to be engraved, and the talisman has to be prepared under the correct astrological constellation. The use of alphabets is here limited to selecting some of the signs necessary to a given magical operation; therefore we rarely find, in this context, a whole group of words or sentences. Alphabets used for this first type of communication are a common component of the so-called Solomonian literature (the numerous writings going under the name of *Claviculae Salomonis*, comprised, *inter alia*, of a number of small works attributed to Honorius or to Albertus Magnus). Likewise, the ring-alphabets known as those of Jupiter, Solomon, Syrianus or Brachmanicum (as documented in the writings of Joseph Hammer, Blaise de Vigenère, Cornelius Agrippa, → Athanasius Kircher) are typical of this means of communication; but many other alphabets used in the context of the other two types of communication occasionally appear here as well, since talismanic practitioners have erratically borrowed from various systems. Quite widespread in the Middle Ages, the golden age of “talismania”, the ring-alphabets and the other alphabets mentioned here did not fall into oblivion but were still in use far beyond the 15th century.

B. *Natural communication*. This category involves communication from the celestial world to the terrestrial world. It is unilateral, not being the response to a request. The intermediate beings use, as it were, the supposed symbolic characteristics of the heavenly bodies, like comets, stars or planets, to build up words and messages that only the human beings in possession of a given secret alphabet will be able to decrypt, so that ‘the Great Book of Nature be open for all to see though only a few can read it or understand it’ (Rosicrucian

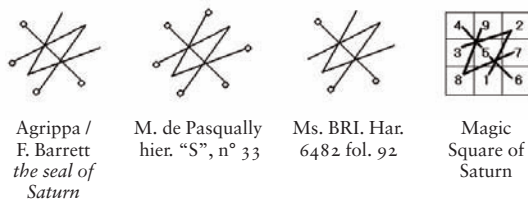
*Confessio*, 29). These messages, usually assumed to have been directly inspired by God, are mostly supposed to be the bearers of news concerning political events to come, but they can also refer to serious epidemics, such as the plague. Alphabets belonging to this type are called “Celestial writing” (*Scriptura Coelestis*, cf. Agrippa, *Occ.Phil.* III, 30), “Writing & Language of Heaven” (Ms Harley 6482 fol. 75), or *Malachim* (“Alphabet of Angels or Kings”, as again in Agrippa, *Occ. Phil.* III, 30). The characters of these alphabets have sometimes the form of stars and are generally similar to the square Hebrew alphabet, but the extremities of these characters usually have the shape of rings. The relation between Celestial writing and stars is somewhat obscure in the *De Occulta Philosophia*, but two maps by J. Gaffarel (in his *Curiositez inouyes . . .*) indicate how to find the correspondence between each letter and each star (or constellation of stars, similar to the constellation of the zodiac) in the northern and southern hemispheres. Other authors have also reproduced the forms of these alphabets with great clarity. Among them are J.B. Hepburn (in his *Virga Aurea* [1616] he calls them *Super caeleste* and *Enochaeum*), Jacques Gaffarel, Athanasius Kircher or T. Bangius (*Caelum orientis et prisici mundi*, 1657). This group of alphabets is frequent in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, that is, in a period when the idea of a connection between the stars and their signs was rarely called into question. The ecclesiastical authorities sometimes took up arms against cryptographic views and practices, but could not deny that the star of Bethlehem bore witness to the role of a celestial object in helping humanity.

C. *Theurgic communication*. This type of communication is bilateral and therefore makes a dialogue possible. It left its mark in the 17th century in western Europe with a theurgy that turned out to be, so it seems, the most accomplished example of communication between angels and man. Here the angel, representative of the “subtle” realm, and Man, or part of the “gross” one, cooperates with a view to ‘working out the miracles of one thing’ (if it is permissible to make use here of the oft-quoted formulations of the *Tabula Smaragdina*) and establishing a kind of theurgical union in tune with heaven’s harmony. Pasqually’s system is a typical example of this form of “co-operative” theurgy in which the signs and hieroglyphs are used, as seen above, to invoke (and/or identify) each angel by his name. Further examples of this category are the alphabets called *Seraphicum* (in J.B. Hepburn, *Virga aurea* [1616], pl. I), *De transitu fluminis* (in Agrippa, *Occ.Phil.* III, 30; → Guillaume Postel,

*Linguarum Duodecim Characteribus*, 1538 etc.) or the series of alphabets referred to as “of Raphaël” (in Ms Harley 1921 fol. 56). Writings of this third type often appeared together in one single treatise (as is the case in books by A. de Balmis, 1523; Blaise de Vigenère, 1586; Julius Bartolucci, 1675-1694; Geoffroy Tory, 1529 or Athanasius Kircher, 1652-1654). An exceptionally long text, written in the *De transitu fluminis* alphabet, has been analysed and transliterated by M. Danon (1910). The alphabets that belong to this category enjoyed a broad success as early as the beginning of the Renaissance, and flourished at least as far as Martines de Pasqually’s time.

#### 4. AN EXAMPLE

To illustrate the nature of cryptographic writings, let us take the seal of Saturn as Agrippa presents it (it was also reproduced by → F. Barrett, *The Magus . . .* II, 1, plate 3, along with much of the text of Agrippa’s book, which contributed to its dissemination), and compare it with the letter “S” as it appears among the hieroglyphs of the aforementioned “Register of 2400 names” (Prunelle de Lière Ms in Grenoble) by Martinez de Pasqually. We see that these signs are similar, but not identical. The seal which can be found in Agrippa (*Occ.Phil.* II, 149) is, under the name of Saturn, accompanied by the magical square of that planet. This square is composed of the numbers 1 to 9, the sum value of each line of numbers being 15. The key to the construction of this seal as based upon a magical square was provided by → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (in *Des nombres*): by simply following the order of the numbers, one gets the seal. Different magical squares yield different seals:



Agrippa / F. Barrett  
the seal of Saturn

M. de Pasqually  
hier. “S”, n° 33

Ms. BRI. Har.  
6482 fol. 92

Magic  
Square of  
Saturn

This method only concerns the seals and is not true, of course, for ring-alphabets, since the latter are in the order of letters proper: they are transliterations.

The way these alphabets are organized, the number of letters, and their order, are very reminiscent of the Hebrew characters, and this is emphasized by the name given to each alphabet (frequently “old hebrew”, e.g. Ms Harley 1921 fol. 58; “alphabetum hebraicum”, e.g. Ms Harley 6030 fol. 15). Many Arabic authors (e.g. Ibn Wahshîya)

tried to establish a correspondence between a ring-alphabet, the Hebrew alphabet, and the Arabic one. The problem that the Arabic alphabet has six more letters than the Hebrew, these authors usually solve by putting the remaining Arabic letters (which have no correspondence to the Hebrew alphabet) at the end of their ring-alphabet to get 28 letters, and trying to draw them in a style reminiscent of the graphism of the ring-writing. For example, if one compares the celestial alphabet of Agrippa to that of "Syrianus the philosopher" of Ibn Wahshīya (9th-10th cent., cf. Hammer, 36), one notices that the six Arabic letters unrelated to the Hebrew alphabet are gathered together at the end of the alphabet and are very similar to one another. In fact, the majority of cryptographic alphabets, whether they came from the Western world or from the Islamic one, have originated from adaptation of the Hebrew alphabet, over a period of more than one thousand years.

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Ms Harley 6482, 1714, London: British Library, Doc. of Dr. Rudd.

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GILLES LE PAPE

### Cudworth, Ralph, \* 1617 Aller (Somerset), † 26.6.1688 Cambridge

Cudworth was the leading philosopher of the group known as the Cambridge Platonists. He was born in Aller, Somerset, in 1617, the third son of Ralph Cudworth († 1624). He was educated at Emmanuel College, where he was elected to a fellowship in 1635. His contemporaries at the college included many of the Cambridge Platonists: Benjamin Whichcote, John Smith, Peter Sterry, Nathaniel Culverwell. Cudworth's friends at Emmanuel included Samuel Cradock, John Wallis and John Worthington, and the future Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft. During the upheavals of the Civil War, Cudworth was appointed Master of Clare Hall and Regius Professor of Hebrew. In 1646 he gave a series of lectures on the Temple of Jerusalem and on 31st March 1647 he preached a sermon to the House of Commons. In 1654 he was elected Master of Christ's College, where his friend, → Henry More (1614-1687), was a fellow. In 1656 Cudworth advised



Cromwell on the readmission of the Jews to England. He retained his college and university appointments after the Restoration of monarchy and in 1662 was presented to a living in Hertfordshire by Archbishop Sheldon. In 1664 he preached a sermon at Lincoln's Inn. In 1669, he was involved in the expulsion from Cambridge of Daniel Scargill, a self-confessed Hobbit. But he received no preferment in the new ecclesiastical and political order, probably because of his earlier links to Cromwell, his latitudinarianism and his de-emphasis on the institutional aspect of religion. In his lifetime he published only one major book, his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678). This was intended as the first part of a more extended treatise on liberty and necessity that was never completed. Two further parts were published posthumously: *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (1731) and *A Treatise of Freewill* (1838). Two manuscripts on the same theme, "On Liberty and Necessity", remain unpublished to this day.

Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* is a compendious philosophy of religion in which he undertakes an anti-determinist defence of theism against atheism and materialism. In it he makes extensive use of *consensus gentium* arguments to demonstrate that the idea of God is natural to all mankind. In so doing he classifies all ancient thinkers as either theists or atheists, interpreting pagan polytheism as corrupt forms of monotheism. *The True Intellectual System* broaches a number of epistemological and ethical themes more fully treated in his unpublished writings "On Liberty and Necessity", and his posthumously published *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (1731), where he argues that mental reality transcends and precedes the physical world, and seeks to establish the certainty of knowledge and the existence of unchangeable moral principles. As the most fully worked out epistemology produced by any of the Cambridge Platonists *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* is the most important statement of innate-idea epistemology by any British philosopher of the 17th century. The natural philosophy espoused in his *System*, is a form of vitalistic atomism, which accepts Descartes' idea of body as inert extension, but explains movement and life in terms of the action of immaterial spirit. His most distinctive causal theory is his doctrine of "Plastic Nature", a vitalistic hypothesis framed to account for phenomena inexplicable in merely mechanical terms. Analogous to the Platonic doctrine of *anima mundi*, and the Stoic conceptions of

*pneuma*, "Plastic Nature" is conceived of as an incorporeal medium between God and creation designed to maintain the orderly day-to-day operations of nature and perform the directives of God, which it does unconsciously. By this theory Cudworth sought to oppose the mechanistic models of causality offered by contemporary thinkers like Hobbes, and to overcome two unacceptable features of Cartesianism: occasionalism and rejection of final causes.

As this example shows, Cudworth drew on both ancient and modern philosophy. Cudworth's extensive knowledge of ancient sources included both the philosophers of antiquity – especially those in the Platonic tradition, but also Aristotle – and the presocratic philosophers. He also believed that evidence of monotheism could be gleaned from the Orphic mysteries, Sibylline Oracles and writings of the ancient poets. Although he sided with Casaubon against → Kircher on the matter of the authenticity of the *Pimander* of → Hermes Trismegistus, he nevertheless argued that forged writings were evidence of some truth, because they would not have been credible had it not been for the presence of monotheistic beliefs among the ancient Egyptians. He also accepted the historicity of Thoth and the authenticity of other Hermetic texts [→ Hermetic Literature], notably the *Asclepius*. He rejected Casaubon's dismissal of the entire Corpus Hermeticum as forged, arguing that these texts were not part of a single book and that there were, in any case, non-extant texts known to the Fathers. Cudworth's view of both ancient and modern philosophy was shaped by his belief in the essential unity of philosophical truth, to which some philosophers came closer than others. Like his Renaissance forbears, Cudworth regarded all philosophy as belonging to a *philosophia perennis* [→ Tradition] and much of his intellectual energy was devoted to demonstrating the kernel of truth that was expressed in different ways by different thinkers. He explained philosophical diversity, both ancient and modern, as resulting from partial or distorted interpretations of the original truth, which he refers to as a "cabbala". To the extent that he believed that this original truth was contained in more or less obscure form within the writings of pagan thinkers, he accepted the existence of an occult tradition. In this he was influenced by the Platonic tradition of veiling mysteries from the uninitiated. He argued that Egyptian religion, in particular, had a double aspect, one part of it being secret and the other intended for public consumption. However, Cudworth did not believe in a separate esoteric wisdom that could only be accessed



by unlocking the mysteries of the ancients. On the contrary, he held that the wisdom transmitted by the philosophers of the perennial tradition, and grasped dimly by others, was the original wisdom of Adam and Moses and that it was compatible with the teachings of Christianity. The perennial philosophy to which Cudworth subscribed was, therefore, as much an ancient theology (*prisca theologia*) as an ancient philosophy (*prisca sapientia*). Cudworth did, however, subscribe to the view that by this means there had been a revelation to the pagans prior to the advent of Christ, as a *praeparatio evangeliae*, a claim which was sustained by the belief that the most virtuous pagans, like Plato and Pythagoras, had benefited from contact with the prophets of Israel or those who had been taught by them.

Although the idea of a perennial philosophy did not survive the critique of the early-enlightenment classical scholars like Richard Bentley, Cudworth's philosophical legacy continued long after his death. His English admirers included John Ray, John Locke, Lord Shaftesbury, Sir Andrew (Le Chevalier) Ramsay, Richard Price and Thomas Reid. He was also read by Leibniz and → Newton, and his doctrine of "Plastic Nature" became the focal point of a dispute between Bayle and Le Clerc (1703-1706). Through J.L. Mosheim's translation of his works (1733, reprinted 1773) Cudworth's writings were transmitted to the German Enlightenment.

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SARAH HUTTON

Cusa, Nicholas of (Niklaus Krebs),  
\* 1401 Kues, † 11.8.1464 Todi

Born in 1401 in Kues, a small village on the banks of the Moselle not far from Trier, Nicolas Krebs studied the liberal arts at Heidelberg, law at Padua and theology at Cologne. He played an important part in the Council of Basel, which he joined in 1432 as a member of the conciliar party. This party considered the Pope to possess supreme authority in the Church, but to be nonetheless subject to the general Council, which better represented the community of the faithful and which hence had a greater legitimacy for promoting a true reform of the Church. Nicolas was disappointed by the narrow-mindedness of his side and by the loss of a legal case. In 1435 he joined the party of Pope Eugenius IV, who soon made him one of his foremost collaborators. As such, Nicolas was sent to Byzantium to appear before the Eastern Emperor and the Patriarch, who were to come to Italy with their entourage to seal anew the union of the Churches. The promised ships did not arrive, and Nicolas spent about six months in Byzantium, where one can imagine that he must have had fruitful conversations with the Greek scholars assembled there in view of the coming Council.

On his voyage back to Italy, Nicolas had his famous intuition of the "coincidence of opposites", according to which God, the infinite being, is above all oppositions and unites in himself the predicates that are judged incompatible in the finite world,

such as being and non-being, absolute necessity and possibility, the *maximum* (the fact of encompassing all beings within himself) and the *minimum* (the fact of being contained in all beings). Thereupon Nicolas searched the philosophical and theological tradition for conceptual tools that would allow him to give an account of this discovery and explain its contents. He wrote several books, among which the most notable are *De Docta Ignorantia* (Learned Ignorance, 1440), *De Coniecturis* (Conjectures, 1443-5), *Idiota de Mente* (The Layman on the Mind, 1450), *De Visione Dei* (The Vision of God, 1453), *De Pace Fidei* (The Peace of Faith, 1453), and *De Non-aliud* (The Non-Other, 1462). The object of all of them was a dialectic approach to God, to the human mind and its capacity for knowledge limited by its finitude, and the consequences that result for the universe. Nicolas also had a great interest in mathematics, especially in the squaring of the circle, which he considered as the geometrical equivalent of the conjunction of opposites. His rich intellectual production came out of the little leisure time at his disposal, for he served the Pope with an intense diplomatic activity in the states of the Empire, to convince their rulers to support the papal point of view. In 1448 he was created Cardinal, with the title of the church of San Pietro in Vincoli. From 1450 to 1452, he was charged with the great legation throughout the Empire, for which he was given extensive powers to reform the Church, promulgate reforms, convoke synods, condemn the recalcitrant, grant indulgences on the occasion of the "Holy Year" of 1450, etc. After that he assumed pastoral duties as Bishop of Brixen before returning to Rome in 1458 and becoming in 1459 the Pope's Vicar General for the temporal world. He died on August 11, 1464.

Nicolas of Cusa passed rapidly into posterity as a man of universal knowledge. Beside his proven competence in civil and canon law, in philosophy and theology, he was seen as an expert in Greek and even in Hebrew, though he had only a very elementary notion of the latter. Likewise his competence in the scientific field, such as in mathematics and astronomy, has been largely overestimated. His mathematical works show that he did not surpass the level of a good amateur, and those more expert in this field, such as Toscanelli (1397-1482) or Regiomontanus (1436-1476) easily detected his limitations. His rich library, still preserved in the St. Nikolaus Hospital of Bernkastel-Kues, certainly contributed to this reputation; but owning a work in one's library does not necessarily mean that one has mastered its contents. The fact that Nicolas

was one of the first to incarnate the humanist ideal, according to which literature and the sciences determine a new relationship of man to the world and have value in themselves, also played a definite role here.

From *Learned Ignorance* onwards, his first great book of speculative theology, Nicolas belonged explicitly to the tradition of Pythagoras. He saw the latter as the first to have clearly perceived that man can only approach wisdom, without ever being able to attain it, for which reason Pythagoras was content with the title of "philosopher", and did not claim that of "sage" like his predecessors. Socrates, too, with his awareness of his own ignorance, is an especially pure illustration of true philosophy as Pythagoras conceived it. By promoting learned ignorance as the ideal of human knowledge, meaning a knowledge aware of its limits and of the element of unknowing that it carries within itself, Nicolas placed his own approach under the protection of these two illustrious figures.

Moreover, Pythagoras had regarded mathematics as the supreme instrument for knowing reality, and Nicolas also belonged unreservedly within this perspective. Numbers, produced by the human mind, are certainly not the very essence of things, but they approach the latter's secrets more closely than any other means [→ Number Symbolism]. Mathematical objects can represent higher realities, such as the theological verities; thus the coincidence of opposites that exists in God is imaged by the progression of geometric figures towards infinity. If a circle infinitely extended is identical to two straight lines, one can sense there the union and coincidence of realities which on the finite level remain opposed.

Nicolas also wrote a short eschatological treatise, *Coniectura de ultimis diebus* (Conjecture about the Last Days, 1448), which was much esteemed during the Renaissance. The life of Christ, to which Nicolas assigned 34 years, contains symbolically the whole subsequent history of the Church. Each year of Christ's life counts as 50 years in the life of the Church, which, having been born in A.D. 34, will last for 34 jubilees of 50 years each, and thus will end around 1734. Corresponding to the public life of Christ, preceded by the preaching of John the Baptist, will be an evangelical renewal becoming ever stronger from the 29th and 30th jubilees onwards. The persecutions suffered by Christ at the end of his life will also be repeated for the Church. This will be the triumph of the Antichrist: the Church will seem to be dead, but it will experience a resurrection before the actual return of its master. Given that Nicolas's pre-

diction of the evangelical renewal corresponded in effect with the Protestant Reformation, one can easily understand the impact that this little treatise had on contemporary minds.

The treatise *Idiota de Mente* (The Layman on the Spirit, 1450) presents a humble workman who makes wooden shelters, but beneath his modest exterior possesses a very profound wisdom; a philosopher and a specialist in rhetoric come to him for initiation. He uses the simple gestures of his craft as analogies of the highest realities: God and his creative act, the human spirit as image of God, the status of numbers, mathematics as displaying the inner fecundity of thought. Nicolas is clearly criticizing here the book-learning of the scholastic thinkers; true knowledge is sometimes found among the ignorant, the fools, and those who are despised by the established intellectual or religious authorities.

In another short work, *Idiota de Staticis Experimentis* (The Layman on Static Experiments, 1450), Nicolas erects a general philosophy of measurement for natural phenomena. Using a simple balance, one can measure the different weights of waters from various origins: light and airy ones, good for habitation, or heavy, earthly, and noxious waters. One can draw up a table with the numerical characteristics of various waters and the specific mixture of elements that characterize them. One can do likewise for the metals, the airs, the humors, such as blood, urine, etc. The blood of a German is not exactly the same weight as that of an Italian, or an inhabitant of some other land. The blood and urine of an individual vary according to whether he is well or ill. A table of the ponderable differences of urine would certainly render great service to medicine by facilitating diagnosis. Evidently Nicolas grasped the idea of the functional variation of nature's measurable quantities, as revealing the hidden relations that things have with one another.

In 1453, Nicolas was deeply affected by the Turkish conquest of Byzantium and the disastrous consequences of wars waged for religious motives. He wrote one of his most penetrating books on this subject, *The Peace of Faith*, where he tries to show that all religious beliefs – Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, paganism, philosophy (regarded as a religion worshipping Wisdom) – are founded on common assumptions. This common core can be explained as a faith that is the precondition of all religious confessions, and by this very fact unites them rather than opposes them. From this point of view, the differences between confessions amount to differences between rites, and do not call into question the common faith that unites them. For

Nicolas, this common faith is Christianity. It is not, however, a religion of reason – understood as the faculty of mind subject to the laws of traditional logic, and thus fit to grasp finite realities – which would be opposed to all the other religions that contradict reason; it is, rather, a religion of the *intellect*: the faculty of the spirit which is open to the conjunction of opposites, because it is higher than reason and situated at the principle of the latter, as light is to shadow. Even when the “rational” religions explicitly contradict some point of “intellectual” religion, they are implicitly admitting that it is part of their very conditions of possibility. Hence Christianity should not want to impose itself by force, because it is not opposed to other beliefs, being at another level than they. With *The Peace of Faith*, Nicolas made the most extensive contribution of the Latin Middle Ages to the problem of religious pluralism.

The central theme of Cusanus's thought, the “coincidence of opposites”, may have given birth to the conviction that he was an “initiate” in the esoteric sense of the word. According to this principle, all affirmation about God is merely partial: it has to be completed and relativized by the contrary affirmation, because God unites in himself that which is incompatible in the finite. This often gives Nicolas's arguments a paradoxical aspect, being very respectful of the truth that some opinion may contain, but equally conscious of the necessity to integrate these diverse perspectives in a higher synthesis, which goes beyond the competence of reason, the latter being observant of the principles of non-contradiction and the excluded middle. Thus God is nowhere in the world, while being everywhere in it; the world has no limits, and thus may be called infinite, but on the other hand, being only a reflection of the true infinity which is God, it is better called indefinite; the cosmos has no clearly marked center or frontiers, but each point in the universe may be considered as both its center and its frontier.

Human thought can only divine this coincidence of opposites, without ever mastering it; that is why man's knowledge is always “learned ignorance”. It is important to note that certain mystics believed that they could interpret Nicolas of Cusa as promoting a suppression of intellectual activity in order to unite with God in ecstatic love, following the emotional interpretation of the *Mystical Theology* of → Pseudo-Dionysus by Thomas Gallus. But Nicolas clearly rejected this understanding of his doctrine: “learned ignorance” requires the intellectual recognition that God, “coincidence of opposites”, is incomprehensible. There really is an

authentic intellectual activity existing beyond the domain of reason, and one cannot reduce all mental activity to an emotional impulse alone. From this point of view, Cusanus is close (*Sermons dionysiens et eckhartiens*) to the way in which → Albertus Magnus and his Dominican disciples in Cologne (often miscalled the “Rhineland mystics”) understood Pseudo-Dionysus’s *Mystical Theology*: as a *divinization* of the intellect, and not as an annihilation of its activity.

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J.M. COUNET

Cusanus, Nicolas → Cusa, Nicholas of

Dante Alighieri, \* 1265 Florence,  
† 1321 Ravenna

Exceptional poet and political figure involved in the dispute between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, Dante took part in the *Dolce stil novo* movement alongside Guido Cavalcanti (ca. 1255-1300) and declared on several occasions that his poetic message addressed the mysterious → “*Fedeli d’amore*” (for ex. *Vita nuova*, III, 12). It is unknown whether these formed an ideal community of learned and loving poets or designated a secret society of an initiatory vocation. The characteristic of the work of Dante indeed consists in expressing this supposed initiatory dimension in the sole vocabulary of courtly poetry and the sorrows of love. Thus, in both his prose and his verse, and finally in the total work that is the *Divine Comedy*, he always speaks of love for a woman or for women, whose life and death mark the rhythm of the course of individual life as well as universal history and the entire cosmos. The esotericism of Dante could not employ any other basis or symbol.

After the death of the beloved woman, Beatrice (who cannot be reduced to Bice Portinari, a real woman whom Dante seems to have loved from late adolescence), came a successive series of tribulations. These mixed a political life of the first order, serious philosophical training in Florence and Bologna, and personal trials that were to culminate in exile. A mission in Rome to Boniface VIII in 1301, when Dante was Prior of Florence, proved to



be a trap since he never returned to his hometown and was sentenced *in absentia* to exile and the stake. Only then did he find his definitive vocation in writing first the *Convivio*, a vast unfinished commentary on some of his *canzone*, and then the *Commedia* published in stages, whose last thirteen cantos would be known only after his death. We can consider, however, that every composition by Dante not only is a preparation for his mature work, but also is a specific and irreplaceable viewpoint on the final work. Thus, not a single line attributed to Dante fails to contribute to the development of a system of an unbelievable complexity that immediately provoked a wave of commentaries.

It would be superfluous, however, to dwell here on the function of the Florentine poet in Italian history and in the literary renaissance of the end of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, if we define the work of Dante as the greatest poetic synthesis of Roman and Catholic civilization, we risk misunderstanding how such a sum could have served as a major source for an almost indefinite number of esoteric, revolutionary, or theosophical interpretations, always heterodox. Thus, we must move away from a general cultural evaluation of the work of the poet and enter into the complexity of his literature to detect the elements, in this apparently unequivocal celebration of a dogma, comprising subversion so profound and enigmatic that no clear-cut opinion on this subject can be formulated even today. Moreover, even if we return to the letter of the text, the debate remains far from easy, because most scholars since Bruno Nardi (1884-1968), who apply the rules of historiography to interpreting the work, restrict themselves to an interpretation of the literal sense and refuse for reasons of either psychological probability or epistemology to enter into any "esoteric" dimension.

Generally cited to justify this specific dimension is a verse that nevertheless seems more applicable to its immediate context than to the whole work: 'O voi ch' avete gl'intelletti sani, / Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde, / Sotto il velame delli versi strani' (*Inf.*, IX, 61-63 [O you who have clear understanding, / Consider the doctrine that is hiding, / Under the veil of strange verses.]) Furthermore, we must not underestimate at least two major roads into the esotericism of Dante. First, as early as the beginning of book II (II, I, 2-12) of the *Convivio*, that is, when the commentary of the first *canzone* begins, Dante gives a complete theory of the different meanings of poetry. Far from merely repeating the traditional theory of the four meanings of Scripture, the author takes care to distinguish between the plurality of meanings of Holy

Scripture and the plurality of meanings appropriate to poetry (II, I, 4). Therefore, Dante indeed made during that period, that is, after the composition of the great allegorical *canzone*, a distinction between poetic fiction, regulated to produce a variety of meanings according to the understanding of the poet, and the work of God that is Holy Scripture. The latter would regulate, according to an infinite understanding, the meanings and the events in the real history of the world.

This system of meaning was to unfold throughout the four books of the *Convivio* and result in a development of exceptional depth, particularly in the use of the analogy between the liberal Arts and the Heavens. In this passage, whose importance → René Guénon has rightly emphasized in his *L'Esotérisme de Dante* (chap. II, regarding *Conv.*, II, XI, 9), Dante not only relates his words to the Heaven of Venus, but also announces the foundation of a completely analogous cosmos. The Crystalline Heaven identified with Ethics propels this cosmos, which finishes in the Empyrean Heaven identified with a kingdom of Peace foreign to any discursive content (*Conv.*, II, XIII-XIV, and René Guénon, *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir*, chapter VIII).

However, this first construction does not suffice, because the famous Letter XIII to Cangrade della Scala, a name on which the esotericists have exercised their sagacity by finding in it the name of Gengis Khan and the symbol of the ladder, announces a revolution in the initial balance between poetry and theology. Some doubt the authenticity of this letter, but its breadth of vision can only be that of Dante or the group that inspired him. In its paragraphs seven and eight, we read that the poet of the *Divine Comedy* used theological allegory to his advantage: an allegory, that is, in which the literal meaning is not a fiction, but a reality like that which God assigns to the history that he is guiding. The poet is hence in the situation of an absolute Creator, whose visions are existences and whose allegories are as powerful as those of the Bible.

On this basis, the plurality of meanings in the work of Dante takes on a prophetic significance and makes the work a true universe, whose hidden meanings are as necessary and established as those governing Revelation. In this regard, we could nonetheless still speak of the wanderings of a poet or the hallucinations of an author, if another element of primordial importance did not invite us to cross to another level. In fact, the most enigmatic element permeating the work is indeed the worship of woman that commands his every statement.

Anyone looking at the assertions of Dante with the eye of Catholic dogma could only be struck by



the strangeness of such allegory, always present and never clarified, all the more so as it penetrates to the very heart of the most sacred statements of dogma. The work of Dante, from this viewpoint, risks appearing as nothing less than an erotic parody of the religion of Christ, which no resurgence of Marian worship could justify in a simple manner. In this sense, the esotericism of Dante is invisible, because instead of hiding, it is present throughout, from the first line of the work telling of the meeting with Beatrice to the last, where the poet merges into universal Love. In a Catholic orthodoxy, Christ is the only mediator, but rather than acting primarily as a mediator, he represents the immediacy of the Trinitarian God, and the Virgin is the only intercessor. Within this context, a simple young woman from Florence, through the effect of her beauty, becomes the ultimate term of all joy and spiritual development. She becomes this to the point where she can epitomize the meanings of all civilization, whether it is a matter, as in the *Vita nuova* (chap. XXX), of the politics of the rulers of this world, or, as in the *Comedy*, of the destiny of the Church and the Empire (*Purg.*, XXIX-XXXIII). Dante continues along this line the undertaking to challenge the clerical order begun by the *Roman de la Rose*. It is not surprising that scholars attribute to the Florentine poet a manuscript of 232 sonnets, signed by a certain “ser Durante”, rediscovered in Montpellier in the 19th century and proceeding from the library of Troyes. These sonnets, entitled *Il Fiore* (the collection appears in the complete works published by the *Società Dantesca italiana*), summarize the highlights of the *Roman de la Rose*. They convey a very strong protest against established society and the need to divert the dogmas of Catholicism in order to transmit a secret wisdom both highly erotic and profoundly heretical (for example sonnets V and XV). However, here we would have to reconsider all the poetry of Dante before the *Comedy* and especially the disturbing *canzone* to the woman “of stone” (the “*Rime pietrose*”), which crown the Dantean doctrine of *Fin Amor* (cf. *Il Fiore*, IV, 8).

This return of the pagan (and Virgilian) mysteries amidst Dantean condemnations of the ‘*puzzo del paganesmo*’ (*Par.* XX, 125), the stench of paganism, has attracted the attention of interpreters, who have well perceived the risk involved in such an increase of religious mediations. Among them, certainly → Marsilio Ficino went the furthest in recognizing the need for a spiritual revolution in order to understand Dante’s gift to Florence. The letter prefacing the great humanist commentary on Dante by Cristoforo Landino (1424-1498)

contains this same idea. Even if we consider this commentary a key to Florentine culture and the beginnings of the art of printing, it does not exclude the idea of a “poetic theology” of neo-Platonic origin, for which poetry is simply the “veil” of philosophical wisdom. This writing, which is primarily a celebration of the unity of Florentine culture, does not address the idea that Dante is esoteric *because heterodox*. It was only with the Romantic annotator of Dante, Gabriele Rossetti (1783-1854), that the thesis of the “esotericism of Dante”, founded on the deliberate use of ancient mysteries, the allegorical worship of woman, Templarism (in particular because of *Purg.* XX, 93), and militant Ghibelline politics, found free and systematic expression. His immediate predecessor was probably Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827) and his well-known *Discorso sul testo della divina Commedia* of 1825. Foscolo, a great nostalgic poet of a paganism both Jacobin and virtuous, tried to show that the entire work of Dante stood in the service of a political and moral reform of Pythagorean origin, which Dante could express only indirectly, given the convictions of his time. That is why Foscolo proposed a primarily political coding of the writings of Dante. Influenced by → Freemasonry and → Rosicrucianism, Rossetti, on his side, suggested a similar interpretation, but he pushed the esoteric interpretation to a degree of complexity worthy indeed of a poet schooled in the Neapolitan baroque.

The works of Rossetti are little read, but they were plundered, in particular by his detractor Aroux. In explaining Rossetti’s theses, Aroux intended to denounce the Romantic cult of Dante before the Roman authorities. He declared that Dante was a revolutionary and an atheist, heir to the Ghibelline doctrine of Frederick II (however condemned by Dante in Canto X of the *Inferno*). The book of Aroux, with his ambiguous vocation as both denouncer and continuator, was nevertheless very influential, because it was from reading Aroux, and not Rossetti, that Guénon would draw the first theses of his esoteric reading of Dante (*Esoterism of Dante*, chapter III). It remains that Rossetti, very influential in the symbolist culture through the works of his son and disciple, the painter Dante Gabriele Rossetti, could marshal with a sufficiently broad view and a peerless knowledge of Dante, although not without repetition and obsession, the most precise arguments in favor of the esoteric reading of the Florentine poet.

For Rossetti, Dante belongs to a millenarian tradition of primarily political protest against power, through a gnosis whose coding according to the terms of dominant ideologies serves only to divert

the attention of censors, so that the “Faithful of love” – that is, of the love of this gnosis – may assemble to liberate humanity. However, this libertarian and naïve socialism would not retain us, if it did not lead to a permanently divided reading of the work. In this regard, Rossetti is decisive more by the attention he brings to bear on the intrinsic ambiguity of the work than by the unequivocal solution that he serves.

Let us retain, in this context, his interpretation of the overlapping of the letters C and O, in the first syllable of COMOEDIA, his meditation on the dual display of the earth and the sea in the *Quaestio terrae et aquae* (the last text of Dante known to us), and his relentless criticism of any psychological and sentimental interpretation of the platonic love for Beatrice. These approaches reappear in Valli, but without the breadth of vision and the humanist culture of Rossetti, or again in the poet Giovanni Pascoli, who attempted in his turn to decipher the work from the recurrent motifs of the eagle and the cross. Esoteric interpretations of Dante indeed proliferated, mixing → astrology, numerology [→ Number Symbolism], Templarism, Joachimism, → alchemy, and so on, as though modern readers were seeking in Dante the secret of a spirituality that was no longer accessible. It is from such a perspective that René Guénon contributed his analyses on the esotericism of Dante (which are not limited to the book by the same name), as did → Julius Evola, whose Ghibelline Dante adopts a magical and heroic tone, rather foreign to traditional thinking according to Guénon. To finish, let us not forget the nominalist tendency of Umberto Eco, who did not think of engaging his great novelistic machinery without declaring a merciless war on any esoteric interpretation of the Florentine poet.

The “adepts of the veil”, as Eco ironically calls them, nevertheless have a promising future, since the writings of Dante keep resisting usual intertextual or psychological interpretations. There is in this work such a thirst for truth, such a power of conviction, and such an enigma concerning the symbols intended to manifest them, that it seems to summarize in itself all the forces of Western thought and the virtue of its peoples. There will always be authors who believe that commenting on Dante is not so much clinging nostalgically to a medieval ruin, as it is evaluating our own capacity to understand the forms and the resources of our spirit.

*Lit.: Comedia di Danthe Alighieri poeta divino con l'esposizione di Christophoro landino, Firenze, 1481, 1537, etc* ♦ Ugo Foscolo, *Studi su Dante*, in *Ed. nazionale delle Opere di Ugo Foscolo*, Vol. IX.1, Le

Monnier: Firenze, 1979 ♦ Gabriele Rossetti, *Il mistero dell'amor platonico del medio evo derivato da' misteri antichi*, London, 1840; Milan: Archè, 1982 ♦ Gabriele Rossetti, *La Beatrice di Dante* (Maria Luisa Giartosio de Courten, ed.), Roma: Atanòr, 1988 ♦ Eugène Aroux, *Dante hérétique, révolutionnaire et socialiste: Révélations d'un catholique sur le Moyen Age*, Paris 1854, 1939 ♦ Giovanni Pascoli, *Minerva obscura*, Livorno, 1878 ♦ idem, *Sotto il velame*, Messina, 1900 ♦ idem, *Conferenze e studi Danteschi*, Bologna, 1914 ♦ Luigi Valli, *Il linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore* (1928) Milano: Luni editrice, 1994 ♦ René Guénon, *L'ésotérisme de Dante*, Paris, 1925; Paris: Gallimard, 1957 ♦ idem, *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel* (1929) Paris: Trédaniel, 1984 ♦ Julius Evola, *Il mistero del Graal e la tradizione ghibellina dell'Impero*, Rome, 1937 ♦ Philippe Guiberteau, *Le Banquet* (introduction, translation and notes by Philippe Guiberteau), Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968 ♦ Arthur Schult, *Dantes Divina Commedia als Zeugnis der Tempelritter-Esoterik*, Bietigheim: Turm Verlag, 1979 ♦ *L'idea deforme, interpretazioni di Dante* (Maria Pia Possato, ed.), Milano: Bompiani, 1989 ♦ Adriano Lanza, *Dante e la Gnose*, Rama: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1990 ♦ *Sotto il velame, terni e interpreti dell'esoterismo Dantesco*, Torino: Associazione Studi Danteschi e Tradizionali, 2001 ♦ Bruno Pinchard (ed.), *Pour Dante*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001 ♦ Bruno Pinchard, *Méditations mythologiques*, Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002.

BRUNO PINCHARD

Davis, Andrew Jackson, \* 11.8.1826  
Blooming Grove, New York,  
† 13.1.1910 Watertown, Massachusetts

Writer, clairvoyant, physician, lecturer, reformer, and forerunner of → New Age spirituality, Davis can rightfully be called the major theologian and philosopher of 19th-century → Spiritualism in the United States. Although most of our information concerning his early life comes from an autobiography whose veracity is questionable, it is likely that he grew up in humble circumstances in rural New York state and was deeply dissatisfied with the conventional Presbyterianism and Methodism of his time. Davis showed little promise in the several apprenticeships – including as a shoemaker – he tried, but was rescued from a life of obscurity when a tailor named William Levingston asked him to serve as a subject for his experiments in mesmerism [→ Animal Magnetism] in 1843. Levingston had learned snippets of mesmerism from the traveling lecturer J. Stanley Grimes. Davis proved to be a natural trance performer and reportedly traveled clairvoyantly to remote places, conversed with spirits, diagnosed physical ailments, and read from books while blindfolded.

In 1844, Davis had a visionary experience in which he spoke with both the Greek physician Galen and the Swedish mystic and scientist → Emanuel Swedenborg. Galen gave him a magical staff constructed so as to represent symbolically the complete correspondence between the natural order and Galen's medical system. The Greek physician also proclaimed Davis's future mission as a clairvoyant healer. Swedenborg told him that he was to become a conduit for a coming revelation of wisdom and truth to humanity. Bolstered by this vision, Davis and Levingston opened a clinic where Davis practiced clairvoyant healing. While in a trance state, the young seer would visualize the inner organs of the sick person and prescribe cures. This shaman-like practice would be replicated and made famous by the "sleeping prophet" → Edgar Cayce, whose clairvoyant readings would become an important element in the emergence of New Age spirituality in the latter half of the 20th century.

By 1845, Davis had moved to New York City with Dr. Silis Lyon and the Universalist minister William Fishbough, both of whom were impressed with his clairvoyant abilities. The two arranged for a series of public lectures during which Lyon mesmerized Davis and Fishbough acted as a scribe. The one hundred fifty-seven talks Davis delivered in the trance state impressed a wealthy patron named Silone Dodge, who arranged for them to be published in 1847 under the title, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelation, and a Voice to Mankind, By and Through Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer" and "Clairvoyant"*. Although some scholars see the book as a derivative melange of Swedenborgian cosmology and Fourierist socialism, *The Principles of Nature* is significant for two reasons: (1) it became the first of an important genre of esoteric treatise – purportedly received in a trance state or from spirit beings, including, for example, → H.P. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, the *Oahspe Book*, the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, the writings of → Alice Bailey, the *Urantia Book*, and the Seth material – that would provide the conceptual categories and dominant themes for such popular alternative spiritualities in the United States as Spiritualism, → New Thought, Christian Science, Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society], and New Age; (2) the book – which went through thirty-four editions – and its ideas helped provide a philosophical and theological underpinning for the nascent Spiritualist movement of the 19th century.

*The Principles of Nature* discussed the origin and development of the universe, the laws that governed the intercourse between spirits and humans,

and various schemes for social reform. Among the book's primary ideas is that of eternal progress, whereby human beings, created in God's image, continue to evolve after death through six (Swedenborgian) spheres that surround the earth. Each sphere surpasses in beauty and wisdom the one which precedes it. Those spirits closest to the earth could communicate with embodied humans, and new cosmic spheres would appear for further development once all humans had progressed to the highest, or sixth sphere. Since deceased persons would move into the sphere that best corresponded with their moral stature, there was a strong incentive to live according to the highest moral code while on earth. This progressive view of human destiny resonated well with the optimistic and egalitarian tenor of 19th-century American society and provided a welcome alternative to the pessimistic Calvinist vision of selective salvation for the few and eternal damnation for the many. Davis's spiritual anthropology also paralleled that of Mormon founder Joseph Smith, who taught that humans had the opportunity to evolve into god-like beings and to rule their own planets and solar systems.

Davis continued to write books, pamphlets, and articles throughout his life and to support such Spiritualist periodicals as *The Univercoelum*, *Spirit Messenger*, and *Herald of Progress*. His most ambitious book, *The Great Harmonia*, was published in five volumes during the 1850s. This tome advanced Davis's grand scheme for societal transformation and made him a leading voice in the abolitionist, women's rights, lyceum, and marriage and health reform movements of the 19th century. His adamant support of abolition alienated him from the Spiritualist movement in the South.

Davis's Harmonial philosophy is an emanationist vision of the universe, with all creative power enthroned in a great spiritual sun and all natural phenomena reflecting eternal forms in the Divine Mind. By developing their spiritual senses in harmony with their physical senses, human beings could come to realize the → correspondences and relationships between the spiritual and the natural worlds and the divine laws and principles that order existence in both realms. Both societal and personal reform in this philosophy came about through a cultivation of harmony with nature, which was seen as the next highest level of existence emanating from the divine center. When persons recognized their places in the divine hierarchy of being, all would operate harmoniously as organs in a single whole, and mutual cooperation would lead to welfare for all living beings. The correspondences of this philosophy with → Neoplatonism, →

Hermetism, Swedenborgianism [→ Swedenborg], and Transcendentalism are obvious.

Davis's vision of children's education derived from his belief that those who died in childhood grew to maturity in the spirit world. The system of education in the "Summerland" for these children was called the lyceum. Davis believed that children held within themselves an image of perfect being and were therefore unlimited in their potentials. The mission of education was not to indoctrinate children into social conventions but to draw out their divine genius through conversation and discussion that was especially geared to each child's mentality and temperament.

In later life, Davis married a women's rights activist from Western New York, Mary Fenn Love. He also moved to distance himself from the physical phenomena associated with the spiritualist séance and to insist on the need for social reform in addition to spirit communication. When widespread fakery and quackery associated with mesmerism resulted in a New York law prohibiting mesmeric healers from practicing medicine, Jackson encouraged his colleagues to gain licenses from legitimate medical colleges. He himself enrolled in the United States Medical College in New York and graduated in 1883 with degrees in anthropology and medicine. Davis spent the last twenty-five years of his life treating patients regardless of their ability to pay from his clinic in Watertown, Massachusetts.

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*Lit.*: Catherine Albanese, "On the Matter of Spirit: Andrew Jackson Davis and the Marriage of God and Nature", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60:1 (1992), 1-17 ♦ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, 34-41, 51-55, 71-76, 144-155, 181-182 ♦ Robert C. Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982, 96-100 ♦ Frank Podmore, *Mediums of the 19th Century*, New York: New Hyde Park, University Books, 1963, vol. I, ch. 9.

PHILLIP CHARLES LUCAS

Dee, John, \* 13.7.1527 London,  
† 26.3.1609 Mortlake

1. BIOGRAPHY: FROM HUMANISM  
TO MAGIC 2. MAGICAL SCIENCE:  
ASTROLOGY, ALCHEMY, "ARCHEMASTRIE"  
3. DEE'S OCCULT PHILOSOPHY: ENOCHIAN  
MAGIC 4. OCCULTIST AND LITERARY  
RECEPTION

Humanist, mathematician, geographer, antiquarian, astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I. A cultural traveller on the Continent, including East-Central Europe. One of the most intriguing representatives of occult philosophy [→ occult/occultism] in the late-Renaissance period.

1. BIOGRAPHY: FROM HUMANISM  
TO MAGIC

Dee was born into a well-to-do textile merchant family which traced its origins to the nobility of Wales. From his father he inherited the intense ambition to fashion himself as a gentleman and conduct his life as near to the court as possible. A way towards this goal was a good education. He pursued university studies at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he received his BA in 1546 and his MA two years later. Among his college fellows he could count the children of the aristocracy newly created by the Tudors. Indeed these youngsters became the key politicians of the future Elizabeth I, and many of them proved to be important patrons of the aspiring scholar.

An interesting episode during Dee's school years was when he constructed a "flying scarabaeus" as a stage prop in a production of Aristophanes' *The Peace*. The invention later caused him much trouble, since the occasional charges of sorcery leveled against him would not fail to mention this act of "wizardry". Another important preoccupation, Dee's passionate love for books, also manifested itself during his student years: in 1544 he bought the first two volumes of his later legendary library.

After graduation Dee went to Louvain in order to learn about such areas of applied mathematics that were not available at home. He studied geometry and cartography with Gerard Mercator and Pedro Nuñez, and medicine and mathematics with Gemma Frisius. In 1550 he went to Paris where he met a great number of famous humanists, among others Pierre Mondoré, the librarian of the French king, Oronce Finé, professor of mathematics, Pierre de la Ramée, the innovator of logic, and → Guillaume Postel, a scholar of oriental languages



who would later experience a magical-enthusiastic turn in his life similar to Dee's "enlightenment". It was in Paris that Dee held a famous lecture on Euclid's geometry, which he later remembered as follows: 'I did undertake to read freely and publicly Euclide's Elements Geometricall, Mathematicè, Physicè, et Pythagoricè; a thing never done publicly in any University of Christendome. My auditory in Rhemes Colledge was so great, and most part elder than my selfe, that the mathematicall schooles could not hold them; for many were faine, without the schooles at the windowes, to be auditors and spectators . . .' (*Autobiographical Tracts*, 7).

In the 1550s Dee lived in England as a tutor to children of aristocratic families, including the young king, Edward VI. Although the Catholic Queen Mary did not favour the ardent protestant Dee (he even found himself briefly in prison), this did not prevent the Doctor to propose to the Queen that she should establish a court library by collecting the manuscripts and valuable books dispersed as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries (cf. *Supplication to Queen Mary*). As his proposal remained unanswered, he himself saw to the establishment of a major library. During the next thirty years he devoted most of his income to purchasing books, maps, astronomical and other scientific instruments, until he had at his disposal England's largest private library, consisting of about four thousand volumes, as well as a scientific centre with an observatory and an alchemical laboratory (see the Introduction to *Dee's Library Catalogues*).

1558 was an important year in Dee's life. The accession of Elizabeth returned him to favour, and as a particular sign of this, Dee was entrusted the task of astrologically determining the day of the coronation. In the same year he constructed a mathematical table which was to help the sailors of the Muscovy Company to find the correct location of the North Pole. Most important of all, this year witnessed the publication of his first full-size scholarly book, the *Propaedeumata aphoristica*: a combination of mathematics and → astrology which claimed to provide an improved and corrected system for registering the stellar oppositions for the calculation of astrological charts.

From 1558 through the 1560s Dee's scientific interests broadened and changed: traditional mathematics and astrology were complemented by the neoplatonic-hermetic philosophy of the Florentine Academy also popularized by such "Renaissance magi" as → Francesco Giorgi da Veneto and → Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. Beside these, another important influence on Dee was that of → Paracel-

sus. Dee was a pioneer in England in recognizing the importance of Paracelsus, and in these years he purchased a remarkably great number of books written by the German doctor or ascribed to him.

Between 1562-1564 Dee embarked on a long Continental journey, visiting Flanders, France, Switzerland and Germany. In Italy he edited an Arabic mathematical treatise with an Italian scholar; in Pressburg (Bratislava) he participated in the coronation of Maximilian II of Habsburg as king of Hungary, and, finally, in 1564 in Antwerp he wrote his major work, the *Monas hieroglyphica*, which appeared from the printing press of the Dutch Willem Silvius and was dedicated to Maximilian. This difficult work has become a basic text of occult-magical literature and is subject to ever new interpretations. In Holland he also came across a manuscript of → Trithemius' *Steganographia*, a work on the possibility of communication with angels. Later on Dee himself became a notable theoretician and practitioner of angel magic.

From the mid-1560s through 1583 Dee again stayed in England, enjoying a growing scholarly reputation and continuing to build his library. In 1578 he married Jane Fromond, who bore him many children and seems to have been a particularly supportive wife. Later that year he briefly travelled in Germany, 'to consult some famous doctors about the Queen's health', and met the German occultist scholar, Leonhard Thurneysser, in Frankfurt an der Oder. This is the time when he acquired his famous house in Mortlake, a village near London in the vicinity of Hampton Court. Four or five rooms were filled with the Doctor's library, and the place functioned as a "private academy" where not only pupils were frequent visitors but also members of the aristocracy, famous explorers, military leaders, members of the government, and occasionally even the Queen herself (on the "Elizabethan think tank" gathering at Dee's house see French 1572 and Sherman 1995, 29-53).

In 1570 Dee published his *Mathematicall Preface*, prefixed to Sir Henry Billingsley's translation of Euclid's *Elements*. Much more than a simple explanation of geometry, it is rather an elevated eulogy of the importance and usefulness of mathematics, including the magical sciences. Later in the same decade, in 1577, he published another important English work, the beautifully illustrated *General and Rare Memorials Pertayning to the perfect Art of Navigation*, which shows another face of the Doctor: the patriotic *homo politicus*, who was deeply concerned with England's advance as a sea power. Simultaneously he also compiled an ornate



scroll, establishing the Virgin Queen's rights to the American territories: *Her Majesties title Royall*. It is clear that during these years Dee was much occupied not only with science and → magic but also with what Frances Yates has called "Elizabethan English imperialism", which combined the program of national expansion with religious associations, a reformed Tudor empire (Yates 1975, 84ff.).

Historians of science have noticed with regret that from the early 1580s Dee did not produce anything worthy of the attention of serious scientists. This is when his overtly esoteric period started, with ambitions and ideas that are highly intriguing to contemporary intellectual historians and historical anthropologists. Cultural historians have given various explanations for the development of Dee's interest in the occult. Recurring arguments are his disappointment with the natural sciences, his frustration about self-fashioning himself within the Elizabethan patronage system, and, finally, a growing preoccupation with one particular kind of magic, *scrying*, that led to his "angelic conversations".

According to the biographical evidence, this shift of orientation did not happen all of a sudden; rather, it was related to his changing scholarly and philosophical ideas, prompted, probably, by his discovery of Trithemius' *Steganographia* and the completion of the *Monas hieroglyphica*. What had started as an intellectual change in the 1560s, became a psychic reality by the late 1570s: his diaries relate more and more about strange dreams, sounds, and visions.

The angel magic Dee developed around this time comprised a kind of ritualistic seance during which, with the help of crystal balls and "scryers", he tried to obtain information from spirits and angels (on various techniques of scrying cf. Clulee 1988; Harkness 1999; Szónyi 2004; Whitby 1988; on Dee's indebtedness to the medieval tradition of *ars notoria*, or Solomonic magic, see Clucas forthcoming). The "angelic conversations" could deal with various themes, ranging from dignified metaphysical questions to everyday problems, but it is important to emphasize that Dee's primary aim with angel magic was to gain a universal knowledge of natural philosophy. The first "full-scale" angelic conversation took place on 22 December 1581, with the help of a medium called Barnabas Saul. Events took a dramatic turn in 1582, when Dee met Edward Kelley, a wandering alchemist who proved to be a perfect medium for the scrying sessions. From this time on Dee needed the conversations on a daily basis and kept a detailed journal about their course, which survives today and is a

fascinating document of early modern esoteric mentality.

In May 1583 a Polish nobleman, Olbracht Łaski arrived in England, where he accomplished a noteworthy program, more cultural than political in nature. His guide was Sir Philip Sidney, the exemplary courtier and Renaissance poet. With him, Łaski witnessed → Giordano Bruno's debate with the Oxford philosophers at the ancient university, after which he was taken to Mortlake to meet Doctor Dee. The encounter determined the future life of Dee, Kelley, and their families. After participating in a few scrying sessions, Łaski suggested that the Englishmen go with him to Poland and try magic and alchemical transmutations there. Dee obtained the Queen's permission, and from 1583 through 1589 he lived on the Continent, pursuing the guidance of the angels as well as trying to gain profitable patronage at various Central European courts.

In 1584 Dee moved his "headquarters" to Prague where he secured an interview with Emperor → Rudolf II, hoping to gain a permanent position as court mathematician. When this failed, he repeatedly visited the Polish king Stephan Batory in Cracow, with the same purpose. After some conflicts during which he and his company were almost arrested by the Catholic Inquisition, and were subsequently expelled from the lands of Rudolf, they got permission to settle in Třeboň, on the estate of Vilém Rožmberk, a prominent Czech magnate and patron of arts as well as → alchemy and magic. There the angelic conferences continued with the occasional participation of the patron, who, however, was clearly more interested in the production of gold. Kelley, who had more experience with alchemical experimentations, soon overshadowed his master and finally Rudolf "borrowed" him back from Rožmberk.

In April, 1587 a rather controversial affair took place: the Doctor and Kelley – who then was trafficking between Prague and Třeboň – 'together with their wives, *nocte profundis*' made a covenant, following the instructions of Archangel Raphael: 'Note and remember that on Sunday the third of May, ann. 1587 (by the new account), I, John Dee, Edward Kelley and our two wives covenanted with God and subscribed to the same, for indissoluble and inviolable unities, charity and friendship keeping between us four, and all things between us to be common, as God by sundry means willed us to do' (*True & Faithful Relation*, 20-1 [new numbering]). As Fenton remarks, 'this new and strange doctrine' of marital cross-matching shows how far Dee was prepared to go in the pursuit of divine knowledge, but he also gives reasons

why Kelley may have invented this shocking divine demand: possibly he wanted to bring the angelic conferences to an end – never expecting that Dee would accept the terms (*The Diaries of John Dee*, 209). Even this covenant could not mend the deteriorating relationship between master and medium. Kelley was building his own career in Prague while Dee obviously became homesick for England; in 1589 he finally petitioned Lord Rožmberk to give him permission to return home.

Back in England, Dee, now past sixty, reestablished himself in his Mortlake library, continued to enjoy the favour of Queen Elizabeth, and still had interesting encounters with men of learning, such as the mathematicians Thomas Harriot and William Digges, and the scholar Richard Cavendish. He also met influential persons – among them Walter Raleigh and the Archbishop of Canterbury – and maintained his Continental contacts by corresponding, among others, with Prince Moritz, Landgrave of Hessen-Kassel.

In 1592 Dee submitted an elaborate autobiographical memorandum to Elizabeth. This is known as the *Compendious Rehearsall* that aimed to convince the Sovereign about his knowledge, religious honesty, and strong loyalty to the Queen (see *Autobiographical Tracts*, 1-45). In return Elizabeth covered for him a bill of no less than £ 2306, related to his journey from Germany. In 1595 he received a wardenship in Manchester by Archbishop Whitgift, but he was never happy with that position. Up to 1605 Dee divided his time between Manchester and Mortlake with occasional visits to London. After the death of Elizabeth he sunk into oblivion and, in spite of several petitions, he never managed to attract the interest of James I – not even with his last considerable work, *THALATTOKPATIA BPETTANIKH, sive de Imperii Brytannici Jurisdictione in mari . . .* in which he suggested the extension of Britain's rights for the open seas (for details see Sherman 1995, 192-201).

Due to the plague of 1605 Dee lost his beloved wife and several of their children. Seventy-eight years old, he returned to Mortlake, never to leave the place again. Hard though it may be to believe, he still continued the angelic conversations, now with a medium called Bartholomew Hickman. And as if wanting to restart his life, the doctor still pondered yet another journey, probably to visit the Landgrave Moritz in Germany. The Archangel Raphael actually encouraged him: 'John Dee, thou hast been a traveller, and God hath ever yet at any time provided for thee in all thy journeys. He that hath commanded thee to take this journey in hand,

will provide for thee in Germany, or any other country wheresoever thou goest' (*A True & Faithful Relation*, 37 [new numbering]).

The last entry in the spiritual diaries is from September 1607, but we know from another notebook that Dee still conducted alchemical experiments between December 1607 and January the following year (Oxford, Bodleian, MS Ashmole 1486, cf. *The Diaries of John Dee*, 303). He died on 26 March, 1609, at the end of an extraordinary career that continues to present historians of science and culture with intriguing problems.

## 2. MAGICAL SCIENCE: ASTROLOGY, ALCHEMY, "ARCHEMASTRIE"

Dee's early career was dominated by mathematics; but already at that time, it was intertwined with mystical-occult concerns, the principal goal of which was to acquire perfect knowledge. His first important work was entitled *Propaedeumata aphoristica*: 'an aphoristic introduction . . . concerning certain virtues of nature' (1558). The work was dedicated to Gerard Mercator, the distinguished mathematician. Although based on the concepts of traditional → astrology, the book attempted to approach prognostication by a strictly scientific method. While the neoplatonist magi of the early Renaissance tried to gain control over the influence of the stars through talismanic magic and ritual incantations, Dee thought of accomplishing this task through mathematically constructed optical mirrors; and for this he needed an exact number of stellar constellations (Clulee, 1988, 39-70). While traditional astrologers usually settled for 120 constellations, Dee's book – which consists of 120 aphorisms – computed the number as 25341. The major setback of this result was that, centuries before the age of megacomputers, calculations with such a quantity could not be carried out. Dee tried to derive astrology from Nature alone, and avoid the danger of demonic intelligences, which haunted even his learned contemporary Giordano Bruno. Next to this seeming rationalism Dee also incorporated elements of the organic natural philosophy and the theory of macrocosmic/microcosmic → correspondences which provided an open gateway toward pythagorean → number symbolism as well as hermetic and magical ideas: 'The entire universe is like a lyre tuned by some excellent artificer, whose strings are separate species of the universal whole. Anyone who knew how to touch these and make them vibrate would draw forth marvelous harmonies. In himself, man is wholly analogous to the universal lyre' (*Aphorism XI*). In this passage,

which seems to echo → Ficino, and elsewhere, the modern reader detects the author's longing for a transcendental and universal knowledge, the full vision of which was expanded in Dee's next work, the famous and much discussed *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564).

Dee himself defined the genre of this work as 'a magical parable'. It consists of a lengthy introduction dedicated to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor, followed by 24 very concise aphorisms or theorems. All these serve the interpretation of "the hieroglyphic monad", a mystical-magical sign, entirely the product of Dee's visual imagination. The monad incorporates the simplest geometrical elements: a circle with a point in its centre on top, two straight lines crossing each other in right angle under it, two touching semi circles at the bottom and all enclosed by an oval. Dee constructed it with the intention of condensing all the natural and supernatural → correspondences of the Cosmos into one single sign which would provide the beholder with a complete understanding of the created universe. In the Preface he emphasized that the monad was to be 'mathematically, magically, cabbalistically, and anagogically explained' (Josten ed. 1964, 155). The theorems elucidate the cosmic image on two levels. On one level, they explain how its elements and proportions express in a mystical but at the same time strictly "scientific" manner the ultimate cause of the World, the Oneness. The theorems make clear how all principal numbers can be derived from the geometrical elements in the core of the diagram. Dee also elucidates how these elementary figures can be used to generate all the signs of the planets as well as the metals, thus referring to the major spheres of the universe (macro- and microcosms).

On the second level the monad refers to the Magus, regarded as an experimenting scientist, emphasizing his potential to recreate the lost unity of existence. This layer of meaning stands in close relation to the alchemical significance which is alluded to by Dee when he identifies the two semi-circles with the Zodiacal sign of Aries, a fire sign bringing about the alchemical transmutation. This process naturally includes the spiritual transformation of the operating Magus as well. The oval frame of the image stands for the Egg of the Philosophers, the alembic in which the alchemical process is taking place. In the sign's basic pattern one can recognize the sign of Mercury, the key element of alchemy which at the same time has astrological importance. In *Theorem XVIII*, Dee calls attention to the interrelatedness of astrology and alchemy; he calls alchemy '*astronomia inferior*'.

In sum: considering the two layers of meaning we can see the hieroglyphic monad as an astrological cosmogram on the one hand, and as a talismanic summary of the alchemical transmutation on the other. The latter plane of reference entails the deification of man the Magus, i.e. the doctrine of *exaltatio*. The creation of the quintessential Mercury is nothing else but the liberation of the human spirit, the elevation of the operator's soul to the sphere of perfect knowledge. Dee's philosophical originality lies in the graphic construction of the monad (no identical diagram can be identified from earlier literature), while on the conceptual level he follows and elaborates the magical → neoplatonism of the Florentine Academy, primarily Ficino's *De vita*, which itself reaches back to Plato, Plotinus, Pythagoras, the Hellenistic "neoplatonici" and, last but not least, the lore of the *Corpus hermeticum*. Considering the possible employment of the hieroglyphic monad, one has to conclude that it was not simply meant to serve or illustrate a discursive and logical explanation; rather it was meant to conjure up a condensed mystical image, the purpose of which was to lead the meditating beholder to revelative illumination. The working of such revelative images might be compared to the Eastern practice of using mandalas (on the theory of revelative images see Gombrich 1972, 157-60; on interpretations of the Monad, see Clulee 1988, 75-143; Harkness 1999, 77-90; Josten in Dee 1964, 102-108; Szőnyi 2001 & 2004, Yates 1964, 148-150).

Although the *Mathematicall Preface* (1570) is usually considered to be a conservative summary of Dee's earlier scientific theories, in this work Dee in fact took a step further. This becomes clear when looking at his explanation of a discipline called "archemastrie". In the *Preface* Dee created a hierarchy of sciences which culminated in this discipline: 'This Arte, teacheth to bryng to actuall experience sensible, all worthy conclusions by all the Artes Mathematicall purposed, & by true Naturall Philosophie concluded. . . . And bycause it procedeth by Experiences, and searcheth forth the causes of Conclusions, by Experiences: and also putteth the Conclusions them selves, in Experiences, it is named of some, Scientia Experimentalis' (A.iiij<sup>v</sup>). This passage has often been cited by historians of science as proof that Dee was concerned with the experimental and practical disciplines and, what is more, advocated science in the vernacular; accordingly, he could be regarded as an important forerunner of the Scientific Revolution. But if Dee's "Scientia Experimentalis" is seen within the wider context of the *Mathematicall*

*Preface*, it becomes clear why such a conclusion must be regarded with caution. While introducing the chief auxiliary sciences of *Archemastrie*, Dee enlisted the following disciplines: ‘the Science Alnirangiat, great Service. Under this, commeth Ars Sintrillia, by Artephius, briefly written. But the chief Science, of the Archemaster, as yet known, is an other OPTICAL Science: whereof, the name shall be told when I shall have some (more just) occasion, thereof, to Discourse (ibid.)’. Although Dee never seems to have given a clear definition of optics as he understood it, it has been suggested, by Clulee and others, that for him these sciences were part of magical activity rather than of experimental natural science. There is reason to suspect that optics meant “scrying” (crystal gazing), which by 1570 definitely entered the horizon of Dee’s interest. And the purpose of this kind of optical magic, of course, was to attain a supreme superhuman knowledge.

Dee’s burning desire to have a glimpse of the mysteries of Creation had a background similar to that of the Florentine neoplatonists and, later on, of Johannes Trithemius, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Guillaume Postel, Giordano Bruno, and → Robert Fludd: it reflects the new self-consciousness of Renaissance Man who considered himself God’s almost equal partner and who claimed his share of the secrets of Nature.

### 3. DEE’S OCCULT PHILOSOPHY: ENOCHIAN MAGIC

We have seen that, all along, Dee’s career was characterized by the pursuit of perfect knowledge; and this ambition finally crystallized into his search for the *lingua adamica*, the antediluvian perfect language, from the time of his construction of the hieroglyphic monad. It is only recently that Nicholas Clulee and Umberto Eco have perceived in the *Monas hieroglyphica* the germs of Dee’s later explorations into the universal, angelic language (Clulee 1988, 71-116, Eco 1995, 186-189). In the *Theorems* Dee manipulated the Monad in various ways (rotation, dismantling, combination and permutation of its elements), not unlike the way in which kabbalistic numerology works with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Already Guillaume Postel had suggested that the characters of the three sacred languages derive from a common geometrical base (Eco 1995, 188), and Dee entertained the same idea. It seems that he constructed the Monad not only as a mystical emblem for contemplation, but also as a “geometrical automaton” which could generate the alphabet of all languages and would thus represent the universal principle of

language (for a detailed analysis of the pertinence of the *lingua adamica* to Dee’s thought see Håkansson 2001, 84-109 and Szőnyi 2004).

From this point on, Dee’s thinking became more and more imbued with a spiritual-cosmic vision, and eventually he turned away entirely from the exact sciences. He became convinced that knowledge based on discursive logic and “booklearning” could not lead to the ultimate and universal comprehension for which he was striving. In 1584 he straightforwardly told this to Emperor Rudolf II, when the monarch gave him an audience in the Prague Hradčany: ‘All my life I had spent in learning: but for this forty years continually, in sundry manners, and in divers Countries, with great pain, care, and cost, I had from degree to degree sought to come by the best knowledge that man might attain unto in the world: and I found that neither any man living, nor any Book I could yet meet withal, was able to teach me those truths I desired and longed for: And therefore I concluded with my self, to make intercession and prayer to the giver of wisdom to send me such wisdom, as I might know the nature of his creatures; and also enjoy means to use them to his honour and glory’ (*A True & Faithful Relation*, 231). This speech confirms what he had admitted to his secret diary already in 1581, spelling out that after his failure to find ‘radical truths’ in the Book of Nature the only way for the scholar of universal wisdom remained to pray to God directly for an ‘Extraordinary Gift . . .’ (*Mysteriorum Libri Primus*, Sloane MS 3188, published by Whitby 1988, vol. 2).

This Gift was to be similar to Enoch’s privileged knowledge, revealed to him by God, of the angelic language (see Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5, and the pseudepigraphical Books of Enoch). On the one hand Dee became convinced that Adam’s language was a perfect medium to obtain directly from God the kind of knowledge he was craving (see Genesis 1:26-7 and 2:19), on the other he also shared the belief of many Renaissance philosophers that the Holy Scripture offered promise and hope for Man’s regaining the dignity lost at the time of the Fall, provided the angelic language would be restored to humankind (see Psalm 8:4-6, Wisdom 7:15-21 and Sir. 17:3-7; the biblical background of Dee’s angelic conversations was clarified by Whitby 1988, vol. 1). From these Biblical passages the early modern thinker could infer that by recovering this lost sacred language all his ambitions and desires concerning *exaltatio* could be fulfilled. This train of thought is the key to Dee’s later scientific and philosophical investigations and there is ample evidence to think that he considered himself second

only to Enoch to acquire the *lingua adamica*. Dee's solution was remarkably simple, yet rather unique among the "Renaissance magi": since science was unable to reconstruct the language of angels, one had to contact them and learn it from them directly.

Accordingly, Dee devoted the last decades of his life to this goal. Surprisingly, this scholar who was perfectly intimate with the subtle traditions of intellectual magic of his day, chose a rather primitive method of popular magic to contact the angels, namely scrying, or crystal gazing. This practice of divination [→ Divinatory Arts] was mostly used by village sorcerers in order to find lost property or call on the dead for advice. Inspired by Old Testament stories, Dee worked out a theory according to which the use of the "shew-stone" was to develop into the technology of a grandiose project leading to universal knowledge. His main problem was that personally he saw no visions in the shew-stone, so that he needed scryers, or mediums to communicate with the celestial beings. The sessions required two basic actors: the Magus and the Scryer. The Magus performed the conjurations, chants and prayers which prepared the evocation of Angels and spirits from the shew-stone. It was the Scryer who gazed at the ball, and the apparitions spoke via his tongue. In the case of the tandem of Doctor Dee and Edward Kelley, the Magus also acted also as a scribe, meticulously recording the actions. The most important requisite, thus, was the crystal ball, completed by other instruments, such as the Holy Table and some seals (on the choreography of the scrying sessions see Szőnyi 2004; these are also usefully introduced in Geoffrey James' thematically arranged selection of the spiritual diaries [Dee, James ed., 1994]). The Doctor firmly believed that he had succeeded in establishing the transcendental contact by the help of his medium. In his spiritual diaries he wrote down whatever Kelley dictated to him. Much of this material is still unpublished but the pioneering selection of Meric Casaubon (*True & Faithful Relation . . .*), which had been commissioned by Sir Robert Cotton, represents the character and the complexity of the document very well.

It is certainly not easy to distil the sense of Dee's speculations concerning the perfect language. In the 1970s an Australian linguist, Donald Laycock subjected the angelic language to the most thorough examination so far, and distinguished two layers in it. The specimen of the *lingua adamica* that was communicated through Kelley during the first scrying sessions (known as the *Liber Logaeth*) is rich in repetition, rhyme, alliteration and other

patterns characteristic of poetry and magical charms. From this Laycock has concluded that Kelley must have been in trance, "speaking in tongues", when receiving these messages. As opposed to this, the Enochian language received later (*48 claves angelicae*, 1584, partly published in James 1994, 65-103) appears more like a real language, generated from set elements. In Dee's diaries there is a translation provided for these texts, which would allow speculation about its grammar. We also know that these texts were dictated to Kelley letter by letter, as opposed to the earlier trance-like flow of speech. As Laycock suggests, 'this is exactly the type of text produced if one generates a string of letters on some random pattern' (Laycock 1994, 40). Although the Enochian language appears to be very strange, it is not entirely impossible to reconstruct its morphology and syntax. Interestingly, according to Laycock, there is nothing strikingly un-English about the grammar, and he was able to compile an extensive dictionary of more than 2400 words, together with phonology and alphabet. About the transcendental validity of the angelic language, he sceptically suggested that the angels' 'limitations are those of Kelley; their occasional sublimities, those of Dee. If the true voice of God comes through the shewstone at all, it is certainly as through a glass darkly' (op. cit., 64).

The historian cannot avoid asking what we are to make of Dee's Enochian magic. While some practical occultists continue to use his keys and invocations even today, we should, rather, pinpoint Dee's importance in the context of Renaissance ideology, at the crossroads of the new science and the reformed religion. The spiritual diaries enable us to assemble an idiosyncratic mythology about the Fall of Mankind, the glorification of Enoch, and a burning desire for the dignity of man, i.e. *exaltatio* – a drive behind so many magical-esoteric programs. While Dee deserves only a minor place in the history of science, we might say that in the end – by turning directly to the angels – he created an almost perfectly consistent anti-theory of science, that still bemuses us with its coherence and faithfulness to its own premises. Rather than towards the rationalism of the Enlightenment, his system points in the direction of alternative intellectual developments of the Western esoteric tradition hallmarked by → Swedenborg, → Blake, → Yeats, Berdjajev and others.

#### 4. OCCULTIST AND LITERARY RECEPTION

Apart from having a distinguished place in the history of early modern magic, Dee is important as



an inspiring model for some modern occult trends as well as many works of literature and art.

The first to reconstruct and try out the Enochian system from Dee's surviving papers was → Elias Ashmole, who attempted a series of seances between 1671 and 1676. Following his example, → Wynn Westcott of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn included Enochian Calls as required materials for the Adeptus Minor degree. Furthermore, → Aleister Crowley took the Enochian system very seriously and published the (reinterpreted and developed) Calls in his occult journal, *The Equinox* (1909-1913). A further important development in the reception of Enochian magic is found in Anton Szandor LaVey's Church of Satan, developed in California in the 1960s; LaVey's *Satanic Bible* reproduces Crowley's Calls by changing words referring to "the Highest" to the name of "Saitan". Enochian magic features heavily in esoteric internet sites even today.

Dee's "literary career" begins with speculations that he may have been the model for Marlowe's Doctor Faustus or Shakespeare's Prospero (Yates 1979, 115-67). His name is first mentioned in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* and Butler's *Hudibras* in the 17th century, but the most exciting chapter of his literary fame has been unfolding since the early 20th century, and today it is in full bloom: in the 1920s the Austrian novelist → Gustav Meyrink – writer of the famous *Golem* – chose Dee as the main character of his novel *The Angel of the West Window*. In 1985 Simon Rees published a novel on Dee, entitled *The Devil's Looking Glass*. Three years later Umberto Eco gave a key episodic role to Dee in his *Foucault's Pendulum*. In 1992 the post-modern mystery writer Peter Ackroyd presented the Doctor as a creator of homunculi in his *The House of Doctor Dee*. The famous film director Derek Jarman not only commemorated Dee in his films *Angelic Conversations* and *Jubilee*, but he also painted Enochian topics and arranged his home garden on the basis of Dee's hieroglyphic principles. One could add to this list Stephen Lowe's play *The Alchemical Wedding* and the opera by John Harle and David Pountney, *Angel Magick*.

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GYÖRGY E. SZŐNYI

**Deunov, Peter Konstantinov,**

\* 11.7.1864 Hadurcha (presently Nikolaevka) (Bulgaria),  
† 27.12.1944 Izgreva (Bulgaria)

Deunov was born in a rural Bulgarian village in 1864, and went on to attend the American School of Theology and Science, run by American missionaries in the Danubian city of Svishtov. In 1888 he went to the United States, where he took courses at several Bible colleges and universities, including Boston University. He also became acquainted with several Theosophical and Rosicrucian bodies.

In 1895, Deunov returned to the Bulgarian city of Varna, where in 1896 he published his first book, *Science and Education*. According to his disciples, the Spirit of God descended onto Deunov on March 7, 1897 (Julian calendar), thus making him into one of the Masters of the White Brotherhood, Master Beinsa Douno. In the same year he founded the Society for Enlightening the Bulgarian People’s Spirit, and started lecturing on his conversion experience and the White Brotherhood, gathering his first faithful disciples, including Penyo Kirov (1868-1918), Todor Stoimenov (1872-1952), and Georgi Mirkovich (1875-1950) around him. These three disciples attended the first “annual meeting” of the White Brotherhood, held on April 6, 1900 in Varna (Julian calendar: “Meeting of the Chain”). They were later joined by Maria Kazakova (1852-1908).

The Brotherhood spread to most Bulgarian cities, and in 1902 Georgi Mirkovich became the editor of the spiritualist [→ Spiritualism] magazine *New Light*, which changed its name to *Videlina*. Whilst at the start the Brotherhood maintained an interest in spiritualist phenomena, magnetism [→ Animal Magnetism], and phrenology, the focus

gradually shifted to a Theosophical [→ Theosophical Society] doctrine, including references to secret Masters and the occult history of humankind, mostly derived from Madame → Blavatsky.

Deunov’s very successful lectures in Sofia during World War I ultimately elicited a reaction from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, accusing him of heresy; its leaders also persuaded the government to exile him to Varna. Deunov’s insistence that the ancient Bulgarian heretics, known as → Bogomiles, were part of the White Brotherhood, certainly did not endear him to the Orthodox hierarchy. After the war, however, the Brotherhood met with renewed success, and in 1922 was able to open a school in Sofia, offering a “General Occult Course” and a “Special Occult Course” for the youth. The Orthodox Church reacted again by declaring Deunov “self-excommunicated”, and excommunicating some of his leading disciples at the same time.

Under the authoritarian regime of the Democratic Union Party, which came into power in 1923, the large annual meetings of the Brotherhood were banned. Deunov continued his teaching activities, however, launching in 1924 the new magazine *Wheat Grain* (the first editor of which was Georgi Radev, 1900-1940), establishing in 1927 an ashram in Izgreva (near Sofia), and opening a school near the Rila lakes in 1929. In the 1930s, most of Deunov’s efforts were focused on the teaching of Paneurhythmy, a discipline which encompassed music, songs and body movements.

In 1936, at the Izgreva ashram, Deunov was assaulted by a political opponent and suffered a brain haemorrhage. After his recovery, however, he supervised the spread of the Brotherhood in the West, and a center under the authority of the Bulgarian community was established in Paris in 1936 by Vittorio (1887-1976) and Annina Bertoli (1912-1989). In 1937, a Bulgarian disciple, Mikhail Ivanov (“Omraam Mikhaël Aïvhanov”, 1900-1986), emigrated to France, where he established an independent Universal White Brotherhood. Although several of Deunov’s disciples later accused Aïvhanov of having down-played the role of his master, misrepresenting himself as the founder of the Brotherhood, relations between the Bulgarian and the French branches have since become generally friendly, although they remain separate, and in several countries there are competing centers of both branches.

During World War II, bombing raids on Sofia forced the Brotherhood to move from Izgreva to the house of disciple Temelko Gyorev (1896-1990) in rural Murchaev. Soon after the Soviet invasion of Bulgaria, they returned to Izgreva, where a

weakened Deunov died on December 27, 1944. He had appointed no successor, and a Supreme Council took over the leadership of the Brotherhood, which achieved official government recognition in 1948.

Religious liberty was short-lived in the new Bulgaria, however, and state recognition was again withdrawn in 1956. The government then confiscated all of the Brotherhood's properties; several leaders were jailed and the Izgreva buildings were firstly nationalized, and then demolished in 1970. In the same decade of the 1970s, however, the Brotherhood cells, which had continued to operate underground throughout Bulgaria, won a certain degree of acceptance and some public meetings became possible again. In the 1970s and 1980s, expatriate disciples were also able to publish several of Deunov's works in both English and French. After the fall of communism, the Brotherhood again won legal recognition in Bulgaria in 1990, and started rebuilding a "New Izgreva" in 1995.

In the meantime, Deunov had become a popular name in neo-Theosophical and → New Age circles in the United States and Western Europe, and many who are not members of the Bulgarian Brotherhood (nor of its French counterpart established by Aïvhanov) today recognize Deunov as a significant master of Western esotericism. A smaller number of committed disciples still practice the exacting exercises of Paneurhythmy, and regard Deunov as more than simply a brilliant teacher; to them, he is the human embodiment of the White Brotherhood's Master, Beinsa Douno.

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MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Dianetics → Scientology

**Dinter, Art(h)ur**, \* 27.6.1876  
Mühlhausen (Alsace), † 21.5.1948  
Offenburg (Baden-Württemberg)

Antisemitic author and one of the early members of Hitler's NSDAP. During the 1920s and 1930s propagator of an "Aryan" Christianity that was

"cleansed" of Semitic influences and inspired by gnostic beliefs [→ Gnosticism].

Arthur Dinter was born as son of a Prussian customs official. His mother, Berta Dinter-Hoffmann, who like her husband originally came from Silesia, raised him as a Catholic along with his brother and three sisters, while his father contributed a nationalist perspective. Starting in 1895, Dinter studied physics at the universities of Munich and Strassbourg, receiving his doctorate at Strassbourg in 1903. After a brief career as teacher, he became dramaturg of a theatrical company in Alsace. In 1908 he founded, in Berlin, with two others, the *Theaterverlag des Verbandes deutscher Schriftsteller* (Association of German Dramatists). During these years Dinter developed his *völkisch* (nationalist and racist) and alternative religious sympathies, which would later make him into a propagator of "Aryan" Christianity. The racist philosophy of history of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century) – published in 1899 and frequently reprinted – was of paramount importance in Dinter's ideological maturation. His attempts to perform nationalist plays, in order to enhance nationalist feelings in the audience, met with resistance from the audience and colleagues and finally resulted in Dinter's removal from the Association.

From 1914 to 1916 Dinter served as an officer on the Western front. The traumatic experience of the defeat of Germany in 1918 increased Dinter's radical *völkisch* belief in the nefarious Jewish influence which had led Germany to disaster. After the war he joined the influential antisemitic *Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund* (German People's League of Self-Defence), in which he occupied a leading position.

Dinter gained notoriety after World War I as author of a trilogy of literary works (see bibliography). Between 1918 and 1928 more than 365.000 copies were printed. The first and best known part of this trilogy, *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (The Sin against the Blood), had been printed 260.000 times by 1934 and reached an audience of millions of people. In this extremely antisemitic novel Jews are portrayed as a demonic force, trying to subjugate the "Aryan" nations through "racial mixing".

In April 1923 Dinter met with Hitler in Munich and joined the NSDAP. Convinced of the idea that politics, religion and "race" are one, and that the political and moral regeneration of Germany had to be preceded by spiritual-religious regeneration, Dinter founded the *Geistchristliche Religionsgemeinschaft* (Spiritualistic Christian Religious

Community) in November 1927. In this community, later renamed *Deutsche Volkskirche* (German People's Church), Dinter preached his "Aryan" Christianity to his followers. The foundation of this community, intended as a *völkisch*-religious base for Hitler's NSDAP, led to a break with Hitler. Hitler wanted to keep the NSDAP away from sectarian influences, which would only curtail his ambitions of making the organization into a mass-party and hence would hinder his quest for power. Dinter was expelled from the NSDAP in October 1928. In 1937 all activities of the *Deutsche Volkskirche* – which by then had some 70,000 members – were banned by the National-Socialist authorities. In the spring of 1945, Dinter, who by this time had been completely forgotten, fled from the Red Army from Thuringia. Three years later he died in Offenburg.

Dinter's doctrine, which he called *Geistchristentum* (Spiritualistic Christianity), had clear gnostic characteristics. According to Dinter in the beginning there was a world of pure spiritual entities created by God. After a break in this divine sphere a great number of worlds came into being through emanations. The material cosmos is the lowest and most impure of these worlds. However, in this impure cosmos there still exists a part of the divine primeval light, that seeks reunification with God and the decomposition of matter.

The cosmos, according to Dinter, is inhabited by good (pure) and demonic (impure) spirits. Every spirit has the task, by way of a process of "self-purification" (the gnostic motive of self-deliverance), to return to God. In this divine movement the human individual is nothing more than a transitional phase in the process that has to lead to reunification with God. In Dinter's system human races are the carriers of the spirits; they are the vehicles the spirits use to achieve their aims. Good spirits will use the human body to purify themselves in order to finally return to God and transcend the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Selfish and materialistic spirits, on the other hand, incarnate only to satisfy their low, demonic urges.

According to Dinter the "Aryans" are the carriers of the good spirits, while the Jews are the embodiment of impure, demonic spirits. They are only after money and sex, and try to corrupt the "Aryans" in order to keep them from achieving their self-purification. This is also evident from the Jewish religion: according to Dinter the Old Testament is nothing but a set of rules created by a demonic God (Jahweh) to cheat and deceive the "Aryans". In Dinter's view Christ (an "Aryan" of absolute purity) came as a messenger from God

to push aside the Old Testament and replace it by Christianity and to preach "spiritualisation" ("self-purification") or *Geistchristentum*. Christ's mission however was interrupted by the Jews, who crucified him and falsified his message. For the latter, Dinter holds Paul particularly responsible. It is clear that Dinter's view is heavily influenced by gnosticism; the ancient christian-gnostic view of Christ as a messenger from the benign, a-cosmic God who came to dethrone Jahweh, the demiurge, is evident in his message.

Dinter saw himself with his *Geistchristentum* as a reformer, a second Luther. According to Dinter, Luther had tried to restore idealistic, "Aryan" Christianity, and Dinter saw himself as the person called to "fulfill" Luther's Reformation. Dinter wanted to "cleanse" Christianity of Semitic influences in order to restore "true" Christianity in all its splendor and glory and bring closer the deliverance of "Aryan" humanity. Apart from Luther, Dinter also invoked → Marcion, the 2nd century Christian gnostic, whom he regarded as a precursor.

Dinter's efforts to instigate a total "religious revolution" and to make his church into the new national church were thwarted in the end because of the political realities of the National-Socialist state.

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## Dionysius Areopagita (Pseudo-), ca. 500

Dionysius Areopagita, a mystical theologian, was so named in the belief, which generally prevailed until the last century, that a body of writings in Greek was produced by Dionysius of Athens, the convert of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:16-34). In fact, the writings were produced ca. 500 A.D. and probably in Syria. Scholars are not agreed on their author; one possibility is Peter Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch (471-488). The surviving *corpus* includes four treatises (*Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*) and ten letters. Written in a lofty tone with a rich vocabulary and cosmic in scope, they largely represent a fusion of Christian angelology with the → neoplatonism of Proclus († 485) and others. Hierarchy is defined in the *Celestial Hierarchy* III.1 as ‘sacred order, knowledge and activity assimilating itself, as far as it can, to the likeness of God (deiformity), and raising itself to its utmost, by means of the illuminations granted by God, to the imitation of God’. The object of hierarchy is assimilation and union of the soul with God. Parallels have been suggested by modern scholars between Dionysius’s writing about divinisation through sacred knowledge and enlightenment and → Hermetism, but even if not strictly paralleled in or by “hermetic” literature *per se*, Dionysius believed that supradiscursive knowledge is capable of effecting an ontological transformation in man. For Dionysius, nine orders of angels in heaven and six orders of ministers in the church on earth are like mirrors which receive illumination from God and in turn mediate this illumination to the beings who come below them, with a view to purifying, enlightening, perfecting and thus uniting them with God. In *Divine Names* Dionysius proposes two types of theology: one affirmative, which arises from God’s revelation of Himself to creatures but which entails the metaphorical use of names (such as Light or Beauty or Being) for the transcendent Thearchy; the other negative, which arises from the unknowability of God. In seeking deification or union with God, Dionysius starts with the sensible, created world and the material sacraments which provide symbols. But the inadequacies of human concepts and symbols when applied to God render the affirmative way inferior to the negative one, in which the human soul dispenses with the knowledge provided by the senses and by human reason, defines God by negatives (e.g. not light, not beauty, not being but beyond all these), and arrives through not knowing and not understanding at an ineffable union with Him. Because the negative way is supe-

rior, Dionysius also preferred dissimilar images of sacred realities (e.g. wild animals) to apparently similar ones (e.g. winged angels with human bodies and perfect faces), in order to highlight the illusory nature of the latter.

His writings, in Greek but translated into other languages (including Latin in the 9th century), have had a profound influence in both the eastern and western churches and were the subject of repeated commentaries in both. One direction to which they pointed was to debate about hierarchy and its role in society, both heavenly and human. But another direction was → mysticism within the traditions of the Catholic church. Mystical theology is the secret knowledge and incommunicable experience of God, non-intellectual and distinct from both natural theology and revealed theology. Two phrases of Dionysius enjoyed great fortune: the ‘ray of darkness’ and the ‘cloud of unknowing’ (*Mystical Theology*, chapter 1). His short treatise on *Mystical Theology* was especially influential during the late Middle Ages and in Spain and France during the 16th and 17th centuries. Thomas Gallus (d. 1246), Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-c. 1328), John Tauler († 1361), Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) and the Carthusian Denis Ryckel (1402-1471) drew generously from the *Mystical Theology* as did, in England in the mid-14th century, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* who, in addition, translated Dionysius’s work into English under the title *Denis Hid Divinity*. St John of the Cross (1542-1591) analysed the successive stages through which the soul passes, of purgation, illumination, and union with God; similarities have been found between *The Cloud of Unknowing* (a work which John probably did not know) and his *Dark Night of the Soul*.

Unlike the medieval commentators, many Renaissance humanists understood that Dionysius was a neoplatonist. They also found connections between divinisation according to Dionysian teaching and traditions of secret → magic deriving from the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and from → Hermetism. → Ficino, who re-translated some of Dionysius’s works, is highly important in this context. He drew out more fully the similarities between Dionysius’s negative theology and the teaching in the *Asclepius* that God has no name but also has all names, as well as the associations between the Sun’s light and the Trinity and between the celestial spheres and the angelic powers. The connection between angelic intelligences and → astrology had long been familiar to the medieval scholastics, influenced as they were from the 13th century by → Avicenna. But Ficino, followed by → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, → Cornelius



Agrippa, Hannibal Rosseli (fl. c. 1590) and → Giordano Bruno, fostered the association between astral powers, sun magic and the Dionisian hierarchies by turning also to Hermetic and kabbalistic sources.

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## Divinatory Arts

1. DIVINATION AND THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE DIVINATORY ARTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES
2. PROGNOSTICS AND BOOKS OF LOTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES
  - (A. PROGNOSTICS B. BOOKS OF LOTS)
3. FROM THE 12TH CENTURY TO THE CONTEMPORARY EPOCH: THE PRINCIPAL DIVINATORY ARTS (A. PHYSIOGNOMY B. CHIROMANCY C. GEOMANCY D. SPATULOMANCY E. CATOPTROMANCY)

Divination, in general, is the art of divining the past, present, and future by means of various techniques. According to Cicero (*De Divinatione*) these can be divided into two main categories: "natural" or "intuitive" divination (*divinatio naturalis*) and "artificial", "inductive", or "reasoned" divination (*divinatio artificiosa*). For Cicero, the revelations bestowed by the gods on men in states of possession (*furor*) or in certain dreams belong to natural divination, whereas inductive or conjectural divination looks at sacred "signs" of whatever kind and submits them to interpretation, a procedure that requires a certain "art". Even though this aspect of interpreting sacred signs disappeared rapidly in the Latin West with the spread of Christianity, the distinction between natural, intuitive divination and artificial, inductive divination remains valid, most of the divinatory methods used belonging to the latter category. It must be emphasized that neither in the Middle Ages nor in later periods divination consisted of an established and coherent body of doctrine; rather, it consisted of a collection of "arts", or techniques, some of which are attested from the High Middle Ages onwards, and may appear to be legacies from classical Antiquity, whilst others did not develop until after the 12th century, with the diffusion of treatises translated either from Arabic or, much more rarely, from Greek.

Recent research into the divinatory methods used during the Middle Ages, and particularly those introduced from the 12th century onwards, presents us with a fairly accurate picture of the main techniques in use during that period, whereas this seems more difficult for the modern and contemporary periods. Therefore the emphasis here will be, first, on the conception and classification of the divinatory sciences in the Middle Ages; next, on the methods used in the High Middle Ages; and finally, on a certain number of techniques which have persisted with more or less success from the 12th century to the present. This study excludes

some techniques that enjoyed an important independent development and are no longer seen as belonging to the field of divinatory arts, such as → astrology, oneiromancy, and necromancy, the latter being classified within the field of → magic.

#### 1. DIVINATION AND THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE DIVINATORY ARTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The medieval concept of divination is essentially based on the chapter that Isidore of Seville (circa 560-636) devotes to the magicians (*magi*) in his *Etymologies* (*Etymologiae*, Book VIII, chapter IX *De magis*). This chapter, the elements of which recur in many medieval treatises, assimilates divination with magic, and as such has undoubtedly been responsible for subsequent confusion between magic and divination and for their common condemnation, as frequent in the Middle Ages as in the modern era. However, the canons of the Church Councils of the 4th, 5th, and 6th centuries, while condemning both of them, often took care to distinguish between divination (*divinatio*) and the magical art (*ars magica*). For example, the Synod of Agde (506) included within the science of divination (*divinationis scientia*) auguries (*auguria*), lots (*sortes*), and dreams (*somnia*).

Like the whole of the *Etymologies*, the chapter *De magis* makes no effort at coherent organization, but assembles information culled from various ancient Greek and Latin authors: those of late Antiquity, such as Tertullian (circa 155-220), or Church Fathers such as → Augustine (354-430) and Jerome (circa 342-420). As regards divination, Isidore first adopts the distinction established by Varro (116-27 B.C.) between four types of divination that make use of the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, respectively known as geomancy (*geomantia*), hydromancy (*hydromantia*), aeromancy (*aeromantia*), and pyromancy (*pyromantia*). Isidore's next paragraph borrows simultaneously from Augustine and Cicero. He states first that those who practice divination are called diviners (*divini*), as if they were 'filled with God' (*quasi Deo pleni*); assimilating themselves to divinity, they fraudulently predict the future. Then, following Cicero, Isidore distinguishes two types of divination, *ars* and *furor*, giving the definition of a series of terms, some of which derive from divination, others from magic, while most denote magical and divinatory practices belonging to Antiquity: haruspices (*aruspices*), augurs (*augures*, *auguria*), auspices (*auspicia*), pythonesses (*pythones*), astrologers (*astrologi*, *genethliaci*, *mathematici*,

*horoscopi*), and casters of lots (*sortilegi*). This last-mentioned term belonged to the vocabulary of divination at least until the 10th century, and applies to those who try to predict the future by consulting books of lots. Thus in the 7th century (Council of Narbonne, 619) and the 8th century (capitulary of 769) it is associated with the terms *divinatores* and *divini* (diviners). The anti-divinatory literature that developed after the introduction of Arab astrology into the Latin West still continued to condemn, along with magic and astrology, which were its main target, all the divinatory techniques described by Isidore of Seville, sometimes adding physiognomy, chiromancy, and geomancy. John of Salisbury (circa 1115-1180), in his *Policraticus*, adds nothing to Isidore's picture and invariably sees in divination, as in magic, the work of demons. Hugh of St. Victor († 1141), in his *Didascalicon*, distinguishes magical practices (*praestigia* and *maleficia*) from the various divinatory arts, and particularly from astrology. Mantics or divination (*mantice quod sonat divinatio*) itself contains five types (*species*): necromancy, which is divination through the dead; geomancy, divination through the earth; hydromancy, divination through water; aeromancy, divination through air; and pyromancy, divination through fire. Hugh divides mathematics (*mathematica*) into three types: haruspicy (*aruspicina*), auguries, and horoscopes (*horoscopica*). In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274), especially in his *Summa theologiae*, likewise dissociates divination from magic but invariably forbids its use, since for him all divination proceeds from the operation of demons. Again, in the 14th and 15th centuries, neither Nicole Oresme (circa 1320-1382), in *Le Livre de divinacions* (Book of divinations) written around 1356, nor Laurent Pignon (circa 1368-1449), in his treatise *Contre les devineurs* (Against the diviners) written around 1411, deviate much from this position.

These various classifications, which mostly refer to the types of divination used in Greek and Latin Antiquity, only cover a small part of the types that were practiced during the Middle Ages. Setting aside the treatises of astrology and oneiromancy which are not our concern, the surviving texts of the Middle Ages belong to two different traditions. On the one hand we have a literature of prognostics in Latin or the vernacular, stemming from the 10th to the 15th century and mostly comprising short texts, to which can be added a few books of lots; on the other, actual treatises explaining the methods of one or another divinatory technique, in Latin or in a few cases in the vernacular, from the

12th century onwards. From the present state of research it appears that the only arts that were particularly studied, if not the only ones practiced, during the Middle Ages were physiognomy, chiromancy, geomancy, and to a lesser extent scapulomancy and catoptrromancy.

## 2. PROGNOSTICS AND BOOKS OF LOTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

### A. PROGNOSTICS

There are several different types of prognostics, nearly all constructed on the same model. The manuscript prognostics that begin with the 1st of January, of which the oldest go back to the 10th century, attribute their texts sometimes to the Venerable Bede, sometimes to Esdras, and in a slightly different version to → (pseudo) Dionysius Areopagita. These Latin texts, of which several French versions exist both in prose and verse, give information for each day of the week, from Sunday onwards, on which the year can begin; they give general indications on what the weather will be in each season, on the abundance of harvests and vintages, on the sicknesses that will afflict men and animals, and on events of collective import such as wars or epidemics.

On the same model, in the Latin and French manuscripts we also find prognostications for the coming year, sometimes attributed to Ezekiel, based on the day of the week on which Christmas falls, together with a short text on the significance of the winds that blow on Christmas Day, depending on the direction from which they come.

We also find prognostics in the Latin and vernacular manuscripts based on the day of the lunar month, following two types: either giving general indications of the actions to be undertaken, or avoided, on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. day of the lunar month, or, in addition to these, explications of the character and destiny of a man or woman (under two separate rubrics) born on these days, which refer more specifically to astrological physiognomy.

Another group of prognostics, in Latin and vernacular languages, concerns thunder, according to the day of the month or week when it is heard, and the direction from which it comes. These prognostics generally give indications of a meteorological and agricultural nature for the coming month or week. The quite numerous texts on “Egyptian Days”, or more generally on “dangerous” days for undertaking some action, belong more to astrology.

### B. BOOKS OF LOTS

Among the surviving medieval books of lots, one can distinguish several types of work. Aside from the *sortes sanctorum* or *apostolorum*, based on choosing by lot passages from the Scriptures, of which few manuscripts exist, the books of lots or books of judgments all work on the same principle: a series of general questions (success of a voyage, outcome of an illness, conception or birth of a child, etc.) is linked to answers classed under rubrics of varying titles, e.g. proper names (generally with an Arabic sound), names of flowers, or animals. The manner of use is not always specified, and it seems that in certain cases the choice of an answer to the question depended on a throw of dice. There is another group of texts, often very brief, that are onomantic in character, in which the answer is obtained from the sum of numerical values attributed to the letters of the questioner's name, and from what remains after dividing this sum by a given number, the remainder referring to groups of prognostic tables.

We should also mention the medical-astrological spheres attributed to Pythagoras, Petosiris, or Apuleius, which are Greek in origin and were diffused in the West from the 9th century onwards, whose prediction system rests on numerological criteria. This type of treatise seems to persist in the modern age in the form of predictions in almanacs and booklets belonging to so-called “popular” literature. From the 12th century onwards, beside these books of lots and prognostics, we see the introduction and development in the Latin West of a certain number of divinatory methods whose transmission rests on an important tradition, first through manuscripts, then in print.

## 3. FROM THE 12TH CENTURY TO THE CONTEMPORARY EPOCH: THE PRINCIPAL DIVINATORY ARTS

### A. PHYSIOGNOMY

Physiognomy belongs within the field of divination insofar as it claims to predict a person's destiny from his facial traits, the general look of his body, or the patterns of lines in his palm. Chiromancy, properly speaking, is only a subdivision of physiognomy, but treatises entirely devoted to this divinatory art have circulated since the Middle Ages. Physiognomy only developed in the West from the 12th century onwards, with the introduction of Greek and Arab science via the first Latin translations. Thus Western physiognomy stems from two different traditions, Greco-Latin and Arab.

Physiognomy was certainly born in Greece, the first treatises claiming Pythagoras or Hippocrates as its founder. Although the latter's works contain no physiognomy as such, they justify its use by their insistence on the close interdependence of the soul and the body. The first surviving treatise on physiognomy is attributed to Aristotle; those of Loxus and Polemon of Laodicea (or Palemon, 2nd century A.D.) are lost. There is in fact an Arabic translation of Polemon's treatise, probably made at the beginning of the 9th century, but neither this nor the abbreviated version made by the Jewish physician Adamantius in Alexandria during the 4th century was transmitted to the Latin West. The only treatises that reached the Latin West from classical Antiquity are that of Pseudo-Aristotle, translated directly from the Greek circa 1260 by Bartholomew of Messina at the request of King Manfred of Sicily, and an anonymous compilation attributed to Apuleius, probably translated from the Latin by the end of the 11th century. According to both Pseudo-Aristotle and Pseudo-Apuleius, the procedures for making a physiognomic judgment is to take account of a person's behavior, his resemblance to some animal, his belonging to one people or another, and also his sex, and then to examine in turn the various parts of his body, beginning with the legs and ending with the face.

The Arabic treatises form the second source of Western physiognomy. The Arabs were aware very early on of Polemon of Laodicea's treatise in a translation by an unknown author. Their physiognomy developed in two directions: the naturalist tradition, akin to medical interests, with the *Secretum secretorum* (Secret of Secrets) and part of the *Liber Almansoris* (*Kitâb al-frâsa*) of Rasis; and the astrological physiognomy represented in most of the treatises of astrology. Rasis devoted the second book of his *Liber Almansoris* to the study of the different temperaments and their signs. In the Latin translation by Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187), dating from 1187, this book contains 58 chapters. After showing how to diagnose the temperament by examining the color and shape of the face, the general aspect and that of the various members, Rasis reviews the characteristic physical signs of the different temperaments, then treats the signs of each member and draws up the portraits of several types of individual. The *Secretum secretorum* (also known under the title *Letter to Alexander*) is a compilation in Arabic that is probably quite late (11th-12th century), existing in both a short and a long version. Only the latter, translated into Latin by Philip of Tripoli at the beginning of the 13th century, contains a physiognomic section. Edited and

commented upon around 1257-1267 by → Roger Bacon, this work was attributed during the Middle Ages to Aristotle, probably thanks to → Albertus Magnus. Its physiognomic section is inspired both by Polemon and by Rasis: the goal of physiognomy is not the search for acquired characteristics, but for natural dispositions. The author reviews the general aspect of man and studies the signs of the different parts of the face and body. In addition, most of the Arab astrological treatises, such as those of Haly Abenragel or Abraham ibn Ezra, expound an astrological physiognomy: a physical and moral type, described at length, corresponds to each planet and to each sign of the zodiac.

The original production of the Latin Middle Ages rests mainly on four treatises: those of Pseudo-Apuleius, Pseudo-Aristotle, Rasis, and the *Secret of Secrets*. However, there are two works that predate these Latin translations: that of Gilles de Corbeil, physician to Philip Augustus, and that of → Michael Scot, whose *Liber phisonomie* (Book of physiognomy) probably derived from the Greek tradition via Arab sources. The most striking treatises are those of Albertus Magnus and, above all, of → Peter of Abano, completed towards 1295, who for the first time introduces astrology into the Latin physiognomic tradition; but we should also mention Michele Savonarola, who in the *Speculum physionomiae* (Mirror of physiognomy), circa 1450, prefaces his physiognomic study with an anatomical description of the relevant parts of the body.

The success of physiognomy did not wane in the modern and contemporary epochs. It was especially popular in the periods from the beginning of the 16th century until the second third of the 17th, and from the 1780s until the middle of the 19th century. The work of Bartholomaeus Cocles, *Chyromantiae ac physionomie Anastasis* (Awakening of chiromancy and physiognomy), published in Latin in Bologna, 1504, was translated into Italian in 1531, and into German, French and English in 1550. That of Giovanni Battista della Porta (1538-1615), *De humana physionomia* (On human physiognomy), published in Latin in 1586, translated into French in 1655 and reissued in 1665 under the title *De la phisionomie humaine*, remarkable for its extent and its exhaustiveness, dominates an abundant 16th-century production. The principle at the heart of 16th-century physiognomy was that of the analogy between the human microcosm and the macrocosm, although there was a noticeable separation of physiognomy from astrology in the last years of the 16th century, after the papal bull *Caeli et terrae creator* of Sixtus V (1520-



1590) in 1586 condemned the divinatory sciences. The naturalist tradition stemming from Aristotle then overtook the astrological and divinatory tradition. This new tendency is illustrated in 1660 by the appearance of the treatise by Louis XIV's physician, Martin Cureau de la Chambre (1596-1669), *L'Art de connoistre les hommes* (The art of knowing men), which contains no astrological element whatever. But the major event in the history of physiognomy during the 17th century was the *Conférences sur l'expression des passions* (Lectures on the expression of the passions), a series of lectures given by the painter Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) before the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. Le Brun no longer held that the face is the mirror resembling the soul, but saw it as the physical expression of its passions. Physiognomy suffered a decline in the 18th century, despite the success of the *Lettres philosophiques sur les physionomies* (Philosophical letters on physiognomies) published in 1746, which rejected comparative or zoomorphic physiognomy. It revived at the end of the century with → Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), whose four-volume *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (Physiognomic fragments for the furthering of the knowledge and love of man), published between 1775 and 1778 and translated into French as *Essais sur la physiognomie destinés à faire connaître l'homme et à le faire aimer*, met with success as well as hostility throughout Europe. Lavater's volumes, synthesizing all the tendencies and the whole history of physiognomy, remain the reference work in this field.

#### B. CHIROMANCY

Chiromancy has as its goal the prediction of the future or the divining of a person's character through studying the palm of the hand, and more particularly its lines. Although this technique is probably of ancient origin, either Greek or Latin, as attested by a number of references to texts attributed to Artemidorus, Pollux, or Suidas, no ancient treatise on chiromancy has been preserved in either language. The only known treatise in Greek appears in two manuscripts dating respectively from the 13th and 15th centuries.

In the Latin West, chiromancy did not appear before the middle of the 12th century. John of Salisbury, in his *Policraticus*, alludes to it as a new form of divination. Although chiromancy claims justification from the Bible (Job 37:7), its sources are of Arab origin, particularly a short work attributed to Rasis, *Knowledge of the Lines of the Hand*. Chiromancy is present in several medieval treatises

on physiognomy, but it also circulated in books devoted to it alone. Two of these, attributed to Aristotle, were printed in Ulm as early as 1490. Two others go under the name of Albertus Magnus, and numerous anonymous works show that the practice of this art was widespread. These treatises study only the three principal lines of the hand (life-line, median line, and mensal line), or the four lines (these, plus the base of the triangle), or else the four lines and the "mounts" that separate them. Most of these texts are very brief and technical, detailing the study of the various lines of the hand, the angles formed between them, and the mounts. The set of → correspondences established between the bodily organs and the lines of the hand allows for multiple interpretations. The interpretation becomes even more complicated when, certainly before the end of the 14th century, astrological correspondences enter this field (like that of physiognomy), relating the parts of the hand to the various planets. Some texts draw virtual portraits of people as a function of the importance of the line attributed to a certain planet.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, chiromancy was always associated with physiognomy. This was the case, for example, in Bartholomaeus Cocles's treatise *Chyromantiae ac physiognomie Anastasis cum approbatione magistri Alexandri de Achillinis*, published in Bologna, 1504; and also in John of Indagine's *Introductiones apotelesmaticae in chyromantiam, physiognomiam, astrologiam naturalem, complexiones hominum naturas planetarum* (Astrological introductions to chiromancy, physiognomy, natural astrology, human complexions, and the natures of the planets) first published in Latin in Strasbourg, 1522, and frequently reissued. This work appeared in French in 1662 (*La Chiromancie et physiognomie par le regard des membres de l'homme*) under the name of Jean de Hayn. The case was the same with the treatise of Jean Bebot, published in Paris, 1619, *Instruction familière et très facile pour apprendre les sciences de chiromancie et physiognomie* (Familiar and very easy introduction for learning the sciences of chiromancy and physiognomy), and that of Martin Cureau de la Chambre, *L'Art de connoistre les hommes*, published in Amsterdam, 1660. However, Cureau's book was one of the last treatises of this type, associating physiognomy, metoposcopy (study of the forehead), and chiromancy, before Lavater, in his *Physiognomische Fragmente*, definitively separated chiromancy from physiognomy. Even so, chiromancy remained extremely widespread, and it certainly still ranks among the most popular divinatory methods.



## C. GEOMANCY

Geomancy is a divinatory technique which took on, in the West, the name of one of the four types of divination defined by Varro after the four elements (see section 1, above). It was introduced to the Latin West in the 12th century by way of translations of Arabic works. It did not aim, as did ancient geomancy, at the interpretation of the earth's "movements", such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, but rather at knowledge of the past, present, and future through interpretation of a "theme", consisting of "houses" in which are placed "figures" formed by the combination of even and odd markings in four columns, each figure containing four to eight points. These figures, originally drawn on sand or earth on the basis of points cast at random with the finger or a stick, and later on paper with pen and ink, are sixteen in number, comprising eight couples of complementary or opposing figures: *Via/Populus*, *Conjunctio/Carcer*, *Fortuna Major/Fortuna Minor*, *Acquisicio/Amissio*, *Laetitia/Tristitia*, *Puer/Puella*, *Albus/Rubeus*, *Caput/Cauda*. Certain qualities, properties, and meanings are attributed to each figure and to each house.

The first twelve geomantic houses, assimilated to the astrological ones, soon found the significations of the latter ascribed to them. Only the four last houses have strictly geomantic meanings, being called respectively the houses of the witnesses, of the judge, and of the over-judge. In geomantic treatises, the prognostications that answer the questions are generally grouped by houses according to their subject, and drawn from the combination of the respective properties and meanings of the figures and the houses.

The first Latin treatises are presented as translations of Arab texts, but it seems that their Arabic originals are lost. The oldest surviving text in Arabic is that of Abû Abdallâh az-Zanâti. Cited by Ibn Khaldûn in his 14th-century *Prolegomena*, this work, very likely dating from the 12th or 13th century, is in use to this day in the countries of the Maghreb and black Africa, as well as in Madagascar. There is also a tradition of Arab geomancy in Hebrew, certain Arab treatises only surviving in their Hebrew translations. These medieval translations seem to have been the work of the Jewish community settled in Spain, and especially in Toledo. Hebrew may therefore have played a role in the transmission of Arab geomancy to the Latin world. Arab geomancy is equally the probable origin of the development of geomancy in the Byzantine empire from the 13th century onwards, although the work of Nicholas of Otranto, for

example, borrows much from the first Latin treatise on geomancy, that of Hugh of Santalla.

The first geomantic treatises in Latin, Hugh of Santalla's *Ars geomancie*, and the treatise known by its incipit as *Estimaverunt Indi*, which certain manuscripts attributed to Gerard of Cremona date from the 12th century and, as said, are presented as translations from the Arabic. They already explain the essentials of geomantic technique as it would be practiced in the West: the casting of points, formation of the "theme", significance of the figures and houses, elements of interpretation, examples of resolving geomantic questions. Astrology, closely associated with geomancy, is already present: the figures are connected to the planets and the signs of the zodiac; the meanings of the first twelve geomantic houses are those of the astrological houses; the geomancer is to take account in his interpretation of the aspects formed between the figures. The later medieval treatises, by Gerard of Cremona, Bartholomew of Parma, William of Moerbeke, John of Murs, and Rolandus Scriptoris, present few differences on a technical level, although the role of astrology tends to increase. Most of these Latin treatises were translated into the vernacular from the 14th century onwards: into German, French, Provençal, English, or Italian. Surviving inventories of medieval libraries bear witness to the existence of a large number of geomancies in the vernacular, showing that this divinatory technique was widespread beyond the restricted circles of the learned. Several original treatises appeared in the 16th century and even later, such as those of Christophe de Cattan in French, Bartholomaeus Cocles in Italian, → Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, and → Robert Fludd; but eventually geomancy seems to have become no more than a curiosity for the erudite.

Beside these divinatory arts, which are in a sense the major ones and essentially derive from the written tradition, mention may also be made of some other divinatory methods whose practice has left few written traces, and whose importance is often difficult to evaluate: besides spatulomancy and catoptromancy (see below), examples are onychomancy (divination from the fingernails), crystallo-mancy, and pyromancy.

## D. SPATULOMANCY

Spatulomancy (from Latin *spatula*, shoulder-blade) is a divinatory technique practiced by interpreting the "signs" (lines, marks, grooves, etc.) found on the right shoulder-blade of a sheep. Its use is attested in many cultural areas and over very different epochs. In the Latin West, the first known

treatises were written in Arabic in Spain, then translated into Latin in the first half of the 12th century. We have four different Latin treatises, two of which were translated by Hugh of Santalla, who dedicated them before 1151 to Michael, Bishop of Tarazona. This new technique then spread all over Europe, but its practice does not seem to have given rise to much literature.

#### E. CATOPTROMANCY

Catoptromancy, divination by the mirror, probably appeared in Greece as early as the 6th century B.C., and was then diffused through East and West. A. Delatte distinguishes two principal forms. In the first, 'no appeal is made to any supernatural force, and one is content to use the somehow magical property possessed by reflective surfaces to foster the imagination'. The hidden persons, things, or events that form the object of the consultation appear in the mirror before the eyes of the consultant, the diviner, or a third party acting as medium. In the second form of catoptromancy, the revelation 'is procured through signs or words from supernatural beings – gods, angels, or demons – whose appearance in the mirror is solicited by magical or religious rituals'. It is this second type that developed in the Middle Ages and the modern epoch, but without giving rise, so it seems, to the writing of real treatises. The practice was mentioned and condemned as early as the 12th century by John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus*. It was again condemned by John XXII (Pope 1316-1334) in 1318 and around 1326-1328; by the theological faculty of Paris in 1398; and by Sixtus V in 1586, in his bull *Caeli et terrae creator*. Although Ronsard mentions it in one of his Hymns, from the 16th century onwards divination by the mirror seems to have given way to divination by the crystal ball.

While it is possible to draw up a more or less representative account of the written tradition of divinatory arts in the medieval and modern periods, it is far more difficult, given the current state of research, to know which divinatory techniques were really practiced, since their constant condemnation by the Church doubtless induced the "diviners" to dissimulate or at least to keep silent about their activities in this field.

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**Dorn, Gérard, \*** ca. 1530-1535  
 Malines (Belgium), † after 1584  
 Frankfurt-am-Main

Dorn was one of the many followers of → Paracelsus who, like Petrus Severinus (1542-1602), Adam von Bodenstein (1528-1577) or → Jacques Gohory, contributed through their commentaries and translations to the dissemination of their German master's work in the scholarly circles of 16th-century Europe. Dorn's birthplace, by general agreement, seems to have been Malines in Belgium, but his frequent travels most often led him to reside in Germany, Switzerland or France. His biography remains known only in a fragmentary manner. Thus, everything about his childhood and his education is unknown. Of his student years, we know only that in 1559 he enrolled at the University of Tübingen where he probably studied medicine and where he may have met the Paracelsian Eisenmenger, known as Siderocrates (1534-1585). In 1565, he sojourned in Besançon, where he offered the manuscript version of his *Clavis totius philosophiae chymistae* to Cardinal de Granvelle (1517-1586), keenly interested in alchemy himself. Dorn was found again in Lyon the following year, where he published his *Clavis*, dedicated to Adam von Bodenstein (1528-1577), with whom he was probably associated and of whom he described himself as 'the very least disciple, just like of Theophrastus [Paracelsus] himself'. Shortly after the publication of the *Clavis*, in 1567, Gohory in his *Theophrasti Paracelsi . . . Compendium* lashed out against Dorn, accusing him of being unfaithful to the Paracelsian teachings. From 1568 to 1578, Dorn settled in Basel. He worked there for some time translating Paracelsus's writings into Latin on behalf of the publisher Petrus Perna. His dedications reveal his contacts, at that time, with some German princes such as Karl von Baden or Wilhelm IV von Hessen-Kassel, or the French ambassador Pierre de Granrye. Owing to the latter, he further gained the protection of prince François de Valois (1555-1584), brother of King Henri III (1551-1589). Dorn reappeared three years later in Frankfurt-am-Main. He published there some ten more works before his death, in 1584 or shortly thereafter.

Dorn's abundant production reflects the diversity of his culture and of his centers of interest. The first version of his *Clavis* (1565) bears the stamp of an alchemical tradition principally represented by → Hermes Trismegistus, pseudo-Geber, → Jean de Roquetaillade, → Marsilio Ficino and G.A. Pantheus. However, his understanding of this alchemy

is not a traditional one: over the transmutatory operations of the gold-makers, for whom Dorn shows mainly contempt, he prefers the search for a universal medicine based upon the therapeutic powers of the quintessence. His speculations also borrow from → astrology and → magic, the latter as understood by → Johannes Trithemius, as a form of wisdom leading to the understanding of physical and metaphysical things. According to Didier Kahn, Paracelsian influence in Dorn's work did not become manifest until the 1567 edition of the *Clavis*. This edition revealingly opens with a homage to the great German master, followed by two prefaces in which the author vows to be an ardent defender of medical alchemy against the traditional concepts of medical science, those of Galen in particular. This commitment to the Paracelsian cause led him to combine his works as a translator, commentator and lexicographer with polemics against others. Thus he published a severe *Admonitio* (1583) directed against Thomas Erastus (1523-1583), a commentary on *De vita longa* by Paracelsus (1583) and a *Dictionarium Theophrasti Paracelsi* (1584) that, because of its obscurity, aroused the wrath of the alchemist Andreas Libavius (1555-1616). His competence as an exegete also led Dorn to follow in the footsteps of the Italians Aurelio Augurelli (1456-1530) and Giovanni Bracesco (toward 1481-?) and take an interest in alchemical interpretations of pagan mythology (see his *Colloquium quo Titan Paterfamilias, Oceanitisque Mater, de sua prole consulunt*, 1568). In addition, it is noteworthy that, in making an effort at popularizing Paracelsus, Dorn moved toward a mystical and theosophical concept of alchemy. The second part of the *Clavis* already bears witness to this spiritual orientation: there he refers to the 'seven degrees of a speculative philosophy' that assimilate the operations of the great work with the different stages of asceticism. He reaffirmed this program of conjoining chemical work and moral accomplishment in his *Congeries Paracelsicae Chymiae* (1581), where the experiments performed in the laboratory are understood as the visible manifestations of a spiritual process developing in the intimate psyche of the alchemist. → C.G. Jung would later propose something similar in reference to the mechanisms of projection and transfer in his book *Psychologie und alchimie* (1944). It is interesting to note, finally, that Dorn gives the outlines of his wisdom in his *Monarchia triadis* (1577), where his speculations ally cosmology, operative research and → Christian theosophy.

The presence of many works by Dorn in the first volume of *Theatrum chemicum* (1602) reflects his

importance in the history of alchemical literature. Certainly, the author of *Clavis* and *Congeries* appears as one of the major figures to carry the thinking of Paracelsus into the 17th century. A heir to the current of Renaissance *philosophia occulta* [→ occult / occultism] represented by Johannes Trithemius, Cornelius Agrippa, or → John Dee, his work moreover encouraged the emergence of an alchemical and Christian theosophy, whose main representatives are → Heinrich Khunrath, → Robert Fludd and → Jacob Boehme.

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FRANK GREINER

**Douzetemps** (or Douz[e]aidans),  
Melchior, \* 1668/1669 place unknown,  
† after 1738 probably Offenbach am  
Main

Very little is known about Douzetemps's life: even his first name was not documented until 1984 (by R. Breymayer). This French Lutheran settled in Germany early in his life as a consequence of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. His book (see below) gives the impression that he associated with people shaped by the spirituality of Quietism and → Pietism. He is reported to have met, in Aachen in 1730, a lady who was a disciple of Madame Guyon. She may have exerted a certain influence on him since, at that time, Quietism was making headway among German Lutherans.

In 1731 appeared a small text by Douzetemps, "Geliebte in dem Geliebten!" (Beloved in the Beloved!), to which R. Breymayer has recently called attention. It consists of 14 pages and was published in a collective volume *Bewährte und Harmonische Zeugnisse* (Warranted and Harmonious Testimonies). The authors seem to have belonged to the "Harmonisten", an irenic and pietistic group. The same year, a Saxon political agent had become aware of a letter in which Douzetemps had used the term "White Eagle", and as a result he was believed to be planning a conspiracy against the Polish Kingdom: for the heraldic arms of that monarchy contain such a bird. But actually, what Douzetemps had had in mind was nothing but the alchemical [→ Alchemy] "Mercurium Philosophorum", also called "White Eagle". Nevertheless, upon a request by the Count of Brühl who was in the service of Prince August II, Douzetemps, who was sixty-three at the time, was taken into custody around November, and imprisoned in the fortress of Sonnenstein near Dresden. He was released on 4 September 1732.



According to his own testimony in *Mystère de la Croix affligeante et consolante* he began writing that book – probably the only one he authored – after having spent ten months and thirteen days in the prison at Sonnenstein, ‘deprived of paper, pen and ink’. On this point he may be exaggerating, since the book was published as early as 1732. He goes on to explain that he chose to write it in French rather than Latin or German because French was the most appropriate language for his work to be read by most of his friends.

The book has fifteen chapters, each of which ends with a short poem in Latin. It furthermore has an appendix of about 40 pages titled *Hortulus Sacer varii floris, coloris, odoris*, which is comprised of poems (some of which are alchemical, like “Lapis Transmutans”), also in Latin. According to Paul Chacornac, this *Hortulus* is inspired or even partly copied from *La Christiada* (1535), a work by Girolamo Vida.

The term “mysterium crucis” had always played a great role in systematic theology and Latin liturgy. It is not all that surprising that Douzetemps preferred that title rather than an esoteric, theosophical [→ Christian Theosophy] or alchemical one, since the majority of the discussions contained in the book are more “mystical” in nature, such as prayers, devotional meditations, etc. But these discussions are interspersed with many neo-kabbalistic, alchemical and theosophical passages which are really more “esoteric” in character. Foreexample, Douzetemps devotes a long passage to the ontological meanings of the seven letters of IEHOVAH and their connections with one another. In so doing, he draws a series of triangles and other related geometrical figures from which a variety of crosses emerge. These are supposed to throw some light upon the mysteries of the Trinity and the Creation.

Chapter thirteen, titled “On the Wonders of the Cross within External Nature”, and also the last chapter, resonate with Paracelsian [→ Paracelsianism] and Bohemian tones. Here we find a vivid evocation of the ontological role of the Sun, the “door of Light” situated at the very place where Lucifer stood before he fell. The Sun produces blood, sulphur, and everything that is oily; the Moon produces milk, salt, and everything that is watery. Such pages have a definite alchemical ring, enhanced both by the choice of technical terms like salpeter, niter, and vitriol, and by the names of the authors or works quoted, such as → Paracelsus, → Arnau de Vilanova, Basilius Valentinus, and, not the least, the *Aurea Catena Homeri* published in Frankfurt in 1723.

In French, the book was newly edited in Lausanne

in 1786, then in 1791 at the same place upon the initiative of → Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini. The latter highly praises Douzetemps in his book *La Philosophie divine* (Lausanne 1794), also partly a theosophical work. The edition of 1786 was reprinted in London in 1860 with a short, anonymous introduction in English. In April 1911, Alexandre Thomas, under the pen name Mandres, edited extracts from *Le mystère de la Croix* in the journal *La Gnose, revue mensuelle consacrée à l'étude des sciences ésotérique*. In the same journal and the same year appeared a series of articles by → René Guénon entitled *Le symbolisme de la Croix* which was published in 1931 as a book. The number of translations and testimonies in other languages bears witness to a rather discreet, but steady reception over a few decades. Johann Christoph Lenz, who was also a translator of → Swedenborg, translated it into German in 1782. The following year, the famous publicist Friedrich Nicolai, who had printed an edition of the Rosicrucian Manifestos in 1781 [→ Rosicrucianism], noted that esoteric philosophy was finding its way to Germany via French books like those written by Douzetemps and → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. At the end of his widely disseminated *Missiv an die Bruderschaft des Ordens des Goldenen und Rosenkreuzes* (1783), Nicolai wrote that *Le Mystère de la Croix* was ‘one of the best Rosicrucian works’. In 1784, Johann Friedrich Kleuker quoted Douzetemps as an authority in his *Magikon*, which is for the most part a discussion of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin’s first two books.

The year 1786 saw the first Russian translation, edited by → Nicholas I. Novikov at the Typographic Society directed by → I. Lopuchin – two figures whose editorial activity consisted to a large extent of translations of books of an esoteric and more specifically theosophical character. At the time of Novikov’s arrest the book was confiscated and burnt, in 1793, along with others of the kind, in compliance with Catherine II’s edict on → Freemasonry and related matters. But as early as 1814, Alexander Labzin, an esotericist influenced by Novikov, procured a new edition in St. Petersburg which he prefaced under the initials Y.M. He used these initials in his introductions to quite a few other works as well, such as those of → Jacob Boehme, → Karl von Eckartshausen, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Emanuel Swedenborg *et alii*. Theosophers occasionally quoted Douzetemps, albeit sometimes anonymously, like → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger in his *Lehrtafel der Prinzessin Antonia* (1763) and → Franz von Baader in *Fermenta Cognitionis* (Book II, 1823).



In view of the intrinsic interest, the context and the influence of the book, it would seem desirable that a critical, scholarly edition be prepared.

Melchior Douzeaidans [= Melchior Douzetemps], “Geliebte in dem Geliebten”, *Bewährte und Harmonische Zeugnisse einiger unpartbeyischer und in Gott verbundener Freunde . . .*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1731, 75-89 ♦ [Melchior Douzetemps], *Mystère de la Croix affligeante et consolante, Mortifiante & vivifiante, Humiliante & triomphante, de Jésus-Christ, et de ses Membres. Ecrit au milieu de la Croix au dedans et au dehors. Par un Disciple de la Croix de Jésus. Achevé le 12 d’Août, 1732. On y a ajouté quelques Poésies Latines sur divers sujets, composées aussi dans la solitude de Sonnenstein. Chara CrVX, MIhI DVX. Chère CroIX gVIDe assVré, Menez aV port azVré!*, Hombourg von der Höhe: Godefroy Memhard Imprimeur de la Cour et de la Chancellerie, 1732; Lausanne: New editions, 1786; Moscow and St. Petersburg, 1786; Lausanne: François Grasset, 1791; London and Edinburgh: William and Norgate, 1860, in French with an anonymous ‘Introduction’ in English (by C.J. Steward, according to P. Chacornac whose series of articles is quoted further below); Reprint of that English edition in French: Milan: Archè (Collection Sebastiani), 1975 ♦ Extracts (Mandres [Alexandre Thomas], ed.) in: *La Gnose, revue mensuelle consacrée à l’étude des sciences ésotériques* 4, 5, 6 (April-June 1911) ♦ Translations: [Melchior Douzetemps], *Das Geheimnis des betrübenden und tröstenden . . . Kreuzes Jesu Christi . . .*, trans. by L.Y.R. [= Johann Christoph Lenz], in Commission bei A.F. Böhm: [Frankfurt and] Leipzig, 1783 [recte: 1782]; Russian translation by A.M. Kutuzov and M.I. Bagryanski, ed. by N.I. Novikov *et alii*, Typographic Society of Moscow: I. Lopuchin, 1784; New edition of this Russian translation, ed. by Alexander Fedoroviitch Labzine, St. Petersburg, 1814.

*Lit.*: Reinhard Breymayer, “Ein radikaler Pietist im Umkreis des jungen Goethe: Der Frankfurter Konzertdirektor Johann Daniel Müller alias Elias/Elias Artista (1716 bis nach 1785)”, *Pietismus und Neuzeit: Ein Jahrbuch zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus* 9 (1983), 192-196, 201 ♦ idem, “[Melchior] Douzetemps: *Le Mystère de la croix*, a critical review of the French edition of 1975”, *ARIES (Association pour la Recherche et l’Information sur l’Esotérisme)* 2 (1984), 49-58 ♦ Paul Chacornac, “Un traité de mystique hermétique de Douzetemps”, *Etudes Traditionnelles* n° 372/373, 63 (1962) 188-200; continued under the title “Le mystère de la Croix de Douzetemps”, n° 374, 63 (1962) 259-265; n° 376, year 64 (1963) 59-72 ♦ 500 *Years of Gnosis in Europe: Exhibition of Printed Books and Manuscripts from the Gnostic Tradition*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1993, 242-243 (78a) ♦ Arthur Edward Waite, “Later Witnesses to the Life of Life”, in: Waite, *Lamps of Western Mysticism*, New York: Blauvelt, 1973, 199-210 (1st London: ed. Kegan Paul, 1923).

ANTOINE FAIVRE

**Dürckheim, Karlfried, Graf von Dürckheim-Montmartin,**  
\* 24.10.1896 Munich, † 28.12.1988  
Todtmoos-Rütte

Dürckheim served in the First World War 1914-1918 and studied Philosophy and Psychology at Munich University from 1919 to 1923. After an educational stay in Italy from 1924 to 1925 he was Assistant of Felix Krüger (1874-1948), founder of “Holistic Psychology”, from 1927 to 1931. He became university teacher in 1930 and was subsequently Professor of Philosophy at Breslau and Kiel Universities. From 1935 on he was staff-member in the office of Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946), who was later to become foreign minister of the Third Reich, after which from 1937 he held a research assignment in Japan, where he received instruction in meditation (za-zen) and Japanese archery. In 1939 he briefly returned to Germany because of the death of his wife and his father. In 1945 he was interned by the American occupying power. During his imprisonment he decided to become a psychotherapist. In 1947 he returned to Germany, moving to Todtmoos-Rütte in the Black Forest in 1951, where he established the “Existential and Psychological Training and Encounter Centre” together with his former student Maria Hippus (born 1909), whom he married only as late as 1985. Dürckheim remained active as psychotherapist and international lecturer until his death.

Dürckheim had his first numinous experiences as a child. While under fire in the Great War, he sensed the ‘indestructible’ within himself and found it a ‘liberating experience’. During his student years in Munich he enjoyed a large circle of friends including the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), the painter Paul Klee (1879-1940), and the sinologist Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930). In 1919 a chance encounter with the *Tao Te Ching* led to his first illumination, which he claims stayed with him all his life. He formed a meditation circle with friends and later studied the writings of Meister Eckhart, Lao-Tzu, and Gautama Buddha. During his ten-year stay in Japan, interrupted only once, Dürckheim met the famous Zen teacher Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1871-1966), which led to an intensive study of theoretical and practical Zen Buddhism. He saw all Japanese arts, from painting through fencing to the tea ceremony, as a path of self-attunement leading to the discovery of one’s own “buddha nature”. Most of Dürckheim’s books can be traced to his existential experiences in Japan. They made his name well-known in the German-speaking world

as well as in France, the Netherlands and the United States. His literary work comprises some 20 books, many of which are anthologies of lectures and journal articles. His influence on the contemporary spiritual scene was quite extensive and already 1954 he was invited by the Dutch Queen to hold a lecture on Zen Buddhism. In France Henri Hartung, a pupil of Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), and Gabriel Monod-Hertzen, a follower of Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), worked with him. Dürckheim was also called the “spiritual father” of the so called Frankfurter Ring, a spiritual study centre where people like Frithjof Capra (b. 1939), Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898-1985), John Lilly (b. 1915), Raimundo Panikkar (b. 1918), George Trevelyan (1906-1996), and others came to teach.

Dürckheim’s chief interest lay in relating Eastern wisdom to Western psychotherapy. He addressed the contemporary Westerner, whose spiritual and religious distress cries out for healing. He attributed this distress to the loss of spiritual meaning in all human activity, which focuses only on man and his worldly affairs while excluding God or “Divine Being”. The inevitable result in Dürckheim’s views is an achievement-oriented culture and a loss of tranquillity, a suppression of the feminine, and the decay of the spirit of community. The transcendent centre, which should provide a firm foundation of existence, is lost, and the individual is reduced to a purely rational unit of production. The resulting spiritual hunger cannot be assuaged by social, rational or economic measures. Dürckheim seeks to liberate the individual from his profane or mundane ego (*Welt-Ich*) and bring him into living contact with his true Self or Being (*Wesen*) beyond time and space. The transcendent Divine Being, present in each individual, thus manifests itself in the world, and the profane ego becomes transparent to its immanent transcendence. Dürckheim offers his “Initiation Therapy” as a means of supporting man on the path to wholeness and healing. His concept of initiation was borrowed from → Julius Evola, whom he studied and got to know personally. Dürckheim also read → René Guénon. According to Dürckheim man proceeds from his first initiatory experience of Being along a continuous process of development, without ever reaching a final goal. The state of being on the path, of becoming ever more transparent to the Divine Being, is the goal itself. Dürckheim is not concerned with the attainment of Nirvana as in Eastern religions. In his later works he describes this path as a way to Christ, whom he calls the eternal inner master. Dürckheim’s work rests on four pillars:

1. Depth psychology, especially deriving from → C.G. Jung, which seeks to integrate the shadow on the path to the true Self. In this process the limits of the profane ego are surpassed and there is a breakthrough of Being on a transcendent plane.

2. “Personal Body Therapy” differentiates “the body one has” (*Körper*), important for health and vitality, from “the body one is” (*Leib*), the spiritual and mental life revealed by one’s physical condition, gestures and expressions. The true or false inner attitude is outwardly reflected in the posture of the body. In an ideal case, the transcendent Being can even shine through the body. Various physical exercises (e.g. T’ai Chi, Aikido, cult dancing) promote this transparency. Dürckheim emphasizes the importance of being physically centred, allowing the physical centre, the inner centre of gravity, to come to rest in the *Hara* (belly). Firmness in the *Hara* brings certainty and thus alters the constitution of the whole person. This promotes new confidence and enables one to transcend more easily the limits and restrictions of the profane ego. Dürckheim also speaks of the subtle body and the aura.

3. “Creative Therapy” comprises artistic exercises such as dancing, singing, clay modelling and, most importantly, the method of “guided drawing” developed by Maria Hippius. The manifestation of Being is facilitated by creative action which, like the blockages which oppose it, derives from the unconscious.

4. Meditation also serves to open oneself towards the transcendent centre. Especially important is the practice of za-zen, sitting absolutely still in an erect position, whereby the belly and pelvic region provide a firm basis. Horizontals and verticals must be so ordered as to create the inner conditions for transcendence to manifest. Man should not actively seek God, but allow himself to be found by God. One should let go while breathing out, and open up while breathing in. The importance of meditation was evident at Dürckheim’s Centre at Todtmoos-Rütte, where each day began with communal za-zen, another session following in the afternoon.

Initiation Therapy is primarily a path of practice and personal experience available to modern man who has lost his connection with traditional religion. Although Dürckheim has found a very positive reception in Christian circles, some theologians wonder whether Dürckheim’s path may be too “subjective”, representing an “autonomous ethic of self-realisation” which values personal “experience” over authentic “faith”.

*The Japanese Cult of Tranquillity* (German orig. 1949), London: Rider & Company, 1960 ♦ *Im Zeichen der*

*Großen Erfahrung*, Weilheim: O.W. Barth, 1951 ♦ *Durchbruch zum Wesen*, Bern/Stuttgart: Hans Huber, 1954 ♦ *Hara, The Vital Centre of Man* (German orig. 1954), London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960 ♦ *Erlebnis und Wandlung*, Bern/Stuttgart: Hans Huber, 1956 ♦ *The Way of Transformation* (German orig. 1961), London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971 ♦ *Zen and Us* (German orig. 1961), New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987 ♦ *The Call for the Master* (German orig. 1972), New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989 ♦ *The Beyond Within: Initiation into Meditation* (German orig. 1976), Saint Meinrad: Abbey Press, 1992.

*Lit.*: Manfred Bergler, *Die Anthropologie des Grafen Karlfried von Dürckheim im Rahmen der Rezeptionsgeschichte des Zen-Buddhismus in Deutschland*, Dissertation, Phil. Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1981 ♦ Alphonse Goettmann, *Dialogue on the Path of Initiation* (French orig. 1979), New York: Globe Press, 1992 ♦ Maria Hippus (ed.), *Transzendenz als Erfahrung: Beitrag und Wiederhall. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Graf Dürckheim*, Weilheim: O.W. Barth, 1966 ♦ Maria Hippus-Gräfin Dürckheim, *Geheimnis und Wagnis der Menschwerdung*, Schaffhausen: Novalis, 1996 ♦ Rüdiger Müller, *Wandlung zur Ganzheit: Die Initiatische Therapie nach Karlfried Graf Dürckheim und Maria Hippus*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1981 ♦ Christian Ottemann, *Initiatisches Christentum: Karlfried Graf Dürckheims Lehre vom "Initiatischen Weg" als Herausforderung an die evangelische Theologie*, Frankfurt am Main etc.: Peter Lang, 1990 ♦ Josef Robrecht, Maria Hippus-Gräfin Dürckheim, Thomas Arzt (eds.), *Der Mensch als Zeuge des Unendlichen: Karlfried Graf Dürckheim zum 100. Geburtstag*, Schaffhausen: Novalis, 1996 ♦ Rüdiger von Roden, *Sich selbst zur Heimat werden: Übungen aus der Initiatischen Therapie von Karlfried Graf Dürckheim*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1987 ♦ Gisela Schoeller, *Heilung aus dem Ursprung: Praxis der Initiatischen Therapie nach Karlfried Graf Dürckheim und Maria Hippus*, München: Kösel, 1983 ♦ Sekretariat Rütte, *Im Zeichen der Wandlung: Dokumentation der Tagung zum 100. Geburtstag von Karlfried Graf Dürckheim*, Existential-psychologische Bildungs- und Todtmoos-Rütte: Begegnungsstätte, 1997 ♦ Gerhard Wehr, *Karlfried Graf Dürckheim: Ein Leben im Zeichen der Wandlung*, München: Kösel, 1988.

HANS THOMAS HAKL

## Dutoit-Membrini, Jean-Philippe,

\* 27.9.1721 Moudon near Lausanne,

† 21.1.1793 Lausanne

Dutoit-Membrini studied Protestant theology in Lausanne. Later, in 1750, during an illness, he had a mystical experience in which he heard a voice telling him: 'Thou shalt eat of the flesh of thy Redeemer and drink of His blood'. Shortly after, he vowed never to marry and steeped himself in the writings of Madame Guyon, assisting with the

preparation of new editions of her works in forty volumes (1767-1791 [in the Musée du Vieux Lausanne one can see his oratory, which contains a chalice on which are inscribed the names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Madame Guyon]). Over many years, he preached in the churches at Lausanne, but in 1759 bad health compelled him to resign his clerical position. From then on he devoted himself mostly to the study of mystical literature, gathering about him a number of followers. The latter, like Dutoit-Membrini himself, were part of a general religious current that was widespread within the Canton of Vaud. In that French speaking part of Switzerland, many Christians distanced themselves from both Calvinist and Catholic influence and created a kind of eclectic, irenic and esoterically tinged "mystical Church" of their own. Before Dutoit-Membrini, Hector de Saint-Georges de Marsais and then Fleischbein had played the role of spiritual leader to this community in the said Canton.

Dutoit-Membrini's "mystical" Christianity is most marked, to the extent that it has an external inspiration, by Quietism. His main book may be compared to that of → Melchior Douzetemps' *Le mystère de la Croix* (1732), in that it is replete with passages of a theosophical character, which to a large extent are presented in long footnotes. The author is fully cognizant of the esoteric literature of his time and frequently takes his stands with regard to it. Especially in his book *La philosophie divine* (1793), he expresses his views and personal experiences. Among his privileged conceptions is the notion of "astral spirit", which is a third category of knowledge, beside sensory perception and divine illumination, made possible by the action of the stars and planets upon us. Unfortunately, this spirit is quickly spoiled and corrupted by the venom of Lucifer and his kin, and made spurious by other entities who are neither angels nor demons. From this perspective, Dutoit-Membrini is critical of both → animal magnetism and → Swedenborg's visions, which he finds highly dubious. He has read *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (1775) by → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and is more indulgent toward this theosopher, whose views are to some extent rather similar to his own, even though he faults Saint-Martin for trusting his imagination too much. He praises Douzetemps' book, but advises readers not to take into consideration the alchemical speculations contained therein. Dutoit-Membrini's esoteric formulations also concern → number symbolism (his book has a section on "the numbers of the Cross" that echoes some of the inferences of Douzetemps). Other speculations are

of an even more theosophical character, such as those he produces on the Elohim, the “nothingness beneath nothingness”, Sophia, and Lucifer and Adam (their Falls and the terrible consequences thereof). Dutoit-Membrini’s statements are delivered in tones reminiscent of → Jacob Boehme, whose follower he assuredly does not claim to be. In fact, he happens to stand more in the tradition of Saint-Georges de Marsais.

*La philosophie divine* was influential among his followers in the Canton of Vaud, for whom he wrote it in the first place. Beyond that circle, immediately after its publication, it became an authoritative reference among the people and authors belonging to, or touched by, the “illuminist” current [→ Illuminism]. Early in the 1790’s, Dutoit-Membrini’s book was discussed in letters exchanged between Saint-Martin and → Niklaus Anton Kirchner. The publication of that correspondence in 1862 (English translation, 1863) once more called attention to Dutoit-Membrini among theosophically oriented readers.

Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini, *De l’origine, des usages, des abus, des quantités et des mélanges de la raison et de la foi*, 2 vols., 1790 ♦ New version under the following title: Keleph ben Nathan [= Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini], *La philosophie divine, appliquée aux lumières naturelle, magique, astrale, surnaturelle, céleste et divine*, 3 vols., 1793 ♦ Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini, *La philosophie chrétienne*, s.l., 4 vols., 1800-1819 ♦ The Bibliothèque de la Faculté Libre de Théologie Protestante in Lausanne has recently transferred to the Bibliothèque Interfacultaire of the University of Lausanne the riches it contained in terms of still unpublished manuscripts by and on Dutoit-Membrini, many of which are still untapped by scholars.

*Lit.*: Charles Burger, *Un défenseur du quietisme au 18<sup>ième</sup> siècle dans la Suisse française: Essai sur Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini et sa philosophie divine*, Thèse de Doctorat, Strasbourg, 1868 ♦ Jules Chavanne, *Philippe Dutoit-Membrini, sa vie, son caractère et ses doctrines*, Lausanne, 1865 ♦ André Favre, *Un théologien mystique vaudois au XVIII<sup>ième</sup> siècle, Jean-Philippe Dutoit*, Genève, 1911 ♦ Auguste Viatte, *Les sources occultes du Romantisme*, vol. I: *Le pré-romantisme*, Paris: Champion, 1965 (1st ed. 1928), 112-119 (see also index of names, vol. II, 320).

ANTOINE FAIVRE

**Eckartshausen, Karl von, \* 28.6.1752  
Haimhausen, † 13.5.1803 Munich**

Eckartshausen attended school in Munich before going to study at the University of Ingolstadt, then directed by the Jesuits. They would have a lasting

influence on his thought, and he later said that he had been guided ‘along the ways of the marvelous’ from the age of seven. An Aulic Councilor in 1776, he became a member of the Academy of Bavaria in 1777 and a secret archivist in 1784. His official functions, which he took very seriously, also provided him with a pretext for moralizing, preaching love of one’s neighbor and tolerance. Married in 1778, he lost his spouse in 1780; in 1781 he remarried, with Gabrielle von Wolter, who would bear him eight children. After her death, in 1794, he married Theresa Weiss, with whom he had two children.

A conservative in politics, Eckartshausen was a theocrat, a monarchist, a friend of the Jesuits and a fierce enemy of the Bavarian → Illuminaten. At first he had mistakenly affiliated himself with this revolutionary and rationalist Order established by Adam Weishaupt, believing that he was dealing with a traditional initiatory society. Having left it, he strove to combat it. From 1780 to 1783, he mostly wrote juridical tracts but also took an interest in literature. He published theatre plays, pamphlets and brochures on the most diverse subjects. He defended the Jesuits against Nicolai, while identifying himself with an “authentic” *Aufklärung*. In the years 1784-1785 he published a number of “moral papers” (*Sittenblätter*) exemplifying the taste of the period for sentimental literature in the manner of Richardson. Intrigues and professional worries did not prevent him from becoming First Archivist in 1789.

From 1788 on he broke away from edifying literature and theatre plays, and devoted himself almost exclusively to esoteric thinking. Despite a certain taste for illusionism that recalls → Cagliostro, he was sincerely interested in → illuminism, → Christian theosophy, and speculative → mysticism, while opposing the pneumatological experiments of certain charlatans. His own experiments, which evoked the interest of the Prussian Court, were to some extent based on arithmology (or science of numbers symbolically understood [→ Number Symbolism]), which he believed gave access to the “principle of things”. His *Zahlenlehre der Natur* (1794) is testimony to this research. Arithmology is the linchpin of his system; by means of it, this emulator of Pythagoras intended to resolve the Kantian opposition between *noumenon* and *phenomenon* and to achieve the synthesis of all knowledge. The ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah are considered the ten numbers of the Holy Names of God. No less than seventeen symbolic dreams were conducive, he tells us, to making him elaborate his complex arithmological system.



As fruits of this method, his works proliferated – he produced more than one hundred –, of which one of the best known, *Die Wolke über dem Heiligthum* (1802) would go through many translations and reprints. An indefatigable reader, he drew upon the Jewish and Christian Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and was highly interested in → alchemy; in fact, he published works considered so outstanding that the Hermetic Society of Karlsruhe adopted them as basic manuals.

Eckartshausen's correspondence was gigantic. He exchanged letters with his friend Johann Michael Sailer (the ex-Jesuit who would become bishop of Regensburg), Conrad Schmid, Franz Joseph von Thun (the magician, and friend of → Johann Caspar Lavater), → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling, → Niklaus Anton Kirchberger, Friedrich Herbort, Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich Nicolai, → Franz von Baader, → Ivan Vladimir Lopukhin, and many others. With Ignaz Lindl he readily shared the dream of voluntary exile and emigration to Russia that characterized the *Erwecktenbewegung*. Through Tsar Alexander I, who highly valued his works, he became famous in Russia. His *Kostis Reise* (1795) resembles the initiatory roman à clef by Jung-Stilling, *Das Heimweb*. In his correspondence with Kirchberger (1793-1797), there is much talk of → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, the great master, after → Boehme, of → Christian theosophy. Eckartshausen claimed to have received secrets and theosophical revelations from an angel who spoke through the voice of a young woman. The revelations of Mme de la Vallière in Lyon seem comparable to these astonishing manifestations claimed by Eckartshausen, in which illusionism and a sincere belief in the intermediary world of angelic entities are constantly mixed. Just as striking is his claimed discovery of the secret of all possible inventions, through a contemplative path that is supposed to have given him access to the mysteries of the pneumatic world.

One finds in Eckartshausen the three panels of the theosophical triptyc: cosmogony, cosmology and eschatology. Moreover, he saw in the celebrated *Tabula Smaragdina* attributed to → Hermes Trismegistus the very image of the permanent exchanges that operate at the level of the three worlds (divine, angelic and human). Spirit and nature are two complementary forces that refer to a higher and unique reality. Like Boehme, he often treats of Sophia, the divine Wisdom who, at work in the creative process, is reflected in Christ, “Salt of Light” and revelation of Her splendor. However, Eckartshausen traces his system even more readily to the ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah. Man is seen

as an image of his creator. The divine Word is made manifest by the Son in the material world, which is the middle term between good and evil. In the myth of the “two Falls” he finds the solution to the problem of evil. Lucifer, the greatest of the angels, fell on account of his self-pride, thus introducing into the universe the first catastrophe. The primordial Adam, a spiritual being of immense virtues created to lead the rebel angels back to the narrow path, was unfortunately seduced by them. Attracted by the perspective of illusory material enjoyment, he fell as well, dragging along the whole of nature in this catastrophe and losing nearly all his spiritual faculties. However, within the opaque world in which it has come to be enclosed as a result of these falls, mankind is still capable of spiritual development. The Nature that surrounds us is full of divine signatures, and it is incumbent upon each one of us to decode them with a view to achieving our “regeneration”. The latter would have been impossible without the redemption effectuated by the sacrifice of the Son of God. Christ has “raised up” Nature and Man, making them capable of a new spiritual birth (*Wiedergeburt*), and making possible the liberation of the paradisiacal substance enclosed in matter since the fall. The initiates, who practice ‘the true royal and priestly science according to the Order of Melchisedech’ – as Eckartshausen puts it –, will receive a luminous body on a regenerated earth.

A Catholic and a friend of the Jesuits, Eckartshausen nevertheless professed an ecumenism close to the notion of the “Inner Church” dear to → Ivan Vladimir Lopukhin. The process of regeneration described by him is considered compatible with his conception of the Roman Catholic Church, of which he remained a member all his life. He certainly considered religion to be a universal phenomenon, as attested by the mythologies of paganism and the great philosophers of Antiquity, notably Plato; but in the end, it is in the biblical revelation and in Christianity that religion finds its accomplishment. Jesus came to fulfill the Mosaic Law and redeem all of humanity through His blood. Jesus is all love, and Man must give Him life in the innermost part of himself. Against what he calls the Protestant error, Eckartshausen exalts not only the value of Catholicism and the necessity of worship and the sacraments, but also an attitude of the quietist type, similar to that of Fénelon or Madame Guyon. The heart of Man is the Temple par excellence. The true Christian community is thus the Inner Church always potentially present in the deepest part of the human heart. It does not require the believer to cut himself off from the world.



Man must act upon nature, knowing its laws. Eckartshausen shares with other *Naturphilosophen* of the pre-romantic period the idea that Nature is pervaded by a circular movement which is the result of two antagonistic forces, namely action/contraction, and/or active and passive states. There is no radical gap between spirit and nature because these two forces, which are both antagonistic and complementary, are at work within the four basic elements themselves, which function rather as a vehicle for them. As for Light, it is the organ of divine Wisdom (i.e., of Sophia, who engenders the elements). The initiate who possesses the right knowledge can act upon Nature, that is, pass from the material world to the world of the spirits. There is certainly some danger involved in dialogue with these entities: a secure inner sense is necessary, by means of which, through true → imagination (in the Paracelsian sense of the term), Man can be raised to the level of the higher forces to which his nature is indissolubly linked. “True → magic” has its foundation in the harmony of invisible links that interconnect God, Man and the universe. The calcinations of certain plants make it possible for an authentic magician to make their essence appear in aerial and etheric form. Transmutation is the goal of true alchemy, whose material foundation serves spiritual purposes. → Animal magnetism, of which Eckartshausen studied the theories and practices, could not but appeal to him, were it only because it was based on the idea of a universal fluid flowing through the whole cosmos.

The influence of Eckartshausen and his work extended to all of Europe and was especially perceptible in Germany, England, France and Russia. His system, which is nevertheless in no way innovative, is testimony to a scope and a depth of vision that command admiration. This richness makes him, next to Franz von Baader, one of the most representative gems of Christian theosophy in the last two decades of the German 18th century.

Karl von Eckartshausen, *Aufschlüsse zur Magie* (1788), facs. repr. Schwarzenburg: Ansata Verlag, 1978 ♦ *Gott ist die reinste Liebe*, Munich: J. Lentner, 1790 (trans. *God is the Love most Pure*, London: Hatchard, 1817) ♦ *Mistische Nächte*, Munich: J. Lentner, 1791 ♦ *Zahlenlehre der Natur*, Leipzig: G.E. Beer, 1794 ♦ *Proboscologie, oder praktischer Teil der Zahlenlehre der Natur*, Leipzig: H. Gräff, 1795 ♦ *Kostis Reise von Morgen gegen Mittag* (1795), repr. Andechs: Dingfelder-Argo, 1987 ♦ *Die wichtigsten Hieroglyphen fürs Menschen-Herz*, Leipzig: P.G. Kummer, 1796 ♦ *Die neuesten Entdeckungen über Licht, Wärme und Feuer*, Munich: J. Lindauer, 1798 ♦ *Entwurf zu einer ganz neuen Chimie*, Regensburg:

Montag & Weiss, 1800 ♦ *Chimische Versuche*, Regensburg: Montag & Weiss, 1801 ♦ *Die Wolke über dem Heiligthum* (1802), Haarlem: repr. Rozenkruis Pers, 1979 (trans. *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, Edmonds WA: Holms, 1991) ♦ *Blicke in die Zukunft/ Ueber Sprache und Schrift/Ueber Verstand und Herz* (A. Faivre, ed. & intr.), Mullheim/Baden: Edition Ambra, 1997 ♦ *Ueber die Zauberkräfte der Natur/ Ueber die wichtigsten Mysterien der Religion* (A. Faivre, ed. & intr.), Mullheim/Baden: Edition Ambra, 1997.

*Lit.*: Diether Struss, *Karl von Eckartshausen, ein Trivialmystizist zwischen Aufklärung und Magie*, unpubl. Diss. Univ. Albert-Ludwig in Friburg/Br., 1955 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1969 ♦ See also the introductions by A. Faivre in the two volumes published by Ambra in 1977 (above).

JACQUES FABRY

## Egyptomania

In modern times, ancient Egypt has inspired many works of literature, → music, and art. There are two distinct characteristics to Egypt in this context. First, it differs widely from the common European heritage of Greco-Roman culture, thus readily lending itself to mystery and appealing to a taste for exoticism. Second, its antiquity has caused it to appear in the Western imagination as the cradle or depository of a buried primordial or “traditional” knowledge; this applies especially to the Renaissance and the 17th century, when the Orient was still little known and the Far East even less so (Asia often being a synonym for Egypt). For these two reasons, many works of the esoteric type have been marked by Egyptophilia. Two postulates are found there, either implicitly or explicitly: first, that the hieroglyphs, pyramids, etc., are bearers of hidden meanings of a gnostic, initiatic, or soteriological nature; and second, that Egypt, having long been the most ancient known civilization, was closer to the primordial → Tradition. Moreover, → Moses was thought to have been initiated there, and → Hermes Trismegistus – often assimilated to Thoth – had left books that figured chronologically (for the Renaissance imagination) among the earliest manifestations of *prisca theologia* or *philosophia perennis*, whose scattered members now had to be reassembled. Following the second postulate, Egyptomania of the esoteric type belongs within a more general context: that of the place of the Orient in Western esotericism [→ Orientalism]. From the present perspective, it is an altogether secondary matter whether or not the esotericists’ Egypt conforms to that of contemporary scientific Egyptology: it is above all Egypt as

present in the esoteric → imagination that is relevant here for being studied on its own terms.

The *Asclepius*, one of the texts rich in Egyptian mysteries that belonged to the → Hermetic literature of 2nd century Alexandria, circulated in Latin throughout the Middle Ages; and in 1471 → Marsilio Ficino published his Latin translation of the recently discovered *Corpus Hermeticum*. The new current of Hermetism enjoyed a remarkable flowering for over two centuries. The Hermetic texts were believed to contain, in substance, the hidden wisdom of the Egyptian priesthood; and moreover, ancient Egypt was interesting from an esoteric point of view on account of its mythology – for while scrutinizing the hidden meanings of the latter (as well, incidentally, as that of the Greeks), some authors believed they were reading an encrypted account of the processes of the alchemical Great Work (e.g., → Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum*, and *Atalanta Fugiens*, 1617; → Dom Antoine Joseph Pernety, *Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées*, and *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique*, 1758). Neo-Alexandrian Hermetism and → alchemy are thus the two principal depositories of Egyptianizing esoteric discourse. The latter scarcely occurs in esoteric currents of the Bohemian type, i.e., in → Christian theosophy, nor in → Rosicrucianism, except for a few 19th and 20th century initiatic orders, such as AMORC. A learned Egyptologist with esoteric leanings appeared in the middle of the 17th century: the Jesuit → Athanasius Kircher (*Lingua aegyptiaca restituta*, 1643; *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 1652/1654), who was one of the prime movers of the great Egyptophile current that would follow. Kircher was soon followed in England by → Ralph Cudworth (*The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, 1678), who was also very widely read.

It was above all from the end of the 18th century that esoteric discourses and practices, apart from Neo-Alexandrian Hermetism and alchemy, began to find their inspiration in ancient Egypt. One can distinguish between pure speculation on the one hand, and the use of Egyptian symbols and themes in rituals, on the other. On the speculative level, J.G. Herder searched the ancient documents for their hidden meaning (*Ueber die älteste Urkunde des Menschen-geschlechts*, 1774/1776), and → Court de Gébelin, in his *Monde Primitif* (1773/1784) presented Egypt as the depository of the highest knowledge. In Book VIII of this encyclopedic work, he traced the origin of the → Tarot cards to this ancient civilization, followed in this by → Etteilla soon after. In another vein, Alexandre Lenoir (*Nouvelle explication des hiéroglyphes*,

1809) and A.P.J. Devismes (*Nouvelles recherches sur l'origine et la destination des pyramides d'Égypte*, 1812), then → Gérard de Nerval (*Voyage en Orient*, 1850), opened up new paths for the boldest speculations about the powers that the Egyptian priests were supposed to have wielded. Henceforth, the theme of the Great Pyramid never ceased to be repeated, especially after the publication of *The Great Pyramid* (1858) by John Taylor. → H.P. Blavatsky and her → Theosophical Society took up the torch of these speculations (*Isis Unveiled*, 1877), followed by → Edouard Schuré (*Les Grands Initiés*, 1889), and many others up to the present, including → Jan van Rijckenborgh, *De Egyptische oer-gnosis* (1960-1965). All of these belonged to the speculative domain.

As for the usage of Egyptian elements in rituals, hence in practice, one should first note the long-lasting influence of the Egyptophile and initiatic novel of Abbé Jean Terrasson, *Séthos, histoire ou vie tirée des monuments, anecdotes, de l'ancienne Égypte* (1731), which inspired the authors of many masonic and fringe-masonic rites [→ Freemasonry]. At least a dozen of the latter existed in the later 18th and early 19th centuries, including the “Architectes Africains”, created by Friedrich von Köppen around 1767, the “Rite Hermétique”, inaugurated around 1770, explicitly inspired by the teaching of → Hermes Trismegistus, and the “Egyptian Rite” of → Cagliostro, which dates from 1784. The beginning of the French Empire witnessed the appearance in Italy of the Rite known as Misraïm, imported to France by the Bédarride brothers (and not very Egyptian), followed in 1815 by the Rite known as Memphis – to which one might add that of the Magés of Memphis, created at the end of the 18th century. A number of present-day initiatic societies continue the trend, including the AMORC, founded in 1916, and the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875. Among the most popular contemporary examples of the esoteric fascination with Egypt are the novels *Einweihung* (Initiation, 1978) by Elisabeth Haich, and *Winged Pharaoh* (orig. 1937) by Joan Grant, both of them based on memories of previous Egyptian incarnations.

*Lit.*: Jan Assman, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge Ma. & London: Harvard University Press, 1997 ♦ Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *La quête d'Isis: Introduction à l'égyptomanie*, Paris: Perrin, 1967 ♦ Gérard Galtier, *Maçonnerie Égyptienne, Rose-Croix et néo-chevalerie*, Paris: Le Rocher, 1989 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1979 ♦ Erik Hornung, *Das esoterische Ägypten*, München: Beck, 1999 ♦ Jean-Pierre Mahé, “La Renaissance et le mirage Égyptien”, in: van den Broek & van Heertum (eds.), *From*

*Poimandres to Jacob Böhme*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2000, 369-384.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

Eirenaeus Philalethes → Starkey, George

Elchasai/Elxai, ca. 100

According to Early Christian and Manichaean sources, Elchasai or Elxai was the founder of the sect of the Elkesaites and the recipient of a book of revelation. The main Christian sources about Elchasai are Hippolytus of Rome, who speaks of “Elchasai”, and, independently, Epiphanius of Salamis, who always calls him “Elxai”. Additional information comes from the Cologne Mani Codex and the Arabic writer Ibn an-Nadim. According to Epiphanius, *Panarion* 19, 2, 2, the name Elchasai means “Hidden Power” (Aramaic: *ḥail kʿsai*), which is generally accepted by modern scholars. If Elchasai was a historical person, which has been doubted, he may have considered himself a manifestation of God, just as → Simon Magus claimed to be or was said to be a manifestation of the “Great Power”. Epiphanius reports that Elchasai was of Jewish descent, had lived in the Trans-Jordan region at the time of the Emperor Trajan (98-117) and was the author of a book, ‘ostensibly based on a prophecy or inspired by divine wisdom’ (*Pan.*, 19, 1, 4). According to Epiphanius, the teachings of Elxai were adopted by several baptist sects in the Trans-Jordan area, the Jewish Osseans, the Jewish-Christian Ebionites, and the Sampseans, ‘also called Elkeseans’ (*Pan.*, 19, 30, and 53, resp.). The reliability of Epiphanius’ assertions is very difficult to assess, but there is no doubt that the Elkesaites were a baptist sect that took its origin somewhere east of the river Jordan and practised repeated purifying immersions. The Mesopotamian baptists among whom → Mani grew up also traced their rites back to Elchasai. In the Cologne Mani Codex, 94, 1-97, 17, Mani argues against the leaders of the sect that his refusal of ritual immersions and of agricultural work was in accordance with the teaching of ‘Alchasaios, the founder of your Law’, himself. In order to prove this surprising claim, he tells some stories about Elchasai, which actually support the Manichaean views but of which origin and meaning are disputed. In his work *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, IX, 1 (ca. 988), the Muslim scholar Ibn an-Nadim also deals with the baptists among whom Mani grew up. According to him, their founder was known as *al-ḥasīh*. Most scholars consider Epiphanius’ information about Elchasai’s background in the Trans-Jordan region more

or less reliable. It finds some support in the fact that still in Epiphanius’ lifetime there lived two highly venerated female descendants of Elchasai among the Sampseans (*Pan.*, 53, 1, 5-6; also 19, 2, 4-5). Other scholars, however, locate the beginning of Elchasai’s career more eastward: in the Syrian-Parthian borderland (Strecker) or in Parthia (Northern Mesopotamia) itself (Luttikhuizen). This view is based on Hippolytus, whose report is rather cryptic at this point but nevertheless shows that there were Elkesaites who did not think of the Trans-Jordan region but of Parthia as the place of origin of Elchasai and his book (*Refutatio* IX, 13, 1). During the episcopate of Callixtus (217-222), a certain Alcibiades came from Apamea in Syria to Rome and propagated there the Elkesaite doctrines, basing himself on the book of Elchasai (Hippolytus, IX, 13, 1-4). He said that Elchasai had proclaimed his message in the third year of the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 101). This might be a mistake, for the book itself contained a prophecy that an eschatological war would break out in the third year after Trajan had subjected the Parthians (A.D. 116), which shows that at least part of it was written towards the end of Trajan’s reign (Hippolytus, IX, 16, 4). The book had been revealed by an angel of enormous measures (height: 96 miles, breadth: 24 miles, etc.), who was called the Son of God. A female angel of the same measures, called the Holy Spirit, had accompanied him (IX, 13, 2-3). The same information is given by Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 19, 4, 1-2 (also 30, 17, 6-7 and 53, 1, 8) who says that the male angel was Christ, ‘the great King’ (this expression apparently came from the book, cf. below Hippolytus, IX, 15, 1). This vision suggests a Jewish-Christian background, for also in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, 9, 33-42 the visionary sees two glorious angels, the Lord, i.e. Christ, and the ‘Angel of the Holy Spirit’ (Stroumsa, Fossum). Other Jewish-Christian tenets are the prescription of circumcision and marriage and of praying toward Jerusalem, a life according to the Law, the rejection of the temple cult, the view that Christ was a normal human being, and the idea that Christ had repeatedly appeared in the course of history (Hippolytus, IX, 14, 1; Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 19, 1, 7 and 3, 5; 30, 3, 1-6 and 17, 5). According to Hippolytus, they claimed to have foreknowledge, practised → magic and → astrology (IX, 14, 2), and had to maintain → secrecy with respect to the content of the book of Elchasai (IX, 17, 1). In case of persecution they were allowed to deny with their lips what they believed in their heart (Origen in Eusebius, *Church History*, VI, 38; Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 19, 1, 8).

Hippolytus had personally combated the ideas of

Alcibiades (IX, 13, 4), since he recognized in his teaching the same heresy he repudiated in his opponent Callixtus, i.e. a second remission of sins. This remission was effected by a second baptism 'in the name of the great and most high God and in the name of his Son, the Great King' and could be administered 'as soon as he (the sinner) had heard this book' (IX, 15, 1). It seems possible that in Rome this baptism was interpreted as a second baptism for the Christians who converted to Alcibiades' Elkesaitism but that it originally meant the initiatory ritual for those who joined the sect. Origen also mentions the remission of sins for those who believe in the book (which, he says, reportedly had fallen from heaven), but he does not speak of a second baptism (Eusebius, *Church History*, VI, 38). According to Hippolytus, IX, 15, 1, it was meant for the remission of sexual sins in particular and had to be undergone fully clothed. During the ceremony seven witnesses 'written in this book' were called upon, i.e. heaven, water, holy spirits, angels of prayer, oil, salt and earth (IX, 15, 2). The same witnesses are also mentioned by Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 19, 1, 6, together with another series of witnesses (salt, water, earth, bread, heaven, ether, and wind). The seven cosmic powers were also called to witness at the reiterated immersions that were characteristic of the Elkesaites. People who suffered of consumption and those possessed of demons had to immerse themselves in cold water forty times during seven days (Hippolytus, IX, 16, 1). The book of Elchasai also gave instructions about how to act in case of the bite of a rabid dog, 'in which there is a spirit of destruction' (Hippolytus, IX, 15, 4-6). The person to whom this had occurred immediately had to run to a river or a spring in order to immerse himself fully clothed. It has been suggested that the rabid dog in fact refers to forbidden sexual desires (Peterson), which might be possible. Most probably, the oath that according to Hippolytus had to be sworn in that connection originally had nothing to do with the actual bite of a rabid dog or with sexual sin, but was spoken at the baptism that marked the admittance to the sect. It runs: 'I shall sin no more, I shall not commit adultery, I shall not steal, I shall not do injustice, I shall not be greedy, I shall not hate, I shall not break faith, nor shall I take pleasure in any evil deeds'. There are strong indications that the book of Elxai was originally written in Aramaic and translated into Greek at a later date. Epiphanius has even preserved a cryptic Aramaic sentence (*Pan.*, 19, 4, 3), which according to him was introduced by the words: 'Let nobody search for the meaning but only speak in prayer the following words'. This

must be an addition of the Greek translation, since for Aramaic speaking people the meaning of the enigmatic words must have been clear: 'I bear witness to you on the Day of the Great Judgement'. This raises the question of how far the Greek translation differed from its Aramaic original. It has been suggested that the book of Elxai originally was a Jewish apocalyptic writing that was Christianized at a later stage (Luttikhuisen). Since we know very little of the beginnings and the history of the Elkesaite movement, this might be possible, but in view of the fact that all available sources already show a combination of Jewish and Christian elements, a Jewish-Christian milieu seems more likely. We know at least for sure that Jewish-Christian baptismal groups claimed Elchasai as their founder and held his book in high esteem. The man who became known as Elchasai, whether he called himself so or not, must have been a strong religious personality, who was able to amalgamate various religious ideas into a new and persuasive message of personal salvation. The Elkesaite movement has been characterized as a 'Gnostic Ebionitism' (Schoeps) or a 'syncretic-Gnostic Jewish Christianity' (Strecker). Its syncretic character is beyond doubt, but there are no indications that it adhered to typically Gnostic ideas, such as the separation between the supreme God and the creator or salvation through Gnosis.

All relevant texts with English translation in G.P. Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, vol. 8), Tübingen: Mohr, 1985.

*Lit.*: W. Brandt, *Elchasai: Ein Religionsstifter und sein Werk*, Leipzig, 1912 (repr. Amsterdam, 1973) ♦ J. Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism", *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983), 260-287 ♦ F.S. Jones, Review of Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai* (see above), *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 30 (1987), 201-209 ♦ A.F.J. Klijn & G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 36), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973, 54-67 (with texts) ♦ Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai* (see above) ♦ E. Peterson, "Die Behandlung der Tollwut bei den Elchasaiten nach Hippolyt", in: idem, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, Rom, Freiburg, Wien: Herder, 1959, 221-235 ♦ K. Rudolph, *Die Mandäer*, I: Prolegomena: Das Mandäer problem, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960, 233-238 ♦ idem, "Die Bedeutung des Kölner Mani-Codex für die Manichäismuskforschung", in: idem, *Gnosis und spätantike Religionsgeschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, 667-685 (first published 1974) ♦ idem, "Jüdische und christliche Täufertraditionen im Spiegel des Kölner Mani-Codex", in: idem, *Gnosis und spätantike*



*Religionsgeschichte*, 686-697 (first published 1986) ♦ H.J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1949, 325-334 ♦ G. Stecker, "Elkesai", *RACIV*, 1171-1186 ♦ G. Stroumsa, "Le couple de l'Ange et de l'Esprit: traditions juives et chrétiennes", *Revue Biblique* 88 (1981), 42-61 (also in: idem, *Savoir et Salut*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1992, 23-41).

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

## Élus Coëns

→ Martinès de Pasqually bestowed upon the Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] initiated into the movement created by him in the second half of the 18th century the title "The Order of the Masonic Knights Élus Coëns of the Universe". Adopting the name that the angel Gabriel had given to Daniel (Dan. 9:23), he invited these *hommes de désir* (men of aspiration) to partake in the practice of a divine religion and exercise a priestly function; they would participate in a theurgic rite, involving invocations (referred to as "operations") that sometimes resulted in a divine "manifestation" from the higher planes. Like Aaron who had been chosen by the Lord to be a priest in His service (Ex. 40:13), they were – theoretically at least, for few of them seem to have really experienced manifestations – chosen priests: elect coëns or cohens (Kohen, plur. Kohanim, meaning priests in Hebrew), according to the two spellings used. In the 1760s, aristocrats of both the old and the new nobility, well-to-do bourgeois who aspired to spiritual ennoblement, and members of the clergy, frequented the lodges. The Elus Coëns were representative of all these different social groups comprising the Masonic milieu.

Like many Freemasons – in a period when the preeminence of reason over religious dogma began to be affirmed, which saw the publication of the *Encyclopédie* between 1751 and 1772, and the spread of new scientific knowledge within the framework of scholarly societies and lodges – the Élus Coëns were in search of the meaning of life and its authentic religious and spiritual dimension; they were in quest perhaps of the irrational and the marvelous, perhaps of power, perhaps of the absolute. In their own way they reflected the premises of → Illuminism. Having met Pasqually, they followed his movement and his school, which united theory and practice, study and exercises, collective and individual theurgic work, discipline of body and mind, and which sought to reintegrate Man into the divine plan, of which he was believed to have been a part but from which he had been excluded through his errors and his faults.

Pasqually seems to have begun presenting his ideas in Marseille, Avignon and Montpellier. Nevertheless, the first known archives place the beginning of his movement around 1760, when he was in Toulouse. A Freemason, he held a patent from 1738, delivered by Charles Stuart to a certain Don Martinez Pasqualis who was supposed to have transmitted it to his eldest son, Joachim Don Martinez-Pasqualis. At the time, if some doubted the authenticity of the patent, no one seems to have disputed that he really was the son of this Martinez-Pasqualis. Some current research, however, furnishes evidence of biographical contradictions. However that may be, Pasqually proposed to the members of a lodge in Toulouse a Masonic system and theurgic exercises for entering into communication with the invisible. He did not manage to achieve a convincing demonstration and was expelled. He succeeded, however, in gaining disciples, who maintained a Temple Coën after his departure for Bordeaux in 1762. Pasqually enjoyed a favourable reception in the only active lodge in Bordeaux, the lodge *la Française*, and may even have functioned as its master. He made disciples there, or rather, "emulators": he preferred this expression because it implied that a student does not have to remain dependent on his instructor, but may equal and even surpass him.

In 1765, the regiment of Foix arrived in the garrison at Bordeaux. A military lodge was constituted, the lodge Joshua, some of whose members met with the lodge *la Française*. A few of them, won over by Pasqually, were initiated as Élus Coëns. These officers, who may have been more readily available or more motivated than the other emulators, played an important role in helping Pasqually structure his movement into an Order comprising ten "Scottish" grades, the highest of which was that of a Master Réau-Croix, who was entitled to direct a theurgic ceremony. For the benefit of the new Élus Coëns and the new temples set up in France and in the colonies, they copied the rituals, the catechisms, and the instructions that Pasqually refined, specified or modified as time went by, as well as the grades. They also formed the first tribunal for the Order in Bordeaux, instituted to handle internal and external conflicts in the Temple Coën. The secretariat, finally, was taken charge of by one of them, a new officer who had joined the regiment in Bordeaux and was to become a recognized writer and Christian theosopher: → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. The officers regularly came to spend their winter quarters near Pasqually, take notes of his instructions and comments, and later communicate them to their absent comrades.



Little by little, these lessons in biblical exegesis were systematized in the form of a treatise which interpreted Old and New Testament texts in the light of Pasqually's theories: *la Réintégration et la Réconciliation de tout Etre spirituel créé avec ses premières Vertus force et Puissance dans la jouissance personnelle dont tout Etre jouira distinctement en la présence du Créateur* (The Reintegration and Reconciliation of every created Being with his original Virtues, Force and Power, in the personal delight of which each Being will partake in the presence of the Creator). Pasqually here reviews biblical themes from the perspective of various esoteric doctrines: kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → alchemy, → Rosicrucianism, gnosis, → hermetism, → astrology, and arithmosophy [→ Number Symbolism]. His sometimes "surprising" translations of Hebrew words are actually based on associations, and sometimes even on homonyms and puns. Interrupted in 1772 by Pasqually's departure to Santo Domingo, the treatise was not published until 1899. It is written without any interruption and must be seen as an edited transcription of notes taken during an oral teaching. Reminiscent of rabbinical oral teachings, it takes recourse to parables, symbolic stories, → correspondences, and analogies to transmit a correct understanding of the sacred texts. It also explains to the Élus Coëns the double fall into matter: God emanated "emancipated" spiritual beings – that is to say, endowed with free will – who had to practice a form of worship prescribed by the Divinity. But these beings sought to act as demiurges. As a punishment, the Creator enclosed them in a circumscribed material space; and Man, an androgynous being with a glorious body, was emanated and emancipated in his turn to guard them and help them regain their original state. But this Man-God, Adam, allowed himself to be seduced by the perverse angels and wanted, in his turn, to imitate God by creating spiritual beings. He fell, pulling the entire material world down with him. The whole work of reconciliation and reintegration in the heart of the divinity, as taught to Pasqually's "emulators", is based on the cult of worship initiated by the Creator, in which Men of Aspiration must render supreme honour to God. This cult requires moral, spiritual, even physical discipline: prayers, daily exercises, invocations, fasts and preparatory exercises for the theurgic meeting, and preparations for warding off negative forces, for purification, and for attempting to enter into contact with the higher spirits, with the angels, and indeed with Christ. During an "operation", the operator knew that he had succeeded in making

contact if "manifestations" took place, in the form of "passes" that could be visually or auditorily perceived. These signs, referred to by Pasqually as *La Chose* (the Thing) showed the operator that he was on the path towards reconciliation with the Creator. Pasqually did not explain why he chose the term; but it is noteworthy that prior to Descartes, the unknown in an equation was called "the thing" and could be resolved only by trying out various operations; and also that → Pernety defined "the thing" as the work of the philosopher's stone.

One might ask what attracted Freemasons to the movement created by Pasqually. They may have been attracted by the spiritual exercises; by the strict and unusual daily discipline; by the human and theurgic qualities of this enigmatic man, whose personality deeply influenced some of them; or by his profound and original exegesis of the biblical texts, which had to be of interest to these men raised in Catholicism. They do not seem to have been shocked by the ideas of Pasqually, who in any case required them to continue following their religion. It is true though that a certain number of Élus Coëns became discouraged. One of the officers of the Regiment of Foix, Grainville (1728-1793), wrote in 1798 to an Élus Coën from Lyons, → Jean Baptiste Willermoz (who would become famous by creating a new Masonic movement, the Rectified Scottish Rite): 'We had a temple in the Regiment; we have let the stones fall away imperceptibly . . . now we would hardly be able to find three stones joined together, of the more than twenty-five that once were there'.

Despite Pasqually's efforts to establish the Order in France – he twice went to Paris, where he enjoyed some success with Masonic personalities such as Bacon de la Chevalerie (1731-1821), and set up his supreme tribunal that delivered patents –, the success of his Order really depended on his actual presence. However, constrained by financial problems, he could not regularly go to Paris and visit the Temples Coën open in France. He left for Santo Domingo in 1772, under conditions that are still somewhat unclear: perhaps they had to do with a small inheritance that he had to collect there, but more plausibly with a trial in which the Élus Coëns were involved in giving evidence, and that complicated his life in Bordeaux. After his departure, the order went downhill. Pasqually died two years later, leaving his wife's cousin, Caignet de Lester (1725-1778) as his successor, in Santo Domingo – no doubt hoping that the latter would keep the school alive until his son, born in 1768, could succeed him. Nevertheless, the "regent"

soon died and the second successor, de Las Casas, officially closed the Temples Coëns in 1780.

The Élus Coëns were dispersed, but Pasqually had been able to create good contacts among the Réaux-Croix, who were accustomed to participating in the rites wherever they might be. If invited by the master of the Élus Coëns or by one of the “very powerful masters” (that is, a Réau-Croix), they would join the initiation rituals for the supreme grade in “sympathetic” cooperation (that is to say, at a distance), and might do the same in other rites, such as those at the equinoxes, considered favorable to theurgic work. Furthermore the Reaux-Croix made a vow of loyalty, which was respected by most of them. Already at Caignet de Lester’s death, Saint-Martin made a tour of the centers that remained active: Lyons with Willermoz, Toulouse, where a new Temple Coën was open, Paris with Bacon de la Chevalerie, and Bordeaux, where the faithful remained in contact with Mrs. de Pasqually (17?-1813), admitted into the Order together with a few other women. With her was one of the most loyal members, a tonsured cleric called Abbot Fournié (1738-1825), who was a simple person but favored by “the Thing”. He had been one of Pasqually’s secretaries and was now given the assignment by his brothers to guide the education of the young Pasqually (1768-1838) who, in the minds of several Coëns and Willermoz in particular, was destined to make the Order rise again when the time would be ripe. But the Revolution caused them to lose trace of him, thus dashing their last hopes.

Pasqually and his Order, however, were not forgotten. In a new form, without theurgy, it was continued by Willermoz in Freemasonry; by Saint-Martin, whose writings served to disseminate some of Pasqually’s ideas, and inspired many 19th century authors, such as Balzac (1799-1850); and finally by Abbot Fournié who, exiled in London, did not create a following there but wrote a treatise like his instructor. Many so-called initiatory movements today still claim to be inspired by the master of the Élus Coëns.

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## Encausse, Gérard-Anacle-Vincent → Papus

## Eriugena, Johannes Scottus, \* 810 Ireland, † 877 France ?

Born in Ireland, where he may have been exposed to the Greek language, Eriugena first surfaces as a liberal arts teacher at the Palace school of Charles the Bald in Northern France around 850 C.E. Few details of his career are known. His knowledge of Greek was probably limited to the use of rhetorical terms. At the request of archbishop Hincmar of Reims he became involved in the ecclesiastical debate on predestination, although it seems he never held any ecclesiastical office himself. His treatise *On divine predestination* refutes the theory of a double predestination (to life and to eternal death) which had been put forth as the true Augustinian position by the monk Gottschalk of Orbais. Claiming that even this lofty religious matter ought to be settled before the forum of human reason, Eriugena argued that God’s predestination equals a kind of divine prescience, thereby not undermining a human being’s free will. Gottschalk’s reasoning was judged faulty due to his poor knowledge of the liberal arts and his ignorance of the Greek language. Having received severe criticism from all sides for his radical intervention, Eriugena withdrew from public debate. Shortly after Charles the Bald commissioned him to translate some important Greek theological texts: *De hominis opificio* (On the Making of Man) by Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 331-395) and especially the important works by → Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. 500). A codex containing the latter had been donated to the Franks by the Byzantine emperor Michael the Stammerer and deposited in the monastery of St. Denis. Furthermore, Eriugena translated the so-called *Ambigua* by Maximus the Confessor (580-662), which is an attempt to harmonize passages in Gregory Nazianzus (ca. 329-390) and Dionysius. Due

to his translation efforts his knowledge of Greek was much improved, while gradually broadening into a remarkable interest in and affinity with the basic structure of Neoplatonic philosophy [→ Neoplatonism].

Eriugena's training in the liberal arts and his knowledge of the Greek Christian-Platonic heritage stemming from his translation efforts come to fruition in his *opus magnum*, *Periphyseon* or *On the Division of Nature* (862-866), in which he synthesized eastern and western thought. While Eriugena believes that → Augustine (354-430) and Dionysius, his preferred western and eastern authorities, never contradict each other, he generally favours the Greek theologians as more astute. This reveals Eriugena's own affinity with Neoplatonic thought, with its emphasis on the dialectical process of *exitus* and *reditus*. Underneath it, there hides a transparently stratified cosmos, which is unified and diversified at the same time so as to bridge the abyss between Creator and creature. By adhering to the *exitus* – *reditus* model, Eriugena was able to overcome the static subject-object dichotomy of the Creator – creature model in favour of a more dynamic and organic view of the cosmos. For Eriugena, the preferred view of reality is to see God as belonging to nature, as *natura* encompasses both created and divine aspects, rather than seeing nature (i.e., creation) belonging to God. Moreover, the *exitus* – *reditus* model allows Eriugena to synchronize cosmic development and human self-awareness, as the end goal of his project is both rational and mystical (culminating in oneness with God).

In matters of scriptural exegesis, Eriugena naturally preferred the allegorical expositions of Origen and Ambrose over most literal or historical approaches, with the notable exception of the literal *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* by Basil of Caesarea (330-379), through which Eriugena gained access to the tradition of Greek natural philosophy. Eriugena's deepest intellectual debt is to Dionysius, whose characteristic preference for the so-called *via negativa* he implemented in his own thought, even though he claimed to have learned how to read Dionysius properly only with the aid of Maximus. From Maximus the Confessor he derived his specific interest in the interface between cosmology and anthropology which gives the *Periphyseon* its unique flavour. While Dionysius' *via negativa* taught him to polish human language so as to make it a fitting tool to analyze God's transcendence, Maximus gave him a sense of God's immanence, for the mystery of the Christian redemption embraces the entire cosmos. In conformity with

this, Eriugena developed a Christology in *Periphyseon* IV-V which highlights the event of the incarnation as a paradigmatic change in both human and cosmic history, as the entire cosmos will be redeemed. Rather than refining existing Christological terminology, Eriugena keenly brings out the paradisaical quality of Jesus' human nature. At times, Eriugena's synthesis of western and eastern thought translates into an oscillation between eastern and western authorities, as is the case in his angelological analysis. While the angelology of Gregory the Great was generally dominant in the West, Eriugena propagated the angelic hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius instead (*Periphyseon* I, 444C). In this way the tradition of Greek angelology became an important influence in the West.

In the domain of → number symbolism Eriugena's eastern and western influences reinforce each other. Augustine's dialectical reflections on the triad, as God created everything *in pondere, numero et mensura* (cf. Wisdom 11:21), resonate nicely with the Dionysian tradition of negative theology in Eriugena's view of the universe as reflecting a created infinity and in his speculations on the divine monad in *Periphyseon* III.

Eriugena works with a wide array of sources as he unites Greek and Latin authorities. Next to the Bible, he had a mostly indirect knowledge of philosophical Neoplatonism and a direct knowledge of many Greek and Latin Church Fathers. He demonstrates a specific interest in the symbolism and scriptural allegories of paradise in *Periphyseon* IV. He equates the first man with *Nous* (the mind) and the first woman with *Aisthesis* (the senses), while the serpent represents their experience of *delectatio* (temptation). His views in this matter derive from Ambrose (339-397), through whom he is connected indirectly to the Middle Platonic tradition of Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.-50 C.E.).

While it is unclear whether or not Eriugena had access to gnostic [→ Gnosticism] or hermetic sources [→ Hermetic Literature], his overall reasoning displays a definite mystical tendency. This is clear from his preference for the heretical notion of the *apokatastasis pantoön* at the end of the *Periphyseon*. In a more orthodox fashion it comes out in his commentary on Dionysius' Celestial Hierarchy, where he engages in the kind of light metaphysics that would re-emerge in Robert Grosseteste in the early 13th century. The famous dictum *omnia quae sunt lumina sunt* (Pseudo-Dionysius, *In Ier. Cael.* 1.1) is a phrase that has been much quoted in this context.

The *Periphyseon* seems not to have been read widely, as its idiosyncratic nature generally defied

understanding. Ignorant indifference turned into hostility when the heretic Amalric of Bene used Eriugena's name to pass off some of his own teachings, for example on the absence of gender division in paradise. As a result, pope Honorius III ordered in 1225 that all copies of the *Periphyseon* be sent to Rome to be burned. When Thomas Gale published the first printed version of the *Periphyseon* in 1681, it was immediately put on the Index. Not until the early 20th century did the critical study of Eriugena's thought begin, following the publication of a seminal biography by M. Cappuyns in 1933. The work on modern editions is now nearly completed.

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WILLEMEN OTTEN

## Esotericism

### 1. ESOTERIC 2. ESOTERICISM 3. TYPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL MEANINGS 4. WESTERN ESOTERICISM

#### 1. ESOTERIC

The adjective "esoteric" (ἑσωτερικός) has often been attributed to Aristotle, but in fact he uses only the word "exoteric" (ἑξωτερικός; see references in Riffard 1990, 65) and opposes it to "acroamatic" (from ἀκρόαμα, oral instruction). It is in a satire by Lucian of Samosata (2nd century C.E.) that the term "esoteric" makes its first appearance. Zeus and Hermes are selling various philosophers as slaves on the market, and claim that if you buy a disciple of Aristotle, you will get two for the same price: 'One seen from without, another seen from within . . . So if you buy him, remember to give to the first one the name of exoteric, and to the second that of esoteric' (*Vitarum Rustio* 26). In → Clement of Alexandria, the term "esoteric" is for the first time associated with → secrecy: 'the disciples of Aristotle say that some of their treatises are esoteric, and others common and exoteric. Further, those who instituted the mysteries, being philosophers, buried their doctrines in myths, so as not to be obvious to all' (*Stromata* V, 58, 3-4). Hippolyte of Rome first applied the terminology to the pupils of Pythagoras, who are said to have been divided into two classes, one exoteric and one esoteric (*Refutation of all Heresies* I, 2, 4), and the same claim is made by Iamblichus in his *Life of Pythagoras*. From here the adjective "esoteric", as referring to secret teachings reserved for a mystic elite, was taken up by later authors, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. It appears in English in Th. Stanley's *History of Philosophy* (1687), as referring to Pythagoras' elite pupils, and in French in a Dictionary of 1752, where it denotes things 'obscure, hidden, and uncommon', orally transmitted by the Ancients to an elite (*Supplément to Dictionnaire universel françois et latin*, 1066).



## 2. ESOTERICISM

The substantive is of much more recent date: it first appears in French (*l'ésotérisme*) in Jacques Matter's *Histoire critique du gnosticisme et de son influence* published in 1828. Matter describes the → gnosticism of the 2nd century in terms of a syncretism between the teachings of Christ on the one hand, and Oriental, Jewish and Greek religious-philosophical traditions on the other. The gnostic 'theosophers of Christianity' had adopted the Pythagorean system of progressive initiation into the mysteries, with years of silent preparation: 'These ordeals and this esotericism existed throughout Antiquity, from China to Gallia . . .' (o.c., 83; and Matter again wrote about 'the esotericism of the gnostics' in an article in *La France littéraire*, febr./march 1834). → Jacques Etienne Marconis de Nègre adopted the neologism in 1839, writing that one of the principal points of the ancient priestly doctrine was 'the division of the sacred science in exotericism or external science and esotericism or internal science' (*L'Hérophante* . . ., 16). And one year later Pierre Leroux spoke, again with reference to Pythagoreanism, of 'esotericism, the secret school, the religious and political sect, a kind of superior caste elevated to understanding by means of initiation' (*De l'humanité* [1840], II, 397). "Esotericism" was recognized as a new word, finally, in Maurice Lachâtre's *Dictionnaire universel* of 1852, where it is defined as 'From the Greek *eisōtheō*, the entirety of the principles of a secret doctrine, communicated only to affiliated members'. Perhaps it would have remained no more than an obscure technical term, had it not been popularized by → Eliphas Lévi in his influential books about → magic, from where it entered the vocabulary of occultism [→ occult / occultism]. Thus the theosophist A.D. Sinnett introduced the term into English with his *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883). Since the days of Lévi and Sinnett, various authors and currents have adopted the terms "esoteric" and "esotericism" as a self-designation, each one defining it according to their own preferences. For example, → Alice Bailey defines esotericism as the school of thought – her own – which recognizes 'that behind all happenings in the world of phenomena . . . exists the world of energies' (*Education in the New Age* [1954], 60).

## 3. TYPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL MEANINGS

As can be seen from the preceding overview, the term "esotericism" was not originally a self-designation by which certain religious authors or

currents identified themselves or their own perspectives. Rather, it originated in Matter's work as a scholarly label, applied a posteriori to certain religious developments in the context of early Christianity. In current academic research the term is still used as a scholarly construct, according to two main perspectives that must be clearly distinguished.

a. According to *typological* constructs as commonly used in the context of religious studies, "esoteric" and "esotericism" refers to certain types of religious activity, characterized by specific structural features. Thus the term is commonly associated with the notion of "secrecy", and then stands for the practice in various religious contexts of reserving certain kinds of salvific knowledge for a selected elite of initiated disciples. As we have seen, this usage is in line with the original connotations of both the adjective and the substantive. In this typological sense, the term "esotericism" can be applied freely within any religious context, for concerns with secret knowledge reserved for elites can be found throughout history, and all over the world: in pre-literate and literate societies, from antiquity to the present, in east and west. The same is true for another, related typological understanding of the term, that associates it with the deeper, "inner mysteries of religion" as opposed to its merely external or "exoteric" dimensions. Such an understanding, which is also found among the proponents of perennialism [→ Tradition], is particularly congenial to religious studies of a "religionist" orientation (represented by scholars in the tradition of e.g. Mircea Eliade, → Henry Corbin, and → Carl Gustav Jung). Such approaches tend to promote the esoteric or "inner" dimension of religion as its true core, and oppose it to more "superficial", merely "exoteric" dimensions, such as social institutions and official dogmas. Traditionally, many scholars of Western esotericism as understood according to the second, historical usage of the term (see below) have had religionist leanings and therefore adopted this typological usage as well, resulting in considerable confusion about what they really meant by "esotericism".

b. According to *historical* constructs, "esotericism" is understood not as a type of religion or a structural dimension of it, but as a general label for certain specific currents in Western culture that display certain similarities and are historically related. For this reason, and in order to avoid confusion with typological usage, most scholars now prefer to speak of "Western esotericism". Although there is considerable debate about the precise definition and demarcation as well as the historical scope of Western esotericism (see below), there exists



widespread consensus about the main currents that form its core domain. If restricted to the modern and contemporary period, the field consists in any case of the Renaissance revival of → hermetism and the so-called “occult philosophy” [→ occult / occultism] in a broadly neoplatonic context, and its later developments; → alchemy, → paracelsianism and → rosigrucianism; Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and its later developments; theosophical [→ Christian Theosophy] and illuminist currents [→ Illuminism]; and various occultist and related developments during the 19th and 20th centuries, up to and including phenomena such as the → New Age movement. If the period is extended backwards so as to include late antiquity and the middle ages, it also includes → gnosticism, hermetism, neoplatonic theurgy, and the various occult sciences and magical currents that later fed into the Renaissance synthesis. From such a historical perspective, the question of whether the currents in question included initiations into secret knowledge or opposed some “inner” knowledge to mere “external” religiosity is irrelevant as a criterion for what does and does not count as “esoteric”: emphases on secrecy and interiority can certainly be found within quite a few of the historical currents just listed, but they are absent in many others, and therefore cannot be seen as defining characteristics.

#### 4. WESTERN ESOTERICISM

That at least some of the major currents such as listed above hang together, and should be seen as a field in its own right, seems to have been suggested first by the end of the 17th century. Ehregott Daniel Colberg attacked what he referred to as “platonich-hermetic Christianity” (*Das Platonisch-Hermetisches* [sic] *Christenthum*, 1690-1691), and not much later → Gottfried Arnold, in his famous “Impartial History” (*Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*, 1699-1700) defended the “heretical” types of Christianity he saw as congenial to his own Christian-theosophical beliefs. In the following century, Jacob Brucker’s massive *Historia critica Philosophiae* (1742-1744) likewise treated a range of currents that would nowadays be referred to as “Western esotericism”, and straight lines from ancient gnosticism via → Jacob Boehme to German Idealism were drawn by the influential church historian Ferdinand Christian Baur (*Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 1835). While authors like Colberg and Arnold approached the currents in question from a theological perspective, Brucker and Baur saw them mostly as examples of religious philosophy.

In the wake of the Enlightenment, mainstream 19th-century historiography seems to have largely neglected the domain nowadays referred to as Western esotericism. The specific currents belonging to it tended to be marginalized as the products of irrational *Schwärmerei* or as belonging to the prehistory of “real” science or philosophy (see e.g. the perception of → alchemy as proto-chemistry, or → astrology as proto-astronomy). It must be emphasized, however, that the portrayal of Western esotericism in 19th-century academic historiography has not yet been systematically investigated. Western-esoteric currents may in fact have received more serious attention from historians than might seem to be the case; there is reason to assume that often such research either did not make it into the main works of those historians whose names are still quoted today, or if they did, those works themselves often came to be quoted selectively by later generations, who concentrated in their turn on what they found most relevant and paid little attention to the rest. The progressive neglect of Western esoteric currents by 19th century historiography was undoubtedly aggravated by the fact that contemporary occultist authors such as → Éliphas Lévi or → H.P. Blavatsky *did* begin to write large “histories” of the field, in which their own fantasies took the upper hand over any critical approach to historical evidence. It is not hard to see that this new genre of popular occultist historiography was bound to make the field appear “tainted” in the eyes of academic historians, who therefore had all the more reason to avoid it: a scholar who published a book about Western esoteric currents was likely to be suspected of occultist sympathies by his colleagues, and in fact such suspicions remain common even today.

Important pioneers of the late-19th-century and early 20th-century academic study of Western esotericism are Carl Kiesewetter (whose *Geschichte des neueren Occultismus* [1891-1895] treated the occult sciences from → Agrippa to Du Prel), Auguste Viatte (whose 1927 study *Les sources occultes du Romantisme* [2 vols.] remains a standard reference on pre-Romantic and Romantic → illuminism even today) and Lynn Thorndike (whose massive *History of Magic and Experimental Science* in eight volumes [1923-1958] remains equally indispensable for anybody studying the history of → magic and the “occult sciences”). But the first 20th-century author to really conceive of Western esotericism in an integral fashion somewhat similar to how it is seen today seems to have been Will-Erich Peuckert, with his *Pansophie: Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der weissen und schwarzen*

*Magie* (1936; 2nd ed. 1956) followed by *Gabalia: Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der magia naturalis im 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert* (1967) and *Das Rosenkreutz* (orig. 1929, posthumously published in 1973). Peuckert began his *Pansophie* with the Florentine platonism and → hermetism of → Ficino and → Pico della Mirandola, and from there continued with the occult philosophy of the Renaissance, → Paracelsus and → Paracelsianism, → Christian theosophy and → Rosicrucianism.

While Peuckert's narrative gave special prominence to the historical antecedents of the figure of Faust as archetype of the magician, another and eventually more influential historiographical current emphasized, rather, the figure of → Hermes Trismegistus. The modern academic study of Renaissance hermetism was launched by Paul Oskar Kristeller, with a pioneering and influential article on Ficino and → Lazzarelli published in Italian in 1938 (repr. in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters I* [1956], 221-247); and in 1955 appeared a first collection of Renaissance "hermetic" texts edited by E. Garin, M. Brini, C. Vasoli and P. Zambelli (*Test umanistici su l'Ermetismo*, 1955). Basing herself upon Italian researches along these lines, Frances A. Yates then published in 1964 her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, which definitively put the study of "the Hermetic Tradition" on the map of international academic research. Yates' "grand narrative" of hermeticism [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies] created what was in fact the first comprehensive academic paradigm for the study of Western esotericism (although she herself did not use that term). It conceived of the field as based upon an intrinsically magical "hermetic philosophy" carried by great Renaissance "magi" such as Pico della Mirandola, → Giordano Bruno or → John Dee and continued (as argued in her later work) by the → Rosicrucianism of the 17th century; and this hermetic philosophy was presented as having given an essential impulse – perhaps *the* essential impulse – to the scientific revolution. This "Yates thesis" was highly provocative because it presented magic as the master-key to understanding the rise of modern science. Authors like Mary Hesse attacked it right away, arguing that scientific thinking had to be understood as emerging from its own internal history. The result was a vehement debate among historians of science and philosophy about the relevance of hermeticism to their domains of research. Once the question of a possible role of "hermetic" currents in the scientific revolution had been put on the agenda, there was a basis for investigating e.g. the importance of

alchemy in the work of great figures such as → Isaac Newton (as demonstrated by B.J.T. Dobbs, R.S. Westfall and others) and Robert Boyle (as demonstrated more recently by L. Principe), as well as many lesser ones. Nowadays Yates' thesis is no longer accepted in its radical form, and her interpretations are criticized in other respects as well, but it is nevertheless thanks to her that the study of hermeticism is now considered an acceptable pursuit in the context of history of science and philosophy.

A more problematic result of Yates' work, at least as far as academic scholarship is concerned, was the appropriation of what may be called the "Yates Paradigm" by a variety of more or less esoterically tinged "religionist" authors in the wake of the counterculture of the 1960s. It was easy for them to embrace hermeticism as a traditional counterculture rebelling against the forces of the establishment. Yates' narrative portrayed the Renaissance magi as emphasizing personal religious experience against the dogmas of the church, and trying to bring "the imagination to power" (*l'imagination au pouvoir*: the famous slogan of the 1960s student generation) against the cold "reign of quantity" associated with mechanistic science. As far as the religious (or "spiritual") dimensions of hermeticism were concerned, religionist authors interpreted them in the light of approaches associated with "Eranos" scholars such as → Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade, → Henry Corbin or Joseph Campbell (see Wasserstrom 1999; Hakl 2001), all of whom are themselves inspired by esoteric world-views to a greater or lesser extent. The result was a religionist and often crypto-esoteric style of writing about esotericism that, predictably, tended to be treated with suspicion by scholars who insisted on academic rigor: once again, the agenda for the study of Western esotericism risked being dominated by apologists rather than scholars. With respect to post-18th-century developments, which fall beyond the scope of the "hermetic philosophy" covered by the Yates paradigm, the situation was even more unsatisfactory: as a rule, it can be said that serious studies in this domain (by e.g. James Webb, Joscelyn Godwin, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, Christopher McIntosh) have been published in spite of the academy rather than thanks to it.

It is only as late as the 1990s that the study of Western esotericism, under that title, has begun to be seriously recognized as an academic field of study in its own right. In these years the Yates paradigm, as well as its religionist interpretation from a countercultural perspective, has come to be challenged by a different one, introduced by

Antoine Faivre. Faivre defined Western esotericism as based upon a “form of thought” that could be recognized by the presence of four intrinsic characteristics, to which two non-intrinsic ones might be added. The intrinsic characteristics are (1) a belief in invisible and non-causal “correspondences” between all visible and invisible dimensions of the cosmos, (2) a perception of nature as permeated and animated by a divine presence or life-force, (3) a concentration on the religious → imagination as a power that provides access to worlds and levels of reality intermediary between the material world and God, (4) the belief in a process of spiritual transmutation by which the inner man is regenerated and re-connected with the divine. The two non-intrinsic characteristics – frequently but not always present – are (1) the belief in a fundamental concordance between several or all spiritual traditions, and (2) the idea of a more or less secret transmission of spiritual knowledge (Faivre 1994, 10-15; the definition was first formulated in a French publication in 1992).

The heuristic value of Faivre’s definition is undeniable. Other than the Yates paradigm it can be seen as encompassing the entire period from the Renaissance to the present, while still clearly demarcating the field from non-esoteric currents. As a result, during the 1990s it has been adopted by many other scholars and has largely replaced Yates’ grand narrative as the major paradigm in the field. Simultaneously, of course, various aspects and implications of it have come to be challenged. It has been suggested that the definition works best for the Renaissance “occult philosophy” and the late 18th/early 19th century Illuminist and Romantic context, but can only partly account for developments in the “spiritualist”/pietist context since the 17th century and the secularization of esotericism during the 19th and 20th centuries (Hanegraaff 1996, 2004); its restriction to modern and contemporary periods has been questioned, and it has been suggested that the limitations of Faivre’s phenomenological concept of a “form of thought” could be overcome by a discursive approach (von Stuckrad 2004); and the nature of the relation of Western esotericism *sensu* Faivre to Christianity and to the other great religions of the book constitutes an ongoing subject for debate as well (Hanegraaff 1995, 2004; Neugebauer-Wölk 2003; von Stuckrad 2004). Undoubtedly these discussions will cause the present paradigm for the study of Western esotericism to further evolve into new directions. It is clear, however, that largely thanks to the emergence of the Faivre paradigm in the 1990s, Western esotericism is now increasingly recognized

as an area of research that deserves serious academic attention, and the implications of which are likely to transform our perception of Western religious history as a whole.

*Lit.*: Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994 ♦ idem, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2000 ♦ idem, “La question d’un ésotérisme comparé des religions du livre”, in: *Henry Corbin et le comparatisme spirituel* (Cahiers du Groupe d’Etudes Spirituelles Comparées 8), Paris: Archè-Edidit, 2000, 91-120 ♦ Olav Hammer, “Esotericism in New Religious Movements”, in: James R. Lewis (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 445-465 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism”, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 7:2 (1995), 99-129 ♦ idem, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill 1996/Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, 384-405 ♦ idem, “On the Construction of ‘Esoteric Traditions’”, in: Antoine Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, Louvain: Peeters, 1998, 11-61 ♦ idem, “Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism between Counterculture and New Complexity”, *Aries* 1:1 (2001), 5-37 ♦ idem, “The Dreams of Theology and the Realities of Christianity”, in: J. Haers & P. de Mey (eds.), *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensis, 172), Leuven: Peeters, 2004, 709-733 ♦ idem, “The Study of Western Esotericism: New Approaches to Christian and Secular Culture”, in: Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz & Randi Warne (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 2004 ♦ Hans Thomas Hakl, *Der verborgene Geist von Eranos: Unbekannte Begegnungen von Wissenschaft und Esoterik. Eine alternative Geistesgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bretten: Scientia nova, 2001 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L’ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 1992, 19-48 ♦ idem, *L’ésotérisme*, Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1993 ♦ Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, “Esoterik und Christentum vor 1800: Prolegomena zu einer Bestimmung ihrer Differenz”, *Aries* 3:2 (2003), 127-165 ♦ Pierre A. Riffard, *L’ésotérisme*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 1990 ♦ Kocku von Stuckrad, *Was ist Esoterik? Kleine Geschichte des geheimen Wissens*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2004 ♦ Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

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## Essenes, Esoteric legends about

The Essenes were a distinct group of Jews which, until the 20th century, was known only from a few

descriptions in Greek and Latin texts. They are described by Philo in *Hypothetica* (11.1-18) and *Every Good Man Is Free* (12.75-13.91). Josephus writes of the Essenes in passages of several of his books. The most detailed description is found in *The Jewish War* (2.119-161). A shorter passage on them is included in *Jewish Antiquities* (18.18-22). Pliny the Elder wrote briefly about the Essenes in his *Natural History* (5.73). Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947, the group associated with the scrolls was for the next five decades generally assumed to be the Essene community described by these Greek and Roman authors. This assumption has again been increasingly questioned during the 1990s (Boccaccini 1998).

Philo and Josephus describe the Essenes as an all-male order, divided into distinct classes and organized under officials to whom obedience was required. They are depicted as a tightly knit group following an austere and pious rule of conduct, living communally and strictly observing Mosaic law. Neophytes were initiated into the order and received three symbols of their new status: a hatchet, a loin-cloth, and a white garment. After a lengthy period of probation, the initiate swore an oath binding himself to piety, justice, a moral life and secrecy regarding the content of Essene teachings.

In his *Ecclesiastical History* (book II chapter 17), Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339) understands Philo's remarks on a group living in Egypt, whom he called Therapeutae, as describing forerunners of Christian monastic life. Through a mistaken identification of the Therapeutae and the Essenes, the latter group in time came to be used as an important topos in post-Reformation controversies concerning monasticism. A discussion developed about the acceptability of Christian monasticism, to which the Protestants were opposed. On the other side, it was especially the Carmelites – who claimed descent of their Order, through the Essenes, from Elia and Elisa – who defended the thesis that the Essenes were an early Christian monastic community. Several texts that claim that the Essenes were Christians also argue that Jesus had been one of that community, thereby giving monasticism even stronger rhetorical support.

The idea that Jesus had been an Essene was interpreted quite differently in Johann Georg Wachter's (1673-1757) influential *De primordiis Christianae religionis*, written in 1703 and revised in 1717. The Essenes are here described as a link in a long chain of transmission of "natural theology", i.e. a moral and philosophical deist tradition that had its ori-

gins among the Egyptians and included the kabbalah. Christianity is thus interpreted by Wachter as the outcome of a historical development and not of a revelation. Wachter's text was not published, but circulated widely in manuscript form. The first reference in print to his Essene hypothesis is found in Humphrey Prideaux *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (1716-1718). Thereafter it becomes a common element in various Enlightenment critiques of Christianity as a revealed religion. It is also against this background that, from 1730 onwards, Masonic authors [→ Freemasonry] join into the discussion about the Essenes.

In 1730/1731, the anonymously published *A Defense of Masonry* appears to be the first Masonic text in which the Essenes are mentioned. They are described in terms that make them appear as Freemasons avant la lettre. By associating the two, the moral respectability of the Essenes as stressed in the ancient sources is used as a defense of Masonry. This pamphlet may at first have made little impact, but it was reprinted in the second edition of Anderson's widely disseminated *Constitutions* in 1738 (pp. 216-226, esp. 221).

A manuscript of a Masonic neo-Templar Order, the *Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus*, dated 1750, radicalizes the parallelism by presenting the Freemasons as being, via several links, the ultimate historical descendants of the Essenes. → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz adopted this claim and in 1778 included statements to that effect in a text entitled *Instruction pour la réception des Frères Écuyers novices de l'Ordre bienfaisant de Chevaliers Maçons de la Cité Sainte*. These claims were repeated in successive versions of the text. From then on references to the Essenes are abundant in masonic literature.

By the end of the 18th century, diverse legend elements had been created that drew selectively on the characteristics of the Essenes as presented in the classical sources. From Masonic literature comes the image of the Essenes as a morally elevated brotherhood with secret initiation rituals and a set of symbols marking them off from the uninitiated. Wachter's book is the source of the legend element that makes the Essenes into covert rationalists, and places Jesus as a member of the Essene brotherhood. The Freemason Karl Bahrdt (1741-1792) is the first writer to have synthesized the various elements and to present for the public a detailed version of the legend. In *Briefe ueber die Bibel im Volkston* (1782), Jesus and several other central New Testament characters are presented as members of this initiatic order. The Essene faith is



portrayed as a form of enlightened humanism, and the life and mission of Jesus are reinterpreted in rationalist terms. In Bahrdt's account, the Essenes spread their rational faith by staging fake miracles in order to convince the spiritually less enlightened masses. Jesus survived the crucifixion and was healed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who were also Essenes. Jesus then withdrew from public life and lived into old age. Karl Heinrich Venturini (1768-1849) fleshed out the details of Bahrdt's account in his four-volume novel *Natuerliche Geschichte des grossen Propheten von Nazareth* (1800-1802).

The main lines of the legend were later summarized in a widely spread anonymous text, *Wichtige historische Enthüllungen über die wirkliche Todesart Jesu* (1849), also known as the *Essäerbrief*. The author of this text was soon thereafter established as Philipp Friedrich Hermann Klencke (1813-1881), a medical doctor from Braunschweig. Although it consists of a summary of sections of Venturini's novel, Klencke's slender volume is purported to be a translation of a previously unknown Essene text in Latin. The text was vigorously attacked for being spurious, which led its author to publish several rejoinders on the same theme. The influence of the *Essäerbrief* can be judged by the fact that it went through numerous reprints since its first appearance, was translated into several languages and inspired several pastiches with similar themes.

19th-century esotericism was deeply influenced by the discovery of the Orient. From the early 19th century and onwards, attempts were made to explain the apparent similarities between Indian and Western forms of religion by claiming that there were historical links between the teachings of Jesus and Buddhism. This motif was combined with the Essene legend by the British author Godfrey Higgins (1772-1833). In his *Anacalypsis* (1833-1836), he presents a vast, speculative history of the human race and its spiritual development. The various religions of the world are placed into an overarching historiographic scheme, and are seen as reflexes of a perennial philosophy [→ Tradition]. The Essenes are included in this historiography in terms that recall all of the main themes encountered previously. The teachings of Jesus are at heart a set of moral precepts. Jesus was a member of the Essene order, a brotherhood that taught the same philosophy as the ancient Indians. Higgins surmises that the lost sacred writings of the Essenes may have been identical to the Vedas. Through the Essenes, this ancient wisdom was also passed on to both the Carmelites and the Freema-

sons. Several texts by later authors continue to give the Essenes various roles as links between diverse Eastern and Western traditions. Examples are Ernest de Bunsen *The Angel-Messiah of Buddhists, Essenes and Christians* (1880) and Arthur Lillie *Buddhism in Christendom or Jesus, the Essene* (1887).

Higgins' *Anacalypsis* is a major source of → Helena Blavatsky's worldview, and appears to have been the principal channel of transmission of the Essene legend into theosophical and post-theosophical currents. References to the Essenes are ubiquitous in the occultist literature, and the examples below are drawn from a large set of such accounts. The Essene legend thus also figures prominently in books by → Edouard Schuré, Otto Hanisch (founder of the Mazdaznan movement), → H. Spencer Lewis, → Manly Palmer Hall and many others. Whereas earlier accounts often claim that the Essenes were initiated into a more rational faith than that of the masses, many such late 19th and 20th century occultist versions of the legend present Essene initiatic knowledge as mysterious and esoteric.

Although the Essene motif is a minor one in Blavatsky's writings, mentions of the Essenes as a secret brotherhood and Jesus as an initiate into the wisdom of this group are scattered through her work. The Essenes are thus in *The Secret Doctrine* (vol. II: 111) seen as a group that taught the doctrine of → reincarnation, as supposedly did Jesus himself. In *Esoteric Christianity* (1902), second-generation theosophists → Annie Besant and → Charles Leadbeater expand on the topic of induction into arcane secrets, explaining that Jesus began his spiritual career in an Essene monastery but later continued to Egypt, where he received various further initiations.

→ Rudolf Steiner gives a wealth of details on the Essenes and their purported connection with Jesus, especially in *Das Matthäus-Evangelium* (1910) and *Aus der Akasha-Forschung: Das fünfte Evangelium* (1913). The Essenes were a brotherhood of initiates devoted to a complex process of spiritual development and clairvoyant investigation. Steiner also gives them a role as link between Buddhism and Christianity, but the connection is due to the intervention of spiritual entities rather than to any mundane historical transmission. Jesus is said to have entered the Essene community because he had acquired clairvoyant faculties similar to theirs. This fact came to the attention of some Essenes who lived in Nazareth, who admitted him to their order without requiring that he go through the usual initiatory rituals. Jesus stayed among them



until his twenty-eighth year and was given esoteric knowledge in the form of visions.

→ Edgar Cayce associates the Essenes with Mount Carmel rather than Qumran, and states that they were part of a spiritual lineage established by Elijah. According to his readings, Mary and Joseph had previously come into contact with this group, and the initiations of Jesus were planned beforehand. The principal aim of being initiated among the Essenes was to receive instructions in → astrology, numerology, phrenology and the doctrine of reincarnation. Furthermore, in his past-life readings, Cayce often claimed that his clients had been acquaintances of Jesus and/or members of the Essene community. In time, a whole gallery of characters supposedly involved in this period of Jesus' life emerged from these trance sessions.

In the contemporary period, the writer most heavily reliant on the Essene motif was Edmond Bordeaux Szekely (1905-1979). In numerous books, notably *The Essene Gospel of Peace* (1974/75), Szekely portrayed the Essenes as links in the transmission of the perennial philosophy, but also as the forerunners of such modern preoccupations as holistic health and natural foods. Several organizations formed around the ideas and practices presented in Szekely's books, including the Essene School of Life and the First Christians' Essene Church.

The Essene legend entered the → New Age movement in the 1970s through compilations of Cayce's readings, as well as through channeled texts ascribed to discarnate entities such as Seth and Ramtha. From then on, the Essene motif is freely combined with other Jesus legends prevalent in the New Age milieu, not least his purported travels in Asia. As one example among many of this historical *bricolage*, New Age healer Diane Stein in her book *Essential Reiki* (1995) explains that the magi were in reality Buddhist monks who took Jesus on a tour of Egypt and India. Inspired by what he learned, Jesus became a member of an Essene order. He survived the crucifixion and lived near Srinagar until he died of natural causes at the age of 120 years.

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Arthur Lillie, *Buddhism in Christendom or Jesus, the Essene*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1887 ♦ Rudolf Steiner *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, Dornach: Steiner Verlag, 1910 ♦ idem, *Aus der Akasha-Forschung: Das fünfte Evangelium*, Dornach: Steiner Verlag, 1913 ♦ Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, *The Gospel of the Essenes*, London: Daniel, 1976.

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**Etteilla** (ps. of Jean-Baptiste Alliette),

\* 1.3.1738 Paris ?, † 13.12.1791 Paris ?

According to a long but spurious tradition, later refuted by Decker, Alliette was a barber and wig-maker. The truth of the matter is that, at least until 1768, he was a seed and grain merchant, like all the rest of his family members; and from 1768-1769 he was a print seller. In one of his books (1789) he refers to himself as a 'Professeur d'Algèbre', but this fancy title, although "confirmed" by his burial certificate, probably lacks any professional basis. In all likelihood, Alliette was more of a fortune-teller. In his publications, he freely advertised his rather expensive lessons and consultations in → Tarot, → astrology and healing. As early as 1772, in *Le zodiaque mystérieux* he gave a colorful description of how a spirit had appeared and spoken to him.

Alliette shared the fashion of his day for membership in esoteric societies and study groups. In this connection, he created in 1788 a "Société littéraire des interprètes du livre de Thoth", which aimed at using the seventy-eight Tarot cards as the structure of a universal language. On July 1st 1790 he also opened a "Nouvelle Ecole de Magie" (New School of Magic) in Paris. It seems to have attracted quite a few students. Lessons were offered on the Book of Thot (i.e., the Tarot of Marseille, see below) and many other related subjects. In his

*Cours théorique* published the same year, Alliette gave detailed commentaries on the essentials of the program of the “School”.

At the latest, Alliette’s interest in the Tarot dates from 1770, when his first book appeared: *Etteilla, ou Maniere de se Récréer avec le Jeu de Cartes Nommées Tarots*. Then, in 1783 and 1785, he published a series of four books (“Cahiers”) under that same title. These contained many further developments of the ideas presented in the earlier book, and added fresh perspectives on them. Due to these publications, he stands out as the first author in the history of Tarot literature to have ever presented an esoteric interpretation of the Tarot of Marseille, or at least, such a detailed one. Alliette’s initiative sparked a “tarotic” esoteric current of interest, which has never really diminished until the present time. Many Tarot decks posthumously published under his name are, however, of dubious provenance. In his “Cahiers”, he informs his readers that the cards are not meant as a game, but as a tool for divination and meditation, and that he considers himself a restorer of their original meaning. He claims, for example, that the deck of Marseille (for this is what he means by “the Book of Thot”) had been revealed by priests in ancient Egypt. With regard to this point in particular, it seems that only the Comte de Mellet was earlier in making a similar claim; it can be found in an article by him that was inserted into → Antoine Court de Gébelin’s *Le monde primitif* (vol. XVII, 1781).

But Alliette goes much further than Mellet. In 1783 he assures us that the Book of Thot had been devised by a committee of seventeen magi, presided over by → Hermes Trismegistus himself in the 171st year after the Flood, some 3953 years ago. He was not content just to make this contribution, which strongly influenced the contemporary craze for Egypt [→ Egyptomania]. In *Le zodiaque mystérieux* (1772), and even more so later, in the fourth “Cahier” (1785), he claimed to have discovered strong connections between Tarot and astrology; in fact, this last “Cahier” is devoted to discovering → correspondences between the cards of the Tarot and the stars. He also occasionally drew upon what he knew of Jewish Kabbalah, notably when attempting to relate each trump card to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In 1786 and 1787 he published books dealing with other esoteric matters as well. First, there were two publications devoted to physiognomy; and second, a – better known – book on alchemy, *Les Sept Nuances de l’Oeuvre Philosophique-Hermétique*, in which he presents himself as a disciple of the Comte de → Saint-Germain. Alliette claimed that Saint-Germain, who

was supposed to have died in 1784, was still alive. Alliette also boldly presents a full description of “le Grand Oeuvre” (the alchemical Opus Magnum) and gives impressive descriptions of what he calls the “hautes sciences” (that is to say, the “higher” or “occult” sciences) notably in his book of 1785 published under that title.

In 1787, when the Philalèthes were preparing their Masonic Convention in Paris, they decided to consult Alliette for his knowledge of → magic, despite the fact that he was not a Freemason. Alliette later became the object of some curiosity as a source of knowledge about esoteric literature, and was recognized as such by the fountainhead of the Occultist movement, → Eliphas Lévi, in his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1858). Lévi wrote some critical commentaries on the works of Alliette, to whom he referred as ‘the inspired whigmaker’. Thanks to Lévi we know that certain unpublished manuscripts of Alliette circulated in the first half of the 19th century: ‘The writings of Etteilla’, writes Lévi, ‘have not all been printed, and some manuscripts of this father of modern cartomancers are in the hands of a Paris bookseller who has been good enough to let us examine them. Their most remarkable points are the obstinate perseverance and incontestable good faith of the author, who all his life perceived the grandeur of the occult sciences, but was destined to die at the gate of the sanctuary without ever penetrating behind the veil’.

Outside the circles of esoteric literature, Alliette inspired several authors of fiction. For example, Alexandre Dumas used him as a picturesque, albeit short-lived figure in one of his tales, ‘L’Histoire merveilleuse de don Bernardo de Zuniga’. In a series of short stories by the same author, *Les mille et un fantômes* (1831) Alliette is cast in the role of an “illuminé” who knows “the secret of the elixir of life”, is a friend of the Count of Saint-Germain, and has reached the age of three hundred years at the time of the French Revolution.

The bibliography of Alliette’s works is fraught with technical difficulties. For more details see Decker et al. (infra) ♦ *Etteilla, ou Maniere de se Récréer avec le Jeu de Cartes Nommées Tarots*, Amsterdam and Paris: Lesclapart, 1770 ♦ *Maniere de se Récréer avec le Jeu de Cartes nommées Tarots*, Amsterdam and Paris: Chez l’Auteur, 1783-1785 (= “Cahiers” I, II, III, 1783; IV, 1785) ♦ Repr. of Cahiers I and II in one volume by Paris: Jobert, 1977 ♦ repr. of Cahier IV under the title *Etteilla: L’astrologie du livre de Thot* (Jacques Halbronn, ed.), Paris: Guy Trédaniel, 1993 ♦ *Fragments sur les hautes sciences, suivi d’une note sur les trois sortes de médecines données aux hommes, dont une mal à propos délaissée*, Amsterdam and Paris, 1785 ♦

*Philosophie des Hautes Sciences, ou La Clef Donnée aux Enfants de l'Art de la Science & de la Sagesse . . .*, Amsterdam and Paris: Chez l'Auteur, et Nyon l'aîné, etc., 1785 ♦ *Les Sept Nuances de l'Oeuvre Philosophique-Hermétique, suivies d'un traité sur la perfection des métaux, mis sous l'Avant-Titre L.D.D.P [= le dernier du pauvre]*, Paris: Ségaut, 1786 ♦ *Apperçu [sic] d'un Rigoriste sur la Cartonomanie et sur son Auteur*, Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1786 ♦ *Jeu des Tarots, ou Le Livre de Thot, ouvert à la Manière des Egyptiens, pour servir ici à l'Interprétation de tous les Rêves, Songes, et Visions diurnes et nocturnes*, Memphis = Paris: Veuve Lesclapart, Petit, et Samson, 1788 ♦ *Livre de Thot: Les Sages ont ensemené ce champ des Sciences et des Arts, Pourquoi, Profanes, venez-vous y jeter de l'Ivraie?* Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1789 ♦ *Science: Leçons Théoriques et Pratiques du Livre de Thot*, Amsterdam and Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1787 ♦ *Cours théorique et pratique du livre de Thot, pour entendre avec justesse, l'art, la science et la sagesse de rendre les oracles*, s.l. 1790 ♦ *Dictionnaire synonymique du livre de Thot, ou synonymes des significations primitives tracées sur les feuillets du livre de Thot*, Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1791.

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

**Eugenius Philalethes** → Vaughan, Thomas

**Eugenius Theodidactus** → Heydon, John

**Evola, Giulio Cesare** (Julius or Jules),  
\* 19.5.1898 Rome, † 11.6.1974 Rome

Writer on philosophy, cultural and religious history, esoteric traditions and politics. Many details concerning the circumstances of Evola's life remain uncertain, since he neither discussed his private life nor kept correspondence. Evola had probably sprung from Sicilian landed gentry, was educated as a Roman Catholic, but soon fell under the intel-

lectual sway of Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Carlo Michelstaedter (1887-1910) and Otto Weininger (1880-1903). He served in the First World War as an artillery officer. Following demobilisation, he underwent an existential crisis, compounded by experiments with ether, which led to a transcendent experience of the self. He became acquainted with the Futurists Giovanni Papini (1881-1956), who got Evola interested in Eastern wisdom and Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328) as well as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), who probably introduced Evola to Benito Mussolini (1883-1945). He next turned to Dadaism and became friends with its chief representative Tristan Tzara (ps. Samuel Rosenstock, 1896-1963). Evola's paintings (exhibitions in Rome and Berlin), poetry and theoretical writings established him as a co-founder of Italian Dadaism. Evola broke off his engineering studies shortly before graduation, as he had no wish to become "bourgeois". He never married nor practised a "bourgeois" profession. In 1922 he ended his provocative, artistic activity and developed his own philosophy, which he called "magical idealism" → after Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801). He brought his philosophical works to a conclusion around 1926. From 1924 onwards, he launched into an intensive study of Western esoteric traditions (chiefly → alchemy and → magic) and Eastern → mysticism (especially Taoism and Tantrism) and established close contacts with the independent Theosophical group Ultra in Rome, where he also lectured. In spite of his personal friendships he became very sceptical of Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society] and → Anthroposophy. Thanks to the important Italian esotericist → Arturo Reghini (1878-1946), Evola made his first contact with the idea of an "integral Tradition" (i.e. the idea that all essential religions and cultures stem from a unified primal → Tradition of transcendent origin) in the sense of → René Guénon (1886-1951), with whom Evola began to correspond. In the period 1927-1929 he assumed leadership of the magical initiatory Group of Ur, in which esotericists such as Reghini and Guido de Giorgio (1890-1957) participated, as well as, anonymously, representatives of Italian intellectual life including Emilio Servadio (1904-1995), the father of Italian psychoanalysis, Aniceto del Massa (1898-1976), art critic and writer, and the anthroposophically influenced poets Girolamo Comi (1890-1968) and Arturo Onofri (1885-1928). In the second year of Ur a dispute between Evola and Reghini caused the end of its practical group work, which was intended to influence politics spiritually

by the formation of magical chains and the creation of subtle energies. The reports of the group that remained around Evola were published under the name Krur. During this period Evola took up mountaineering, and became the first person to make certain Alpine ascents.

From 1925 onwards Evola had tried to intervene in the spiritual and political struggles of fascism in order to give it a sacral and imperial orientation. After the Group of Ur had dissolved, Evola immediately began to publish an intellectual and political periodical *La Torre*, which was discontinued by the order of Mussolini after ten issues, because Evola's spiritual imperialism was too intransigent. At this time Evola even had to protect himself against fascist hard-liners. His polemic *Imperialismo pagano* (1928) unleashed violent controversy in both fascist and the highest ecclesiastical circles. Around this time Evola became acquainted with the philosophers Benedetto Croce (1886-1952) and Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944), with whom he collaborated on the *Encyclopedia Italiana*. During the 1930s Evola adapted the Integral Tradition of Guénon in his own warrior fashion and made a profound study of alchemy, contemporary esoteric groups and the → Grail myth. In these years he undertook Traditionalist critiques of history and culture and wrote several of his most important books. He also traveled widely through Europe, to meet representatives of political currents corresponding to his own sacral, holistic, anti-liberal and anti-democratic ideas; these contacts include Edgar Julius Jung (1894-1934), the conservative revolutionary murdered by the National Socialists, Karl Anton Prince Rohan (1898-1975), the Roman Catholic monarchist founder of the *Europäische Revue*, and Corneliu Codreanu (1899-1938), founder of the Iron Guard in Romania. During a visit to Romania Evola met Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), the later historian of religion, who had adopted some of Evola's ideas and would remain in touch with him. He also had meetings with the constitutional lawyer Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) and the poet Gottfried Benn (1886-1956). At the same time Evola wrote widely for the contemporary press.

Evola had an ambivalent attitude to Fascism: on the one hand he hoped it would lead Italy back towards the pagan and sacral values of the Roman empire, but on the other hand he found it devoid of any transcendent foundation. With his spiritual ideas rejected by the Fascist bureaucracy, he turned to National Socialism, especially the SS, which he initially regarded as a military spiritual order. An acquaintance with Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) and

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945) may have taken place but is not proven. By 1938, however, an official SS report dismissed Evola as a "reactionary Roman and fantasist", and recommended that his further activities be kept under observation. His efforts to bring the "two eagles" (Italy and Germany) closer together were frustrated by opposition in both countries. From the mid-1930s Evola made an intensive study of racial questions, in the hope of gaining official recognition and influence, as Mussolini had spoken positively about Evola's thesis of "spiritual" racism. Mussolini was interested in developing a counter-balance to the "materialistic biological" racism of National Socialism, but this came to naught as both Italians and Germans opposed it. During the Second World War, Evola studied Buddhism. In 1943 he was present in Rastenburg as multilingual confidant at the meeting of Mussolini and Hitler in the latter's headquarters, where a future German-backed government in Italy was discussed. Following the American invasion of Rome in 1944, Evola fled to Vienna, where he is said to have had an official assignment writing the history of secret societies. In 1945 he suffered a severe spinal injury during a Russian bombardment of Vienna, which left him paralysed in the legs for the rest of his life.

After three years in hospitals and sanatoriums, in 1948 Evola returned to Rome, where he immediately resumed writing. He soon became the intellectual focus of a small troop of mostly young disciples who sought to emulate his spiritual and political outlook. In April 1951 Evola was arrested, accused of being the "intellectual instigator" of secret neo-fascist terrorist groups and of "glorifying fascism". Complete acquittal followed after six months' investigative custody. Since the practical realisation of his ideas seemed impossible in the absence of party support, Evola's political orientation now changed in the direction of an "apoliteia", an attitude of disengagement from current politics. Studies of the links between sex and esotericism led to another of his principal works. Around the same time he produced countless periodical essays and numerous translations from the work of Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), Arthur Avalon (1865-1936), Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1877-1966), → Karlfried Graf Dürckheim (1896-1988), Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), Otto Weininger and Ernst Jünger (1895-1998). Together with his translations of Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815-1887), → Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932) and René Guénon during the 1930s and 1940s, these writings made Evola an important transmitter of wider European



spirituality to Italy. In 1974 he died, propping himself up beside the window of his apartment in order to meet death upright, like his heroes. In accordance with his will, he was cremated. He expressly forbade a Roman Catholic funeral, and his ashes were lowered into a crevasse on Monte Rosa.

All Evola's creative work is characterised by his desire to surpass the merely mortal aspects of existence and his radical orientation towards transcendent principles, which he perceived as immanent at the same time. As early as his Dadaist phase he regarded art as 'a disinterested creation, which comes from the individual's higher consciousness'. He was unsatisfied by purely academic philosophy and sought a breakthrough to the completely different level of reality to which his own transcendent experience of the self had given him access. Based on the philosophy of German Idealism, chiefly represented by → Schelling (1775-1854) and Fichte (1762-1814), supplemented by Max Stirner's (1806-1856) solipsistic notion of the Ego, and by the ideas of French Personalism, as well as Nietzsche and Weininger, Evola arrived at the demand of an "absolute I", which – freed of any intellectual or material restriction – sees freedom, power and knowledge as an indivisible whole, and seeks to realise it. Teachings from Taoism, Hinduism, Tantrism, alchemy, magic, and Meister Eckhart are woven into this "magical idealism". Evola's "absolute I" is related to the Hindu *atman* (= *brahman*), and his notion of power corresponds to the *maya* of Tantrism, which subsumes both illusion and creative magic, as well as to the emptiness of the *Tao Te Ching*. The individual can find his only solid basis and his sole point of certainty in the transcendental I, the personality's deepest ground of being. However, philosophy should not remain an end in itself but must surpass itself and find its consummation in absolute action leading to higher levels. Evola's philosophy thus represents a propaedeutic for the attainment of transcendent initiatory realms. Thus it was only logical that his so-called philosophical phase should be followed by a magical phase.

From Evola's perspective magic has nothing to do with sorcery for gain or harm. He is concerned with a complete self-transformation and integration into transcendent realms, and with the higher dignity and freedom that result from it. This is supposed to happen by way of experiments 'according to those very principles of open-mindedness, scepticism and unflinching exploration which characterise the exact sciences'. Thus Evola prefers self-experiment and knowledge to faith, and represents a thoroughly modernist and post-Enlighten-

ment form of magic. Later in his life Evola speaks of a 'divine technology, traditional in the higher sense' and concludes with → Roger Bacon's definition of magic as "practical metaphysics". The writings of the "magical" Group of Ur therefore contain original texts from Tantrism, Buddhism, Taoism, ancient theurgy and especially alchemy, all of which in Evola's view are oriented towards transcendent self-realisation. Evola uses the concept of initiation to describe the quest and the conscious attainment of transcendent realms. This attainment is also connected with achieving continuous consciousness during sleep, and even beyond physical death. Evola believes neither in → reincarnation nor in the natural immortality of the human soul. Rather man must build up a "diamond body" around an absolutely stable centre of consciousness, which is capable of surviving the trauma of physical death and will replace the mortal body as a new vehicle in more subtle realms of existence.

Evola's emphasis on man's potential self-transformation through asceticism and discipline also explains why he recognized the same purpose in magic and alchemy. Alchemy as the royal art is not just a specialised knowledge concerning the transformation of metals, but a comprehensive physical and metaphysical system embracing cosmology and sacred anthropology, and aims at the spiritual transformation of men *and* metals. Evola championed a spiritual conception of alchemy before → C.G. Jung (1875-1961) and Mircea Eliade, who were both influenced by his view. Accordingly, he sees in the symbolic language of alchemy a universal code for all mysteriosophical fields: hence his equation of alchemy with Hermeticism in toto which was criticised by Guénon, who thought Evola likened alchemy too much to magic. Evola identified himself with the warrior *kshatriya* caste and similarly viewed the "Traditional sciences" in an activist and combative light. He thus differed markedly from Guénon, who emphasised the traditional primacy of the contemplative, priestly *brahmin* caste. Hence Evola's emphasis on the dynamic, magical and mutable aspects of the world, which also explains his controversial involvement in practical politics; and hence also his preference for activist Tantrism, whereas Guénon devoted himself to philosophical Vedanta. It is therefore an oversimplification to regard Evola merely as the Italian representative of Guénon. However, in common with Guénon, Evola rejected the Theosophy of → Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), the Anthroposophy of → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), → spiritualism, and other contemporary neo-spiritualist groups. He was also definitely



hostile towards the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and even more so towards Jung. In contrast to Guénon, Evola made positive statements on → Giuliano Kremmerz (1861-1930) and his *Fratellanza Terapeutica Magica di Miriam*, of which he was not a member, but whose doctrines influenced him. Likewise he was positive about the magical doctrine of → Aleister Crowley, with whom he was only superficially acquainted, and about → George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877-1949). Nor does Evola's opinion of Christianity and → Freemasonry accord with that of Guénon, who recognised Traditionalist survivals in both institutions, which he therefore believed could lead to at least a virtual initiation. With the possible exception of fraternities completely hidden from us, Evola recognised no initiatory groups in modern times. Christianity, on the other hand he saw as a primary cause of spiritual decline in the West, because it preaches humility and submission rather than the self-determination of man. To Freemasonry he attributed an initiatory character only in its operative period, before the foundation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. Freemasonry had thenceforth turned into a speculative, purely rational association, devoted to the politics of the Enlightenment and thus acting in the sense of what Guénon referred to as "counter-initiation". Here one may detect the influence of Catholic world-conspiracy theorists extending from Louis de Bonald (1754-1840) and Leon de Poncins (1895-1975) to Evola's friend Giovanni Preziosi (1881-1945). In his own theory of world-conspiracy, probably derived originally from Guénon, Evola did not so much accuse specific human groups (Freemasons or Jews) of seeking to conquer the world. Rather he regarded them as the tools of extra-human spiritual powers.

In Grail mythology Evola sees a hidden initiatory mystery, and the Grail kingdom he regards as the specifically Western medieval manifestation of the Traditionalist idea of a supreme world centre under the "royal-spiritual" authority of a "world ruler". The quest for the Grail therefore symbolises "the desire to establish contact with this mysterious centre". In Evola's view, the Grail is a Nordic mystery on account of its links with Germanic and Celtic traditions as well as in its Hyperborean symbolism, and it also relates to the Ghibelline imperial tradition as opposed to papal supremacy.

In his works on culture and history, Evola uses the so-called "Traditional method". It accords greater importance to myths and symbols than to actual historical facts and highlights the intersection between sacred metahistory and profane

history. Using Graeco-Roman and Vedic sources, Evola speaks of a Hyperborean centre located in the prehistoric Arctic where Nordic god-men ruled in a Golden Age. Due to cosmic catastrophes, they had to leave their homeland, as a result of which their heaven-oriented, solar and heroic-masculine world-view came to be over most of the world. A culture characterised by hierarchy, spiritual regality, ritual and initiation represented the primal Tradition which a man living by the Tradition should hope eventually to reinstate. On the opposing side stood the earth-oriented, lunar and matriarchal culture of the Southern peoples (here the influence of Bachofen is obvious), which led to wars but also to interbreeding with the Northern peoples. Thus the solar element in the West increasingly lost its vitality during a cyclical history of decline. A final efflorescence was felt in medieval Catholicism, as this was less Christian than inclined to sacral imperialism. The Renaissance and, above all, the French Revolution represented further stations of decline. Modernity would finally perish in a state of collectivism, lawlessness and materialism, as already prophesied in Indian religious texts (*Vishnu-purana*). World history is therefore not an evolution but a downward devolution ending with the present iron (dark) age (*kali-yuga*). An authentic restoration of the Tradition will only be possible after the complete collapse of the modern world, because there can be no gradual transition between Traditional culture and modernity: we are dealing with two totally separated, *entirely different* concepts of time, values, and the sacred.

Evola made extensive studies of wisdom teachings from the East. He became acquainted with Tantrism, which is described by him as the only remaining regular path to transcendence in the *kali-yuga*, through the writings of Arthur Avalon (ps. John Woodroffe; 1865-1936), with whom he corresponded. Evola was particularly impressed by the active side of Tantrism as well as the practices of the left-hand path, which though highly sacred run contrary to customary moral and religious notions. That in Tantrism the divine female Shakti symbolises motion, energy and power, in contrast to the motionless male Shiva, influenced Evola's own ideas of "sacred eros" to a high degree. The philosophy of Taoism was exemplary for the life-style of a sage in Evola's view, and "inactive action" (*wei-wu-wei*) was the best possible description of effective magic for him. In 1923, and again in 1959, Evola published two completely different translations of the *Tao Te Ching*, with commentaries by himself. He was also profoundly interested in the internal alchemy (*nei-tan*) of Taoism.

In Buddhism, Evola concentrated on the original teaching of Prince Siddhartha Gautama (c. 560–c. 480 B.C.) as well as on Zen. In contrast to the contemporary focus on pacifism and neighbourly love, Evola emphasised the warrior-like and aristocratic nature of early Buddhism pointing out that Gautama was not a brahmin but a member of the warrior caste (*kshatriya*). He also stressed the initiatory character of Buddhist asceticism, which as a “dry path” of non-identification and letting-go aims at the extinction of all “thirst” and the “great liberation” in the “void” (*sunyata*). Evola also published numerous essays in the periodical *East and West* edited by the Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984), with whom he was acquainted for many years.

Evola regarded sex as virtually the only practical possibility open to contemporary man to experience something of the higher transcendental world. Only in the sexual act does man escape his all-encompassing profane ego and open himself to higher spheres. For Evola, male (= the unmoved spiritual mover) and female (= the malleable matrix) are transcendent categories, and the biological differences between man and woman are merely a reflection of these. Evola also refers to the Platonic myth of the androgyne whose division led to the two sexes which strive to regain their original unity. Sexuality offers the possibility of a breakthrough to transcendence through certain practices, in which man has to combine his inner masculinity with his inner femininity. The practices of kundalini yoga, Taoism, the → “fedeli d’amore” (Liesges of Love) as well as Arabic and European secret orders show the way in this direction.

Evola’s political philosophy is based on hierarchical thinking and expressed in the “organic state”. Its precondition is a centre founded on purely transcendental principles and permeating all areas of public life – without the need for violence, as in totalitarianism – by virtue of its superior spiritual power. The principal duty of the state is to lead its citizens towards transcendence, as in Plato. At the same time, Evola opposes the concept of nations and advocates a spiritual-monarchic imperial theory. Evola’s notions of race derive from a tripartite division. From above to below he distinguishes between a “race of the spirit” (the various attitudes to sacral principles from fearful submission to an upright and self-relying relationship), a “race of the soul” (the various types of character from emotional to detached) and a “race of the body” (which covers the usual physical definition). As he dismissed the physical racial characteristics as the least important, he found himself in opposi-

tion to other racial theorists and increasingly lost influence among them.

Evola regarded Jewry primarily as a symbol of the dominance of materialism and economics in modernity. His statements range from polemical attacks and conspiracy theories to his warning ‘not to make the Jews a kind of scapegoat for everything that Gentiles were really responsible for’, (‘Inquadramento del problema ebraico’ in *Bibliografia Fascista*, XIV, No. 8/9, 1939, 717–728). One notes a certain tendency towards vulgarisation of these notions in his journalistic writings, as compared to his books. Due to his involvement with Fascism (Evola was never a party member, however), National Socialism and racism, Evola has been little read since the Second World War, except by keen opponents or supporters. Only since the early 1990s has he become more widely discussed as an artist and has he become the subject of numerous university dissertations. His unpromising ideas have also been taken up by the underground youth music scene. Thus a compact disk was produced to honour Evola’s centenary. Musical bands like Blood Axis, Alraune, Camerata Mediolanense, Allerseen and Ain Soph composed and played themes inspired by Evola’s writings. Practically all of his twenty full-length books, approximately 300 longer essays, and much of his collected journalism, numbering more than 1000 articles and countless reviews in newspapers and magazines, are in print. A growing number of translations has made Evola known outside of Italy as well – chiefly in France, but also, interestingly, throughout Eastern Europe. A foundation dedicated to his work in Rome is engaged in publishing definitive editions of his major writings, and in collecting and editing his scattered essays and biographical material.

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HANS THOMAS HAKL

**Faber Stapulensis, Jacobus** → Lefèvre d'Étapes, Jacques

**Fabre d'Olivet, Antoine**, \* 8.12.1767 Ganges, † 27.3.1825 Paris

The immensely curious and massively erudite self-proclaimed Neo-Pythagorean Fabre d'Olivet was born to a wealthy Protestant family. As a young man, he came under the influence of Delisle de Sales, an Enlightenment rationalist with a penchant for historical speculation. Under Delisle's influence, Fabre d'Olivet wrote *Lettres à Sophie sur l'histoire* (1801), a resume of ancient and modern cosmogonic systems together with a history of civilizations. Fabre d'Olivet's other notable pre-theosophical work is *Le Troubadour: Poésies occitaniques du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (2 vols., 1803-1804). This compound of poetry, a study, a dissertation on the Occitan language, and a vocabulary was intended to revive interest in the poetry of the Troubadours and to defend the Occitan language. A mystification and celebration rather than scientific linguistics or philology, *Le Troubadour* closely resembles Macpherson's *Ossian*.

Fabre d'Olivet underwent a religious and vocational crisis between 1800 and 1805. He emerged as a theosopher. The key to his conversion seems to have been his discovery, the details of which are

unknown, of a Unity that is the source and end of all diversity. → Tradition, or a primitive revelation granted to humanity by Providence, bears witness to this Unity. The existence of this Tradition, in turn, is demonstrated by the agreement of all cosmogonies. The homeland of the ancient wisdom was Egypt, from where it was transmitted to other peoples through initiation, most notably by → Moses, Pythagoras, and Orpheus.

Fabre d'Olivet's Illuminism, set out in a series of works published between 1813 and 1824, belongs to the esoteric tradition of thought that in its modern western form derives above all from → Jakob Boehme (1575-1624). He was an autodidact who acknowledged no master and belonged to no sect. Nevertheless, even if he never met → Saint-Martin, Fabre d'Olivet was in constant contact with his friends and disciples from 1800 onwards. Similarly, though he was never initiated into the Order of → Elus-Coëns, Fabre d'Olivet was thoroughly acquainted with the theurgic activities of → Martinès de Pasqually and → J.B. Willermoz. His principal works are *Les Vers dorés de Pythagore* (1813), *La Langue hébraïque restituée* (1810, published in 1816/1817), *Caïn: Mystère dramatique de Lord Byron* (1823), and *Histoire philosophique du genre humain* (1824; first published in 1822 as *De l'Etat social de l'homme*).

*Vers dorés* presents Fabre d'Olivet's theosophical views in the form of a commentary on his own translation of Pythagoras' *Golden Verses*. It is prefaced by a lengthy discourse, 'Sur l'essence et la forme de la poésie'. Pythagoras, for Fabre d'Olivet, is only a name for Tradition. Since all true knowledge derives from the primitive revelation, the universal truths may be found in all cosmologies and philosophies that have not separated themselves from Tradition. Fabre d'Olivet demonstrates the unity of the sacred tradition by correlating passages from Pythagoras with passages from other Classical writers, from Indian, Chinese, and Persian texts, and from modern philosophers. So, while it is true that → neopaganism and even Pythagoreanism itself were fashionable during the Empire, Fabre d'Olivet's "Pythagoreanism" is not a rejection of biblical religion but symbolic of the theosophical truths contained in the universal primitive revelation. And since Moses received the same Egyptian initiation as Pythagoras, the Pentateuch, correctly interpreted, contains the same doctrines as the *Vers dorés*, as Fabre d'Olivet set out to demonstrate in *La Langue hébraïque restituée*.

*La Langue hébraïque restituée* is Fabre d'Olivet's free translation and commentary on the first five books of the Bible. He believed that Hebrew, as one

of the three primordial idioms of the language revealed directly to humanity by God, was a hieroglyphic language that veiled deep esoteric truths. The books of Moses, particularly Genesis, preserve this ancient wisdom, but it has been inaccessible until now because knowledge of the true esoteric meaning of Hebrew degenerated soon after Moses' death and has been lost since the Babylonian Captivity, except among the → Essenes. The Essenes, however, whom Fabre d'Olivet depicts as a small group of Alexandrian sages, were bound by oath to keep the ancient doctrines secret. When the Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt requested a translation of the Pentateuch for the great Library at Alexandria, the Essenes faced a dilemma: they did not want to flout the authority of the civil power, but religious law forbade communication of the divine mysteries. Their solution was to distinguish between the literal and the esoteric senses of the text. Thus they produced a literal translation, the Septuagint, in which the incommunicable mysteries remained veiled. Present-day versions of the Pentateuch are deficient and misleading because they reproduce only the literal sense of the ancient text. In *La Langue hébraïque restituée*, Fabre d'Olivet announced that he had rediscovered the esoteric meaning of Hebrew and reestablished the primitive theosophical cosmogony of Moses.

In 1811 Fabre d'Olivet claimed, in *Notions sur le Sens de l'Ouïe*, to have healed a deaf-mute named Rodolphe Grivel through the application of principles established in the as-yet unpublished *La Langue hébraïque restituée*. The Mosaic cosmogony, he asserted, contains the principles of all sciences, ancient and modern. The healing of Grivel vindicates the accuracy of his reconstruction of the primitive revelation. According to Léon Celler's brilliant analysis, Fabre d'Olivet considered hearing, like the exercise of any sense, to be a manifestation of the volitive faculty. It follows that deafness may be cured by awakening the volitive faculty of the deaf person. Genesis 2:21 recounts that Eve was created from Adam's rib while Adam was in a deep sleep. In his commentary in *La Langue hébraïque* Fabre d'Olivet identifies "deep sleep" with magnetic sleep or somnambulism. Eve, in Fabre d'Olivet's system, corresponds to the volitive faculty. The Genesis passage therefore tells us that the volitive faculty is awakened through magnetized sleep. Fabre d'Olivet claimed to have healed Grivel's deafness by plunging the subject into magnetized sleep (Fabre d'Olivet was a practising magnetizer; he protested against the name → *animal* magnetism because it degraded what he considered to be a high spiritual phenomenon) and



through the action of his own will awakened in the subject the faculty of hearing.

*De l'Etat social de l'homme*, reflecting in part the sense of historical evolution that Fabre d'Olivet acquired during the Bourbon Restoration, is an exposition of the 12,000-year history of the human race from earliest times to Bonaparte. Inasmuch as it is a philosophical history built on the cosmological principles set out in his earlier books, Fabre d'Olivet follows his Illuminist (→ Illuminism) predecessors in predicating history on cosmogony. He republished it two years later in the vain hope that the more fashionable title, *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, would increase its sales. *Histoire philosophique* is prefaced by a lengthy 'Dissertation Introductive', which summarizes (and in places revises) the metaphysical foundation established in the earlier works on which the philosophical history is built. In it Fabre d'Olivet declares that conventional history is false because it has been written without knowledge of the true principles that govern the cosmos and history. If we are to understand the successive development of humanity, its moral faculties and their action, we must first grasp the metaphysical facts of the spiritual nature of humanity and its place in the hierarchy of the universe.

The cosmogonic drama of *Cain* counters Byron's "blasphemous" version of the Genesis story by translating it together with a corrective commentary drawn from Fabre d'Olivet's own speculations on the meaning of Genesis in *La Langue hébraïque restituée*.

Fabre d'Olivet's epistemology takes up and purports to refute Kant's epistemological pessimism. Fabre d'Olivet's argument is based on a distinction between rationality and reason. Rationality, he says in *Vers dorés de Pythagore*, is a secondary faculty that corresponds to soul, the middle term of the triple nature of humanity as body, soul, and spirit; reason, or intellectuality, is a principal faculty that corresponds to spirit, the highest term of our triple nature. Fabre d'Olivet argues that Kant misled himself because, confusing rationality with intellectuality, he failed to understand the spiritual nature of reason. The result of Kant's error is a philosophy that first strips humanity of its spiritual faculties, then attempts to grasp spiritual truths with a faculty incommensurate with them, and finally, the attempt having necessarily failed, declares the spiritual truths to be unknowable. Fabre d'Olivet overcomes Kant's epistemological pessimism by redefining reason as an intuitive faculty capable of grasping the ontological Absolute.

Fabre d'Olivet's Illuminist drama is played out in

a Boehmenist cosmos in which divine emanation bathes the universe in divine forces and humanity, created as primordial Adam, is a spiritual being of great power. Fabre d'Olivet identifies unfallen humanity with the Will, which, along with Providence and Destiny, is one of the three powers, or cosmogonic principles, of the universe. The Fall has obscured, but not effaced, this glorious identity. Fabre d'Olivet refers to humanity as the *règne hominal*; that is, the fourth kingdom, following the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Nevertheless, he insists that the human essence is distinct from lower essences and that there is no continuity between the natural world and humanity. The *règne hominal*, in fact, is Fabre d'Olivet's name for the Universal Adam of the Illuminist tradition. Fallen humanity displays a triple nature, at once body, soul, and spirit, and lives a triple life, instinctive, passionate [*animique*], and intellectual (i.e., spiritual). These three lives, when they are fully developed, intermingle and are confounded into a fourth, or volitive, life. Through the exercise of the volitive life, which is proper to it, humanity gradually reintegrates primordial Adam and raises itself to the reattainment of its cosmogonic status. Humanity's (future) achievement of this status is the prerequisite for the reestablishment of harmony among the three cosmogonic principles of Providence, Will, and Destiny. The reestablishment of cosmogonic harmony, in turn, will create, replicating on the macrocosmic level the fourth life of humanity, a fourth power that is the very image or mirror of divinity and the realization of Fabre d'Olivet's version of Illuminist reintegration.

In his commentary in *Cain*, Fabre d'Olivet interprets the Genesis narratives concerning the three sons of Adam and Eve as allegories of his cosmogonic principles. All future humanity was contained in prelapsarian Adam, in whose nature Will and Providence co-existed in perfect harmony. The Fall shattered the harmony within Adam's nature, precipitating both descent into the material universe of time and space and dispersal of the primordial Adam into the successive generations and myriad individuals of the human race. Adam's posterity divided his integrated nature: Cain embodied the faculty of Will and Abel that of Providence. This division was to be perpetuated in their descendants, creating in effect two races: *hommes volatifs*, who rely on their own powers, and *hommes providentiels*, who trust in God's love for humanity. Adam's sons and their respective descendants were intended to co-operate in the redemption of the human race. The free submission of human will to Providence would have quickly reintegrated pri-



mordial Adam, but Lucifer intervened. Knowing that he would not be able to dominate the providential race, Lucifer (actually a hypostatization of Will, and thus identical to Cain) persuaded Cain to kill his brother. Henceforth, Providence, annihilated by Will, no longer acts directly in the world. After the murder of Abel, Adam and Eve had another son, Seth. Seth, however, embodied, not Providence, but Fabre d'Olivet's third cosmogonic principle, Destiny, or blind fate. Human history is henceforth a struggle between *hommes volatifs*, the descendants of Cain who champion anarchic liberty, and *hommes fatidiques*, the descendants of Seth who preach submission to necessity. Caught in this dismal struggle, humanity calls out to Providence for assistance, but in vain since, save for rare exceptions like Orpheus, Moses, and Buddha, *hommes providentiels* no longer walk the earth. Nevertheless, though Providence no longer intervenes directly in human affairs, it still operates indirectly. Like Hegel's "cunning of reason", Fabre d'Olivet's Providence uses wilful human intentions to effect its own end of the redemption of humanity in the reintegration of Adam. Not only is God not responsible for evil in the world, but Providence ensures that, despite its best efforts to the contrary, humanity will be redeemed in the end. This is Fabre d'Olivet's version of theodicy, and indicates the central place the defense of Providence holds in his theosophical oeuvre.

Humanity may be a power in the cosmos, but since the Fall it is a power only in germ. Through the interaction of humanity with Fabre d'Olivet's other two cosmogonic powers, Providence and Destiny, humanity must develop its potential as Will. The essences of all species, including humanity's ontologically unique essence, were placed in them by God at the creation. Because the will of a being corresponds to its essence, individuals and species alike develop – that is, progressively realize the external characteristics appropriate to their preexistent essences – by means of the repeated exercise of the will. Fabre d'Olivet's fundamental image of development is the growth of a plant as the unfolding of what is contained in its seed (this is a variant of preformationism in which the voluntarism of Boehmenist Illuminism has been added to the organic language of biological preformationism). Fabre d'Olivet finds authority for this image in the Hebrew Bible (albeit in the theosophic version of Moses' teaching he himself "restored" in *La Langue hébraïque restituée*). The first word of Genesis, *bereshith*, according to Fabre d'Olivet, ought not be translated "in the beginning" but rather "*in principio*", "in principle", "in potential".

Creation signifies not the act of bringing something into being out of nothing but a process of bringing something from potential being into actual being.

History, for Fabre d'Olivet, is the progressive unfolding of what is already in humanity as its essence. The result is a teleological philosophy of history, in which the consequences of humanity's constitutive metaphysical principles are played out in time and space. In the 'Discours sur l'Essence et la Forme de la Poésie', Fabre d'Olivet addresses the relationship between the spiritual process of reintegration and the succession of historical events in his distinction between allegorical history and positive history. Positive history chronicles events that happened but that have no spiritual significance, whereas allegorical history arranges events that may never have happened into a dramatization of the spiritual destiny of humanity. Allegorical history alone, Fabre d'Olivet declares, is worthy of study. Fabre d'Olivet insists that history is meaningful only when it is explicitly subordinated to metaphysics; to, that is, the knowledge of its origin, end, and purpose.

As sketched in *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, the development of humanity was at first subject to Destiny, but the divine germ humanity carries within itself – a spark of the divine will – develops, by reacting against Destiny itself, into an opposing volitional force whose essence is liberty. This is not a smooth or uniform process. Ever since the murder of Abel, history has been an incessant struggle between the human Will and Destiny. When the human Will sides with or yields to Destiny, centuries of decadence and oppression result. Conversely, the Will allied to Providence leads humanity toward perfection. For Fabre d'Olivet, theocracy is the political correlate of the principle of unity and thus the balance among the principles that Fabre d'Olivet desires can be attained only under theocratic government. *Histoire philosophique* concludes with a call for France, Europe, and ultimately the whole world, to form a single theocratic empire under the final authority of a Supreme Pontiff, thereby uniting at last the three cosmogonic principles in the ideal social structure. Cosmically speaking, the Will of humanity functions as a mediating power, entering elementary nature in order to bring harmony there and reuniting Destiny and Providence. The full development of the volitional germ constitutes the restored Will of the Universal Man, and thus the restoration of the *règne hominal* to its original and proper dignity as a cosmogonic principle. Through the action of human volition the *règne hominal* is reintegrated and the great ternary of Providence, Will, and

Destiny harmonized into the fourth principle that is the mirror of divinity.

Fabre d'Olivet's christology distinguishes him from most other Illuminists. He reduces Christianity to merely one manifestation of primitive revelation. And while he calls Jesus a divine man, he awards this title to all *hommes providentiels* (including Krishna, Odin, and Apollonius of Tyana). What makes Jesus great, in Fabre d'Olivet's opinion, is that he showed by his death and resurrection what the human will is capable of when it knows itself to be in conformity with the will of Providence. Similarly, all religions are true, and agree with each other, to the extent that they derive from the primitive revelation. Fabre d'Olivet is willing to concede that Christianity has changed the world on the moral or historical plane, but insists that Christianity has brought nothing new on the religious plane. Jesus, in Fabre d'Olivet's theosophy, ceases to be the unique and necessary Redeemer; Christ as saviour is replaced by the development of humanity into the cosmogonic *règne hominal* through the exercise of its will.

Fabre d'Olivet gathered around himself a group of disciples whom in 1824 he organized into a sect, *Théodoxie universelle*, whose ritual and theology he himself, as supreme Pontiff, provided. Fabre d'Olivet cast his new cult in the form of a masonic lodge except that he replaced the traditional masonic and architectural symbolism and paraphernalia with substitutes derived from agriculture (once again, the fundamental analogy between the soul and a seed). Fabre d'Olivet outlined the teachings of his sect in a work titled *La Vraie Maçonnerie et la Céleste Culture*, which remained unpublished until edited by Léon Cellier in 1953.

Fabre d'Olivet's posthumous reputation exceeded anything he had enjoyed during his lifetime. He was a figure of authority on a wide range of subjects for Illuminists of the 1830s and 1840s. Beyond Illuminism proper, he was an important influence on religio-social theorists of the Romantic period [→ Romanticism], most notably → P.S. Ballanche and P. Leroux. His fame reached its peak during the Symbolist period, when → Saint-Yves Alveydre offered an interpretation of him as a modern pagan that was taken up by the Symbolist poets, though it is impossible to point to a direct, decisive influence on any major poet.

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ARTHUR MCCALLA

### Fabré-Palaprat, Bernard-Raymond, \* 1773 Cordes (Tarn), † 18.2.1838 Pau (Southern France)

Bernard-Raymond Fabré-Palaprat was the founder of modern neo-Templarism [→ Neo-Templar Traditions]. Although he styled himself a "medical doctor", he was actually educated in a Catholic seminary but was unable to complete his training there because of the French Revolution. He later worked as a pedicure performing small surgical operations (an activity not requiring a formal medical education at that time).

After the Revolution, Fabré-Palaprat joined Paris → Freemasonry in the lodge of the Knights of the Cross. In 1804, he and some of his Masonic companions declared that they had discovered, quite by chance and hidden in furniture which had belonged to Duke Louis-Hercule-Timoléon de Cossé-Brissac, who had been killed during the Revolutionary Terror of 1792, a number of documents "proving" the century-old theory, or legend, of a secret prosecution of the Order of the Knights

Templar (formally suppressed in 1307). The theory had many proponents in Masonic circles, but Fabré-Palaprat claimed not only to have found solid evidence for it, but also documents left by the last Grand Master in an uninterrupted line of succession dating back to the Middle Ages (namely, Cossé-Brissac himself), authorizing certain Masonic bodies to elect a new Grand Master after his death. Fabré-Palaprat concluded that the Knights of the Cross lodge held sufficient authority to appoint the Templar Grand Master, and had himself elected to the position in 1805.

Restoring the Order of the Temple was somewhat attuned to the imperial rhetoric of the time, and Napoleon I (1769-1821) himself even agreed to preside at one of its solemn ceremonies in 1808. Fabré-Palaprat's claims went beyond establishing yet another order of chivalry, however. Firstly, he proclaimed that modern Freemasonry had been founded by Templars, and that the Grand Master of the renewed Order of the Temple had authority over all the Masonic lodges throughout the world.

In 1812, Fabré-Palaprat went still further, and claimed to have purchased from a Paris *bouquiniste* an original version of the Gospel of St. John entitled *Evangelicon*, together with an old commentary known as *Leviticon* or *Levitikon*. Historians today believe that these works, rather than forgeries authored by Fabré-Palaprat himself, were actually 17th or 18th century creations. Fabré-Palaprat, however, regarded them as ancient scriptures revealing the very truth about Christianity. They explained that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, but a genial esoteric master educated in Alexandria. Before dying, according to the *Leviticon*, Jesus established an "Order of the East", with secret but unquestionable authority over the Church of the West. The first Grand Master of the Order of the East was John the Beloved; in the Middle Ages the Order ceased to exist under that name and became instead the Order of the Temple.

The implication was that Fabré-Palaprat, being the current Grand Master of the Order of the Temple, was both St. John's successor and head of the Order of the East, with full apostolic authority over the whole of Christianity. In 1812, Fabré-Palaprat was thus able to establish what was in fact a new religion, the so-called "Johannite Church", and to proclaim himself Sovereign Pontiff of that "John's Church", a body invested with full authority over "Peter's Church" (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church). Most neo-Templars regarded themselves as good Roman Catholics, and had no intention whatsoever of following Fabré-Palaprat into the Johannite Church. A schism followed in Fabré-

Palaprat's Order of the Temple between the "Johannite" (also called "Palapratian") and the "Catholic" factions. Both continued as separate entities, with Fabré-Palaprat gathering his followers from among the most anticlerical of the French Freemasons of his time.

In 1831, Fabré-Palaprat met the defrocked priest Ferdinand-François Châtel (1795-1857), who had founded an anticlerical and overtly socialist "French Catholic Church" independent of Rome. Châtel joined Fabré-Palaprat's "Johannite" wing of the neo-Templar order and was consecrated by Fabré-Palaprat (on the basis of the authority he claimed to have as successor of St. John) as "Bishop" and "Primate of France" in the Johannite Church. Châtel was able to recruit other politically radical ex-priests, but his anti-Catholic excesses alienated even more neo-Templars, who left Fabré-Palaprat, outraged also by a "Johannite Mass" which Fabré-Palaprat (who had never been ordained a priest) publicly celebrated in 1834. The Johannite Church ultimately collapsed; Châtel continued to operate a "Radical French Church" for some years after that, but eventually abandoned all such projects altogether, and in his later years simply worked in a Paris drugstore. Fabré-Palaprat left Paris due to ill health in 1837 and died in Southern France in 1838.

After Fabré-Palaprat's death, the "Palapratian" and the "Catholic" wings of the neo-Templar order tried to merge by electing the British Admiral William Sidney-Smith (1764-1840), whom Fabré-Palaprat had appointed as Grand Prior for England in 1813, as Grand Master recognized by both branches. The merger proved short-lived, however, and the "Palapratian" (Masonic and anticlerical) and the "Catholic" branch of Fabré-Palaprat's Order of the Temple went their separate ways. Eventually, a "Catholic" wing in continuity with Fabré-Palaprat's initiative ceased to exist, and the "Palapratian" wing separated into several dozens of conflicting Orders and Priors.

Today, "Catholic" neo-Templar orders have again been established (some of them recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, which does not regard them as being in continuity with the Medieval Knights Templars, however, but as simple private associations), whilst more than a hundred "Palapratian" neo-Templar obediences, divided by a century-old history of schisms and separations, continue an independent existence with different degrees of success. A controversial figure throughout his life, Fabré-Palaprat stands at the gateway of modern neo-Templarism as such, and its endemic proclivity for division and schism.

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MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

Falk, Samuel Jacob,  
\* ca. 1710 Podhayce (Poland),  
† 17.4.1782 London

Jewish Kabbalist known as the “Baal Shem of London” (master of the divine names). Scorned by rabbinic opponents as an ignoramus and charlatan, he was revered by mystical Jews as a healer and visionary. Through his association with occultist Freemasons [→ Freemasonry], his fame spread from England to the Continent, Scandinavia, Russia, and North Africa. Some Masons believed that he was the “Old Man of the Mountain”, an “Unknown Superior” of illuminist Freemasonry – a belief that later fueled the anti-Semitic polemics of Edouard Drumont, Benjamin Fabre, and Nesta Webster. Scholem suggests that the youthful Falk was influenced by the antinomian Sabbatianism of Baruchia Russo, who interpreted Sabbatai Zevi's conversion to Islam in 1666 as a “holy sin”, a necessary descent into the realm of evil (the *kellipoth*) in order to transform evil into good. Some radical devotees condoned public conversion to the dominant religion of one's region, combined with private adherence to Sabbatian beliefs. After moving to Fürth, Falk became well-versed in New Testament teachings, which he utilized in religious disputations with Christians, whose patronage he sought for his alchemical and magical exploits.

In the 1730's Falk visited aristocratic courts in Germany, where he dazzled witnesses with feats of kabbalistic healing, vision-inducement, angelic conjurations, treasure-finding, and political predictions. According to the *Mémoires du Comte de Rantzow* (Amsterdam, 1741), Falk was driven from Cassel by jealous Jesuits, who wanted him burned at the stake. In 1736 he found refuge with Baron de Donop and Count Alexander Rantzow, whose son George published Falk's startling pronouncements and magical feats. While boldly defending the superiority of the Jewish religion, Falk argued that ‘the Jews are in ignominy, so that in a true sense they are the only Christians’: moreover, their debasement will soon lead to their deliverance. His prediction of a universal war leading to

a messianic consummation frightened Rantzow, who was ordered to abandon ‘the pretended liberator of the Jews’.

Falk then fled to Holland, where he possibly met Moses Hayim Luzzatto, the great messianic kabbalist and suspected Sabbatian, whose writings he would long cherish. He also befriended Tobias and Simon Boas, wealthy bankers and Freemasons, who became his admirers and patrons. After Falk moved to London (ca. 1739-1740), Rantzow heard that ‘the Portuguese Jews of the highest reputation rendered him honors as their prince and sovereign pontiff’. However, Parliament ordered the Jew's arrest but then released him on condition that he ‘no longer Kabbalize’. A later Masonic colleague, General Charles Rainsford, reported that Falk was also censured for Kabbalistic indiscretions by certain Jewish authorities, who punished him and forced him to ‘pass the rest of his life in solitude, without daring to communicate his knowledge, which he had the imprudence to make apparent for ostentation’.

As has been argued by the present author, over the next decades in London, Falk's path often crossed that of → Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish scientist and mystic, and the Papal Inquisition later linked their names as ‘chiefs of the Illuminés’. During his residence in 1744-1745, Swedenborg was in contact with two unnamed Jews, who witnessed his visionary trance state and whom he defended as ‘these good Israelites’. When he suffered an hallucinatory illness, he was treated by his ‘intimate friend’ Dr. William Smith, an eccentric Mason, who was studying Kabbala [→ Jewish Influences] with Falk. Until Swedenborg's death in 1772, whenever he visited London he lived in close proximity to Smith and Falk in their mutual neighborhood of Wellclose Square. In his diaries, Swedenborg referred to “Falker” (a surname also used by Falk), and his many descriptions of a Jewish magician in London bear striking similarities to those in the diary of Hirsch Kalisch, Falk's factotum. From their overlapping network of Masonic admirers (Rainsford, Thomé, → Cagliostro, etc.), a shadowy tradition of Falk-Swedenborg collaboration developed.

Though Falk remained a devout Jew, his ambivalent religious behavior provoked puzzlement among Jews and Christians alike. Their questions were intensified by the scandals erupting around other crypto-Sabbatians, such as Jonathan Eibeschütz, Jacob Frank, and Moses David, who were accused by orthodox rabbis of Sabbatian deception and debauchery. Frank, who publicly converted to Catholicism, was linked with Falk by some illuminist Masons. David, who participated in Falk's



“brotherhood” in London in 1759, was associated with a secret Sabbatian sect on the Continent that attempted to combine Judaism with Christianity.

From 1764 on, Falk received financial support from the Goldsmid brothers, who moved from Amsterdam to London, became Freemasons, and gained great influence in the Jewish and Christian communities. Now visited by diplomats and aristocrats from Europe, he attracted politically-minded Masons who hoped to gain his magical assistance for their causes. Prince Adam Czartorski, leader of the Polish nationalists against Russian oppression, visited Boas and then Falk, and received their blessing and funding. The Duke of Chartres, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of France, sought his support in London, and Falk consecrated a talismanic ring that would ensure Chartres's succession to the French throne. The Marquise de la Croix, protector of Jews in Avignon, and the Marquis de Thomé, founder of a Swedenborgian lodge in Paris, received Kabbalistic instruction from him.

But his most famous disciple was Joseph Balsamo, alias “Count Cagliostro,” who in 1776 helped Falk develop the Egyptian Rite, which Cagliostro carried to lodges in Holland, France, Germany, Poland, and Russia, where – according to Catherine the Great – the Masons were infatuated with Swedenborg's teachings and thus welcomed Cagliostro, who possessed the secrets of Dr. Falk. In 1780 in Strasbourg, Cagliostro praised Swedenborg as a great man but stressed that the greatest Mason was the celebrated Falk of London. In 1782 at Wilhelmsbad, delegates to an international Masonic convention investigated Falk's kabbalistic influence on various *Illuminés* (questions which arose again at the *Philalèthes* conferences in Paris in 1783-1787).

During Falk's final year, Rainsford hoped to work with him on the development of a Judeo-Christian rite (the → “Asiatic Brethren”), dedicated to a transcendent form of kabbalism which did not require conversion from either religion. In October 1782 Rainsford sadly recorded, ‘As to the Kabbalah, all is upset by the unexpected death of Dr. Falk’. However, the secretive order survived, and F.J. Molitor, a later Christian initiate, recorded in 1829 that the ‘Asiatics’ drew on the teachings of Sabbatai Zevi, Jacob Frank, and Dr. Falk, ‘the *Baal Shem* of London’.

MS. Diary of Hirsch Kalisch in Jewish Theological Seminary of New York ♦ Commonplace Book of Samuel Falk in Jewish Museum in London. Hebrew edition published by Michal Oron, *Miba'al Shed Leba'al Shem: Schmu'el Falk, Haba'al Shem Mi-Lon-*

*don*, Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2003 ♦ Masonic and political documentation in Grand Lodge Libraries of London, Edinburgh, The Hague ♦ Rainsford MSS. in British Library and Alnwick Castle.

*Lit.*: [Jörgen L.A. Rantzau], *Mémoires du Comte de Rantzow*, Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1741, 197-223 ♦ Caubet (ed.), “Les Philalèthes”, *Le Monde Maçonique* 14 (1873), 425, 474; 15 (1874), 164-165, 548 ♦ Hermann Adler, “The Baal-Shem of London”, *Transactions of Jewish Historical Society of England* 26 (1902-1905), 148-173 ♦ Solomon Schechter, “The Baal-Shem, Dr. Falk”, *Jewish Chronicle* (9 March 1913), 15-16 ♦ Gordon Hills, “Notes on Some Contemporary References to Dr. Falk, the Baal Shem of London, in the Rainsford MSS. at the British Museum”, *Transactions of Jewish Historical Society of England* 8 (1915-1917), 122-128 ♦ J.E.S. Tuckett, “Savalette de Langes, les Philalèthes, and the Convent of Wilhelmsbad”, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 30 (1917), 131-171 ♦ Cecil Roth, *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962, 139-164 ♦ Maria Trebiloni, “L'Esoterismo mistico e scienista di Bourrée de Corberon”, *Annuario dell'Instituto Storico Italiano* 17-18 (1965-1966), 5-109 ♦ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Spiritual Diary* (A.W. Acton, ed.), London: Swedenborg Society, 1977, 5620-5885 ♦ Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (1974), New York: Dorset, 1987, 272-284 ♦ idem, *Du Frankisme au Jacobinisme*, Paris: Le Seul-Gallimard, 1981, 39 ♦ Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 454-462 ♦ Michal Oron, “Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk and the Eibeschuetz-Emden Controversy”, in: Karl Grözinger & Joseph Dan (eds.), *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazic Judaism*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995, 243-256 ♦ Marsha K. Schuchard, “Yeats and the Unknown Superiors: Swedenborg, Falk, and Cagliostro”, in: Marie Roberts & Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, *Secret Texts*, New York: AMS, 1995, 114-167 ♦ idem, “Dr. Samuel Jacob Falk: A Sabbatean Adventurer in the Masonic Underground”, in: Matt Goldish & Richard Popkin (eds.), *Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern Period*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001, 203-227.

MARSHA KEITH SCHUCHARD

Faucheux, Albert → Barlet, François-Charles

Fedeli d'Amore

We owe the expression “Fedeli d'Amore” (faithful of love, Love's lieges) to → Dante Alighieri. In his *Vita Nuova*, the work in which he crystallizes his experience of human love, he records how after a dream-vision of his lady he decided to write a sonnet in which, he says, ‘I would greet all the Faithful of Love’ (*Vita Nuova*, III, 9), asking them



to judge his vision. He may have meant by this expression a group of poets gifted with a higher intellectual faculty, because in the same work he writes that some of his words whose meaning is uncertain should not be further explained; 'no one can resolve this uncertainty who is not as much a devotee of Love as I am; but those who are, will easily find the solution of these uncertain words' (*Ibid.*, XIV, 14). According to the commentary of the *Ottimo*, Dante the love-poet makes words mean something other than their usual meanings. Francesco da Barberino shares this claim to a hidden meaning: he reserves his *Documenti d'Amore* for initiated or enlightened readers, and at the end he presents a warrior with sword drawn to defend them, and to threaten any attempt at reading by the ignorant. The work is, in fact, obscure, and Francesco uses every artifice of double meaning in order to say in secret what he cannot evoke openly. Several of these poets give lyrical expression to the deep anguish felt at not being able to speak the truth out loud: '... I am not blind, yet I must act as though I were ...', says Cecco d'Ascoli in his *Acerba*; '... I die, gazing at a beautiful face covered by a veil' (*L'Acerba*, 156). Dante, Francesco da Barberino, Guido Cavalcanti and Guido Guinizelli all celebrate in an enigmatic way the love of a woman they call *sapientissima* (wisest). The lyric poetry of the group well known under the sobriquet *Dolce Stil Nuovo* (sweet new style) is full of words like *dottrina* (doctrine), *intendimento* (understanding), *sapienza* (wisdom) and *intelligenza* (intelligence), the latter being the actual name of the woman whom Dino Compagni hymns in his eponymous poem.

Are the Faithful of Love simply the same as the poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*, and is there a hidden meaning beneath the literal sense of their poetry? Is it a philosophical, theological, or political meaning? If we use the traditional scholastic division between matter and form, Love would be the outer form of the poetry, while the poem's soul would be an essential thought different from Love. In that case the loved ones whom the poet celebrates – *Madonna*, Beatrice, Giovanna, etc. – are masks for a significance which is not immediately grasped, but reserved for those gifted with a certain mental acuity. The starting-point of all poems in "stilnuovist" style is the love of a woman whose femininity is only the clothing for a profoundly abstract idea. The theme of the angel-woman (*donna angelicata*) allows the poet to objectify perfectly the Aristotelian and, later, the scholastic theory of potency and act. Applying the principle of analogy, the woman arouses in the man a love of the same

nature as that through which God, the unmoved mover, is the source of movement. Every noble heart is virtually capable of realizing its perfection as a knowing being, with which divine wisdom has endowed it. Unlike the angels, who have immediate perception of the first principles, man starts from sense-data and rises, through a process of abstraction from the *signum formale* (formal sign) living in the subject as *intentio* (intention) or potency, to the very idea of divine beauty. The woman, as a vestige of the first creative Intelligence and mirror of divine Wisdom, awakens the capacity latent in every man of lifting himself, thanks to the principle of analogy, to the contemplation of the transcendent, which he perceives only through the Lady's beauty. To encounter beauty is to sense a beckoning presence. The loved one is a gift of God, *de sursum descendens* (descending from above), a creature whose reality manifests the divine Wisdom to human sight and intellect, and the loving of whom is an initiation into the mysteries of the Uncreated. The soul of Guido Guinizelli, arriving in the presence of his Creator, argues in its own defence that 'she had the appearance of an angel' (*Al cor gentile repara sempre Amore* [Love always cures the gentle heart], in *Poeti del Duecento* [Poets of the 13th century], 460). The love of this creature is an *amor sapientiae* (love of wisdom).

The most famous poem of Guido Cavalcanti, *Donna me prega* (*Ibid.*, 522), concentrates on this same theme of the passage from potency to act through the intercession of the phenomenon of love. At the request of a lady who is interrogating him on what "Love" is, he expounds a perfectly orthodox theory: love resides in that union of the possible and active intellects, the passage from potentiality to the effective actuality of knowledge. The scholastics even used for it the term "copulation". In Cavalcanti's verse the love of a lady is none other than the love of *Sapientia* (Wisdom). It consists in a sort of stirring of the possible intellect (just as the beloved attracts the lover to her) towards its supreme beatitude, which is the actualization of all its potentialities of knowledge. The "tension" towards the woman is a metaphor for the aspiration towards the supreme intelligence of things that the being carries within itself. Cecco d'Ascoli says the same when, in his *Acerba*, he sings of that woman who gives form to the intellect, who existed before the beginning of all things, who grants light and salvation. A ray of the divine Wisdom, she is assimilated to the phoenix, symbol of the one and only wisdom that is reborn throughout the ages.

The endless quest for God is often described in

images borrowed from → alchemy. The love of Madonna allows Francesco da Barberino, throughout his *Reggimento e Costumi di Donna* (Ladies' behavior and customs), to tread a path through various initiatic stages whose meaning may be expressed as going from "faithful" to "intelligent", from loyal belief to intellectual penetration. The quest for the Lady is crowned by the award of the philosopher's stone, whose 'reading by concentric circles' (as Francesco puts it) permits him to realize the communion of the knowing nature with the realities intelligible by the human being. Intellect, who awaits the poet at the portal of Madonna's palace, is the possible intellect, held in tension by this aptitude for knowledge that the reading of the stone (pointing to the East) will illuminate, thus permitting the passage from the virtuality of knowledge to its actuality, which constitutes the supreme beatitude. To attain beatifying Wisdom: is that not to possess the rose which is brandished by the strange figure with both male and female heads, illustrated in Francesco da Barberino's *Tractatus amoris et operum eius* (Treatise on love and its works)? Its bodily union would then symbolize the perfect fusion between the possible intellect (male) and the active Intelligence (female). The millennial dream of the transformation of base matter into gold is realized on the spiritual plane.

All these poets of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* share the celebration of the love of a beautiful, pure, luminous lady, the quest for whom is basically the tireless pursuit of Wisdom. This belongs within a venerable tradition, of which the Italian poets seem to reflect two versions: the more "philosophical" and Aristotelian version, interpreted especially by Cavalcanti and by Dino Compagni in his poem *L'Intelligenza*; and the more "mystical" version, Platonic in essence, as expressed in the Song of Solomon and in Catholic thought. Saint → Augustine and Richard of Saint Victor, for example, incarnate the divine Wisdom in Rachel beloved by Jacob; and the poetry of Guinizelli, Dante, and Francesco da Barberino certainly resonates with these mystical accents. Original sin, for them, has thrown a dark veil over the human intellect and prevented it from *scire recte* (knowing rightly). The Redemption alone was able to draw man out of his profound darkness, out of this *ignorantia* (ignorance), and make a part of the eternal verities again accessible to human intelligence. Thus one can see why the quest and love of the Lady allow the lover to be reborn into the true life, the life of a regenerated nature, reconciled with God towards whom it aspires as its ultimate perfection. The "Liegies of Love", pilgrims on the path of transcendence that

leads to the Truth, did not only have a spiritual and theological message to convey, but sought to bear witness through their personal quest to man's necessity of leaving the path through which he has gone astray.

The esotericism of these devotees of Love consists in the multiplicity of meanings which Dante himself evokes at the entrance to the city of Dys, carefully distinguishing the apparent meaning of his verse from its hidden meaning. Beneath the quest for Wisdom, incarnated by a woman and depicted in the Fedeli's cryptic language, these poets concealed their profound aspiration to reach God through personal and individual paths: the way of mystical ecstasy, the contemplative way, free from earthly constraints. In contrast to the Church's worldly and deviant immanence, they sought a transcendence that climaxes in meeting God face to face.

During the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, well before Dante's Catholic rehabilitation in the encyclical *In praeclara* (1921), several Italian writers followed in the footsteps of some Renaissance scholars (Corbinelli, → Postel) by supporting the thesis that Dante's entire work holds a hidden meaning. Often motivated by ideologies hostile to the Roman Church, their various theses maintain that Dante was masking an urgent call for reform, especially Ghibelline or heterodox (e.g. Foscolo, Rossetti, Caetani) or else mystical or sapiential (e.g. Perez, Pascoli). These mysterious meanings were supposedly both dissimulated and conveyed by the secret language ("jargon") common to Dante and the stilnuovist poets. This systematic argument has been fiercely discussed and contested up to the present day by a number of historians of medieval Italian literature. It has also found defenders in France (Delécluze, Aroux, Péladan, Vulliaud), while Valli, Ricolfi and Alessandrini have taken it further from a historical and stylistic perspective. It is obviously a small step from there to representing Dante's "secret doctrine" as essentially esoteric, and the Fedeli d'Amore as an initiatic circle, inspired by chivalry and especially by the Knights Templar. The step was duly taken in 1925 by → René Guénon, who was followed in turn, and to various degrees, by authors both within and outside the Traditionalist current, e.g. (respectively) J. Canteins or R.L. John. In an entirely different spirit, this time academic, → Henry Corbin (1903-1978) pointed out some remarkable parallels between the "Fedeli d'Amore" of East and West, based on the love poetry of certain Persian Sufis (e.g. Ruzbehan, 1128-1209), whose esotericism likewise presents human love as a "support" for

divine love, and as naturally destined to be transfigured ultimately into the latter.

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CATHERINE GUIMBARD

**Ficino, Marsilio**, \* 19.10.1433 Figline,  
† 1.10.1499 Careggi (Florence)

1. LIFE AND WORKS 2. PRISCA  
THEOLOGIA 3. THEOLOGIA  
PLATONICA 4. ESOTERIC MEDICINE AND THE  
SPIRIT 5. DEMONOLOGY AND THE OCCULT  
6. CONCLUSION

#### 1. LIFE AND WORKS

Ficino, the eminent Florentine Platonist and one of the most learned and influential thinkers of his age, lived a somewhat uneventful life as a brilliant, networking scholar, patronized by the Medici, ordained in 1473, and elected a canon of Florence's cathedral in 1487 (his notable bust still adorns the south side of the nave). Originally destined for a medical career by his father, a doctor in the service

of the Medici, and trained as an Aristotelian, he acquired, in addition to much medical learning, a rare mastery both of the difficult Greek of Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus, and of the ancient and medieval history of Platonic philosophy. Under the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici who gave him a villa at Careggi in 1463, Ficino set out to render all of Plato's dialogues into Latin, but interrupted this task almost immediately in order to translate the *Corpus Hermeticum*, under the title *Liber de potestate et sapientia Dei* but generally referred to as the *Pimander*, after the title of the first of the fourteen treatises known to him (Tommaso Benci subsequently produced a vernacular version). In 1464 he actually read his versions of Plato's *Parmenides* and *Philebus* to Cosimo on his deathbed. Eventually, with financing from Filippo Valori and other admirers, and having selectively consulted the renderings of various dialogues by such humanist predecessors as Leonardo Bruni, he published the complete Plato in 1484 (on a date coinciding with a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn) and dedicated it to Lorenzo de' Medici. Ficino included prefaces (*argumenta*) for each dialogue, as well as a long commentary he had written by 1469 on the *Symposium* and entitled *De amore* (a vernacular version of which he also prepared). This became the seminal text of Renaissance love theory. Later he composed other magisterial Plato commentaries, some incomplete, on the *Timaeus*, *Philebus* (also the subject of a public lecture series), *Parmenides*, *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, and on the Nuptial Number in book VIII of the *Republic*.

While continually revising his Plato during the 1470s, Ficino published the Latin text of his *De Christiana religione* in 1476 (which, as we now realize, was indebted to earlier anti-Jewish and anti-Moslem polemicists), as well as compiling his original philosophical masterpiece, an eighteen-book *summa* on metaphysics and the immortality of the soul, which he published in 1482. Indebted to → Augustine and Aquinas, it was nonetheless the fruit of his conviction that "Platonism" – actually → Neoplatonism, since he regarded Plotinus as Plato's most profound interpreter – was reconcilable with Christianity. He called it his *Theologia Platonica*, borrowing the title of Proclus's *magnum opus* to which he was considerably though secretly indebted; and then subtitled it, echoing both a Plotinian treatise and an early Platonizing treatise of Augustine, *De immortalitate animorum*.

In the 1480s Ficino turned again to Plotinus, with whom he had been familiar since the 1460s, and rendered the entire *Enneads* into Latin. For these he also wrote extensive notes and commen-

taries, publishing the whole in 1492 with a dedication to Lorenzo. Meanwhile he also worked on a three-book treatise on prolonging health, the *De vita*, having begun it apparently as part of his Plotinus commentary. It was full of encyclopedic pharmacological and other learning, and daringly combined philosophical, astrological, magical and psychiatric speculations. When it appeared in 1489, Ficino was threatened with a Curial investigation into its orthodoxy; but he fended this off successfully, if disingenuously, by asserting that he was presenting ancient views rather than his own. In the last years of his life he published translations of other Neoplatonic authors, including Iamblichus, Porphyry, Proclus, Synesius and the 11th c. Byzantine Psellus; he translated and commented on the works of → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita and embarked on a commentary on St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. Finally, he first supported but then vehemently attacked Savonarola.

Unlike most scholars, Ficino was able to exert a formative influence on his own age and on two subsequent centuries. Several reasons contributed to this. First, there was the intellectual fascination and novelty, bordering on unorthodoxy (even heresy, as we shall see), of his revival of Neoplatonism and the unfamiliar nature of what he had to say about the complementary roles of religion and philosophy in nurturing the spiritual and noetic life. His ecumenism, his delight in the notion that divine worship is natural and inherently varied, and his diverse interests, would align him with the very liberal wing of Christian theologians even today. Second, a revered teacher of the *signori* and their sons, he cultivated and sustained a learned and pastoral correspondence with well over a hundred pupils, friends, patrons, and admirers, many of them, including Lorenzo and various cardinals, in the highest offices of church and state, in Italy and abroad (this circle is often, if rather misleadingly, referred to as his Platonic Academy). His twelve books of letters in Latin (and there are others besides) range from elegant thank-you notes and witty compliments to philosophical treatises, and were later rendered into Italian. Finally, he was one of the first early modern intellectuals to enjoy the accelerated Europe-wide exposure made possible by the invention of the printing press. His works are now among the most splendid and valuable of the incunabula; and the *De amore* and *De vita*, along with the *Pimander* and Plato translations, became bestsellers.

Although Ficino had a humanist training and freely quoted the Roman poets, and although at one level he was a pious philosopher-apologist-

priest with a missionary goal, he was also the first of the Renaissance mages dedicated to the notion of a World Spirit and a World Soul. Apart from metaphysics, ethics and psychology, his interests embraced mythology (for him, poetic theology), → astrology, → magic, magical and figural numbers [→ Number Symbolism], demonology and the occult [→ occult / occultism], → music (especially harmonics) and musical therapy – interests which he found in Plato himself and therefore saw as authentic aspects of the Platonic tradition. While the depth of his technical understanding of later Platonism has rarely been equalled (his works of translation and interpretation bear witness to an enlightened and dedicated scholarship), his original philosophical, theological, and magical speculations constitute one of the enduring monuments of Renaissance thought and were enormously and diversely influential. The first edition of his own *Opera omnia* appeared in Basel in 1561, the second (and better) edition in 1576, and the third (a reprint, strangely, of the first) in Paris in 1641; and his *Platonis opera omnia* was printed a number of times too, as were other works or groups of works. Furthermore, dubious, spurious and lost works testify to his authority as an *érudit* and magus, as do many unpublished manuscripts.

## 2. PRISCA THEOLOGIA

The path to gnosis, though perfected by Plato, had a distant origin, and Ficino was one of the first Renaissance authors to champion the notion of a secret, esoteric, and (as Agostino Steuco would later call it) perennial wisdom that preceded and prepared the way for Christianity as the climactic Platonic revelation. As such it paralleled the Mosaic wisdom transmitted to the Hebrews by the Pentateuch, by the secrets of the Mosaic oral tradition later inscribed in the books of the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], and by the revelations of Moses' successors, the psalmists and the prophets. For symbolic and numerological reasons Ficino propounded the idea that Plato was the sixth in a succession of gentile sages, six being the sum of its integers and the product of its factors and thus, according to the arithmological tradition, the perfect number. It was also the number of Jupiter, of the days of biblical creation, of the links in Homer's golden chain from which hangs the pendant world (which the Neoplatonists interpreted allegorically), and of the six primary ontological categories in the *Sophist* (essence, being, identity, alterity, rest and motion). Indeed the hexad was such an authoritative category for charting the gentle succession of sages that Ficino had to adjust its

members, since he had many more sages than slots available for them; but eventually he decided on → Zoroaster, → Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, and Plato. This is remarkable on several counts. It omits such important figures as Socrates, Timaeus, Parmenides, and Empedocles whose dicta Ficino often quoted as Platonic. It also omits the sibyls whose authority he accepted and in whose company he included Diotima, Socrates' teacher in the metaphysics of love. And it insists in the Neoplatonic manner on Plato's Pythagorean wisdom, a wisdom embodied in the *aurea dicta* and *symbola* which Ficino found in Iamblichus's life of Pythagoras, translated into Latin, and published at the conclusion of his *Opera Omnia*.

Ficino knew Orpheus from the many fragments quoted in Plato's works and in the works of his commentators, and from the eighty-seven *Orphic Hymns* now thought to be products of later antiquity but that he and his contemporaries believed authentic. From early on, when he first translated them, he treated these *Hymns* as sacred but dangerous texts. Certainly they testified to Orpheus being the gentiles' David, and his songs, their psalms, and they listed the attributes of the deities they addressed in an aretology, a listing of virtues, hiding under a polytheistic rind a monotheistic core (a much revered prefatory palinode explained away the polytheism). But they also appeared to invoke demonic powers; and Ficino was careful to circulate only a few fragments in his Latin translation to some choice friends. Orpheus himself, though Plato's *Symposium* 179D condemns him as faint-hearted for his refusal to die for Eurydice (etymologized as "breadth of [the] judgment"), had been the master of incantation, the paradigmatic magus who bent the natural world to his will and whose music derived from the fundamental harmonies of the cosmos. Ficino was himself flatteringly addressed by various poet-friends as another Orpheus, and the figure of Orpheus was painted on an "Orphic" lyre he played in his Platonic hymn recitals – apparently to great effect, since onlookers describe him as both entranced and entrancing. At the onset of his career as a Medicean teacher and sage he seems indeed to have presided over a neo-Orphic revival. Orphic incantation became the key to his conception of Platonic or Platonizing poetry and, in general, of musical images and models, and the affective bearer, the perfect medium of philosophy.

Nonetheless Orpheus was subordinate to the two most ancient of the sages: first to Hermes Trismegistus, whose *Pimander* Ficino continually cited and whose *Asclepius* he knew from the Latin trans-

lation attributed to Apuleius, as well as from hostile notices in Augustine and more sympathetic ones in Lactantius. The two commentaries on these works, incidentally, which were eventually printed in Ficino's *Opera* interleaved with his own translation of the one and Apuleius' translation of the other, and which have long been attributed to him, were actually by his French disciple → Lefèvre d'Étaples (Faber Stapulensis). However, while Hermes' authority remained intact, Ficino retained a guarded approach to Egypt's religious tradition. This may have been partly because Egypt appears in the Bible as the land of exile even though → Moses could have taught or been taught by the Egyptian priests (and here determining whether Hermes was coeval with Moses or succeeded him was critical, though Ficino never entertained a later view that Hermes preceded Moses!). But Egypt was also known for its zoomorphic deities and pagan rites, and Hermes had devised a sacred, hieroglyphic alphabet utilizing animals, birds, and plants to convey his wisdom. The strange little myth of Theuth and Ammon in Plato's *Phaedrus* 274Bff may have played a decisive role here; for it portrays Ammon (Jupiter) rebuking Theuth (identified with Hermes) for inventing writing and thereby opening up the possibility of debasing or profaning teachings that should only be transmitted orally, in the fullness of time, by a master who had properly prepared his disciples for their reception and comprehension. An apotropaic story also attributed to Pythagoras, it created a dilemma for a committed interpreter such as Ficino, who was faced with voluminous texts of, and commentaries on, a wisdom that from the outset he felt impelled to explore and explain and yet considered sacred and thus needing protection from the eyes of the vulgar. It set private, esoteric teaching steadfastly against public exposition, and so went to the very heart of his commitment to educating and converting the elite of Florence.

Prior even to Hermes, however, was Zoroaster. Ficino must have derived this notion primarily from the controversial Byzantine, → George Gemistos Plethon, a Proclan revivalist who had made a great impression on the Florentines during the ecumenical council of Ferrara/Florence in 1438-1443 (the abortive attempt to reconcile the Roman and Greek churches). But he was also following the odd sympathetic references to Zoroaster in Plato's works, notably in the I *Alcibiades* 121E<sup>ff</sup>, and in the works of such Platonizing thinkers as Plutarch; and responding too to the authority of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, attributed to Zoroaster, a late antique compilation which he and



others deemed authentic and whose derivative and eclectic Middle Platonism was therefore assumed to be the originary Platonism. For Ficino, however, Zoroaster's primacy was preeminently something that highlighted the centrality of the Epiphany and the Magi. The three wise Chaldaeans who had come from the East, following a star, were the followers of Zoroaster (whose very name in Greek has the word "star" in it, and who was supposedly the founder both of astronomy/astrology and of the magic associated with it). Thus they symbolized the coming of the ancient wisdom to the cradle of a new philosopher-king-magus: the new Zoroaster. Moreover, having set out from the very land from which Abram had departed, they symbolized the reunion of the two ancient branches of wisdom, the Hebrew and the Zoroastrian stemming from Noah's sons (since the Ark had come to rest allegedly in a province of Persia – and Persia, Chaldaea and Babylon were often confused). Insofar as Zoroaster was also, in Ficino's view, the discoverer of writing, since he used the stars and constellations, and not animals, birds, and plants, as the "letters" of his sacred alphabet, he was, in a way, the sage who had transcribed the wisdom of the stars, had brought the stars into men's language and had taught men to write with the stars. Hence the Magi were primarily astronomers and practitioners of a star-based magic, whose knowledge of the heavens had enabled them to find the Christ child and to worship him as the Zoroastrian, the supreme Platonic guardian in Bethlehem. Thus to Plato's Pythagorean, Orphic, and Hermetic predecessors, we should add Zoroaster as the original *priscus theologus*, the founder of the ancient gentile wisdom that Ficino himself was dedicated to reconciling with the theology of Abraham as perfected in Christ.

### 3. THEOLOGIA PLATONICA

The history of gnosis after Plato was also subject to revision by Ficino, since he believed that the Proclus-inspired writings nowadays attributed to the Pseudo-Dionysius of the late 5th century had been composed by the Dionysius mentioned in Acts 17:34 as an Athenian converted by St. Paul's preaching on the Areopagus, in other words by a thinker of the 1st century. Since one of the Dionysian treatises is a masterpiece of a negative theology inspired by the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* as interpreted by Plutarch of Athens, Proclus's teacher, this had the effect of transferring the fully fledged late Neoplatonism of Proclus back to the time immediately following the Ascension. Suddenly the opening of St. John's Gospel, the epis-

cles of St. Paul, and the Pseudo-Areopagitean treatises coalesced to form an impressive body of Christian-Platonic writing, a body that indeed signifies the perfection of the Platonic wisdom in the Christian revelation. Given the centrality of the *via negativa*, moreover, it had the effect of foregrounding Platonic dialectics as a mystical rather than a logical instrument, and thus of transforming the old Socratic scepticism or agnosticism into a kind of super- or supra-gnosis.

This pivotal misdating in turn impacted Ficino's perspective on the centuries we would now assign to the Middle Platonists, and led him to embrace the notion that the Ammonius Saccas who was Plotinus' teacher had been a Christian Platonist, and that the Origen whom Porphyry mentions as Plotinus' fellow disciple was the Christian heresiarch, author of the *De principiis* and *Contra Celsum*. Consequently, Plotinus emerges as a Christianized Platonist if not as a Christian. This was all-defining given the centrality of the *Enneads* in Ficino's own understanding of Plato, and his belief that Plotinus was Plato's beloved intellectual son 'in whom' – thus Ficino imagines Plato using the very words used by God according to the Gospels – 'I am well pleased'. After all, Ficino's supreme scholarly achievement was to render the fifty-four Plotinian treatises into Latin, and to devote his interpretational life to arguing that Plotinian and Christian metaphysics were almost one and the same, that Plotinus had written a *summa platonica* just as Aquinas would later write a *summa theologica*. Moreover, succumbing to a common temptation, Ficino read most of Proclus' subtle distinctions back into Plotinus, and thence into Plato, the *Hermetica*, the *Orphic Hymns*, and the *Oracula Chaldaica*, thus creating an ancient Platonic, but in effect Proclan, theology that had begun with Zoroaster but been perfected in the works of Plato, Dionysius, and Plotinus. Finally, since so much of Proclus had become incorporated into medieval theology by way of the Pseudo-Areopagitean writings – and, indeed, had become embedded in the Augustinian mystical traditions of the Middle Ages – Ficino was able to argue with conviction that the time was ripe for a Platonic revival that would unite wisdom and faith, philosophy and revelation, as they had once been united in the golden age, the pre-Noachian time of Enoch himself who had walked with God. Interestingly, this whole fabric is built on some fundamental mistakes in attribution and dating; but they were mistakes that the vast majority of Ficino's learned contemporaries shared. Thus Ficino was able to present a Neoplatonic view of the history of

philosophy, and to propel that history back into the remotest past.

#### 4. ESOTERIC MEDICINE AND THE SPIRIT

Ficino was also familiar with a number of ancient texts that he regarded as an integral part of the Platonic tradition but that were not strictly speaking philosophical (although they often included philosophical speculations and adduced philosophical premises). These included medical, pharmacological, and medical-astrological texts, some of them of Arabic provenance, that formed part of his intellectual training as a doctor – a role he never abandoned, since he regarded himself, in the Socratic sense, as a doctor of souls, a *medicus* even to the Medici. His *De vita libri tres* of 1489 is a treatise in three books on regimen, diet, abstinence, salves, beneficent powders and sprays, aromas, psychosomatic exercises, meditation and mood-elevation techniques, and astrological and demonological attuning. The third book in particular, entitled *De vita coelitus comparanda* (“On bringing one’s life into harmony with the heavens”), is a rich and complex exploration of scholarly melancholy, holistic medicine and psychiatry. It makes continual reference to zodiacal and planetary influences, to stellar oppositions and conjunctions, to astrological election, to the theory of universal sympathies, and to synastry, the assumption that particular people are born under the same planet under the same astral configurations and are therefore star twins. Additionally, following → Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, Ficino treats of the therapeutic powers of talismans and → amulets when properly made and inscribed. Here he is drawing both upon Scholastic notions of acquired form and the hylomorphic structuring of corporeal and (contra Aquinas) incorporeal entities, and upon the Galenic and subsequently medieval notions of the vital, vegetable, and animal spirits that can be refined, like sugar, into the pure spirit. The spirit’s health is the goal of all the various interlocking therapies, since the body will be well, that is, perfectly tempered, if the *spiritus* is well.

Ficino sees this spirit both as an image of the soul (like the meteor’s tail) and as an envelope, vehicle, or aethereal body linking soul to body, the intellectual to the corporeal: it functions as the soul’s chariot, first as the body in which we endure the cleansing purgatorial fires, and then as the glorified body of the resurrection and of paradise. Ficino believed that Zoroaster had been referring to this spirit or pneuma in such Chaldaean oracles as no.

104, which exhorts us not to add depth (that is, three-dimensional corporeality) to what is plane (that is, to the planar two-dimensional spirit); and no. 158, which asserts that even the pneuma (*idolum*) will be with us ‘in the region of utmost clarity’.

Governing the amulets, talismans, salves and drugs, and the aethereal spirit alike are the astrological powers and influences, ever-changing in their dance; and governing these in turn are the musical consonancies and harmonies that rule the universe. Plato had described these in the *Timaeus*, in the famous passage on the two quaternaries of 1-2-4-8 and 1-3-9-27 (traditionally seen as a Greek *lambda*) used by his demiurge to create the mathematical-musical structure of the World-Soul. This Soul itself, in Ficino’s speculative view, animated a World-Spirit that mediated between it and the World-Body; and to this Spirit our own spirit was originally attuned, and even united. An integral part of the healer’s training therefore consisted in learning to understand a complex pneumatology with reference both to the cosmos (the great man, according to the famous Macrobian phrase), and to the human being, the little world. Indeed, rather than being a soul chained to or entombed in a body, according to the hallowed Platonic and Christian images, man is to be identified here with his spirit in this non-Pauline, quasi-medical sense: a spirit imaged as a talismanic inscription, an airy powder, an attar of roses, a musical chord, a diffused light, a planetary ray even, and subject to the influences of salves, songs, spells, incantations, and prayers. Ficino often responds to this world of “spiritual” therapies in fact not as a realm of insidious evil or of base matter but as a bountiful pharmacopoeia of lenitives and cures, a musical, a magical *concordia discors*.

It is this visionary dimension of Ficino’s Aesculapian thought, with its many striking parallels to current → new age therapies on the one hand (to whose practitioners, however, his work is largely unknown), and on the other to features of Jungian depth psychology (see the work of James Hillman, Thomas Moore and others) that makes him, arguably more than → Paracelsus or Cardano, the most important speculative medical theorist of the Renaissance. Indeed, his arresting envisioning of the mind-body linkage and of our own demonic condition, and his holistic approach to health and to the importance of our inner sense of well-being and of well-being’s power over the external world, make his general orientation, if not many of his specific ideas, enduringly attractive, and some would argue relevant.

## 5. DEMONOLOGY AND THE OCCULT

Other ancient or medieval texts Ficino studied carefully treat of aspects of arithmosophy and arithmology (Theon of Smyrna), oneirology (Syneusius), angelology and demonology (Porphyry, Proclus and Psellus), and the occult (Iamblichus). Iamblichus in particular was an authority Ficino encountered at the onset of his Platonic studies; and among his first attempts at translating philosophical Greek were the four Iamblichean treatises that constitute a kind of Pythagorean handbook, dealing with Pythagoras' life and with various mathematical and numerological issues. The *De Mysteriis* probably served as his basic introduction to occult lore and to the notion of theurgy, of converting oneself and others – even wood, clay and stone statues – into gods.

While he identified the highest order or chorus of demons in ancient theology with the angels of Christianity, he also inherited a hierarchy of lower orders of demons who were principally beneficent spirits caring for the earth. Said by Hesiod to be thirty thousand in number, or divided into as many legions as there are stars in the night sky, with as many individual demons again in each legion, they were ruled by twelve princes in the twelve zodiacal signs. By virtue of their intermediate nature between the gods and men, they dwelt in the intermediate zone of the air, particularly of the upper or fiery region of air often identified with the aether; and their mandate embraced the airy realm of sleep and the production of omens, oracles and portentous dreams. Essentially airy beings, though they could be found throughout elemental creation, the demons were called by the ancients the *rectores* (helmsmen) and *exploratores* (spies or examiners) of men. They were apportioned and linked to the seven Ptolemaic planets, and assigned the guardianship and ministrations of lunar, venerean, mercurial, solar, martian, jovian and saturnian entities (collective or individual) such as kingdoms, institutions, homes, places, people, animals, plants, and stones. The Jews, for instance, along with melancholics, were supposedly saturnian; all scribes, keen-scented dogs, and the city of Heropolis, mercurial; Socrates, lions, and cockerels, solar; and so on. Their airy nature meant they were particularly sensitive to aromas, mists, fumes, and smokes. Thus the fumigation instructions accompanying many of the *Orphic Hymns*, quite apart from other invocatory dimensions, would make the chanting of such hymns attractive to the class of demons attending the deity who was the subject of the hymn, since they could materialize, if only momentarily, in the wafts of burning aromatics

ascending from the thuribels, hearths, altars, or lamps used for igniting fumigants. A solar demon for instance would be drawn to the eighth *Hymn to Helios*, which was sung to the smoke of incense and manna, a jovian demon to the nineteenth *Hymn to Zeus the Thunderer* sung to the smoke of styrax (while some of the hymns have identical fumigant instructions, the majority prescribe “aromatics” generally, and some lack any instructions at all).

However, as creatures essentially of light, the beneficent demons were most drawn to, and acted as mediums of, light: light scintillating from the faceting of gems and crystals, reflecting from pools and mirrors (natural or man made), refracting through lenses, beaming from lamps and lanterns, haloing clouds, and in shimmering mirages. Indeed the entire realm of optics was theirs, and necessarily so, given that Ficino thought of light as in some ways the spirit, or as linked to the spirit, of the natural world, its source being in the sun but its essence radiating through the length and breadth of the cosmos as life itself, as visible animation. In the *Platonic Theology* 8.13, citing the followers of both Orpheus and Heraclitus, Ficino actually calls light ‘visible soul’ and soul ‘invisible light’. Hence the importance for him of Zoroastrian and Hermetic light worship or of light in worship, and the haunting significances of the reference to God in St. James' Epistle 1:17 as ‘the father of lights’ and of the noonday setting with the stridulating cicadas of Plato's *Phaedrus*. These harmonizing insects Ficino identified with demons, in the particular sense of men who had entered, after philosophizing for the requisite three millennia, a quasi immaterial, light-filled, demonic condition, being ruled entirely by their intelligences and about to repossess their glorified spirit-star bodies as their envelopes or vehicles. All light demons, whether erstwhile philosophers or planetary spirits, were benevolent, intellectual, even musical presences, higher pneuma-borne souls whom we will ultimately accompany in the universal cavalcade Jupiter leads across the intellectual heaven, thence to gaze from afar at the intelligible beings, the Ideas in their collectivity as both the unfolding or radiance of Beauty, and the enfolding or incandescence of Truth.

This demonological world is not confined, furthermore, to aromatic, musical or intellectual invocation in hymns or prayers at such threshold times as dawn, noonday, and dusk. For Ficino was also fascinated by ancient *idolum* theory. On the one hand, there was the materialist view, articulated most memorably by Lucretius, that effluvia or

material images, *idola*, emanated from all objects, and were seen most obviously in mirrors (hence the Aristotelian story that mirrors bled in the presence of menstruating women). On the other hand, there were enigmatic references in Plotinus, Proclus, the *Orphica*, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, to the idolum as the densest and most visible form of the spiritual body, to its being in some respects the shadow or other residual self. Plotinus' references to Homer's account of the shade, the *idolum*, of Hercules in the *Enneads* 1.1.12 and 4.3.27 were especially notable since they pointed to the readers' own demonic duality, their condition not so much as souls tied to bodies, but as higher souls tied to lower secondary souls, that is to say, to images or reflections of themselves. Life was seen now as the Platonic mirror, however distorting, to which Socrates alludes in the *Republic* 596DE when he speaks of the sophisticated or "easy way" in which the created world might be reproduced catoptrically: 'You could do it most quickly if you should choose to take a mirror and carry it about everywhere. You will speedily produce the sun and all the things in the sky, the earth and yourself and the other animals'. Following Plotinus, Ficino interpreted this as an enigmatic reference to the World Body as it reflects the *idolum* of the World Soul, an idolum that is in turn identified with the twice-born Dionysus, lord of ecstasy and dance. Optics, accordingly, and its accompanying plane geometry, and especially (given the section in the *Timaeus*) the geometry of right triangles and the Pythagorean theorem that determines the squares and square-roots, the "powers" of their sides, became the key to understanding the nature of our reflected, catoptric demi-lives as Dionysian images tied to images, to *idola* and *effluvia*. It also became the key to understanding the demons and, by implication, our own ascending, philosophical, Apollonian selves, as beings who can pass like Alice through the terpsichorean illusions of the mirror plane into the world of intellectual, uranian light.

In such an ascent, man will again become the Hermetic and Orphic "spark", the "colleague" of a star that we once were, before our precipitation from Cancer, the Moon's constellation and "the gate of mortals", down through the nest of planetary spheres. As man ascends again towards Capricorn, Saturn's constellation and "the gate of the gods", he assumes the demonic, stellar, luminous body that is eternally his, and that Zoroaster had assumed when he devised an astral alphabet. For man, Ficino writes in a generic letter to the human race, is an earthly star enveloped in a cloud, while a star is a heavenly man (*Opera*, 659).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Ficino was voyaging through the straits of unorthodoxy out into the open seas of the ancient Gnostic heresies, including Manichaeism, that had been attacked by various Church Fathers, preeminently Augustine, and by Plotinus, Ficino's greatest Platonic authority next to Plato himself. That such esoteric and magical speculations did not get him into trouble is a measure of his personal diplomacy (testifying to his commitment to accommodation) and of the solidity and weight of his other philosophical and theological works. A century later → Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for notions that were no more revolutionary. Ficino bequeaths us both the venerable Christian emblem of man as *viator* and the pagan emblems of him as a cicada, an Orpheus with his lyre strung to the planetary modes, a Hermetic seal, a Zoroastrian magus, a spark struck from the flint of dionysian matter, a starry charioteer in the *biga* of the soul. For his audacious attempt to reconcile Platonism with Christianity went far beyond Platonism: it became a life-long ecumenical quest to introduce into orthodoxy an encyclopedic range of unorthodox spiritual, magical, and occult beliefs keyed to the theme of the soul's ascent from the cave of illusion. That he had a profound posthumous impact upon western thought and culture for two centuries or more speaks to the European elite's continuing, if clandestine, interest in the exploration of many ideas that Plato himself would not have recognized and that had been censured and even persecuted by the Church. Ficino fervently believed, however, *a bono in bonum omnia dirigiuntur*. It is this credo, inscribed on the walls of his Platonic "academy" which gives to his labyrinthine pages a remarkable unity and generosity in the service of what was always a fundamentally Plotinian and therefore optimistic search for the "flower" in the mind, the oneness that is for him the object of both intellectual and spiritual ascent.

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MICHAEL J.B. ALLEN

Fictuld, Hermann, \* 14.11.1700 (?)  
place unknown, † 1777(?) place  
unknown

Hermann Fictuld is the pen name used by an individual whose identity is disputed. In 1879 the



historian of → Freemasonry Nettelbladt (Nettelbladt, 766, n. 625) quoted a manuscript he had found (he did not say where), written by the freemason Baron Ernst Werner von Raven and partly devoted to the latter's relationship with Fictuld in the years 1768-1769. 'According to this manuscript', writes Nettelbladt, Fictuld's 'real name was Johann Heinrich Schmidt von Sonnenberg. Born on 7. March 1700. As early as 1716 he became the helpmate [Gehülfe] of a military surgeon in Temesvar (Hungria) and was instructed by him in → alchemy. Later, he became acquainted with Baron Prugg von Pruggenstein from Innsbruck, who gave him further teachings in this matter'. The end of Fictuld's preface to his *Cabala mystica naturae* disconfirms the date of birth given in Nettelbladt's manuscript, because Fictuld writes he finished that book 'on my birthday, 14. November 1739'. In this same manuscript, Raven also wrote that Fictuld had instructed the persons (among whom was Raven himself) desirous to send him letters to address them to 'Baron von Minsthoff, Langenthal, Switzerland'. Moreover, the anonymous author of *Sehr rare . . . Kunststücke* (Part III, Zittau/Leipzig, ed. of 1763, Preface) claimed that Fictuld's name was actually Hans Schmidt, that he was a physician from 'Huttwill' in the Canton of Bern, and that he recently made a lot of money at the Court of a Prince thanks to his teachings bearing on the Philosopher's Stone. Indeed, the idea that he was Swiss appears in another anonymous author who mentions the works of 'the still living Adept Hermann Fictuld in Switzerland' (*Kurtze Nachricht vom Auro Potabili*, Leipzig, 1767, 18).

The name "Minsthoff" (or very similar ones) mentioned by Raven is to be found in four other documents: 1) Duveen claims that on the last page of Fictuld's *Azoth et Ignis* (1749) he had seen 'printed 8 lines in cryptography', which revealed that Fictuld's real name was 'Johann Ferdinand von Meinstoff' or 'Meinstorff' (Duveen 214, 215; but Duveen's interpretation has not been checked as yet). 2) J.F. von Frydau wrote in his *Sendschreiben an einen . . . Prinz . . . in welchem von dem . . . Stein der Weisen gehandelt wird* (Quedlinburg/Leipzig, 1762) that Fictuld's *Probierstein* (1740) was written by 'H. Fictuld und Baron Meinstoff'. This ambiguous note might indicate that these were two different persons. 3) In a letter from → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger to L.F. Castell-Rehweiler (13. May 1763, in *Oetingers Leben und Briefe*), Oetinger mentions a 'Baron von Meinstoff' who – the formulation is not clear – might be either Fictuld himself or someone close to the latter.

4) In 1779 the anonymous editor of the *Hermetisches ABC* (1779, III, 5, 251) claims to count Fictuld among the 'late wonderful and true wise men whom [he] liked very much' and says that his name was 'Meinstof' (spelt 'Weinstoof' in III, 251, which is possibly the source of the spelling used by Ferguson, see below) and that he came from Langenthal (hence, he adds, Fictuld was sometimes called Mummenthaler as a joke). Ferguson identified Fictuld as 'Weinstof' and wrote that he died in 1777 at the age of seventy-eight (Ferguson, I, 273). It would be interesting to know where Ferguson found this information concerning the date of Fictuld's death. Following Duveen, Breymayer and Häussermann (609) identify Fictuld as "Johann Ferdinand von Meinstorff". All these statements might contain some kernel of truth, and research into the German nobility archives may prove fruitful. In 1788 Johann Salomon Semler was of the opinion that the pen name was to be read 'HerMann F I C t V L D', as a chronogram for 1656, but Semler did not deduce anything further from this interpretation (Ferguson, I, 272 f).

Fictuld early developed a strong interest in → Rosicrucianism, and for years he toyed with the idea of giving birth to a new Rosicrucian society. In *Aureum Vellus* (written in 1747, published in 1749) he mentions the Rosicrucians with great praise, although at that time he had in mind mostly the Order of the Golden Fleece founded by Philip III the Good (in the same book, Fictuld goes as far as tracing the origins of Rosicrucianism not to Christian Rosenkreuz, but to Philip III). A manuscript dated as early as 1761 that is preserved in the Hungarian Archives of the Festetics family and considered by the historian of Freemasonry Abafi (*alias* Ludwig Aigner) to be the most important source of information for the first period of the "Gold- und Rosenkreuz", contains the rituals and statutes of a Society of the "Rosae Crucis". The account given in this document of the Order's founding is taken almost word for word from Fictuld's *Aureum Vellus* (Abafi, 81-85).

Besides, in the manuscript quoted above, Raven wrote that he received from Fictuld many letters (ca. 1767-1768) describing certain alchemical procedures. Raven was expected to compensate Fictuld financially for this information. In 1769 a certain "Br. O" replaced Fictuld as Raven's instructor. Raven describes how he quarrelled with this Brother, who in 1770 threatened to expel him from an 'association', which he occasionally referred to in his letters as 'the Society of the Ros[y] C[ross]'. Therefore, Raven's text provides evidence of the early existence in 1770 of a Rosicrucian soci-

ety. The latter was probably the first version of the fringe-masonic Order of the “Gold- und Rosenkreuz” (The Gold and Rosy Cross, “officially” born in 1777). Furthermore, Raven reveals that in the late 1760s Fictuld had become an authoritative member of the aforementioned “Society of the Ros[y] C[ross]” in which he had formerly been a rather isolated ‘instructor’. Be that as it may, it is strongly documented that later on, in the late 1770s and in the 1780s, Fictuld’s books had become part and parcel of the bibliography strongly recommended by the Superiors of the Order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

In addition to Raven, Fictuld exchanged letters with Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, and in his *Probiertestein* (Touchstone) he devoted an entry to him that spread Oetinger’s reputation as far as England (a fact noted with satisfaction by Oetinger). Fictuld even sent to him one of his works before publication, asking him for his advice. But Oetinger had some misgivings. He found Fictuld ‘too little exercised in the spelling of [the letters of] the Holy Spirit, and too much attracted into the x and y of Nature’ (*Oetingers Leben und Briefe*, letters to L.F. Castell-Rehweiler, 1763-1764).

Judging from the dates given in the prefaces to his works (written in German exclusively), Fictuld wrote from 1731 to ca. 1760. The first books deal not only with alchemy, but with → magic and Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] as well. As a matter of fact, all his publications correspond to the way he presented himself as early as 1750, namely as a ‘Liebhaber der Theosophischen und Hermetischen Philosophischen Geheimnisse’ (an amateur in the mysteries of theosophy, hermeticism and philosophy’, see preface to his *Abhandlung von der Alchymie*, 1754). His writings fall into four main categories, which occasionally overlap in one and the same book. 1) Alchemy proper. He never tires of defending the alchemical worldview against its opponents and is lavish in descriptions of the procedures designed to prepare the Philosopher’s Stone. Like many authors writing about this subject, he exhibits a wide knowledge of alchemical literature. His writings thereon often present themselves as conversations between “philosophers”, a *topos* directly inspired by the classic alchemical work *Turba Philosophorum* (so much so that he gave this very title to one of his books). 2) Bio-bibliographical descriptions of authors who wrote on alchemy and/or philosophy of Nature. This second category is represented by the several editions of his book *Probiertestein*, which claims to be (as the title indicates) a ‘chemical and philosophical touchstone in which are tested the writ-

ings of the true Adepts as well as those of the misleading sophists’. 3) Arithmological and/or neokabbalistic speculations (for example, in *Cabbala mystica naturae*). 4) Writings which are mostly theosophical in character and which contain, for example, interpretations of Greek myths (in particular the Golden Fleece) and texts (like the *Emerald Tablet*), speculations on the Bible (preferably on the narratives on the original Falls, or on the Divine Wisdom), and developments of a Paracelsian orientation [→ Paracelsianism].

It is not surprising that *Aureum Vellus* (a big appendix [121-379] to *Azoth et Ignis*), which belongs primarily to the fourth category, was very influential among the “new Rosicrucians” since in it Fictuld discusses the chivalric Order of the Golden Fleece founded by Philip III the Good. This work is probably the only alchemical book entirely devoted to this Greek myth, which like many authors before him he interprets as ‘a hermetic [= alchemical] alphabet’. But contrary to the interpretations of most of his predecessors he does not deal with alchemy alone. A theosophical inspiration runs through the whole work, notably in the long appendix which consists of a commentary of the *Emerald Tablet*. Here, and in his *Turba Philosophorum* (1763), Fictuld provides one of the most detailed interpretations of that text ever written.

Fictuld’s language is oftentimes bombastic. At its best, it is reminiscent of the rococo style. But the vivid imagination he displays makes his books worthwhile reading. His erudition still provides a valuable resource for historians interested in late 18th century esoteric thought. Moreover, he typifies the kind of theo-alchemy (alchemy blended with theosophy, or the reverse) in Germany current at that time, interwoven with the inspiration of the so-called radical → Pietism. His works do not deserve the oblivion into which they have fallen. They merit a thorough scholarly study.

*Wege zum Grossen Universal, oder Stein der Alten Weisen*, s. l., 1731 ♦ *Chymische Schriften, Darinnen in zwölf königlichen Palästen, von dem Stein der Weisen gehandelt wird . . .*, Nuremberg: J.C. Göpner, 1734 ♦ (Preface by Friedrich Roth-Scholtz), *Der längst gewünschte und versprochene Chymisch-Philosophische Probiertestein, Auf welchem so wohl die Schriften der wahren Adeptorum als auch der betrügerischen Sophisten seyn probiret worden . . .*, Frankfurt and Leipzig: M. Blochberger, 1740; New, enlarged version edited by Gottlieb von Weissenfels: Frankfurt and Leipzig: E. Lugenfeind, 1753 ♦ Third edition: Hilschersche Buchhandlung: Dresden, 1784 ♦ *Hermetischer Triumphbogen, auf zweyen Wunder-Säulen der grossen und kleinen Welt bevestiget . . .* (Consists of three texts which stand on their own: (separate title

pages and paginations): a) *Der Allergrössten . . . Göttlichen Weisheit . . .* (a sort of introduction to the following two texts, b and c); b) *Cabbala mystice naturae . . . von dem Ewigen und Einigen Eins als dem Feu-ri-gen Liebes-Saltze . . .*; c) *Occulta occultissime*). E. Lügenfeind [!]: Petersburg, Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1741 ♦ *Azoth et Ignis, Das ist, das wahre Elementarische Wasser und Feuer Oder Mercurius Philosophorum . . .* (Contains: *Aureum Vellus oder Goldenes Vliess Was dasselbe sey . . .*, Leipzig: M. Blochberger, 1749) ♦ *Hermetica Victoria, Das ist: Vollkommen Erfochtener Sieg und Triumph Des . . . Herma-phroditi . . .*, Leipzig: M. Blochberger, 1750 (written in 1747) ♦ *Abhandlung von der Alchymie, und deren Gewissheit*, Erlangen: J.C. Tetzschner, 1754 ♦ *Turba Philosophorum, das ist: Gesammelte Sprüche der Weisen zur Erläuterung der hermetischen Schmaragd-Tafel . . .*, s. l., 1763 (written in 1759) ♦ “Fürstliche und Monarchische Rosen von Jericho. Das ist: Moses Testament und Vergabung der Künsten und Wissenschaften . . .”, in: *Neue Sammlung von einigen alten und sehr rar gewordenen Philosophisch und Alchymistischen Schriften*, part 3, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1771. Written in 1760 (see Preface). This is a fake translation (actually, F. ist the author) ♦ Extracts from texts by F. are presented in vols. 3 and 4 of the anthology *Hermetisches A. B. C., deren ächten Weisen alter und neuer Zeiten vom Stein der Weisen* (C.U. Berlin: Ringmacher, 1778-1779; reprint Ansata: CH-Schwarzenburg, 1979).

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

Firth, Violet Mary → Fortune, Dion

Flamel, Nicolas, \*ca. 1330 Pontoise, † 22.3.1418 Paris

Flamel’s life, although destined to be legendary, had no outstanding features on the face of it. It was first that of a public writer, then of a comfortable artisan, the proprietor of a studio for the binding of manuscripts, on whom, as his ultimate professional honor, the University bestowed the title of *libraire-juré*, authorized copier of manuscripts. More than this busy career, Flamel’s wife seems to have been the origin of his fortune. At her death in 1397, she bequeathed her husband a large sum of money and much revenue from rental properties. Flamel, at his death on 22 March 1417, left an impressive legacy: about 4000 gold crowns mainly intended for charitable works and pious gifts. Flamel’s reputation as an alchemist would be born from this wealth, which was difficult to explain, but also from allegorical motifs painted on arcades that had been built at his orders, in 1389 and in 1407, at the cemetery of the Holy Innocents.

As noted by Didier Kahn, the first trace of the myth of Flamel the alchemist goes back to the end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century, when a French adaptation of *Flos florum* (a Latin treatise on → alchemy from the 14th century attributed to → Arnau de Vilanova) was published with the simple title: *Le Livre Flamel*. Subsequently, Flamel was incorrectly presented as the author of several other texts – notably the *Sommaire philosophique* (a French poem of the 15th century) and *Désir désiré* (1618, a French version of the *Thesaurus philosophiae* of Efferarius Monachus [14th century]) – and promoted as an authority in the field of hermetic research. The alchemical interpretation of the arches in the cemetery of the Innocents bolstered the idea that Flamel was an adept. Robertus Vallensis, their first exegete, in his *De antiquitate et veritate artis alchemiae* (1561) refers his readers, as regards the matter of pictorial illustration of the “mysteries of chemistry”, to ‘the enigma of Nicolas Flamel, who depicts two serpents or dragons, one winged, the other wingless, and a winged lion, etc.’ and that one can ‘see today in Paris at the cemetery of the Holy Innocents’.

It is in the *Livre des figures hiéroglyphiques* (1612) that the detailed story of Flamel as a maker of gold is found for the first time. An unknown publisher, Arnauld de la Chevalerie, published it twice in 1612 in a collection including *Trois traités de la philosophie naturelle*. The questions of the

dating and the real author of the text have not yet been resolved. If it ever really existed, the original Latin from which Arnauld de la Chevalerie claims to have made the translation has disappeared in any case. According to Robert Halleux, there are of this work 'no manuscripts prior to the edition', and it is 'now established that it can be dated to no earlier than the end of the 16th century', because of a citation of Lambsprinck published by Nicolas Barnaud in 1599. Claude Gagnon attributes the paternity of the book to the publisher himself, under whose pseudonym would be hiding, according to him, the writer Béroalde de Verville (1556-1626). The *Livre des figures* forms a triptych with clearly distinct parts. The first of them is equivalent to a sort of narrative preamble in which Flamel reports how a mysterious work fell into his hands, the book of Abraham, and continues to relate his difficulties in piercing its arcana, his initiation by a certain master Canches, and finally his realization of the philosopher's stone. Following this, he decided to have hieroglyphs painted on an arch, which referred to the alchemical art and would be helpful to those who would be able to decipher them. Next, these symbols are explained in two stages. First, in two introductory chapters the author sets forth his two keys of interpretation. One of them is theological; the other, called 'philosophical', is established 'according to the authority of Hermes'. The eight remaining chapters give detailed alchemical commentaries on the different motifs of the arch. The latter is illustrated separately on two full pages. It would seem that the Flamelian explications are made according to the rules of the ancient art of memory [→ Mnemonics] (Greiner 2000). This mnemotechnique result in a presentation of the two spheres of theology and of chemical experiments as closely associated operations belonging to the domains of the spirit and of matter respectively, thus furnishing the reader with a totalizing vision of the making of the philosopher's stone. As such the Book of pseudo-Flamel is primarily a testimony of the rise of Christian alchemy in France at the beginning of the 17th century.

*Le Sommaire philosophique*, in: *De La Transformation métallique, trois anciens tractez en rithme françoise*, Paris: G. Guillard & A. Warancore, 1561 ♦ P. Arnaud de La Chevalerie (ed.), *Les Figures hiéroglyphiques de Nicolas Flamel ainsi qu'il les a mises en la quatrième arche qu'il a bastie au Cimetière des Innocents à Paris . . . avec l'explication d'icelles par iceluy Flamel*, in: *Trois Traitez de la philosophie naturelle*, Paris: Vve M. Guillemot & S. Thiboust, 1612 ♦ *ThréSOR de philosophie ou original du Désir désiré de Nicolas Flamel*, in: [M. Sendigovius], Paris: *Traicté du*

*Soulphre*, 1618 ♦ *Le Grand Esclaircissement de la Pierre Philosophale, pour la transmutation de tous les Metaux*, Paris: L. Vendosmes, 1628 ♦ D. Kahn (ed.), *Nicolas Flamel, écrits alchimiques*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1993.

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FRANK GREINER

**Fludd, Robert**, \* 1574 Milgate House (Kent), † 8.09.1637 London

Fludd was born in his family manor. The fifth son of Sir Thomas Fludd, he would always remain very proud of his noble origins: we can see on the title page of his printed works that he has his university title preceded by Armiger or Esquire. We know little of his childhood. He was probably entrusted to a tutor for his basic studies; later he enrolled in Saint John's College, Oxford. While many students issued from the gentry considered their time at university as no more than a social necessity, Fludd prepared for his examinations in earnest and obtained his M.A. in 1598.

We have some information on his centers of interest during this period: he devoted part of his free time to → music and to what he called *mea astrologia* [→ Astrology]. This in fact allowed him, according to an anecdote included in 1617 in his masterly book *Utriusque Cosmi . . . Historia* (History of the Two Worlds), to unmask a thief. He was thus already known for his competence in the domain of astrology, but such research was considered neither blameworthy, nor, above all, in discord with the dominant religious tendencies at St. John's



College. In fact most of the clergy of the Anglican Church were trained at this university, where serious knowledge of the Scriptures was required of the students. Fludd shows his perfect knowledge of the Bible by the citations that he makes throughout his work. The basis of the philosophy then taught at the university was still Aristotelian. It is difficult to perceive whether the Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism] or hermetic [→ Hermetic Literature] currents had penetrated the university world, but what is certain is that Fludd knew the works of Petrus Ramus, a well-known anti-Aristotelian whose books were at St. John's.

After obtaining his M.A., Fludd left for travels on the continent that would last six years. He worked as a tutor in aristocratic families, for example for Charles de Lorraine and his brother, with whom he studied mathematics and various related sciences such as land surveying and establishing fortifications. This knowledge would fill part of the second volume of his *Utriusque Cosmi . . . Historia*, which also includes a treatise on geomancy, composed in Avignon for the Papal Vice-Legate, as well as a study on music.

When he could finally get to Italy, he stayed first in Livorno, and then in Rome. There he met a Swiss named Grutherus, who taught him engineering and the use of Paracelsian remedies [→ Paracelsianism]. One of them was the famous "weapon-salve" (based upon applying salve to the weapon that has caused a wound rather than caring for the wound itself; it was supposed to work on the basis of sympathy): a medication that later caused a controversy between Fludd and William Foster. In 1602, the traveler returned to Italy, and in Padua he met William Harvey, with whom he was to remain in contact and to whose discoveries regarding blood circulation he gave his full attention.

We have little information about his contacts in Germanic territory, but there is no doubt that he passed through the Court of the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg and that of the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel. Fludd certainly turned this long stay abroad to advantage, by improving his knowledge in the areas that seem to have interested him from the period of his studies at St. John's College; and he found his medical vocation confirmed in an atmosphere where the theories of → Paracelsus were particularly in vogue.

Upon his return to England in 1605, Fludd enrolled at Christ Church College, Oxford, but it would seem that he encountered difficulties in conducting his medical studies. In fact, he was admitted to the London College of Physicians only in 1609. He was mainly criticized for his insolent atti-

tude, that offended all the members of the Jury. The inflated idea that he had of his origins, combined with hypersensitivity, explains moreover the violence of his later reactions to any criticism of his theories, whether from Libavius, Merenne, Gassendi, Kepler, William Foster or any other of his many critics. A few years later, however, Fludd was completely accepted in the college, and he was elected Censor in 1618 and 1627, and again in 1633 and 1634.

The exercise of Paracelsian medicine required Fludd to have an apothecary at his service, to manage his personal laboratory, where he prepared drugs for his patients and engaged in many alchemical experiments. He had a wide clientele. We know little about his method of therapy, except that he began by establishing his patient's horoscope, and that as a good disciple of Paracelsus he employed certain plants and chemical preparations. To this he added taking the pulse and examining the patient's urine: classical elements of diagnosis that he sets forth in his *Medicina Catholica* (I, b and II, b). His bedside manner was particularly appreciated: he attached much importance to the spoken word and to prayer.

Apart from these consultations, Doctor Fludd devoted his time to assembling all the writings that he had already partly composed at Oxford and during his travels, and that would eventually be assimilated into his voluminous work *Utriusque Cosmi . . . Historia*. The publication in 1617 of the first volume, about the macrocosm, did not fail to make quite some waves. Fludd had dedicated it to King James I, whom he qualified as Ter Maximus; but certain courtiers – Francis Bacon may have been one of them – called the monarch's attention to the often enigmatic illustrations contained in the work, and their occasionally obscure commentaries. As a result, James I, who was more or less obsessed with → witchcraft, asked the author to come and explain the meaning of his book. But if Fludd's theories certainly aroused *calomniators* (he himself uses this term), he also had many supporters and friends, in the country and on the continent, and the interview with James I went very well. The king's support for him was henceforth assured; and he even obtained a patent for his steel-making process and later the revenue from a property in Suffolk; these benefits were continued by the next monarch, Charles I.

Fludd's position was nevertheless made delicate due to his publication in 1616 of a work supporting the cause of → Rosicrucianism, entitled *Apolo-gia compendaria, Fraternalitatem de Rosea Cruce suspicionis et infamiae maculis aspersam, veritas*



*quasi Fluctibus abluens et abstergens* (Summary Apology for the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, sullied with stains of suspicion and infamy, but cleansed with the Waters of truth). These “stains” came from the work of a German Lutheran alchemist, Andreas Libavius, who had attacked the *Fama* (1614), the *Confessio* (1615) and the *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz* (1616). Libavius accused their authors of heresy, attempted sedition, and diabolical → magic. Fludd reacted violently; according to him, the Brothers had no political ambition but merely affirmed their attachment to Christ and to a renovated religion. As for the marvelous things they promised, these could be obtained by means of natural magic, kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and astrology, all of them “arts” that our doctor knew well and that he claimed were in no way diabolical. In fact, Fludd himself did not hesitate to apply as a candidate for joining the Brotherhood. He thought that he could permit himself to do so because he despised carnal and worldly pleasures, wished to improve education, and was motivated solely by thirst for wisdom.

As he had promised in the *Apologia*, he developed his arguments the following year, in 1617, in a much longer work, the *Tractatus apologeticus integritatem Societatis de Rosea Cruce defendens* (Apologetic tract to defend the integrity of the Rosicrucian Society). Several works that have long been available only in manuscript, but have recently been published – the *Declaratio brevis* dedicated to James I (written probably as early as 1618) and *A Philosophicall Key* (written somewhat later) – show that when Fludd first heard of the Rosicrucian manifestoes, he had already composed a large part of his *Utriusque Cosmi . . . Historia*; therefore if he broadly shared the ideas of the Rosicrucians, he had nevertheless borrowed nothing from them for his work, and had never met any member whatsoever of the Brotherhood.

Many critics have pointed out the complex nature of Fludd’s thought, or at least its difficulty. But fortunately he had a talent for illustrating his sometimes long and confusing discussions with engravings and diagrams, which were ironically referred to as “hieroglyphs” by Kepler, but which have certainly been responsible for the fact that his name has survived in history. Because of their great number and their quality, they first captured the attention of bibliophiles, some of whom then began to study the doctrine they were supposed to illustrate.

The influence on Fludd of the Florentine Academy, especially → Marsilio Ficino and → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, is of the greatest importance;

this, together with many borrowings from the Bible, is the foundation on which he built his entire system of thought. Fludd’s universe is based upon the relationships of musical harmony (following Pythagoras and Plato), with the purity of spirit progressively diminishing as it descends down to the most material level. The arts, technology, science and medicine are presented according to a similar framework. Fludd’s philosophy is first and foremost a religious one: it is “Mosaic”, as he himself calls it in his last work, *Philosophia Moysaica*, and based on biblical interpretation. Fludd takes the time to be explicit in this regard: if he might sometimes seem to deviate from the thinking of certain Church Fathers, this is because Scripture often has a double meaning, but he considers his works to be always in line with orthodoxy. If, moreover, he cites Plato, this is because he believes that this philosopher had knowledge of the work of → Moses; and → Hermes Trismegistus he believes to be in agreement with Moses as well. This was not the opinion of the monk and mathematician Marin Mersenne, who saw in Fludd’s works a dangerous syncretism of hermetico-kabbalistic origin that no longer had anything in common with authentic Christianity. A brutal controversy ensued between the two men and their supporters, which lasted more than ten years; the title of a short work by Fludd, *Sophiae cum Moria Certamen* (Combat of Wisdom with Madness), gives an idea of its violence.

The synthesis finally produced by Fludd contains some original ideas, such as in particular his invention of a diagram of intersecting pyramids that represents the descent of spirit (called *pyramis formalis*) and the ascent of matter. Fludd was particularly proud of it and did not hesitate to include it among the seven microcosmic arts, along with prophecy, the art of memory [→ Mnemonics], chiromancy, etc. The figure on page 89 of *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (I, a), about the divisions of each of the worlds, gives a perfect image of his conception of the cosmos. First there is the *empyrean*, that is the highest heaven, which is composed of three parts corresponding to the divisions of the angelic hierarchy; then follow the seven circles of the planets that move in the *etheric heaven*; and finally the four parts of the elementary world, which are those of the four elements, fire, air, water, earth. The ascending pyramid stops at the edge of the supercelestial kingdom of God and the other pyramid stops just before the circle depicting the earth. These pyramids intersect the celestial regions at precisely fixed intervals.

Intervals and proportions play a very great role in Fluddian thinking, and immediately recall the

idea of the music of the spheres. The English doctor – who had been interested in music since his youth and who knew of Plato’s heptachord and the Kabbalistic interpretation of the divine names – presents the world as organized according to the rules of a divine monochord; in fact, he used the term *Monochordum Mundi* as the title of his last reply to Kepler. The latter had accused him of using calculations and curves *hermetico more*, while he himself was studying only the planets, according to a rigorous mathematical method. In fact it was not enough for Fludd to apply his system to the whole macrocosm; he believed that Man’s body and all his organs obeyed diapasons corresponding to the three heavens as well (*Utriusque Cosmi Historia* II, a 1, p. 275).

Fludd’s God is unique and absolute: many of the figures in his *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* confirm this for us by enthroning the Hebrew tetragrammaton or the equilateral triangle at their summit. But, just as the Kabbalists distinguished a “luminous aleph” from a “tenebrous aleph” in the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Fludd sees in God a tenebrous aspect comparable to unorganized chaos, the expression of the divine *noluntas*, and on the other hand, an active state that brings the universe into being; this is the manifestation of the divine *voluntas*, so that this active state is necessarily good. The emblem on the title page of *Philosophia Mosaica* intends to express this duality and clarifies this aspect of his vision: the weather-glass, a sort of thermometer-barometer used to predict the weather, but that the doctor had invented above all for philosophical purposes. According to him, the expansion and the contraction of air which are made visible by the apparatus, are manifestations analogously related to the hot-cold antagonism, which is similar to that of light and shadows, both of which have issued from God. The movements of contraction and expansion immediately recall breathing: for Fludd all life on earth and in the cosmos depends on the divine breath. When God exhales, all the evil principles recede, but when He holds His breath, they can wreak havoc on humanity and the universe. Such is the manifestation of the divine *Voluntas* and *Noluntas*. Given the hierarchical structure of the cosmos as imagined by Fludd, beneficial effects are transmitted by the ministry of the angels who are active throughout the universe, but who can also become passive and “frozen” and thus make it possible for the opposing demons to act. The angels’ mission is to govern the winds of the four cardinal points, whose effects are antagonistic. But even more than being the masters of the winds, the angels are in charge of

the stars and the planets, which have an influence on our earthly existence as well. We can understand how important it was for the doctor to set up a patient’s horoscope before considering any therapy.

The question of the beginning of this universe also greatly interested Fludd. He claimed that before the Creation there had existed a *materia prima* or *hylè*, described by him as a ‘dark cloud as black as pitch’; in response to critics who might see in it an entity coeternal with divinity, he hastens to quote Saint → Augustine, who compared this original state to silence in relation to speech. The first divine manifestation was light, and in this Fludd could claim the support of Moses, Plato and Hermes. The words *fiat lux* brought forth the highest heaven, the empyrean, filled with light that only the intellect can perceive. Then everything unfolded according to the hierarchical order, traversed by the pyramids described above. Noteworthy is the capital role of the primordial waters in the separation of the worlds; they are the vehicles of the creative light that splits the heavens in two, and then imposes order on matter, to constitute the three reigns of our world: animal, vegetable and mineral. This is not, of course, common water, but “alchemical water”; Fludd undoubtedly alludes to it in his essay “Of the Excellency of Wheat”, which comprises the greater part of his *A Philosophicall Key* and which also appears in his *Anatomiae Amphitheatrum*.

When the first heaven and the lower heaven had been organized, God created the sun, which he made the seat of the quintessence. He placed it in the center of the intermediary heaven (or etheric) where it participates with both God and the Earth. In a way, it is the visible representation of God. What follows is borrowed by Fludd not from *Genesis* but from a myth of Orphic origin. In his *Tractatus Theologo-Philosophicus*, as in *A Philosophicall Key*, there appears a sort of demiurge, *Demogorgon*, flanked by *Eternity* (or Nature) and by *Chaos* who gave birth to *Litigium* (or Conflict), which is the source of so many evils that it had to be thrown down with *Chaos* into the tenebrous center of the earth. Nature brought another son into the world, Pan, to whom was entrusted the creation of the Microcosm, Man, who was created in perfect correspondence with the Macrocosm. His sensory organs are as many as there are planets; just as God is enthroned in the loftiest heaven, Man’s intellect is in his head; in the middle part of his body is placed a little tabernacle, the heart, that provides blood to the members, just as the sun floods the macrocosm with its rays, giving it light,

etc. Demogorgon needs only to blow part of his divine fire into him.

Fludd's Creator never abandons his creation. He intervenes ceaselessly, through the intermediary of Nature, which is in musical sympathy with him. Fludd tried to represent Nature in one of the first illustrations in *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (I, a, pp. 4-5). She is the minister closest to God: connected to him by a chain, to her other hand is attached, also by a chain, a monkey that represents the microcosmic Art. In his later works, Fludd speaks less of Nature and more of the World Soul. He thinks that the kabbalists meant to describe the same principle with their *Metatron* who has dominion over the World, and in whom he sees (in his *Monochordum Mundi*) 'the Soul of the Messiah, or the Virtue of the Tetragrammaton, in which is the light of the Living God, and in which is the light of *Ensof*, beyond which one cannot go'.

Fludd drew from all the sources available to him – the Bible and the kabbalah, music, astrology, alchemy, as well as technology – to construct his image of the universe. He can be seen as one of the last representatives of the Renaissance homo universalis. If some historians have seen in Fludd no more than an experimenter still too restricted by the bonds of alchemy, others will point out the importance he attached to the experimental foundations of his lengthy philosophical theories. Some of the debates stimulated by his work are still topical today.

*Utriusque cosmi Majoris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica Atque Technica Historia . . . Tomus Primus De Macrocosmi Historia.*, Oppenheim: Johann Theodor de Bry, 1617 (I, a) & 1618 (I, b) ♦ *Tomus secundus De . . . microcosmi historia . . .*, Oppenheim: Johann Theodor de Bry, 1619 (II, a, 1), 1620(?) (II, a, 2) & Francofurti, 1621 (II, b) ♦ *Anatomiae Amphitheatrum Effigie Triplici, More et Conditione Varia Designatum* [constitutes a sequel to *Utriusque . . .*], Frankfurt: Johann-Theodor de Bry, 1623 ♦ *Philosophia Sacra et vere Christiana Seu Meterologica Cosmica* [constitutes a sequel to *Utriusque . . .*], Frankfurt: Officina Bryana, 1626 ♦ *Medicina Catholica, seu Mysticum Artis Medicandi sacrum . . .*, Frankfurt: William Fitzer, 1629 (I, a) & 1631 (I,b, II,a, II,b) ♦ *Philosophia Moysaica*, Gouda: Petrus Rammazenus, 1638 ♦ *Mosaicall Philosophy: Grounded upon the essential Truth or eternal Sapience, Written first in Latin, and afterwards thus rendered into English . . .*, London: Humphrey Moseley, 1659 ♦ "Truth's Golden Harrow" (C.H. Josten, ed.), *Ambix* 3 (1949), 91-150 ♦ "Declaratio Brevis" to James I (William H. Huffman & Robert A. Seelinge, ed. & trans.), *Ambix* 25 (1978), 69-92 ♦ "A Philosophicall Key", in: Allen G. Debus (ed.), *Robert Fludd and his Philosophicall Key*, New York: Science History Publication, 1979.

*Lit.*: Joscelyn Godwin, *Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds* (1979), repr. Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1991 ♦ William H. Huffman, *Robert Fludd and the End of the Renaissance*, London, New York: Routledge, 1988 ♦ *Robert Fludd: Essential Readings* (William H. Huffman, ed.), London: The Aquarian Press, 1992 ♦ Serge Hutin, *Robert Fludd (1574-1637): Alchimiste et Philosophe Rosicrucien*, Paris: Omnium Littéraire, 1971 ♦ J.B. Craven, *Dr. Robert Fludd (Robertus de Fluctibus): The English Rosicrucian. Life and Writings*, repr. Montana: Kessinger, n.d. ♦ Urszula Szulakowska, "Robert Fludd: The Divine Alchemy of the Eye of God", in: *The Alchemy of Light: Geometry and Optics in Late Renaissance Alchemical Illustration*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill, 2000, 167-182.

SYLVIE EDIGHOFFER

**Foix-Candale (= Foix de Candale),**  
François, \* August 1512 Bordeaux,  
† 5.2.1594 Bordeaux

Foix-Candale belonged to a family of the old Catholic nobility which provided some of the most ardent leaders of resistance to the Huguenots in the Southwest. He succeeded his brother as Bishop of Aire-sur-l'Adour near Bordeaux in 1570. Although that post remained merely formal, he was made Cardinal in 1587. Well versed in geometry, he acquired a reputation as a specialist in instruments of measurement. He used his castle of Puy-Paulin near Bordeaux as a "grand salon littéraire", gathering humanists, mathematicians, etc. Foix-Candale is considered one of the greatest humanists in Bordeaux in the second half of the 16th century, along with people like the historian Jacques Auguste de Thou, the publisher Simon Millanges, Joseph Scaliger and, of course, Michel de Montaigne (who, like Foix-Candale, had been a member of the Parliament of Bordeaux). His cousin Henri de Navarre (the future Henri IV) trusted him enough to send him in 1576 with a diplomatic mission to Elizabeth I of England.

Foix-Candale is an important figure in the history of Neo-Alexandrian → Hermetism, the ensemble of esoterically oriented commentaries (from the end of the 15th through the 20th centuries) of the Greek *Hermetica* in general, and of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (2nd and 3rd centuries) in particular. He first authored an edition (1566) of Euclid's *Elementa*, with commentaries which later inspired → John Dee. In that book, he stressed the necessity of the Pythagorean approach to numbers [→ Number Symbolism] and praised the idea, widespread in his time, that mathematics has a spiritual value. His last work (1584) does not deal with numbers but

with the nature of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Even more than his first book, this one is strongly inspired by Hermetism.

In between his book on Euclid and his book on the Eucharist, he published three further texts. As noted by Frances A. Yates, all three mark 'new heights of ecstatic religious Hermetism' (1964, 173). They present themselves as editions, with his own commentaries, of treatises belonging to the *Corpus Hermeticum*. They consist of: (A) a Greek-Latin edition based upon the edition by Turnebus of 1554 (68 pp.), published in 1574; (B) a Greek-French edition of these texts (72 pp.), also in 1574; and (C) a book in French (759 pp. in folio), consisting for the most part of a new edition of them, published in 1579, but now accompanied by long philosophical expositions. His manuscript of this last book had been finished by 1572, but its publication was delayed due to the turmoil caused by the events of St. Bartholomew's Day. It is this last-mentioned book which made him most famous, because it is filled with his expositions of various aspects of Hermetism. It differs from the former two books in that it is much bigger, and Foix-Candale devotes much more space to his personal speculations than to purely philological considerations.

There are some similarities between this book of 1579 and the *Essais* (1580) of Foix-Candale's friend Michel de Montaigne. Both evince an extremely tolerant attitude in religious matters. This is a striking trait in a France then plagued by feuds between Protestant and Catholics, though it was a trait common in people for whom Hermetism was a staple diet. From a literary point of view, Foix-Candale's book consists of a long series of hardly interconnected discourses, written in a fluid style as the inspiration goes, very much like the *Essais*. The titles of most of Montaigne's essays are less an indication of what is to follow than a pretext for a free-wheeling association of ideas. Likewise in Foix-Candale's *Le Pimandre*, extracts from the C.H. serve as titles for expounding ideas which are oftentimes only tenuously related to these extracts or the titles. In this connection, another book, already a "classic" in esoteric literature, → Valentin Tomberg's *Meditationen . . .*, (1st ed. 1972) may also be compared to Foix-Candale's, in that each title of a chapter bears the name of a → Tarot card, though what follows is oftentimes somewhat removed from the symbolism of the card.

Foix-Candale's intellectual make-up was profoundly influenced by his study of Hermetic philosophy. At the beginning of his 1574 edition, in the dedicatory epistle to Emperor Maximilian II,

he writes that → Hermes Trismegistus possessed knowledge of the divine equal to the apostles and the evangelists, and the rest of his epistle abounds in similar statements. Later, in his unpublished treatise on the Eucharist, he does not hesitate to rely upon Hermetic authority in defending the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Although he never seems willing to abandon or compromise his commitment to a Catholicism that would stimulate a religious reunion of all Christian confessions, he believes that Hermes Trismegistus was a contemporary of 'Saturn, King of Egypt' who preceded Abraham by several generations, and goes as far as claiming that Hermes' texts (the *Corpus Hermeticum*) are superior in form and understanding to the books of → Moses. He claims that Hermetic philosophy is a means of purification, that prepares one for the unifying experience of contemplating the divine. But in so doing he frequently seems to imply that salvation is made possible less by redemption and forgiveness of sins than by a spiritual "regeneration" – as he calls it – which is achieved through a form of gnosis. In this emphasis of salvation through knowledge ('piété avec cognoissance', 243), he goes even further than predecessors and contemporaries of a hermetic persuasion such as → Lefèvre d'Étaples, Gabriel du Préau, → Symphorien Champier, → Lodovico Lazzarelli or Philippe Duplessis de Mornay.

Foix-Candale does not extend to nature this notion of purification or "regeneration". Nature does not need to be regenerated, and man's "regeneration" does not take place through her. But nature is not lifeless for that: Foix-Candale sees her as a kind of big immortal animal. He holds long discourses on the Soul of the World, which range chronologically between Ficinian Platonism and the speculations of → Ralph Cudworth. He is lavish in his discussions of → astrology. Each star and planet has a power of its own which enables it to exercise a specific influence upon the sublunary world. The earth is replete with spirits or *daïmones* put in charge of carrying out the will of God and immersed within a very subtle matter. He speculates also about the kind of body that the angels may have, about their sex, about divine and human androgyny, etc. He believes in the existence of the elementals (spirits of the four elements) and even narrates how he himself met spirits or goblins somewhere in the mountains of southern France. As a matter of fact, his book contains certain reflections that have a Paracelsian character as he wrote when → Paracelsianism was just beginning to get known in France.



Like many other French Hermetists of the Renaissance (but contrary to most Italian ones), Foix-Candale is wary of the magical aspects of certain passages contained in the Hermetic writings, and above all in the *Asclepius*. Therefore he tends to underplay them or to blame them on the supposed “translator”, the evil magus Apuleius. More generally, he is not interested in magical or theurgical practices. But → alchemy is for him a different matter, and his book contains expositions on this subject which should be put into the context of both his cosmological outlooks and the alchemical literature of his time. About his own activities in this domain he always remained very discreet, but he was himself an alchemist, or at least a spagyrist. He had a laboratory where he produced his medicines, including a panacea called “Eau de Candale” which has remained famous in France through the subsequent centuries. His neighbour and friend Michel de Montaigne mentions him in his *Essais* (II, XII) as someone engaged into the quest of the Philosopher’s Stone, and the poet Agrippa d’Aubigné describes a tour of his laboratory in the company of himself and of Henri de Navarre. Except in his book of 1579, Foix-Candale did not publish anything on alchemy, but his knowledge was appreciated by specialists like → Clovis Hesteaude de Nuysement and other theoreticians or practitioners of the Opus Magnum.

Foix-Candale’s *Le Pimandre* of 1579 ranks among the most representative works to have been produced by the Neo-Alexandrian Hermetic current in the second half of the 16th century. More generally, it stands out as one of the most remarkable texts in Western esoteric currents since the early Renaissance, even until the present time. Surprisingly, it has not been newly edited since 1587. A third edition with philological and historical commentaries is badly needed.

*Euclidis Megarensis Mathematici Clarissimi elementa . . .*, Paris: Jean Le Royer, 1566; rev. ed. Jacques du Puys, 1578 ♦ *Mercurii Trismegisti Pimandras utraque linguae restitutus, D. Francisci Flussatis Candallae industria*, Bordeaux: S. Millanges, 1574 ♦ (reprinted in Paris in 1630) ♦ *Le Pimandre de Mercure Trismégiste Nouvellement Traduit De l’Exemplaire Grec Restitué en Langue Françoisse par François Monsieur de Foy de la famille de Candalle. A la Roynne du Roy tres-chrestien Henry troisieme*, Bordeaux: S. Millanges, 1574 ♦ *Le Pimandre de Mercure Trismégiste de la philosophie chrestienne, cognoissance du Verbe divin, et de l’excellence des œuvres de Dieu, traduit de l’exemplaire grec, avec la collation de . . . commentaires, par François Monsieur de Foix*, Bordeaux: S. Millanges, 1579; Paris: New ed. Abel l’Angelier, 1587 ♦ *Traicté du Saint-Sacrement par lequel plusieurs*

*intelligences divines . . . sont esclaircies . . .*, 1584 (Manuscript Bibliothèque Nationale F. Mitterrand in Paris: Fonds Français, 1886).

*Lit.*: Jean Dagens, “Le Commentaire du *Pimandre* de François de Candale”, *Mélanges d’histoire littéraire offerts à Daniel Mornet*, Paris: Nizet, 1951 (see 21-26) ♦ idem, *Bérulle et les origines de la restauration catholique (1575-1611)*, Paris, 1952 (see 21-22) ♦ idem, “Hermétisme et cabale en France de Lefèvre d’Etaples à Bossuet”, *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 1 (1961), 5-16 (see 6-7) ♦ Jeanne Harrie, *François Foix de Candale and the Hermetic Tradition in Sixteenth Century France*, doctoral diss. 1972, University of California, Riverside. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1975 ♦ eadem, “Duplessis-Mornay, Foix-Candale and the Hermetic Religion of the World”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 31:2 (1978), 499-514 ♦ Elaine Limbrick, “Hermétisme religieux au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: le *Pimandre* de François Foix de Candale”, *Renaissance and Reformation* 5 (1981), 1-14 ♦ Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, 173, 179, 182, 406.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

**Formisano, Ciro** → Kremmerz, Giuliano

**Fortune, Dion** (ps. of Violet Mary Firth), \* 6.12.1890 Bryn-y-Bia, Llandudno, Wales, † 8.1.1946 London

Occultist [→ occult / occultism] author, founder of the group which eventually became the Society of the Inner Light, originally conceived as an “outer court” of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Fortune was initiated into the Golden Dawn in 1919 (adopting the magical motto *Deo non Fortuna*, whence her pen name) but was subsequently evicted on account of personal conflicts with Moina Mathers (1865-1928, colleague and by then widow of → S.L. McGregor Mathers). Fortune continued to run the Fraternity of the Inner Light as an independent organization, still based on Golden Dawn principles, until her death (and for some years after it by the popular account). She was an amateur of psychology, a conscious and canny popularizer of occult ideas and methods, and a prolific author, both of textbooks on magic of a “how-to” variety, and of occult novels which depict the construction of magical rituals in such detail that the novels, too, have served as a set of ritual sourcebooks (both for post-Gardnerian Neopagan witchcraft [→ Neopaganism] and for ritual magicians more explicitly indebted to the magical tradition she founded). Her books



continue to be popular among Neopagans and occultists and most of them remain in print.

By her own account Fortune came to occultism through the study of psychology. Some of her early experiences are chronicled in *Psychic Self-Defense* (1930), a remarkable book which is part anecdotal evidence, part do-it-yourself exorcism manual, part autobiography, and some part no doubt fiction. In its opening pages, Fortune describes an experience of being the victim of what at the time of writing she construes as a “psychic attack” by her employer, which took place when she was about twenty (or around 1910) and left her in poor health for some years afterwards. The effort to recover from this breakdown led her to take up the study of psychology, and subsequently, ‘in order to understand the hidden aspects of the mind’, occultism (*Psychic Self-Defense*, 19). In 1922 she published (under the name she reserved for her psychological writings, Violet Firth) a compendium of her lectures on psychology under the title *Machinery of the Mind*: a brief, popularizing digest of psycho-analytic ideas which (though useless as a commentary on Freud and of little interest to the practicing occultist) still gives insight into how easily then fashionable notions of psychology might be melded with the ideas of occultism. In later writings she continues to refer to the study of psychology as the thing which precipitated her into occultism, and it is likely that her ability to draw on the jargon of repressions, complexes, and mental pathologies did much to contribute to the popularity and accessibility of her books, inasmuch as her prose flows back and forth easily between esoteric and mystical language and a more modernizing, secular, and scientific rhetoric which tends to ease the fundamental alterity of the former.

Though the primary source for the shape and style of Fortune’s magic was the Golden Dawn, other strands of influence include Christian Science (the religion in which she was raised) and Theosophy. Fortune’s theosophical readings appear to have been important to the early development of her occult ideas, though she did not actually join the → Theosophical Society until 1924, acting upon instructions from the inner planes to do so. Soon thereafter she became president of the Christian Mystic Lodge of the Theosophical Society at her base of operations in London, 3 Queensborough Terrace. While she herself perceived a continuity between her activities under the auspices of the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn, not everyone felt comfortable with her dynamic personality and confident leadership. In 1927, having quarrelled with some of its other members

(whom she accused of corruption in the *Transactions* of the Christian Mystic Lodge), she resigned from the Theosophical Society. In the same time period she was evicted from the Golden Dawn due to the exacerbation of her psychic conflicts with Moina Mathers, and shortly thereafter she declared the existence of a new Fraternity of the Inner Light, which continued to operate, with her at its head, in the same location at 3 Queensborough Terrace. The newly declared fraternity initially involved the same core group of people who had previously attended meetings of the Christian Mystic Lodge; indeed throughout Fortune’s conflicts with the larger societies there is a continuity to her own group provided not only by its incarnate membership but also by the inner planes masters with whom Fortune had been in contact since 1922 (two years prior to her membership in the Theosophical Society), who evidently commanded the interest and loyalty of those who had been working with her up to this point. Because Fortune’s outlook tended to be broadly synthetic in any case, her personal conflicts never caused her to lose her sense of community with people involved in other forms and styles of occultism. Later on Fortune became familiar with → Aleister Crowley’s writings, which for the most part she respected; of Crowley’s *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929) she declares that she approves the theory though condemns the practice (more mildly than many after her) as potentially dangerous for the neophyte (‘The Occult Field Today’, in *Applied Magic*, 60-64).

A colorful influence on her earlier writings is a teacher she does not name in any of her own works, but who is identifiable by external evidence as Theodore Moriarty (1873-1923), a charismatic figure, psychic, medium, Freemason and adept. It is unclear exactly when or where she met Moriarty; some experiences with him are retailed in *Psychic Self-Defense*, others recounted in the series of pot-boiling short stories ostensibly based on incidents at his “nursing home” for the psychically challenged which were first published in 1922 and collected into a volume as *The Secrets of Dr Taverner* in 1926. She describes the tales as ‘studies in supernormal pathology’, and comments that ‘far from written up for the purposes of fiction, [they] have been toned down to make them fit for print’ (*Secrets of Dr Taverner*, vii-viii). Despite the disclaimer, these tales fit into the genre of the horror story (as does also her first novel, *The Demon Lover*, published in 1927) more than that of the case study, though perhaps their chief interest lies in the attempt to couple the two genres.

In 1927 Fortune married Dr. Thomas Penry Evans (1892-1959), and the time period between her marriage and her death in 1946 saw the publication of some of her strongest and most popular writing, including *Sane Occultism* (1929), *Psychic Self Defense* (1930), *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935) and the novels *Winged Bull* (1935), *The Goat Foot God* (1936), and *The Sea Priestess* (1938). Perhaps her best novel, *Moon Magic*, was begun in the last years of her life though not published until 1956. The late novels have a similar pattern: the protagonist (an intelligent male, sexually deprived, and solitary), comes into contact with primordial spiritual forces through psychic experiences brought on by illness or disappointment; he meets a sensual, magically experienced and assertive woman, whom he assists in reconstructing or revitalising a ritual space (disused church or old priory, or, in the case of *The Sea Priestess*, an abandoned fort), after which the male and female protagonists work magical rituals to bring the cosmic forces which they have begun to channel into balance. Besides containing treasure troves of ritual ideas and techniques, these novels are overtly wish fulfillment fantasies, successful magical romances with gothic elements, and they continue to have a readership. Her own marriage, though it seems in some respects to adhere to the basic plot outline discoverable in the novels (she and Evans spent years constructing a ritual space and doing magic together there), may have had less satisfying results from the perspective of wish fulfillment: having fallen in love with a younger woman, Evans petitioned for and was granted a divorce in 1939.

As a writer, Fortune's gifts are generally more practical than philosophical. Above all she was a deft synthesizer of ideas, and her continued influence derives largely from her ability to bring difficult esoteric concepts into a lucid and readily accessible prose.

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CLAIRE FANGER

## Fraternitas Saturni

The most important magical secret lodge of the 20th century in the German-speaking world. Unlike most secret occult groups, the Fraternitas Saturni has no legendary tradition. A Brotherhood of Saturn is said to have existed in Scandinavia at the turn of the 19th century and there may have been a group with a similar name in Warsaw under the leadership of → Jean-Marie Hoené-Wronski (1776-1853).

The Fraternitas Saturni was founded *de facto* in Berlin on May 8, 1926, by Eugen Grosche (order name Gregor A. Gregorius; 1888-1964) and four fratres, but the official date of foundation is Easter 1928. It derived from the Pansophical Lodge of the Lightseeking Brethren of the Orient-Berlin, also founded by Grosche. Grosche had functioned there, however, only as secretary, at the request of the pansophist Heinrich Tränker (order name Recnartus; 1880-1956). Tränker had been the first person to use the name of Pansophia for a strictly esoteric movement in Germany, and since 1921 he also acted as Grand Master of the O.T.O. (→ Ordo Templi Orientis) in Germany. The Pansophical Lodge was closed in 1926 due to a dispute between Tränker and → Aleister Crowley who, having been invited by Tränker to stay at his house, had come to Germany. Crowley's demand that all German groups under Tränker's aegis should submit to the Crowleyan world lodge A.A. (Argenteum Astrum) met with rejection. The dispute escalated and a majority of Lodge members (not including Tränker) were admitted to the newly-founded Fraternitas Saturni, which assumed the so-called Crowleyan Law of the New Aeon, while modifying it as follows: "Do what thou wilt, *is* (according to Crowley, *shall be*) the whole of the law. Love is the law, love under will, compassionless love". The specific Fraternitas Saturni formula "compassionless love" was added to emphasize the severe,

Saturnian character of the Brotherhood. The Fraternitas Saturni remained in contact with Crowley but was organisationally independent. Further members joined the Fraternitas Saturni in 1928 following the dissolution of the Orden mentalischer Bauherren (established 1922 in Dresden by Wilhelm Quintscher, 1893-1945), which also worked rites involving sex magic. It is not clear whether the National Socialist ban of the Fraternitas Saturni occurred in 1933 or as late as 1936. In 1936 Grosche emigrated to the Tessin, then to North Italy, from where he was expelled in 1943 and forced to return to Germany.

After the war, Grosche endeavoured to reassemble the former members of the Fraternitas Saturni. Initially he was living in the Soviet occupation zone, where he had problems on account of his esoteric interests. In 1950 he moved to West Berlin, where he tried to build up the Fraternitas Saturni as an umbrella organisation for various esoteric groups in the German-speaking world. He also contacted Hermann Joseph Metzger (1918-1990), who had newly-founded the O.T.O. and the Illuminati Order in Switzerland. While the collaboration with the O.T.O. soon lapsed, the Fraternitas Saturni quickly revived. In April 1950, the first issue of the long-standing monthly lodge periodical *Blätter für angewandte okkulte Lebenskunst* was published, which lay out the theoretical and practical basis of Fraternitas Saturni doctrine (typewritten carbon copies of important essays were already being sent to members in 1948-1950). On 18.3.1957, the anniversary of the death of the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, the Fraternitas Saturni announced itself as the Grand Lodge of the Fraternitas Saturni at Berlin and officially registered itself as such. It supported outer courts (*Vorhöfe*) in several German cities. Grosche was nominated Grand Master. His death in 1964 unleashed a violent power struggle. Following the death of his successor Margarete Berndt (order name Roxane; 1920-1965), a triumvirate took over at Easter 1966. Thereupon Guido Wolther (born 1922, order name Daniel) became Grand Master. In order to attain a higher level of magical work, Wolther founded a new secret league within the Fraternitas Saturni, known as AMOS (Ancient and Mysterious Order of the Brotherhood of Saturn) and limited it to nine members. A strict “new training programme” followed, involving only “knowledge grades”, which had to be really achieved rather than merely conferred as an honour. A new order periodical *Vita Gnosis* was founded and distributed only to members of those specific working grades. Because of this Wolther

fell out of favour and in 1969 Walter Jantschik (order name Jananda; born 1939) was elected Grand Master. But since he held only a lower degree (8°), further dissent followed. Shortly after this election, the internal order literature was made public. Dr Adolf Hemberger (1929-1991), Professor of Methodology and Scientific Theory at the University of Gießen, holder of an economics diploma and member of several occult groups, self-published essential parts of the secret records of the Fraternitas Saturni, thus unleashing a storm of protest. Jantschik meanwhile planned an “esoteric university” with higher degrees. But in 1969 a member who had only joined that same year was elected Grand Master, and henceforth the fraternity increasingly concerned itself with a general philosophy of life rather than with practical magic. From this time on, the history of the Fraternitas Saturni becomes tortuous. Splits, new foundations, dissolution and reunions follow in swift succession. Despite this decline, the lodge has survived (albeit possibly with interruptions) up to the present. Apart from various schismatic groups which formed and mostly disappeared over the years (Fraternitas Luminis, Fraternitas Uranis, Ordo Saturni, and an independent Frankfurt group c. 1962-63, already active when Grosche was still alive) the (original?) Fraternitas Saturni is once again magically active.

According to its own account the Fraternitas Saturni is a ‘just, enlightened, perfect, secret, magical and ritual’ lodge. “Just” (*gerecht*) means that the novice is expected to work on himself, in order to become a “square” (*winkelgerecht*; i.e. perfectly fitting like a brick in a building) member of human society and the Lodge. The Fraternitas Saturni is “enlightened” because its super-rational knowledge is mediated through the direct experience of magical rituals and not through logic. The Fraternitas Saturni is “secret” because public names and offices have no value inside the lodge. It is characterised as a Brotherhood because the members’ bonds within it are supposed to continue beyond death. The Fraternitas Saturni accepts women and men on an equal basis. Woman however is regarded as the ‘bleeding wound of the cosmos’, and her “Moon powers” are the negative manifestation of Saturn. Man’s task is to overcome these demonic energies.

The organisational structure of the Fraternitas Saturni shows a thirty-three degree system, resembling the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and the Droit Humain, which carries Latin designations. After the Pronaos from the 1° to the 3° come intermediate grades, which lead to a Rosicrucian

Chapter from the 12° onwards. From the 21° onwards we have the High Degrees and finally the Highest Chapter from the 30° to the 33°. The Lodge Daimonium holding the 33° (the Gradus Ordinis Templi Orientis Saturni, abbreviated to GOTOS), functions as the spiritual head of the Lodge. The GOTOS, as an “egregor” (a subtle essence charged by group magical practices) in the sphere of Saturn, magnetically attracts and stores the power of the magical Chain of the Brotherhood. This GOTOS is compared to Baphomet, the Lodge Daimonium of the Knights Templar. The Fraternitas Saturni is administratively organized into the offices of Grand Master, Executive, (consisting of the Guardian of the Ritual, Secretary, and Archivist), Regional Masters, and Local Masters. A detailed Lodge Rule governs internal matters, admission and ejection, disputes, as well as the possibility of changing the rituals etc.

The use of hammer, spirit-level, set-square and plummet supply evidence of Masonic influence (trowel and dividers, and the columns of Joachim and Boaz are absent). In the context of the Fraternitas Saturni, however, their meaning is magical and not merely symbolic. There are no organisational links to regular → Freemasonry.

The Fraternitas Saturni describes itself as a ‘pansophical society with a responsibility to train interested persons in the theory and practice of the pansophical sciences (occultism [→ occult/occultism], → magic, yoga, → mysticism, → astrology etc.) and to support them as assistant, guide and leader on the path to divine light’. The doctrines of the Fraternitas Saturni are very eclectic, in contrast to the O.T.O. groups, which mostly subscribe to the teachings of Crowley. Ancient Egyptian wisdom accompanies the magic of → Agrippa von Nettesheim; grimoires and → witchcraft (chiefly concerning plants and drugs) are used as well as Masonic symbolism. The Fraternitas Saturni uses Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] in the sense of Agrippa von Nettesheim and sees no problem in assimilating the doctrines of modern occult groups such as the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the Adonistenbund, the O.T.O., or modern magicians like Franz Bardon (1909-1958). Astrology is especially important, as the relation of the self to cosmic powers is a basic assumption of the magician. → Ariosophy has exerted a certain influence (chiefly during the early years) because the Fraternitas Saturni uses ancient Nordic mysticism, magic and folklore for non-Christian wisdom teaching. There are also references to the glacial cosmogony (*Welteislehre*) of Hanns Hörbiger (1860-1931) in Fraternitas Saturni cosmosophy.

Ordinary → spiritualism is rejected because one’s own will has to be surrendered. There is practically no reference to → Tarot. The emphasis of the doctrine naturally lies in magic, whereby the Fraternitas Saturni makes no distinction between “white” and “black” magic: everyone is free and responsible for his own karma. The invocation of so-called elementary and planetary spirits is given particular attention. Sex magic certainly belongs in the domain of Fraternitas Saturni knowledge, but contrary to current prejudice the Fraternitas Saturni is not exclusively a sex magical order. Whether the published sex magic rituals, such as the notorious 18° (Gradus Pentaphae), are actually worked or are merely a fantastic or “commercial” invention is unclear. The phallus is regarded as the earthly manifestation of the divine power of will and imagination; the vagina is the symbol for chaos as the creative ground of being; and the male seed is the vehicle of the divine spirit. Tantric practices are also taught, which are supposed to lead to a transformation of the powers of generation into spiritual energy. A period of chastity lasting up to 180 days is therefore prescribed before important rituals. Total abstinence is (theoretically) demanded for the highest degrees.

The teachings of the Fraternitas Saturni basically represent a Gnostic doctrine [→ Gnosticism] concerned with knowledge. Man is capable of discovering his inherent divinity through self-realization. The Fraternitas Saturni member does not seek to dissolve in the cosmos, but wants to fashion it. At the beginning of time darkness represented the more powerful primal element, but light was contained within it. A Logos was necessary in order for the light to dawn; and this Logos was Lucifer, the Light-Bringer. Lucifer is the demiurge, who created our visible world by breaking the static cosmic order. The result was War in Heaven, by which death entered the world. Lucifer is regarded as the “higher octave” of Saturn (Satan representing its “lower octave”), the outermost planet and polar opposite of the Sun in ancient cosmology. Because of this ongoing opposition Lucifer is still fighting the Solar Logos. The principal battlefield is our earth, which contains a negative-astral and a positive-mental sphere apart from its physical form. Saturn is seen as the great judge with scales and sword, entrusted with weight, measure and number. He is the Guardian of the Threshold, or the gateway to transcendence. Because he betrayed divine mysteries to mankind, he has been punished. His heavy, dark, leaden qualities must be transformed into gold by the magician, in an alchemical process involving the “repolarisation of lights”. In



this coincidence of opposites Saturn becomes the Sun, because the Solar Principle (“Chrestos Principle”) was originally the inner nucleus of the Saturn Principle. Only non-initiates regard Saturn as Satan; the initiate however practices spiritual Solar service by worshipping Saturn, and contributes thus to the homecoming of the “dark brother”.

Even Eastern teachings have found their way into the Fraternitas Saturni. At least in Grosche's time there was a belief in → reincarnation and karma, and the awakening of the chakras was deemed necessary for spiritual ascent. The Aquarian Age is also heralded. But in contrast to the customary → New Age view, the Fraternitas Saturni emphasizes, that Saturn was originally the astrological regent of Aquarius. Although after the discovery of Uranus in modern times, that planet is now generally regarded as its regent, one should not forget the original role of Saturn. Accordingly, in the view of the Fraternitas Saturni, the new Aquarian era is determined by both planets that is by the solitariness and hardness of the clarified Saturn as well as by the intuitive energy of Uranus.

The anti-Christian stance and sex magic of the Fraternitas Saturni have understandably provoked opposition in the churches and public media. That most Grand Masters have had a reputation for indulging in sex and drugs has made things worse. On the other hand, the Fraternitas Saturni never courted the public exhibition of theatrical satanism as with Aleister Crowley or the Church of Satan. While the Fraternitas Saturni has recruited members by means of occult magazines, it has never sought the spotlights of publicity and has always regarded itself as an elite group. It has sought to address persons who were ready for hardness, solitariness and the burden of adversity, corresponding to the character of Saturn. Thus even in its heyday it has probably never had more than 200 members. Nevertheless it has produced a comprehensive, original and varied literature, which in itself guarantees it an important place in the history of magical and occult orders.

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HANS THOMAS HAKL

## Freemasonry

1. FREEMASONRY AS AN ESOTERIC SOCIETY
2. ESOTERICISM AND MASONIC SYMBOLISM
3. IS THE RITUAL OF MASONIC INITIATION OF AN ESOTERIC TYPE? 4. SECRET DOCTRINES AND FREEMASONRY

The relations between Freemasonry and → esotericism are problematic. They depend essentially on the idea that freemasons generally have about their own institution: is it above all an “esoteric society”, an initiatic society – and are those the same thing? –, an intellectual circle, or simply a fraternal association? Masonry has given different answers at different times and places, and the experts who study the history and sociology of this institution from the outside do not necessarily agree among themselves.

The ambiguity of the word “esotericism” is particularly salient in Masonry. Certainly it can be



taken as designating a whole field of speculations, often confused, or else it may simply serve as title for a bookseller's shelves or for some publisher's series; but it seems that in masonic usage it vacillates between two special meanings. (1) First of all there is → secrecy, the notion of a hidden knowledge to be deciphered, a teaching encoded to conceal it from the profane. In this sense, masonic esotericism refers primarily to the classic *discipline of the mysteries* of which the masonic institution, as a "secret society", is a special case. (2) Alternatively, masonic esotericism, for the masons themselves, is inseparable from the initiatic dimension of the institution which is supposed to lead to an intimate experience, an inner liberation, and, to quote Mircea Eliade's apt definition, to 'an ontological mutation of the existential regime' (*Birth and Rebirth*, 1958). In this second sense, masonic esotericism has more in common with a *gnosis*, with the idea that a mystery is inherent in the things themselves, and that the penetration of this mystery occurs through a hermeneutic that is simultaneously a lived experience, capable of granting a kind of higher knowledge.

Hence, to be in a position to wonder either about the masonic "secret" or about "the initiatic" in Masonry, one has to pose certain preliminary questions. We begin with the problem of masonic symbolism. William Preston (1742-1818), in his famous definition of masonry – one among many others –, distinguishes between *allegories* that "veil" and *symbols* that "illustrate" it (*Illustrations of Masonry*, 1772). Since the 18th century, the masonic texts have often used other terms, such as *emblems* or even *hieroglyphs*. No one can deny that masonry makes lavish use of images and figures, to which it intends to give a more or less precise intellectual or spiritual meaning. But is that esotericism in either – or even both – of the two senses mentioned above? Furthermore, one of the most characteristic traits of Freemasonry is obviously the use of rituals, based on speeches that present the candidate certain legendary or mythical characters: the dramaturgy of the degrees is supposed to teach essential lessons in an allusive, indirect, and subtle manner. In this way, masonry is a kind of "esoteric theatre". Lastly, since the 19th century an important faction in masonry has claimed to reject all dogmatic thinking and to espouse "freedom of conscience"; yet many masonic systems have evidently justified their procedures by means of a more or less clearly defined doctrine.

## I. FREEMASONRY AS AN ESOTERIC SOCIETY

Is Freemasonry essentially an esoteric society, taking this epithet in the two special senses already highlighted? Operative masonry, being that of the stonemasons' craft typically situated in the Middle Ages, is known through texts from the 12th century onwards, and much better known from the 13th. The earliest of the *Old Charges*, which are documents stemming directly from the lodges of operative masons, go back to the end of the 14th century (*Regius*, circa 1390; *Cooke*, circa 1420). They were written down by clerics, the sole possessors of the knowledge in question, who supervised the workers to keep them obedient to the rules of Christian life. Beside moral prescriptions (the "charges"), these texts merely contain a "Craft History" that is fabulous, legendary, and mythical: careless of chronology or verisimilitude, it links the work of the cathedral builders to that of the builders of the Tower of Babel or the Temple of Solomon, whose heirs and successors they are supposed to be.

Although we know almost nothing of the life and practices of the medieval builders' lodges, it seems that the induction of a new apprentice or the recognition of workers confirmed in the status of "fellow" was marked by a very simple ceremony, whose essential part was an oath taken on the Gospels. In England, the text handed down from the 17th century contains solely professional "obligations". Yet one often hears of the "builders' secret" as one of the treasures bequeathed by masonic tradition from age to age, whose source was none other than the medieval lodges. One must be clear about the nature of this secret. At a period when many crafts, notably that of the mason, were regulated by texts that were often quite restrictive, the training of workmen and their conditions of work were strictly controlled. A major concern was to protect the professional skills as far as possible, so as to reserve the privilege of their exercise to those who were worthy. Hence there was a strong tendency not to spread technical knowledge, and especially not to put it into writing, which in any case would have been of little use at a time when almost all the workers were illiterate. There was surely no other reason for the orality of the tradition, allegedly the infallible proof of an esoteric tradition understood in the sense of a "secret".

Nonetheless, these practices may explain the later appearance of an esoteric significance in the sense of a secret language, secondarily attributed to usages which were originally purely conventional and justified by professional needs. A striking

example is the institution of the “Mason Word”, known in Scotland from the beginning of the 17th century but certainly much older. In the Scottish operative lodges, this Mason Word was transmitted to the new masons, probably starting with the degree of Apprentice. It allowed these “regular” workmen to enjoy exclusive employment by the Masters, thus keeping out the *cowans*, who were unqualified masons and unrecognized by the lodge. The secret was a purely professional one. However, there was a practice, attested in Scotland from the beginning of the 17th century, of admitting as benefactors and honorary members certain local dignitaries (“Gentlemen Masons”) by giving them also the Mason Word – of which they could make no professional use – which gradually transformed this secret into an esoteric instruction. In 1691, Robert Kirk, while describing various Scottish customs, wrote that the Mason Word is ‘like a Rabbinical Tradition, in way of comment on Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars erected in Solomon’s Temple with an Addition of some secret Signe delyvered from Hand to Hand’. Robert Moray (circa 1600–1673), an artilleryman, engineer, antiquarian given to esoteric speculations, and the first Gentleman Mason whose name is known to history, possessed the Mason Word as early as 1640; and this was doubtless one of the first seeds of masonic esotericism in the sense of a hidden knowledge.

The personality of Robert Moray is emblematic of the intellectual movement which led during the 17th century to the emergence of “speculative masonry”, i.e., a masonry which instead of making practical use of the tools of the trade applies them to the moral life. Remarkably enough, in 1660 Moray became the first President of the Royal Society. In this milieu, from which modern science would be born, the Hermetic and Kabbalistic Renaissance still re-echoed, notably in the Rosicrucian movement [→ Rosicrucianism], as Frances Yates has well shown (1972). It was through this unexpected channel that speculations taken from an old alchemical and magical source contributed to forming the spirit of speculative masonry and giving it its esoteric tone, in the “gnostic” sense mentioned above.

In one of the foundational texts, the *Discourse* written in Paris in 1736 by André Michael de Ramsay (1686–1743), incipient French masonry proclaimed that it ‘aspires to unite all men of sublime taste and agreeable humour, through love of the fine arts, where ambition becomes a virtue, where the interest of the fraternity is that of the entire human race, whence all the nations may draw solid knowledge, and where all the subjects of the differ-

ent kingdoms may act together without jealousy, without discord, and in mutual affection’. As we shall see, the affirmation of an esoteric filiation going back to the origin of humanity would come much later. In England, it was probably not until the later 18th century, with the publication of *The Spirit of Masonry* (1775) by William Hutchinson (1732–1814), that there was any acceptance of the concept of masonry as being principally the elucidation of a symbolic corpus. Even so, English rituals right up to the present day insist on the essentially moral meaning of the masonic symbols, which appear much more as conventional allegories than as mystical secrets, as Preston’s definition clearly shows.

It was in 20th century France that the esoteric vision of masonry was given an impressive theoretical basis by the vast work of → René Guénon (1886–1951). He first entered the lists in the world of Parisian occultism [→ occult / occultism], especially that surrounding the magus → Papus (1865–1916), himself founder of a pseudo-masonic order around 1887. This was → Martinism, whose somewhat confused doctrine, explained in 1891 in Papus’s *Traité méthodique de science occulte*, attempted a sort of synthesis between “the wisdom of the Ancients” and the infancy of modern science. The motto of the movement, inscribed on the cover of Papus’s journal *L’Initiation*, was: ‘The supernatural does not exist’. Guénon, soon disillusioned by the inconsistency of this kind of thinking, was next drawn to Hinduism, then attracted by the Sufi Muslim circles that had formed in Paris. In due course he received the *baraka*, and was permanently influenced by a vision of religious and world history taken from a school of thought close to the *Frères musulmans* (Muslim brothers), whose main characteristic was a blanket condemnation of the modern world. After a brief passage through the masonic lodges, from which he definitively distanced himself, Guénon wrote many books and articles in which he developed his vision of the “Primordial Tradition”, postulating an esotericism common to all the peoples of mankind and affirming the absolute degeneracy of the contemporary age (*La crise du monde moderne*, 1925; *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, 1945). Applying this same grid of interpretation to Freemasonry, of which he had only a very slight personal experience, he devoted many writings to it (*Ecrits sur la franc-maçonnerie et le compagnonnage*, 1964), considering it to be one of the few organizations in the West that still possessed the keys to a universal esotericism. At the same time, Guénon severely criticized what he presumed to

consider the deviations and disavowals of a masonry which, especially in France, had supposedly forgotten its deep roots and lost the meaning of its own symbols. Guénon stated the masonic institution, through its degrees, contains a powerful esotericism and a “spiritual influence” leading, as at Eleusis, from the “Lesser Mysteries” to the “Greater Mysteries”, and opening the path to a unitive vision and to liberation of the soul. In parallel to this valuation of masonry, René Guénon constantly stressed the necessity for the initiated mason of “traditional exotericism”, meaning the effective attachment to a “regular” religious tradition (predominantly one of the religions of the Book), which masonry would permit one to penetrate esoterically. René Guénon’s thought has permanently influenced a faction of masonry, especially French and Italian, while meeting with much less success in Anglo-Saxon masonry, whose preference is for a purely moral or psychological reading of the masonic rituals.

## 2. ESOTERICISM AND MASONIC SYMBOLISM

Since one cannot avoid referring to operative masonry as the source of masonic symbolism, the question arises of whether any esoteric reflections took place in the lodges during the medieval period. The answer appears entirely negative. No evidence has ever reached us that allows one to imagine any secret teaching being dispensed to the workmen who built the cathedrals. The lodges transmitted the secrets of the craft, the art of building, which was no slight matter; it was jealously guarded and to a certain extent concealed, but not secret, for all that. Moreover, these workmen were carefully overseen by priests who were often the sponsors of the works, and we know that it was the latter who wrote down the oldest texts of the operative period. The moral prescriptions mentioned in them scarcely differ from those of the manuals in current use by the clergy for the edification of their flock.

A simple moral interpretation could certainly have been suggested to the workmen by the tools of their trade, at a time when everything, in a way, was a bearer of meaning. For example, a metal square was found inside a pile of a bridge near Limerick, Ireland, bearing the date 1507 and the inscription: ‘I will strive to live with love and care, upon the level, by the square’. But it must be admitted that masonic symbolism in all its luxuriant diversity, together with its esoteric connotations, was a creation that postdated the operative period; it was introduced perhaps as early as the end of the

16th century, and certainly during the 17th, by those who wanted to found on the ancient model of the craft guilds a new society dedicated to philanthropy and later to free philosophical speculation. One can even say that masonic symbolism existed before speculative masonry, but outside any professional or operative context. Thus in the great architectural treatises of the Renaissance, which are essentially the work of educated amateurs or dilettanti, it was usual to give moral or spiritual interpretations to the three principal orders of architecture – Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. In one of the main treatises of the French 17th century, Philibert de l’Orme’s *Les Livres de l’Architecture* (published 1648), there is a whole passage about the symbolism of the cross. The portrait that Philibert draws of the ideal architect is a sort of prefiguration of the 18th-century mason: he is devoted to ancient and architectural matters, naturally, but is also a philosopher, a theologian, and even versed in the sciences and in medicine! He is the ideal polymath, such as was well represented in the membership of the Royal Society from its beginnings: a type for whom Robert Moray, as we have seen, served as model. One tributary of this current was the emblematic literature that was so popular throughout the 16th and into the 17th century, compiling hundreds of enigmatic figures, each associated with a virtue, a quality, or a short motto. Many of these “symbols” would reappear several decades later in the decoration of the masonic lodges.

Knowing as we do the identifiable sources of the masonic symbols, it is very unlikely that a secret or genuinely initiatic content would have been ascribed to them from their beginnings. As Ramsay recalled in 1737: ‘We have secrets; they are figurative signs and sacred words, which comprise a language sometimes mute, sometimes most eloquent, to communicate over great distances and to recognize our Brethren no matter what their language or their native land’. It was only by playing on a much later, indeed quite recent interpretation, that these symbols assembled on the “tracing boards” could be compared to mantras, to supports for meditation opening onto an inner experience. That some minds were capable of such a development is probably due to the fact that these figures and boards play a major role during the ceremonies in which the masonic degrees are conferred.

## 3. IS THE RITUAL OF MASONIC INITIATION OF AN ESOTERIC TYPE?

If we consult the oldest texts, notably the Scottish manuscripts of the Haughfoot group (1696-

circa 1720), the masonic ceremonies of the pre-speculative period were quite simple. The lodge is an oriented space containing some of the objects connected with the mason's trade, into which the candidate is brought blindfold, and there receives light. Under the sanction of a solemn oath and the threat of terrible punishments, the secrets of his degree are revealed to him, in this case the Mason Word. No other teaching is given.

However, from the 1730s onwards, in England and soon after in France, a new movement arose and rapidly grew to a considerable size: that of the high degrees. All through the 18th century, many dozens of rituals containing legends most often inspired by the Bible, populated by new symbols borrowed from all quarters and loaded with words derived more or less accurately from Hebrew, plunged the masons into a strange and puzzling world. Reading the thousands of manuscripts that survive in the chief masonic archives of Europe leaves one with an ambivalent impression. Not least, history shows that a number of these degrees were invented and sold at a high price by adventurers who made a sort of commerce out of masonry.

This body of documents, however, allows us to understand that masonic ritual intends not so much to teach the candidate through discourse as to involve him in an experience: a sort of sacred drama, a mystery in the medieval sense of the word, which is supposed to awaken spiritual resonances in him. It is a masonic commonplace that the true secret of masonry does not reside in the "words, signs and tokens" taught in the degrees, but in the inner experience of their recipient. This secret is thus reputedly incommunicable and inviolable. Such a conception also justifies the apparent absurdity of certain rituals, for it is not their literal sense that matters, but the profound and existential sense that the candidate lives through in his inmost being.

The exact nature of this inner experience always remains debatable. One can distinguish schematically between the Guénonian concept, which sees in the process of initiation the transmission of a "spiritual influence" in harmony with the "subtle constitution" of the human being, and a more current and strongly psychologized interpretation, which associates the masonic ritual with the techniques used in psychoanalysis: thought-associations, waking dream, and psychodrama.

This concept of masonic esotericism as ineffable initiatic experience clearly sets aside the doctrinal content of the rituals, i.e., their "catechisms" and classic "lectures". It is the lived experience that is favored here above any discursive teaching. How-

ever, this approach does not exhaust the question of the esotericism at the heart of masonry, because throughout its history several masonic systems have claimed that they possess an authentic esoteric doctrine.

#### 4. SECRET DOCTRINES AND FREEMASONRY

Very early on, masonry integrated into its rituals various themes borrowed from esoteric currents such as → Christian theosophy and so-called spiritual → alchemy. It also came to include elements of a theurgical character, likewise connected with theosophy. During the extraordinary flowering of high degrees, masonic systems appeared having an overtly esoteric teaching, taking this term as referring to the currents of thought that historians include under it: theosophy and alchemy (mentioned above), the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], arithmology [→ Number Symbolism], and several others. Here we shall mention only a few examples.

The most remarkable case is perhaps that of the → *Ordre des Élus Coëns*, propagated from the 1760s onward by → Martinès de Pasqually (1708/9-1774). This system, masonic in appearance, began with the universal masonic model of the three degrees of Apprentice, Fellow, and Master, but it pursued the specific goal of theurgy. Drawing on sources that are still partly unknown, Martinès de Pasqually offered both a doctrine (later summarized in his *Traité de la Réintégration* [Treatise on Reintegration]) and a practice, aimed at causing the manifestation of higher spirits by means of the order's complicated ceremonies. According to Martinès, the two approaches were connected. The doctrine explained the fall of man and the necessity of his "reconciliation" with his creator, as a prelude to the end of time when the whole universe might be "reintegrated" in the divine unity. In the course of the rituals (called "operations"), the spirits were summoned, and their presence attested that the candidate had been approved by them. The highest degree of Réau-Croix was supposed to place the candidate in the virtual state of "reconciliation".

The system of the *Élus Coëns* did not survive the departure of its founder in 1772 – he died in San Domingo two years later. Properly speaking, the *Ordre des Élus Coëns* was not masonic, but it deeply affected the Régime Ecossois Rectifié (RER) created by → J.B. Willermoz (1730-1824), one of Martinès' disciples. Beginning in 1774, Willermoz imported to France a masonic system of Templar inspiration [→ Neo-Templar Traditions] stemming

from Germany: the *Stricte Observance Templière* (SOT). The traces were already visible there of a supposed secret doctrine inherited from the “poor knights of Christ”, a theme that would inspire a whole lineage of masonic degrees up to the end of the 18th century, notably the *Chevalier Kadosh*. Modern historians of the Order of the Temple have never been able to present credible proof that such a secret teaching really existed among the Templars prior to their suppression in 1312. Embarrassed by this unconvincing claim of Templar filiation, Willermoz modified the system and integrated Martinesian doctrine into it, while doing away with theurgy. At the summit of the pyramid of degrees he added two secret classes, the *Profès* and the *Grands Profès*, whose reception ceremony consisted exclusively of the reading of a long instructional discourse, which summarized the main points of Martinesian doctrine and applied them to masonic symbolism. This instruction is firmly stamped with the theosophy of the period, being not only that of Martinès de Pasqually but also of → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. It is noteworthy that the scheme previously described is reversed here: it is now the theoretical teaching, not the initiatic experience, that transmits a theosophic content. Thus we are dealing not with something “lived”, but with a “knowledge” borrowed from the particular esoteric current that is theosophy. The teaching texts of the RER stress the existence of a secret history transmitted from age to age by an unbroken line of Initiates. This history reveals that at every epoch since humanity’s origins a ‘primitive, essential and fundamental Order’ has existed in the shadow of public history, possessing the keys that explain the origin of Man and the Universe, to which masonry – to be precise, the masonry of the Rectified Rite – is the ultimate heir. The RER, which survives to this day especially in Switzerland, France, and Belgium, was thus probably the first masonic system to present masonry as an esoteric school, whose symbols and rituals were not mere allegories and whose ultimate teaching, revealing the essential verities about the origin and destiny of man and the universe, belonged to the initiates of the highest rank. What is specifically theosophic in the high degrees of the RER is a whole “illuminated” reflection on the mysterious relationships between a complex divine world, a living Nature, and the history of man, all presented in dramaturgical fashion.

Another esoteric current greatly in favor within masonry since the 18th century was the alchemical one. By way of the Rosicrucian tradition introduced into Germany at the beginning of the 17th

century and still widely re-echoing in Europe, degrees inspired by Hermeticism [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies] made their appearance – e.g. the *Chevalier du Soleil*, circa 1750 – and sometimes structured an entire masonic system. One such can be seen in Baron Tschoudy’s *L’Etoile flamboyante*, published in 1766, which describes a very imaginary Society of Unknown Philosophers; another, in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz which began in Germany in 1777 and survived for a dozen years, mingling the Templar fable with the alchemical theme. There was also the Rite Ecossais Philosophique which was quite successful in France at the end of the 18th and the first years of the 19th century.

Connections between this Hermetic masonry and “operative” alchemists were very rare. In the masonic context it was an exclusively spiritual alchemy that was envisaged. The process of masonic initiation was thus assimilated to the Great Work, and the spiritual progress of the initiate paralleled with the ripening of the Philosophic Egg in the athanor, of which the lodge was the equivalent. This was a matter of borrowing pure and simple, taking from an ancient esoteric current the explicative keys which it hoped to adapt to a new context.

Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign combined with the vogue of → Egyptomania – of which Abbé Terrasson’s *Sethos* (1731) had been a precursor – to create, at the start of the 19th century, the Egyptian Rites of masonry, allowing their authors to introduce into the masonic rituals a most romantic vision of the ancient Mysteries, notably as expounded by Jacques Etienne Marconis de Nègre (1796-1868) in *L’Hiérophante, développement complet des mystères maçonniques*, 1839.

From the end of the 18th century, Jewish Kabbalah inspired certain masonic systems such as the → Asiatic Brethren, founded in 1799. While this branch did not have much of a posterity, another conception of Kabbalah, often based on misinterpretations and a very vague knowledge of the sources, became a commonly acknowledged origin of masonic teachings, especially at the end of the 19th century in the high degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, furnishing the rituals with symbols, tables, and instructional texts. A typical illustration of this is *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (1871) by the great American ritualist Albert Pike (1809-1891), whose proximate source was the French occultist → Eliphas Lévi (1810-1875, author of *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1856).



In England, the motherland of masonry, the term “fringe masonry” is used to designate a masonry preoccupied with occult knowledge and hidden learning that has never had a widespread development in that country. John Yarker (1833-1913) was its most convinced and zealous propagator (author of *The Arcane Schools*, 1909). In the later 19th century, systems of high degrees emerged from this movement such as the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (“Soc. Ros.” or SRIA, founded 1867), many of whose members gravitated to an order that was not masonic but esoteric and magical, though originally including many masons: the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (1888). In the same vein, → Annie Besant (1847-1933), the successor of → H.P. Blavatsky as head of the → Theosophical Society, introduced fringe-masonic ideas into the English-speaking branches of an Order admitting women (such orders are known as Co-masonry), Le Droit Humain. One of the dignitaries of this order, → Charles Leadbeater, a bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church, gave a long exposition of its principles in *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry*, 1926.

In France, the occult side of Freemasonry was quite popular at the end of the 19th century, although French masonry itself was undergoing a mainly secular and humanist evolution, more interested in social commitment than in mystical speculation. The work of Oswald Wirth (1860-1943) is relevant here. Wirth was the spiritual heir of → Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897), himself one of the representatives of the Parisian occultist current of the 1880s. In a series of works that were very popular among French masons, Wirth expounded a conception of masonic symbolism inspired by a highly personal vision of alchemy and magnetism (*La franc-maçonnerie rendue intelligible à ses adeptes*, 1894-1922; *Le symbolisme hermétique dans ses rapports avec l'alchimie et la franc-maçonnerie*, 1910). His influence remained strong in the French masonic milieu, but had almost no effect outside the French-speaking countries. One should compare Wirth's production to a whole literature of esoteric pretensions influenced by the → New Age, which sees in masonry today the possible nexus of a new synthesis between the teachings of the great religious and mystical currents, indistinctly blended, and the most worrying (and often the least understood) discoveries of contemporary science.

These debates, queries, and persistent doubts serve once again to underline the extreme complexity of Freemasonry, both intellectual and moral. The first divulcation of masonic practices,

*Le secret des francs-maçons* (The Secret of the Freemasons), printed in Paris in 1744, playfully evokes the mystery in a way that is timely even today: ‘Pour le public un franc-maçon/Sera toujours un vrai problème/Qu'il ne saurait résoudre à fond/Qu'en devenant maçon lui-même’ (For the public, a freemason will always be a real problem, which cannot be resolved except by becoming a mason oneself).

*Lit.*: William Hutchinson, *The Spirit of Masonry*, London, 1775 ♦ *Conférences des Elus Coens de Lyon*, Du Baucens: Braine le Comte, 1975 ♦ *Les Leçons de Lyon*, par Saint-Martin, Hauterive et Willermoz, Paris: Dervy, 1999 ♦ Colin Dyer, *Symbolism in Craft Freemasonry*, London: Lewis Masonic, 1983 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, 147-162, 186-193 ♦ Karl R.H. Frick, *Die Erleuchteten: Gnostisch-theosophische und alchemisch rosenkreuzerische Geheimgesellschaften bis zum Ende des 18 ♦ Jahrhunderts*, Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1973, 454-499 ♦ Gérard Galtier, *Franc-maçonnerie égyptienne, Rose-croix et Néo-chevalerie*, Monaco: Le Rocher, 1989 ♦ Louis Guinet, *Zacharias Werner et l'ésotérisme maçonnique*, Paris: Mouton, 1962 ♦ *Illuminisme et franc-maçonnerie (Revue des études maïstriennes 5-6)*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980 ♦ *Maître Studies*, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988 ♦ René Le Forestier, *L'occultisme et la franc-maçonnerie écossaise*, Paris: Perrin, 1928 ♦ idem, *La franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux 18e et 19e siècles*, Paris: Aubier-Nauwelaerts, 1970 (Paris: reprinted La Table d'Émeraude, 1987-2003) ♦ Jean L'homme, Edouard Maisondieu, Jacob Tomaso, *Dictionnaire thématique illustré de la franc-maçonnerie*, Paris: Rocher, 1993, 12-18, 310-324, 450-452 ♦ idem, *Esotérisme et spiritualités maçonniques*, Paris, 2002 ♦ Charles Porset, *Les Philalèthes et les Convents de Paris*, Paris, Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1996 ♦ David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 ♦ Henrik Bogdan, *From Darkness to Light: Western Esoteric Rituals of Initiation*: Göteborg: Göteborg University (Department of Religious Studies), 2003.

ROGER DACHEZ

## Fulcanelli

As far as one can tell, the name of Fulcanelli appeared for the first time in Spring, 1926, on the cover of the first of two works published under this pseudonym: *Le Mystère des cathédrales et l'interprétation ésotérique des symboles hermétiques du Grand Œuvre* (The mystery of the cathedrals and the esoteric interpretation of the Hermetic symbols of the Great Work). Only a small number of copies was issued; the book contained a Preface by →

Eugène Canseliet (1899-1982) and plates by the painter Jean Julien Champagne (1877-1932). It was followed in 1930 by *Les demeures philosophales et le symbolisme hermétique dans ses rapports avec l'art sacré et l'ésotérisme du Grand Œuvre* (Philosophic residences and Hermetic symbolism in its relationship to sacred art and the esotericism of the Great Work), prefaced and illustrated by the same. A third work was intended to complete the trilogy, *Finis gloriae mundi* (The end of the world's glory), but for unknown reasons it was never published.

The only useful biographical information on Fulcanelli is the little that is given by his only known disciple, Eugène Canseliet, in articles, prefaces, "memoirs", and in interviews which for the most part remain unpublished. According to Canseliet, Fulcanelli was born in 1839 and educated at the École Polytechnique in Paris. He was an engineer by profession, and, like most of the other pupils from such schools, was called up to serve in the Engineers' regiments, notably during the defence of Paris in 1870-1871. Canseliet tells us nothing more precise about Fulcanelli's mundane life. Was he married? Did he have children? We have not the shadow of an answer. All that we know, and that only through Canseliet, is that during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century Fulcanelli led a divided existence: on the one hand in Parisian society, frequenting salons in which he met scientists, politicians of national importance, and artists; and on the other, devoted to the study of alchemical texts and to laboratory practice. Fulcanelli lived in Paris, but also owned a small town house in Marseille, at least in 1915 or 1916 when Canseliet first met him, where he seems to have spent several years during the First World War. The story continues that Fulcanelli attained the final alchemical "coction" and obtained the Philosopher's Stone during the 1920s, at an unspecified date but certainly after the transmutation of 1922, which Canseliet records as having taken place in the Sarcelles gas factory. At this point Fulcanelli disappeared from Canseliet's life, but the latter remained closely linked to Champagne by friendship and alchemical researches right up to the painter's death. In 1952 (or 1953), Canseliet claims to have met Fulcanelli once more in Seville, under unusual circumstances.

Despite the absence of tangible evidence, or perhaps because of that, several investigations, biographies, and articles on Fulcanelli and his presumed identity have been published from the 1960s onwards, and especially since 1980. After the second edition of Fulcanelli's works appeared,

the best-seller *Le matin des magiciens* (The morning of the magicians, 1960) by Jacques Bergier (1912-1978) and Louis Pauwels (1920-1997) helped to make the alchemist a more popular figure. Bergier goes into considerable detail about → alchemy and relates his own meeting with an alchemist, presented as having been Fulcanelli, in 1937 – at the very moment when Bergier and his scientific colleagues were working on atomic energy. The purpose of the encounter was to warn the scientific world of the dangers of such manipulations. At the end of his life, Bergier confided to friends that the man he met in 1937 was → René Schwaller de Lubicz, which is impossible to verify.

Two years later, Robert Ambelain (1907-1997) published the results of his own researches and those of Jules Boucher (1902-1955): 'Jean-Julien Champagne alias Fulcanelli'. Ambelain emphasized the quasi-master-disciple relationship that existed between Champagne and Canseliet. His researches ascertained that Fulcanelli's publisher had never met anyone other than these two; the same applied to the concierge of the apartment building in Rue de Rochecouart where they had both lived from 1925 to 1932. Ambelain concluded by discerning Champagne's name in the engraving at the end of *Le Mystère des cathédrales*. Although his proofs were not totally convincing (resting as they did on unverifiable statements by people now deceased), they cannot be rejected out of hand.

Another important source for Fulcanelli's possible identity appeared in 1987, with a book on René Schwaller de Lubicz (1887-1961) by the Luxemburger-American writer André VandenBroeck. During 1959 and 1960, VandenBroeck was a frequent visitor to Schwaller, who disclosed an important and hitherto unknown fact: that at the end of the 1910s, Champagne and Schwaller had known each other. Champagne (said Schwaller) had discovered some ancient pages inserted in an alchemical book, and showed them to him: they dealt with alchemical experiments. The two worked together on them and discussed their respective researches: Schwaller had been collecting documents on the Hermetic symbolism of the cathedrals, and he confided to Champagne that he wished to publish his findings. Champagne, most interested in the manuscript, offered to read it, and perhaps to use his contacts in the world of esoteric publication to get it published. After reading it, Champagne declared that it should not be published, because it revealed too many secrets. A few years later, Schwaller was astounded to find his own work

forming the substance of *Le Mystère des cathédrales*. He guessed that Champagne had compiled it with the assistance of the erudite book-dealer Pierre Dujols (1860-1926) and of the young Eugène Canseliet, who signed the Preface. This much Schwaller told to André VandenBroeck, by the latter's account. The "Schwaller hypothesis", according to which the essential ideas of *Le Mystère des cathédrales* were supplied by Schwaller de Lubicz, developed (perhaps with further assistance from others) by Jean Julien Champagne who hid behind the pseudonym of Fulcanelli, and seen through publication by Canseliet, is supported by Geneviève Dubois, who has published a letter from Canseliet to Schwaller that confirms some of VandenBroeck's information.

The other hypotheses of Fulcanelli's identity (that he was Pierre Dujols, Camille Flammarion [F. Courjeaud 1995], Jules Violle [P. Rivière 2000], etc.) are unsupported by any documents, proofs, or concrete evidence, and as such can only appeal to opinion, not to the slightest historical validity. Given the present state of knowledge, all the evidence seems to point towards J.J. Champagne, and it seems impossible to offer an alternative hypothesis that satisfies the rules of historical method.

The importance and fascination of the question of Fulcanelli's identity should not obscure the great interest that his two works hold within the context of alchemical literature. First, they are written in a particularly fine style – supple, precise, and readable – and these qualities have favored their reception in the years since World War II by a far wider public than alchemical publications usually attract. The books belong as much to the field of erudition as to that of alchemy. They have a lofty viewpoint, a serenity, and a freedom from the polemical tendency so often found in this literature. Fulcanelli appears as a Christian Hermeticist rooted in the classic texts and especially in the French tradition, from → Nicolas Flamel to the early 19th century writer Cyliani (the manuscript reputedly discovered by Champagne, which led to his experiments with Schwaller, dated from Cyliani's time). The strongly French character of Fulcanelli's work shows in two further respects. Most of his alchemical discourses take as their starting-point the sculptural program of a Gothic cathedral or a château of the Renaissance era. Moreover, he makes great play with the *langue des oiseaux* (language of the birds): a way of phonetically interpreting words and phrases in order to discover an inner, alchemical meaning, always expressed in French even when the original words are in Latin or English. Fulcanelli's models in this were perhaps

the alchemical writer Cesare Della Riviera (*Il mondo magico de gli heroi* [The magical world of the heroes], 1605) and the antiquarian Claude-Sosthène Grasset d'Orcet (1828-1900).

The ideas that the monumental buildings of France may enshrine a secret alchemical teaching, and that the same secrets lie hidden in certain great works of literature, are immensely appealing, especially to armchair alchemists. But for the practical alchemist, the value of Fulcanelli's work (and of Canseliet's) is greater still. He describes phenomena and hints at laboratory procedures and substances in a tantalizing way, coming closer, perhaps, than any of his predecessors to giving real instruction to the aspirant. Whatever claim can be made for the reality of alchemy, and particularly for the transmutation of base metals into gold with which Fulcanelli, almost alone in the 20th century, has been credited, his writings have set in motion a renaissance of practical alchemy that shows no sign of diminishing.

In 1999, there appeared in London a book claiming to be the celebrated third volume of Fulcanelli's trilogy. Jacques d'Arès, the author of the preface, explains that the manuscript was sent to him as an attachment to an electronic mail message from "Fulcanelli", who stated that he had chosen d'Arès as being the spiritual heir of Paul Le Cour and Philéas Lebesgue. The "master" added that this manuscript was different from the first *Finis gloriae mundi*, and that its communication to the public had been forced upon him by 'compelling reasons, concerning the destiny of all mankind . . .' (23). Now aged 160(!), Fulcanelli apparently felt obliged to write a work in which he breathlessly condemns the conquest of space, experimentation on embryos, nuclear energy, etc., and predicts the fragmentation of the (currently) United States of America, then sent it to Jacques d'Arès through the latest communication channels. Thus there is repeated a pattern well known to historians of Hermeticism: that of attaching a prestigious name to one's own lucubrations – and gaining an audience thereby.

*Le mystère des cathédrales et l'interprétation des symboles ésotériques du Grand Œuvre*, Paris: Jean Schemit, 1926; 2nd augmented ed. Paris: Omnium Littéraire, 1957; 3rd augmented ed. with new preface, Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1964 (frequently reprinted) ♦ Engl. transl., *Fulcanelli, Master Alchemist*, London/Jersey: Neville Spearman, 1971 (repr. Suffolk: N. Spearman, 1977); *The Brotherhood of Life*: Albuquerque 1984, 2000<sup>2</sup> ♦ *Les demeures philosophales et le symbolisme hermétique dans ses rapports avec l'art sacré*, Paris: Jean Schemit, 1930; 2nd augmented ed., with an additional chapter and

new preface, Paris: Omnium Littéraire, 1960, 2 vols. ♦ Engl. trans., *The Dwellings of the Philosophers*, Boulder: Archive Press, 1999.

*Lit.*: Frater Albertus (= Albert Richard Riedel), *The Alchemist of the Rocky Mountains*, Salt Lake City: Paracelsus Research Society, 1976 ♦ Robert Amadou, "L'Affaire Fulcanelli", *Le Monde Inconnu* 74 (Sep. 1983), 40-45; 75 (Oct. 1983), 28-32; 76 (Nov. 1983), 44-49, 78 (Jan. 1984), 50-51 ♦ Robert Ambelain, "Dossier Fulcanelli", *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 9, n.d. [ca. 1962], 181-204 ♦ Jacques Bergier & Louis Pauwels, *Le matin des magiciens*, Paris: Gallimard, 1960 ♦ Jacques Bergier, *Je ne suis pas une légende*, Paris: Retz, 1977 (esp. ch. 12: "La très sainte alchimie", 167-180) ♦ Vincent Bridges & Jay Weidner, *A Monument to the End of Time: Alchemy, Fulcanelli, and the Great Cross of Hendaye*, Mount Gilead: Aethyrea Books, 1999 ♦ Frédéric Courjeaud, *Fulcanelli, une identité révélée*, Paris: Claire Vigne, 1995 ♦ Geneviève Dubois, *Fulcanelli dévoilé*, Paris: Dervy, 1992 (reprinted 1996) ♦ Kenneth Rayner Johnson, *The Fulcanelli Phenomenon*, London: Neville Spearman, 1980 ♦ Khaitzine, *Fulcanelli et le cabaret du chat noir: Histoire artistique, politique et secrète de Montmartre*, Villeselve: Ramuel, 1997 ♦ Luis-Miguel Martínez-Otéro, *Fulcanelli, una Biografía imposible*, Barcelona: Obelisco, 1986; French tr., *Fulcanelli, une biographie impossible*, Arista: Plazac (F-24580), 1989 ♦ Patrick Rivière, *Fulcanelli: Sa véritable identité enfin révélée. La lumière sur son œuvre*, Paris: De Vecchi, 2000 ♦ André VandenBroeck, *Al-Kemi: A Memoir. Hermetic, Occult, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz*, Great Barrington & Rochester, Vt: Lindisfarne Press/Inner Traditions International, 1987.

RICHARD CARON

## Galatino, Pietro, \* ca. 1460 Galatina (Puglia), † about 1540 Roma

Galatino's surname derives from the town where he was born from a family of Albanian origin which, some time before, had reached the Italian coast under pressure of the Turkish expansion. According to one tradition, the name of the family was Colonna, according to other sources, Mongiò. While still young, Galatino joined the Observant Friars Minor in St. Catherine's monastery in Galatina; in 1515 he became Vicar of the Franciscan Observance in Puglia and in 1517 Minister, re-elected in 1536, of the St. Nicholas' district. When in Naples, in 1506, he offered his work *De optimi principis diademate* to Ferdinand the Catholic and in 1507 he wrote the *Divini nominis Tetragrammaton interpretatio contra Judaeos*. Galatino reached Rome in the last years of the pontificate of Julius II, to whom he dedicated his *Oratio "Cum ieiunatis"*. As a chaplain of the cardinal Lorenzo Pucci, he had an *Oratio de circumcissione dominica*

printed in 1515, which was dedicated to Pope Leo X. To the same Pope he dedicated, in 1519, a *Libellus de morte consolatorius*. He spent the rest of his life in Rome, becoming "artium et sacrae theologiae professor"; but whether he ever taught in the University "La Sapienza" is uncertain. His numerous works, almost all still unpublished, were collected in 1539, under licence of Paul III, in the Franciscan monastery of S. Maria in Aracoeli, and then transferred to the Vatican Library. Posterior to that date we have no information about him.

During his Roman period, Galatino came into contact with the intellectual circles interested in Hebrew culture, the kabbalist tradition and prophetism: he met → Egidio da Viterbo and Georgius Benignus Salviati (Dragišič), entered into correspondence with → Johannes Reuchlin, improved his knowledge of Hebrew mysticism under Elia Levita's guidance, and learned Ethiopian from John Potken. Urged by the cardinals Lorenzo Pucci and Adriano Castellesi, he defended Reuchlin in his *De arcanis catholicae veritatis* (12 books), written in 1515-1516, a work which earned him a high reputation. It presents a dialogue between Johannes Reuchlin and Jakob Hoogstraeten. With this work, Galatino wanted to prove that the basic tenets of the Christian religion are contained in the talmudic and kabbalistic texts. The talmudic approach leads to an allegorical interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, the kabbalistic one to an anagogic reading. The conclusion is that no Christian can afford to neglect studying the hebraic tradition. In his demonstration, Galatino made so much use of Raimundus Martini's *Pugio fidei* and Porchetus de Salvaticis' *Victoria adversus impios Hebraeos* that he was charged with plagiarism. But, even if the work does not have the value of originality, it does offer a large collection of hebraic and Christian sources. In addition one can find → Hermes Trismegistus, the moderns Egidio da Viterbo, Reuchlin, Agostino Giustiniani and → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola as parts of his project of "concordia". Galatino's work is relevant as a synthesis which had an important audience and was reprinted many times during the 17th and 18th centuries. The years after writing his *De arcanis catholicae veritatis* were spent on compiling exegetic and prophetic works: Galatino shared the hopes, widespread in this period, of a religious and political renewal; he awaited a palingenesis under the guidance of an Angelic Shepherd, who would appear flanked by a sovereign of the final times, as stated by numerous prophecies. Only at that moment the "arcania Dei" of the Scriptures would be completely revealed, going beyond the literal



and allegorical meaning. Galatino wanted to make a personal contribution to this anagogic interpretation of the Scriptures and he tried to apply some kabbalistic techniques to the New Testament. Galatino tried to interpret his age by making use of prophetic texts from several epochs, particularly those belonging to the Joachimite tradition and – particularly relevant – the *Apocalypsis Nova* attributed to Beato Amadeo.

*Pulcherrima divini nominis Tetragrammaton interpretatio contra Judaeos ubi divinae trinitatis mysterium distincte continetur*, Granada, Abadia del Sacromonte, Ms. s. n., ff. 154-159 (see P.O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum* IV, 507b) ♦ *Opus toti christianae Reipublicae maxime utile, de arcanis catholicae veritatis, contra obstinatissimam Judaeorum nostrae tempestatis perfidiam*, Ortonae Maris: Hieronymus Soncinus, 1518 ♦ *Codices Vaticani Latini: Opera exegetica inedita*, 5567-5581.

*Lit.*: A. Kleinhans, “De vita et operibus Petri Galatini, O.F.M., scientiarum biblicarum cultoris (c. 1460-1540)”, *Antonianum* 1 (1926), 145-179, 327-356 ♦ A. Morisi, “Galatino et la Kabbale chrétienne”, in: *Kabbalistes chrétiens* (Cahiers de l’Hermétisme), Paris: Albin Michel, 1979, 211-231 ♦ eadem, “The *Apocalypsis Nova*: A Plan for Reform”, in: M. Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 27-50 ♦ R. Rusconi, “An Angelic Pope before the Sack of Rome”, *ibid.*, 157-187.

ANNA MORISI

**Gemistos, Georgios** → Plethon,  
Georgios Gemistos

**Gichtel, Johann Georg**,  
\* 4.3.1638 Ratisbon (Germany),  
† 21.1.1710 Amsterdam

Gichtel’s life can be divided into three primary sections: from 1638 to 1664, when he had problems with the clerical authorities in Ratisbon; from 1665 through 1667, when he moved about, staying for a time with Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711); and from 1668 to his death in 1710, the time during which he lived, wrote, and taught in Amsterdam. Much of our information comes from this last period, during which he established his community of the “Brethren of the Angelic Life”, the *Engelsbrüder*, or “Angelic Brethren”, and became more well known as a theosopher.

Gichtel’s family was pious, his father was a pharmacist, and Gichtel went to study law at Strasbourg. During this time he came to know → Knorr von Rosenroth, the Christian Kabbalist, and stud-

ied under Johann Schmidt, Heinrich Böckler, and Philipp Jacob Spener, all renowned historians or theologians, particularly Spener. But in 1664, at the age of 26, Gichtel’s life changed radically, when he began to realize something of his spiritual calling, and began to become directly involved in the turbulent Protestant reform movements of his day.

Gichtel was always combative, as we can see in his letters, and certainly this comes through in the biography appended to his letters. There we read Gichtel’s account of his ouster from Ratisbon: Ratisbon ministers denounced Gichtel as a heretic, an enthusiast, and an Anabaptist, and had him thrown in prison for thirteen weeks, though he claimed that he belonged to no sect, nor disputed with anyone. The last assertion seems unlikely. Brought before the intransigent Johann Heinrich Ursinus and his fellow clergymen, Gichtel was combative in his responses, so much so that he cowed them into silence and it was afterward said that he had a devil that knew how to handle Scripture. Even Gichtel’s own mother eventually told him to leave the ministers alone (VII.35).

Although one would think Gichtel’s denunciation and imprisonment would have been the low point of his life, in fact it was the turning point, for in prison he had a vision in which, while ‘wrestling with Satan’, he fell to earth and felt exalted into the spirit. He then saw a large serpent ‘lying in a threefold coil around my heart’, while in the midst of the circle appeared a light, in which the Lord appeared. Thereafter the serpent was ‘cut up in innumerable pieces’. After recovering from the experience, Gichtel felt a great strength of faith and realized that this was merely the beginning of a long spiritual struggle (II.742-744). This experience was really the beginning of Gichtel’s subsequent life, for after this serpent-vision he felt set free, and travelled to Switzerland and then to Holland, where he took refuge for the rest of his life – all the while engaged in the spiritual struggle he described here in its inception in prison.

In the winter of 1666, Gichtel arrived in Schwoll, Switzerland, where he was given shelter by Lutheran minister Friedrich Breckling. During this time Gichtel did preach, but saw that there was little value in mere preaching – ministers, he thought, merely flung words at their congregations. By October, 1667, Breckling was being attacked by his fellow Lutheran ministers, and while Gichtel himself tried to defend him (even though the two had already had a falling out) in a letter written 5 October 1667, Gichtel’s support probably contributed to Breckling’s own troubles. Gichtel left Schwoll and ended up in Amsterdam, cold and virtually



penniless, where he was approached by a complete stranger who laid down six silver ducats and left. This kind of miraculous event evidently happened fairly regularly around Gichtel, whose debts were shortly paid off totally through the largesse of a Dutch book dealer. In fact, although Gichtel was to reside in Amsterdam for decades to come, he was supported all this time by friends or benefactors.

Gichtel's biography is Protestant hagiography: not for nothing is his biography in *Theosophica Practica* entitled *The Wonderful and Holy Life of the Chosen Champion and Blessèd Man of God Johann Georg Gichtel*. Readers must check their disbelief in miracles at this work's portals, for Gichtel's life apparently grew more and not less miraculous as time went on. For example, we read of how Gichtel was forced to bed for over a year since 'Breckling and his wife with their fiery prayers strove against his [Gichtel's] soul'. But after that time, an 'invisible hand' lifted Gichtel from his bed to the ground, and 'Satan's powers were broken'.

If Gichtel's friendship with Breckling ended rather nastily, his friendship with Alhart de Raedt [Raadt] ended in an equally or, if possible, even worse situation. De Raedt was a professor of theology at Harderwijk who had had to leave his chair because of another theological controversy. No doubt introduced to Gichtel by Breckling, de Raedt and Gichtel became fast friends in 1682, and in the words of Gichtel's biographer, 'they would have imparted their hearts to each other, and no one that visited them left them unmoved' (VII.185ff.).

But eventually Gichtel began to suspect that all was not well with de Raedt, that indeed a "foreign spirit" had crept into him. In a crucial incident, de Raedt prayed for a young man who had gone mad, and the more de Raedt prayed, the more insane the young man in another room became, until eventually he hanged himself. In a later such incident, a man with whom de Raedt lived for a time went quite insane and had to be chained, eventually escaping and coming to Gichtel looking 'quite wild and terrible'. Through prayer, the account goes, Gichtel was able to help restore the man to sanity again. In 1684, Gichtel invited all the Angelic Brethren to sit together at a table, and de Raedt reportedly sat apart and cried, because of his offenses – a story that reminds one of the Last Supper, with de Raedt playing the part of Judas. Thereafter, the two never met again, though de Raedt became Gichtel's bitter enemy (VII.212-213).

Between this time and Gichtel's death in 1710, his reputation spread through the Netherlands, and to England and Germany. Gichtel corresponded with numerous theosophers or aspirants,

and knew what was happening in theosophical circles elsewhere in Europe. He weighed English theosopher → Jane Lead's assertion of *apocatastasis*, or universal restoration, and eventually rejected it as conflicting with → Boehme's views. As the center of the Angelic community in Amsterdam, Gichtel was a spiritual advisor to both men and women, and people not part of this group would also seek him out for advice. Gichtel saw the world as the venue for spiritual struggles between good and evil, a perspective that infuses his many volumes of letters entitled *Theosophia Practica*, and that also pervades the work of Jacob Boehme, which Gichtel edited and published under the title *Theosophia Revelata*.

In the volumes of Gichtel's *Theosophia Practica*, we find many references to paranormal or miraculous events. He wrote about how he was able through prayer to assist the soul of a friend who had committed suicide; of how he was able to help people by taking their obsessions onto himself through prayer; of how he and his "angelic brethren" were always given what they needed to survive; of how he was able to put a ghost to rest; and of how he was able to discern whether an alchemical recipe was legitimate or merely fraudulent (I.335; VII.215; V.3188, 3210-3211, 3343).

Gichtel's letters are strikingly empty of references to current events or well-known people, but instead emphasize what we may call "hierohistory". Essentially, hierohistory refers to records of the dates and times of individual spiritual events or revelations. Gichtel's letters and biography exemplify this tendency very well, and one often gets the impression that, for Gichtel, hierohistory takes absolute precedence over the progression of linear time. In a sense, Gichtel's *Theosophia Practica* is simply an extended hierohistory, the specific cycles of revelation for Gichtel and his circle being chronicled both at the beginning and at the biographic conclusion of this seven-volume magnum opus of letters.

Gichtel's death is forecast in hagiographical fashion at the end of *Theosophia Practica* by reference to archetypal cycles of time. The Divine Sophia (Wisdom) reportedly appeared to Gichtel in definite temporal cycles during his life, and these cycles culminated forty days before his death, when 'the heavenly mother of wisdom revealed herself anew in 1709, December 13'. This time of revelation was the greatest, Gichtel said, since the time of de Raedt's apostasy; and according to Johann Georg Graber, it reached its zenith in the Angelic group after Gichtel's physical death early in 1710 (VII.340-341). This cycle of revelation, Graber

tells us, was renewed in subsequent years among the remaining Angelic community.

Gichtel's primary written work, as we have seen, was his voluminous collection of letters, but he left several other major works behind as well. Among these is a treatise, dated 1696, entitled *Eine kurze Eröffnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien und Welten Im Menschen* (A Brief Revelation and Instruction on the Three Principles and Worlds in Man), published in 1723. This work – which has been reprinted several times under the erroneous title *Theosophia Practica* – includes some very important illustrations on planetary symbolism and the human microcosm, detailing the process of theosophical illumination that is discussed at length in the text. The treatise is extremely ascetic in emphasis, focusing on the “wooing” of Sophia and on advice to the aspirant on struggles against demons and temptations.

Gichtel also edited the first major collection of Boehme's writings, entitled *Theosophia Revelata*, published in three successive editions: 1682, 1715, and 1730. Between 1680 and 1682, Gichtel and his colleagues accomplished this remarkable project of collating disparate texts and producing a single, fourteen-volume edition in octavo. It was in fact the primary German edition of Boehme until the work of Werner Buddecke in the 20th century. These two multivolume series – Boehme's work in *Theosophia Revelata*, and Gichtel's own letters in *Theosophia Practica* – were deliberately complementary, Boehme offering the primary revelational paradigm of theosophy, and Gichtel concentrating on its practical implications through guiding letters.

While Gichtel certainly belongs to the tradition of Boehme, his emphasis was not on Boehmean exegesis, but upon direct spiritual experience that he details in his letters. His contributions to the Boehmean tradition include the following: (1) an emphasis on rigorous asceticism in order to “woo Sophia”, or divine Wisdom personified as feminine; (2) an intense emphasis on demonic temptations in life that must be overcome (i.e., daily life as intense spiritual-ascetic struggle); (3) cycles of Sophianic revelations at specific intervals (“hierohistory”); (4) an emphasis on the androgyny of Adam prior to the Fall, and on the central role of Sophia in restoring the soul of the theosophical practitioner to primordial spiritual wholeness symbolized as androgyny; (5) explicit reference to traditions of practical and spiritual → alchemy; (6) miraculous or paranormal events, including clairvoyance. All of these themes are to be found in Boehme, though in far more symbolic form. Gichtel's work is marked above all as unique by his

particularly detailed chronology of Sophianic revelation in specific temporal cycles, or hierohistory, by his practical theosophic community (the Angelic Brethren), and by his letters filled with details of his own theosophic and paranormal experiences. Gichtel's essential contribution to the theosophical tradition is his emphasis on theosophic praxis and experience.

Gichtel has been criticized by Gorceix and others as having been a misogynist, but while there is no doubt that Gichtel insisted on chastity as part of his path toward spiritual marriage with Sophia, an emphasis on chastity is not the same as hatred of women (Gorceix 1975, 125; Versluis 1999, 36-37). Gichtel wrote that he had often refused proposals of marriage from various women, but this is consistent with his worldview affirming chastity. It is also the case that he corresponded with and offered spiritual advice to women as well as to men. Gichtel was unquestionably an irascible character who argued with a great many people, but he remains among the most important of the theosophers, and his letters shed a great deal of light on Boehme and on a theosophic spiritual path. The major study remains that of Gorceix (1975); detailed discussion is also found in Hutin (1960), Thune (1948), and Versluis (1999). Translated excerpts from *Theosophia Practica* are found in Versluis (2000).

Johann Georg Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica*, 7 vols., Leipzig: n.p., 1722 ♦ *Theosophia Revelata*, 19 vols., Hamburg: Regelin, 1715, 1730-1731 ♦ *Eine kurze Eröffnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien und Welten im Menschen* (with Johann Georg Graber), Leipzig: n.p., 1696 [mistitled as *Theosophia Practica*] Freiburg: Auum, 1979 ♦ Some fragments translated into English in Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Book: The Sophia Anthology*, St. Paul: Paragon House, 2000, 129-139.

*Lit.*: Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, 64, 69, 71, 216-217 ♦ Bernard Gorceix, *Flambée et Agonie: Mystiques du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle allemand*, Sisteron: Présence, 1977, 277-294 ♦ idem, *Johann Georg Gichtel: Théosophe D'Amsterdam*, Paris: L'Age d'Homme, 1975 ♦ Serge Hutin, *Les Disciples anglais de Jacob Boehme aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: Editions Denoël, 1960, 15-25 ♦ Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1948, 105-130 ♦ Arthur Versluis, “Christian Theosophic Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in: W.J. Hanegraaff and R. van den Broek (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, 217-234 ♦ idem, *Theosophia: Hidden Dimensions of Christianity*, Hudson: Lindisfarne, 1994, 67-69, 143-144 ♦

idem, *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1999, 29-38.

ARTHUR VERSLUIS

**Giorgio [Zorzi], Francesco, \* 7.4.1466  
(?) Venice, † 1.4.1540 Asolo**

Giorgio was born in Venice at a date which is undocumented, but which study of his astrological nativity indicates to be April 7, 1466, thus disproving his previous identification with one Dardi Zorzi. The scarcity of sure information on his youth and early manhood prevents us from knowing about his intellectual formation or his possible places of study. We know only that he belonged to the powerful patrician family of the Zorzi, and that he was a close relative of Alberto Marino Zorzi, "Reformer" of the University of Padua, and of Marin Sanudo, the author of the *Diari* which furnish important information about him. There is an old tradition that Giorgio, like other young patricians, completed his philosophical studies at the Paduan "Studio", but it is undocumented, as is the statement that he taught before becoming a friar. Nor can one establish the exact date of his entry into the order of the Observant Friars Minor, perhaps in the Venetian monastery of San Francesco della Vigna, or whether he pursued a regular theological education in the Studio del Santo, the school of the Venetian Franciscan Province. However, Giorgio's familiarity with the Scotist doctrines that he often cites, and his reading of → Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, seems to confirm this hypothesis. His evident familiarity with the works of → Marsilio Ficino and → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, with the Hermetic texts and the Talmudic and Kabbalistic traditions, suggests close contact with the Venetian intellectual circles influenced by the Platonic "Renaissance" and with the scholars of the Venetian Jewish community, such as Jacob Mantino, Elia Levita, Elia Menahem Halfon, as well as with the printer Gersom Soncino. Such contacts, together with the probable connections with → Egidio da Viterbo and the Venetian Augustinians engaged with editing the Joachimite and pseudo-Joachimite texts, may explain the most typical aspects of Giorgio's thought, expressed above all in the third "cantico" of *De Harmonia mundi*.

These interests, studies, and personal experiences did not hinder Giorgio from participating in the life of the Franciscan community, including a busy preaching activity and perhaps even a voyage to the Holy Land, and from maintaining excellent

relations with the political institutions of Venice. In 1500 he was elected Guardian of the monastery of San Francesco della Vigna, then apostolic delegate for the celebration of the Jubilee. At the same time he found himself involved in the trial of the physician Giovanni Maria, a follower of Francesco Biondo, who had promulgated his heterodox ideas in Venice. It is unclear what Giorgio's role was in this affair, which brought him a brief excommunication; but the consequences were not serious, for in 1504 he was re-elected Guardian and continued to preach with much success in Venice, on the mainland, and also beyond the Venetian domains. He was even confessor of the Poor Clares of the monastery of Santo Sepolchro, and of the abbess, Chiara Bugni, a "visionary" and "thaumaturge" who enjoyed considerable fame in the city. The church authorities carefully investigated the ecstasies and visions of the abbess, which were then celebrated by Giorgio in his own "Life" of Bugni. A commission of theologians excluded any charge of fraud or heterodoxy, but nevertheless in 1512 the nun had to accept segregation in a sort of conventual prison, where she lived out her last years.

Not even this affair lessened the favor which Giorgio enjoyed with the Senate and Signoria, which included him among the candidates for the Patriarchate in 1504, 1508, and 1523. After the Venetian defeat at Agnadello (1509), he was their intermediary with Andrea da Capua, duke of Teroli and commander of the Spanish-Neapolitan troops stationed at Vicenza, who was considering a truce in anticipation of a shifting of alliances. The mission was unsuccessful; but again, during the war of the Holy League, Giorgio sent important confidential reports to the main Venetian institutions. In spring, 1512 he met with Francesco II Gonzaga before proceeding to Ferrara, where he stayed with Alfonso d'Este, and reported on these conversations in person to the Doge. Meanwhile Giorgio pursued his monastic career. He was superintendent of the building of the sanctuary of Motta di Livenza, and in 1513 was elected Provincial, then Provincial Vicar, a post confirmed for the next two years. As such, he took part in the general chapter of the Observants in Assisi (1514), and in 1517 in the "supreme chapter" of Rome that sanctioned the definitive separation between the Conventuals and the Observants. Giorgio was named "definitore generale cismontano" of the latter. Although he retired in 1517-1518 to the monastery of San Girolamo at Asolo to begin the laborious writing of *De Harmonia mundi*, he took part in the general chapters of Lyon (1518) and Carpi (1521), where he was re-elected Definitore General. Finally,

in 1523 he became Provincial Minister, and was reconfirmed until 1525.

The exercise of these offices brought Giorgio closer to those who, reacting to the schism of the Reformation and the crisis of ecclesiastical institutions, hoped for a profound renovation of the Roman Church which would not only eliminate the corruption of the clergy, the monastic orders, and the hierarchy, but would return the Christian faith to its origins. Especially in the 1520s, Giorgio hoped that the reform of the Observants might be the example of a real Christian rebirth; and indeed in 1523, at the general chapter of Burgos, he sided with the “general” Francisco Quiñones, sharing his reforming proposals. It is not surprising that Giorgio was friendly with the Venetian supporters of the so-called “Catholic Reformation”, such as Gasparo Contarini, and with personalities such as Cortese, Giberti, Fregoso, and even Carafa, who after the Sack of Rome found the Venetian environment more congenial. However, in 1523 Giorgio found himself involved in a delicate disciplinary investigation concerning some “unruly” brethren whom he had not punished sufficiently. The Cismontine Commissary General suspended him from his post of Provincial, then, because Giorgio, with other Venetian friars, had not presented himself at the chapter of Mantua, the General excommunicated him, causing him to appeal to the pontifical legate and to the Pope. This was resolved only through the direct intervention of Quiñones, who in December 1525 absolved Giorgio but punished the other brethren. We do not know whether this altercation was provoked by mere disciplinary questions, or by some heterodox attitude as was common among the Observants, made suggestible by millenarist ferments and sometimes leaning toward the acceptance of Protestant doctrines. No longer re-elected, Giorgio returned to Asolo, where he had meanwhile finished writing *De Harmonia mundi*, published in Venice in September, 1525.

It is difficult to sum up such a complex work, which has the form of a musical poem composed of three “songs”, and in which the continuous reference to Platonic, Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism], and Hermetic texts [→ Hermetic Literature] is intertwined with astrological doctrines [→ Astrology] and alchemical allusions [→ Alchemy]. Long quotations from the Gospels, especially St. John’s, the Apocalypse, and the Pauline Epistles cohabit with mathematical speculations of a Pythagorean and magical type [→ Number Symbolism]. Giorgio’s preferred Kabbalistic doctrines [→ Jewish Influences] encounter the “Christian wisdom” of the Church Fathers (especially Origen), → August-

tine, and the greater Minorite masters. Such a rich erudition cannot be explained solely by the extraordinary accomplishments of → Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, but rather by the return to the Hebrew biblical tradition urged in recent works by Felice da Prato and Sante Pagnini, by the publication of writings of pure Kabbalistic inspiration such as Agostino Riccio’s *De motu octavae sphaerae*, and by the prolific efforts of Egidio da Viterbo in his attempt to christianize the Kabbala. *De Harmonia* aims to be the expression of a shared “wisdom” that is at once philosophical and theological, speculative and mystical; an interpretation of the supreme divine and cosmic mystery whose “illumination” descends through all the “revelations”: the Bible, the *prisca theologia*, the Word of Christ. Giorgio draws from these divine “springs” and their exegesis those fundamental themes which invariably influenced the religious culture of the mature Cinquecento, whether Catholic or heterodox: the “central” significance of man in the hierarchical and harmonious order of the cosmos; his liberty and dignity as a creature who comprehends the whole universe within himself; the supreme “mediating” function of Christ, the “incarnate Word” conceived as the unique “intermediary” between the eternal Monad and the infinite multiplicity of creation; the return of all to the One through the progressive *reductio* that every man can achieve in the privacy of his own spirit, if he follows the “path” of redemption by Christ, receives his “blessing”, and “imitates” his example. Finally, in the third cantico, perhaps added later, the Franciscan – like Ficino in the *Libri de Vita* – comes to connect the *deificatio hominis* (deification of man), with the beneficial use of astrological and magical techniques that facilitate the celestial ascent, just as his Kabbalistic exegesis aims toward the millenarist expectation of the new Jerusalem and of the new Adam who will reign together with Christ.

Giorgio credits this knowledge of these eternal truths to the sages of every age and every people, who have enjoyed the secret divine “illumination” and transmitted it from the immemorial time of the *prisca theologi* and the *poetae theologi* up to the more recent meditations of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, of Francis of Assisi and → Nicholas of Cusa. To them is due the lofty speculation on the One that is eternal and immutable but not immobile or sterile, thus the generator of every multiplicity in the infinite production of the world. From this unity and “first, most fecund mind” proceeds a “most similar offspring”, the true image of the Father, who generates it with a “unique and

uninterrupted" act. This "offspring" is the "Word of God" that Plato calls "son", and Orpheus sings of in the myth of Minerva born from the head of Jupiter. But the "Son" is the very principle that generates the love of divine goodness, linking every "intelligence" to the supreme Mind. Thus Giorgio proceeds to deduce the generative process from the One to the many, as conceived by the *sapientes*, and especially by Plato's *Timaeus*, Orpheus, Boethius, the Magi and the "Chaldean theologians", who have shown that the creation of the *fabrica mundi* (world-material) has been achieved following the musical and mathematical model of the perfect ternary number. The heavens and the stars have been made by the "perfect artisan" in such a way as to move with the greatest harmony and diffuse their good influences on all inferior things. Thus no calamity, mishap or catastrophe can be attributed to God, the fount of all goodness, because his celestial "ministers" operate according to his will, without ever violating human free will or disturbing the divine order of the world and the perfect reciprocal communication of all things. Christ the Word, "root" of all the "virtues" operating in the cosmos and of the "light" that forms it, attracts every earthly life and nature to himself and leads back to unity the multiplicity that is dispersed in the immense cosmic architecture. He is indeed the "redeemer" who has shown to man, placed by God between time and eternity, the finite and the infinite, how to ascend to the pure angelic intelligences and thence to return to his own origin and celestial nature. Thus the human soul, which the sacrifice of the highest cosmic and spiritual intermediary has redeemed from original sin, can again become God's favorite child; and when it has finally put off its dissonant and inharmonious "matter", it will reveal its harmony of pure spiritual and immortal substance, awaiting the last judgment when beatitude will be absolute and everything will return to its one source. As the soul pursues this journey, it will be able to enjoy all the natural energies and potencies, using the "good" magical arts of "haruspicy", chiromancy, geomancy and physiognomy [→ Divinatory Arts], which allow the "elect" to receive exceptional knowledge and powers as they approach the higher form of revelation, the "rapture" in which the omnipotent divine will reveals the mystery of the future and unveils eternity.

The publication of *De Harmonia* at a time that was so perilous for Christendom, riddled with violent religious and political conflicts, was received with great interest in the religious circles that entertained reforming notions; but it did not fail also to

attract intellectuals who were later considered heretics. Not by chance did Bembo express his doubts about its ample usage of the Kabbalah, 'a most suspect and dangerous thing', while other readers distrusted its attitude toward traditional theological doctrines, harbinger of possible heretical conclusions. The book was soon diffused throughout Europe, as witness the Paris editions of 1543 and 1564 and the French version (1578, 1588) by →Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie, a disciple of →Guillaume Postel, himself an admirer of Giorgio.

During the following years, Giorgio was one of the main figures in the religious life of Venice. He was charged by the Senate in 1527 to promulgate the Jubilee conceded by Clement VII, and returned to San Francesco della Vigna as Reader in Sacred Scripture and Teacher of the Hebrew Language. In the dramatic spring of that year, on the eve of the Sack of Rome, Quiñones, on the orders of Clement VII, asked him to convince the Venetian Senate to lay down arms and support the final efforts to avoid war. Giorgio's intervention was in vain; but the following year, when he obtained the conversion of a rabbi, he was solemnly honored in San Marco in the presence of the Doge. His most dramatic effort of religious politics was his involvement in the complicated affair launched by Henry VIII's request for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Giorgio supported the humanist Richard Croke, sent to Italy to collect the opinions of professors, church dignitaries, biblical scholars, theologians, and even rabbis who were disposed to recognize the validity of the reasons put forth by the English king. The friar's activity succeeded in gathering support not only from various theologians of Venice, Padua, and Vicenza, but even of Elia Menahem Halfon, Baruch di Benevento, Calò Calonymos, and the converted rabbi Marco Raffaele. Not even the papal prohibition, on pain of excommunication, of writing or speaking against the validity of this marriage induced him to give up. But he did not disobey the papal brief of Clement VII (2-6-1530) which summoned him to Rome, so that with his "singular doctrine" he might assist the papacy and the Church. Even the Senate had warned Giorgio not to become further involved with the "English question", just as it refused the request of the Bishop of London, John Stokeslay, that the Paduan theologians might make their opinion known. Giorgio's stay in Rome, where it seems that he toned down his attitude, did not change the Pope's decision, after which a severe, life-threatening illness forced him to lessen his efforts. It is difficult to agree with the identification



made by Roth of Giorgio as the “authoritative” Italian Franciscan present at the end of 1530 or 1531 at the English court, where, incidentally, his close associate Marco Raffaele found refuge.

Shortly after his return to Venice, and thence to Asolo – perhaps as early as March 1531, when the Signoria named him among the candidates for the diocese of Brescia – Giorgio found himself involved in a bitter conflict which set the supporters of Paolo Pisotti, General of the order, against the former Venetian Provincials and a group of young friars who supported the radical reforms of the Observants. When the future “heretic” Bernardino Ochino was sent to Venice as Pisotti’s “commissary”, it embittered the meeting and led to the intervention of Carafa and Gian Matteo Giberti, Bishop of Verona, in favor of the “reformers”. The crisis lasted till the end of 1533, when Pisotti renounced the generalship. Giorgio, acquitted of his adversaries’ accusations, could then return to dedicate himself to Kabbalistic studies, biblical exegesis, and ever bolder spiritualist meditations. Already in 1532 he had met Luca Bonfius, friend of → Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, with whom he had a long conversation about the most important Kabbalistic themes; and the following year Agrippa, defending himself from the accusations of Corrado di Ulma, had cited Giorgio among the greatest students of the Kabbalah. The friar’s fame was already widespread among European followers of the *secretior theologia* (more secret theology), whilst on the other side he regained authority in his order, becoming in 1534 Custodian, and in 1535 again Provincial and Procurator of the “fabric” of San Francesco della Vigna. The latter office allowed him to realize his idea of the canon of harmony and mathematical proportion to be used in the construction of temples, as a symbol of the universal harmony. Finally in July, 1536, he published in Venice *In Scripturam Sacram Problemata* (Problems in Holy Scripture), a work which had considerable success, especially in France where it was reprinted in 1575 and 1622.

In this book, Giorgio used a completely different procedure, tackling the “problematic” discussion of scriptural passages, of their apparent divergences and the different meanings to be attributed to them through recourse to Kabbalistic interpretation. In the dedication to Paul III he says that he has written this work solely to help the faithful, who are seeking in the divine Word the most “sweet” and solid wisdom. He points to the Bible as the source of all knowledge, from mathematics to geometry, from → music to “true and divine” astronomy, from medicine to natural philosophy

and ethics. Thus in the *Problemata* he says that he has treated not only the problems concerning the origin and order of the *fabrica mundana*, but also the creation of man, the coming of the Mosaic revelation and the history of the Law; also the themes concerning “vaticination” from the biblical prophets to the prophecies of → Hermes, → Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato, derived from the communal divine *officina*, and thence to the more secret truths of the Gospels. Above all, he announces that he will have recourse to Kabbalistic exegesis according to the method of the *Zohar*, by which the sense of the Scripture may vary in 72 “facets”, thereby revealing unknown “treasures” of wisdom. It is no surprise that in this book the most subtle theological and dogmatic arguments, subjected to Kabbalistic analysis, alternate with prophetic, messianic, and eschatological themes aimed at the expectation of the necessary *renovatio* of man and the world.

In the first section, *De mundi fabrica*, the friar revives the defence of the creationist doctrine against Averroes and the Peripatetics; but he asserts that God has created a unique, universal soul from which he has drawn the individual souls, infused in Adam and other men. Giorgio accepts the Platonic myth of the original, androgynous nature of man, which he says Plato took from → Moses, a prophet illuminated by divine wisdom. Thus Giorgio shows his intention to interpret the sacred texts in complete liberty, in search of recondite and arcane meanings foreign to traditional exegesis, and in particular of propositions that refer directly to trinitarian dogma. He emphasizes the work done by the Son-Word in the formation of the cosmos, dominating the original chaos and the dark formlessness of primordial matter. Moreover, the conception of sacred history, discussed in nine groups of problems, allows Giorgio to extend the Old Testament revelation up to the coming of Christ, the universal mediator, so as to consider the Mosaic law in close symbolic continuity with the Christian message.

The true significance of the *Problemata* appears only in the third tome, dedicated to the *Prophetarum oracula* (oracles of the prophets). While Giorgio praises the supreme value of prophecy, he considers “natural reason” and philosophy as frivolous and vain in comparison with that “divine gift” perceptible to the “spiritual senses” alone, because the true prophet must express himself in enigmatic form, presenting the divine truth only in obscure form, comprehensible by few. Moreover, when Giorgio discusses the significance of the sacraments, particularly bap-

tism, and their “potency”, he insists on their “spiritual” and “symbolic” character, whether it is a matter of penitence, baptism, or the “sacrifice” of the Mass and the Eucharist, of which Christ is the only priest. He alone who participates in complete inner purity can unite himself with God in *charitas* (love), like the grains of wheat in bread, while the false Christians, no longer his children, will be subjected to God’s strict justice.

Like the *problemata* on the secret reason that God permits the evils and disasters of the world, the interpretation of the sacraments is resolved within the eschatological perspective of the war between good and evil, concluded by the coming of the “new men” reborn in Christ and the end of worldly rites and observances, necessary under the Law but now abolished by the sacrifice of Christ, “celestial man”, and by faith in him. Then in the fourth tome, the friar discusses original sin and the fullness of time, which is now very close; he returns to the divine-human nature of Christ and his supreme thaumaturgic virtue, revealed by the messianic name that dismays the demons with its powers and its numeric virtue, in which the power of all the divine names is collected. Certainly, faith in the man-God is now too scarce among “worldly men”, and the very “mystical body of Christ”, the Church, can no longer preserve that divine “treasure”, while the mystery persists of “Judaic incredulity” toward the true Messiah so long awaited. In the fourth and fifth tomes Giorgio appeals not only to Paul, Augustine and other Fathers, but to Hermes, Orpheus, Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Plato, to renew the ancient “secret wisdom”, interpret the supreme mystery of the Trinity, and recognize the divine glory, conqueror of demonic cunning, which is only revealed when one despises the desires and temptations of the mortal and ephemeral body. Giorgio also discusses the Kabbalistic significance of the angelic natures; the heavens, stars, and celestial influences governed by them; and lastly the “secret” arts among which is → alchemy, often wrongly used but worthy of faith. Thus there emerges the image of the Christian “thaumaturge” to whom divine wisdom has revealed the most hidden mysteries of the cosmos, which he uses for his final identification with the Word as redeemer of his earthly and carnal nature.

The publication of the *Problemata* caused doubts and fears even among Giorgio’s friends. Contarini, especially, judged severely the interpretations of trinitarian dogma as being close to the Arian heresy, and the prevalence of rabbinic and Kabbalistic exegesis over Christian theologians. Giorgio defended his work, asserting its absolute

orthodoxy; then, returning to Asolo, devoted himself to writing an unpublished commentary on the Kabbalistic Conclusions of Pico, and to the composition in Italian of the *Elegante poema* and its *Commento*, perhaps interrupted by his death. In the introductory *Argomento*, he writes that he intends to ‘make clear and bright many places in Scripture that seem more occult and obscure’ by ‘following the poetic custom’, that is, with a poem evidently imitative of Dante, on the lines of the Platonic and prophetic interpretation of the *Commedia* proposed by Ficino and Landino. The *Poema* and *Commento*, which resume the doubts and Kabbalistic exegesis of the *Problemata*, survive in a single manuscript tradition which must have circulated only among the friar’s most faithful followers, among them perhaps → Giulio Camillo.

Giorgio died in Asolo in April 1, 1540, while his works were still circulating in Europe. But later, after the harsh attack by the Dominican Sisto da Siena (1566) and the drastic accusations by Bellarmino (1585), came the final condemnation of *De Harmonia* and the *Problemata*, sanctioned by the *Index romanus* of Sixtus V (1590) and repeated in the *Index librorum prohibitorum et expurgandorum* of Giovanni Maria Guazzelli (1607).

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CESARE VASOLI

## Gnostic Church

The Gnostic Church (Église Gnostique), created in 1890 by Jules-Benoît Doinel (1842-1902), was born in the environment of modern → spiritualism and the → Theosophical Society. Doinel had for some years frequented esoteric and occultist circles, and, while practicing spiritualism, had attended the Swedenborgian Church [→ Swedenborgian Traditions]. In 1875 he met Léon Denis (1846-1927), for whom he would always have a great admiration. From 1882 to 1893 Doinel belonged to the sect of Guillaume Monod (1800-1896), a reformed minister who believed himself to be the new Christ, and gave lectures there which

Monod praised, considering Doinel to be his prophet, a reincarnation of Nehemias. Doinel's masonic career began in 1884. He was initiated Master in 1885 with the 'congratulations and encouragement' of Albert Pike (1809-1891). From 1886 to 1893 he was Orator of his Orléans lodge, and became its Worshipful Master in 1892. The following year, he attained the degree of Rose-Croix within the Parisian chapter "L'Étoile Polaire".

As far as the Gnostic Church is concerned, everything began as a result of a spiritualist séance held at the end of 1889 at Lady Caithness's (1832-1895). The circle of friends grouped around this lady was much concerned with spiritualism, on the one hand, and with ancient → gnosticism, on the other. During this particular séance, in which Doinel participated, the "spirit" of Guilhabert de Castres, former Bishop of Montségur, manifested to demand the creation, or re-creation, of a "Gnostic Church". Doinel became convinced that he had received a "gnostic investiture" on this occasion, and was indeed the elect appointed to head this church, which he called Nouvelle Église Gnostique Universelle (New Universal Gnostic Church). It was primarily a matter of giving new life to ancient gnosticism, broadly understood (not only → Valentinus, but also personages such as Apollonius of Tyana and → Simon Magus, and even Origen, figure as authorities here). After founding his church, Doinel consecrated its bishops, including → Papus (1865-1916). Then he joined Papus's Martinist Order [→ Martinism: Second Period], and became a member of its Supreme Council.

The goal of the Gnostic Church was to create a spiritual and elitist → Freemasonry under the sign of Gnosis. In his study of the Gnostic Church, René Le Forestier has emphasized one of its particularities, viz. that its directors wished to teach an elite: 'while the postulates of the gnostic doctrines and the dogmas of the Cathar religion had been made known to all the disciples and catechumens, . . . it was quite different with the new Gnostic Church, where the three orders of the faithful were like masonic "degrees"' (Le Forestier 1990, 50-51). A bridge was in fact established with the lodges of the Scottish Rite, thanks to the "Ordre des chevaliers faydits [the name given to the Cathar lords] de la Colombe du Paraclét", which was an imitation of a Templar Masonic System (or "Rite"), known as the Strict Observance. 'Only knights should belong to Gnosis, to Martinism, and to Kabbalah'; their password *Ad Spiritum per Helenam* 'was most significant, and the Order de la Colombe du Paraclét, creation of the Gnostic Church, was fortunate in attracting to the latter the attention of enthusi-

asts for the occult sciences, and bringing it proselytes' (ibid., 56-57). The ties between the Gnostic Church and Freemasonry would never be broken.

The adherence of the leaders of the Gnostic Church to the Martinist Order was a constant. This was notably the case with Doinel's successor, Synésius (Léonce Fabre des Essarts, 1848-1917), as with the neo-gnostic bishops Théophane (Léon Champrenaud, 1870-1925) and Simon (Albert de Pouvoirville, 1861-1940). These last two published the periodical *La Voie* (1904-1907), and, in 1907, *Les Enseignements secrets de la Gnose* (The secret teachings of gnosis). The same adherence applied (1909-1912) to Palingenius (→ René Guénon, 1886-1951).

Doinel presided over the Très Haut Synode, i.e. the group of "bishops" who were at the head of this Gnostic Church. We have very little information on this synod's activity. Le Forestier states that within it a 'council of members of the third degree' practiced a ritual of magical character that was in favor in certain occult Orders, notably the → Élus Coëns. Doinel presided over the synod for the last time in September, 1894. At this point, in fact, he broke with his church, going so far as to denigrate it in a book that appeared in the same year (under the pseudonym of Jean Kostka), *Lucifer démasqué* (Lucifer unmasked). Yet he re-joined it at the end of his life, then holding only the simple title of bishop.

Another organization was in liaison with the Gnostic Church, thanks to → François-Charles Barlet (Albert Faucheux): the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, defined by Guénon in the review *La Gnose*, its organ, as 'one of the rare serious initiatic fraternities that currently still exist in the West' and as 'foreign to any occultist movement' (*La Gnose*, no. of November 1911). René Guénon's entrance onto the stage marked the rejection, at the heart of the Gnostic Church, of sympathy and complicity with spiritualist and reincarnationist theories. Guénon's contributions to the review *La Gnose* were his first writings, in which the seeds of his future work were already present. He there declared expressly the continuity of the lineage of Doinel, announced the publication of 'all that we have been able to collect of the printed or unpublished writings of Jules Doinel (T Valentin), who was the Restorer of Gnosis in the 19th century' (*La Gnose*, no. 1, November 1909, p. 2), and reaffirmed 'the bonds that have always united Gnosticism and Masonry, bonds which we will demonstrate all the better by reproducing some masonic discourses (already published some time before in *La Chaîne d'Union* by F. Jules Doinel [T Valentin], who was simultaneously Patriarch of the



Gnostic Church and member of the Council of the Order of the Grand Orient of France' (*La Gnose*, no. 5, March 1910, 84).

Another of the bishops consecrated by Doinel, Bardesane (Lucien Mauchel/Chamuel [1867-1936]), elected president of the Holy Synod of the Gnostic Church in 1932, extended his authority in 1934 over the Supreme Council of the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix. The delegate of this order to the Brussels Convention was Frère Yesir (Victor Blanchard, 1877-1953), incidentally head of the Ordre Martiniste Synarchique and of the Fraternité des Polaires, and also delegate of the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix de France, instituted by F. Jollivet-Castelot. At this convention, Blanchard, alias Yesir, became Imperator d'Orient, i.e. one of the three elected Emperors of the F.U.D.O.S.I. (Federatio Universalis Dirigens Omnes Ordines Societatesque Initiationis [Universal Federation Directing All Orders and Societies of Initiation]). After Doinel's departure, Fabre des Essarts took over leadership of the Gnostic Church but was faced with a secession, that of the bishop-primate of Lyon, Johannès, pseudonym of Jean/Joanny Bricaud (1881-1934).

Bricaud had already trodden a long path through the occultist milieu (Masonry, Martinism, Vintras's Church of Carmel, the Johannite Church, the Chaldeo-Latin Church) and had frequented → Maître Philippe of Lyon. In 1908, Bricaud held at Lyon the Holy Synod, which raised him to the patriarchal throne under the name of John II. He was then initiated into the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm. In 1911 he signed, with Papus, the treaty that made the Église Gnostique Universelle the official church of the Martinist Order (along with the Gallican Church of France). Wishing to reserve initiation for an elite, he took Freemasonry as the model, 'raising the number of gnostic degrees to 33'. Very ambitious, Bricaud entered into relations with the occultist circles of Europe and the United States, and allied himself with the heads of the principal dissident organizations of the Roman church. In 1912, he instituted the "Gnostic Legates", and many personalities of the occult world received this title. Thus Charles Détré/Téder (1855-1918) became Legate for England, Spain, and the British colonies; Dr. Krauss (Grand Master of the Samaritains Inconnus), Legate for Bavaria; the famous → Theodor Reuss (Grand Master General of the → Ordo Templi Orientis and of the Ancient and Primitive Oriental Order of Memphis-Misraïm), Legate for Switzerland. The ties between the latter and Bricaud are easy to understand: Bricaud had a great admiration

for Vintras, and valued the form of sexual magic sanctioned by the latter. Theodor Reuss, co-founder with Carl Kellner of the O.T.O., became Sovereign Patriarch and Primate of the E.G.C. (Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica), and in 1918 published a "Gnostic Mass" written by → Aleister Crowley.

Upon Détré's death, Bricaud became head simultaneously of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm, the Martinist Order, and the Rose-Croix Kabbalistique et Gnostique. His successor Constant Chevillon (T Harmonius, 1880-1944) took over the headship of these organizations. Chevillon allied himself with Reuben Swinburne Clymer (1878-1966) and his Rosicrucian order, rival to the A.M.O.R.C. – the Rosicrucian order created by → Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883-1939) – and belonged to the F.U.D.O.F.S.I. (Fédération Universelle des Ordres Fraternités et Sociétés Initiatives [Universal Federation of Initiatic Orders, Fraternities, and Societies]).

After the tragic death of Chevillon in 1944, the Église Gnostique Universelle was successively headed by Antoine Fayolle (T Marcos), in 1948 by Charles-Henry Dupont (T Charles-Henry, 1877-1960), and finally in 1960 by Robert Ambelain (T Jean III). The latter, head of the Martinist Order, "put to sleep" the Église Gnostique Universelle, transferring his activities to his own Église Gnostique Apostolique, founded in 1958.

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LADISLAUS TOTH

## Gnosticism I: Gnostic Religion

1. THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION
2. GNOSTIC VIEWS (A. GOD AND THE DIVINE WORLD B. FALL AND CREATION C. SALVATION D. ETHICS) 3. BACKGROUNDS AND RELATIONSHIPS (A. JUDAISM B. GREEK PHILOSOPHY C. HERMETISM D. CHRISTIANITY) 4. CONCLUSION

### 1. THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

The term “Gnosticism” is a scholarly invention, coined by the Cambridge Platonist → Henry More (1614-1687), who used it in a pejorative sense (Layton 1995). In Antiquity, the religious phenomenon it designates was simply called “Gnosis” (Gr. *gnōsis*, “knowledge”) or, by its opponents, “the Gnosis falsely so called” (already in 1 Timothy 6:20). In this connection, the word Gnosis does not refer to rational, philosophical knowledge, but to religious, spiritual insight, based on revelation. From the beginning, the modern word Gnosticism has been used in particular to indicate a special brand of Gnosis that flourished in the 2nd and 3rd centuries and was vehemently combated by several early Christian writers because of its “heretical” doctrine of creation and salvation. But even in this limited sense, it proved increasingly difficult to exactly determine its characterizing features, especially after the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library (→ Gnosticism II). Especially in German scholarship, the words “Gnosis” and “Gnosticism” have always been used indiscriminately to indicate both the great Gnostic systems of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and the more general spiritual current they belonged to. The English-speaking world preferentially used the word “Gnosticism”. The terminological obscurity was further complicated by the fact that, under the influence of early Christian anti-heretical literature, the adjective “Gnostic” was – as it still is – used almost exclusively to refer to the “Gnosticism” considered heretical by the church fathers, which gave the term a pejorative meaning. Not without reason, A.D. Nock, in his review of the first volume of Jonas's now classic *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, exclaimed: ‘I am left in a terminological fog’ (I, 444). To create more clarity on this point, the primary objective of the first great colloquium on Gnosticism, held in Messina in 1966, was to establish generally accepted definitions of the terms “Gnosis” and “Gnosticism”. The final document of this colloquium (in Italian, French, English and German) was a ‘Proposal for a Terminological and

Conceptual Agreement with regard to the theme of the Colloquium' (Bianchi, XXVI-XXIX, English version). It proposed to reserve the term "Gnosticism" for the movement that began 'with a certain group of systems of the Second Century A.D.' and to regard "Gnosis" as 'knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an élite', i.e. of an esoteric kind. The characteristics of Gnosticism 'can be summarized in the idea of a divine spark in man, deriving from the divine realm, fallen into this world of fate, birth and death, and needing to be awakened by the divine counterpart of the self in order to be finally reintegrated'. The proposal emphasized: 'Not every *Gnosis* is Gnosticism, but only that which involves . . . the idea of the divine consubstantiality of the spark that is in need of being awakened and reintegrated. This *Gnosis* of Gnosticism involves the divine identity of the *knower* (the Gnostic), the *known* (the divine substance of one's transcendent self) and the *means by which one knows* (*Gnosis* as an implicit divine faculty that is to be awakened and actualized)'. As was to be expected, the Messina definitions did not receive unanimous scholarly approval, for the description of the *Gnosis* of Gnosticism could also be applied to currents that certainly did not fit the proposed definition of Gnosticism. To mention only one influential scholar, Kurt Rudolph almost immediately (1967) rejected the separation between Gnosis and Gnosticism. In accordance with the German scholarly tradition, he continued to use both terms for the religion of salvation through Gnosis that flourished in the first centuries of our era, but later on (1985) he preferred the term Gnosis and advised to eliminate the term Gnosticism 'as far as possible, since it is not only pejorative, but also confusing' (Rudolph 1996, 34-52 [1985], 144-148 [1967]). The term Gnosticism was completely discredited by Michael Williams in his *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (1996). Based on a solid knowledge of the primary and secondary sources, his book contains a massive attack on what is usually understood by the terms "Gnostic", "Gnosis", "Gnosticism" and "Gnostic Religion". He rightly argues that there never existed one clearly definable religious system that could be called Gnosticism. He shows that many texts that are commonly thought to represent the "Gnostic religion" do not contain the characteristics usually ascribed to it (separation between the supreme God and the Creator, protest exegesis, anti-cosmic world rejection, hatred of the body, Gnostic ethics as either libertine or ascetic, etc.). In his view,

terms such as "Gnosis" and "Gnostic" are so vague that they have lost any specific meaning and, therefore, should be avoided. Of course, even Williams could not deny that a number of 2nd-century texts unquestionably show the existence of a group of related and more or less coherent systems that together are usually, as in Messina, labelled "Gnosticism". The dominant idea in these systems is the assumption that the world has not been created by the supreme transcendent God, but by a lower, imperfect and even bad Demiurge, who is identified with the God of the Jews (see below). Williams proposed to speak in this connection of "biblical demiurgical" texts and traditions; but this new terminology does not bring us much further, for one still needs to specify what kind of biblical demiurgical texts and traditions are meant, that is to say, those that through a specific interpretation of biblical myths proclaim that salvation is only possible through *Gnosis*, i.e. an esoteric knowledge of the origin and destination of one's inner self.

From the above it may have become clear that an unambiguous definition of what is understood by the much-used terms "Gnosis", "Gnosticism" and "Gnostic" is impossible; but nevertheless some degree of clarification is necessary. It is undeniable that there existed in Antiquity a broad and variegated religious current characterized by a strong emphasis on esoteric knowledge (*Gnosis*) as the only means of salvation, which implied the return to one's divine origin. This religious current can best be referred to as the "Gnostic Movement" or "Gnostic religiosity". The great Gnostic systems of the 2nd and 3rd centuries are integral parts of this broader Gnostic movement and should not be isolated from it. The main characteristic of these systems is that their central ideas are expressed in myths, which may vary from one system to another, but as a whole display strong similarities. For that reason, and to maintain the link with the Gnostic current in general, it is preferable to speak here of mythological Gnostic texts or systems. The term "Gnosticism", if used at all, should be reserved for these more or less coherent expressions of mythological Gnosis. The people who believed and proclaimed that salvation is possible only through revealed, secret Gnosis should be called "Gnostics", i.e. "those who know". There were Gnostics who used this term as a self-designation, for instance the followers of → Prodicus and the people referred to in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, I, 29 (Smith). The emphasis on secrecy alone is not decisive to label an idea or a system as Gnostic: in Greek philoso-

phy (Pythagoreanism and Platonism) as well as in Alexandrian Christian theology (the *Sentences of Sextus*, → Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the *Teachings of Silvanus*), there was a strong tendency to maintain secrecy about some central doctrines or mysteries (van den Broek 1996, 264-270), but nobody would classify these doctrines as “Gnostic” and their adherents as “Gnostics”. Rather, the decisive criterion for designating an idea or text as Gnostic is whether or not it involves a concept of knowledge that considers Gnosis the indispensable means of salvation, indeed salvation itself. In this sense, the esoteric *Gospel of Thomas* can be labelled Gnostic, even though it shows no traces of mythological Gnosis. On the other hand, Clement of Alexandria, who always speaks of his ideal Christian as “the true Gnostic”, cannot be called a Gnostic, because he declared simple faith alone sufficient for salvation. The Gnostic knows of his divine origin and destination. According to the second-century Christian Gnostic Theodotus, Gnosis is the knowledge of ‘who we were and what we have become, where we were and into what we have been thrown, whither we hasten and from what we are redeemed, what is birth and what rebirth’ (Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus*, 78, 2). The central Gnostic idea of revealed, secret Gnosis as a gift that illuminates and liberates man’s inner self is found in all periods, as is abundantly shown by the present Dictionary. For that reason, the terms “Gnosis” and “Gnostic” are applicable to all ideas and currents, from Antiquity to the present day, that stress the necessity of esoteric knowledge. The term “Gnosticism”, however, should be used with respect to the Gnostic systems of Antiquity only.

## 2. GNOSTIC VIEWS

The Gnostic ideas of Antiquity display such an enormous variety that it is impossible to reduce them to one coherent system. However, there is a certain set of views that can be considered characteristic of the Gnostic movement, even if most of them also occur in contexts that are not Gnostic at all. To this kernel of Gnostic thought belongs the idea of a completely transcendent God, who produces a divine world, to which the human being’s inner self originally belonged. Through a tragic course of events, which is often more implied than openly exposed, man became separated from his divine origin, which made him forget his high descent. Return to his place of origin is only possible through Gnosis, which in some way or another is imparted to him through revelation.

### A. GOD AND THE DIVINE WORLD

The starting point of all Gnostic theology, both in its mythological and its more speculative form, is the idea of God’s absolute transcendence. In a number of texts, this idea is expressed in the same terminology of negative theology that was also used by pagan philosophers and hermetists as well as by Christian theologians. God is ineffable, invisible, unbegotten, incomprehensible, immeasurable, incorruptible, unnameable, etc. Long enumerations of these negative qualifications of God are, for instance, found at the beginning of the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1), the *Tractatus Tripartitus* (NHC I, 5), and *Eugnostus the Blessed* (NHC III, 1 and V, 1). The negative theology of the Gnostics went even further than that of the Greek philosophers and most Christian theologians. The latter held that God, although unknowable in his essence, could at least partially be comprehended by the human mind (*nous*), through philosophical reasoning and contemplation of the cosmic order; but the Gnostics denied this and declared knowledge of God to be possible only through revelation.

A central theme of Hellenistic philosophy was the relationship between the One and the Many, the Monad and the infinite Dyad. In these speculations, the One was always identified with the Good, whereas evil somehow arose from the principle of duality and multiplicity, mostly associated with matter. The Middle Platonists preferred a triad of basic principles of the universe, which could be described differently by the individual philosophers (Dillon). The first principle was mostly seen as Mind, but sometimes it was thought to be above Mind and Being; in that case the second principle was considered Mind. The Platonic ideas, which formed the patterns of visible reality, were conceived of as the thoughts of God and, accordingly, located either in the first or the second principle. The third principle was often identified with primal, formless matter, which by receiving the imprints of the ideas became the created world. A detailed discussion of the complicated Middle Platonist views on the first principles of being is impossible in the present context. May it suffice to say that the Gnostic authors, who often show themselves to be rather well educated, almost inevitably made use of these philosophical speculations to express their fundamentally religious ideas. In many Gnostic systems, a triad of divine hypostases constitutes the apex of the divine world. Most of those described by Hippolytus start from three basic principles of the universe, *inter alia* → Justin the Gnostic, the →

Naassenes, the → Perates, and the → Sethians. The Perates distinguished between the Unbegotten (*agenētōn*), the Self-begotten (*autogenes*) and the Begotten (*gennētōn*), which are also described as the Father, the Son and Matter (Hippolytus, *Refutatio* V, 17,1). A similar terminology is found in the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (NHC VI, 57, 13-18; 63-21-23), in the Naassene system, and partly also in *Eugnostus the Blessed* (NHC III, 72, 22; 75, 6-7). The *Paraphrase of Shem* says of 'the great powers that were in existence in the beginning': 'There was Light and Darkness and there was Spirit between them' (NHC VII, 1, 25-28; the same principles occur in the Sethian system according to Hippolytus, *Refutatio* V, 19).

There is, however, an important difference between the Middle- and Neoplatonist ideas on the principles of the universe and those of the Gnostics. The latter assumed a much greater number of levels of being than the philosophers were prepared to accept. In the middle of the third century, this led to a conflict in the school of Plotinus, which was also frequented by Gnostics. In his *Against the Gnostics* (*Enneads* II, 9), Plotinus rejected the Gnostic introduction of a great number of other hypostases within and outside the three basic principles he acknowledged himself (the One, Mind and Soul). This switch from philosophical reasoning to religious mythology is clearly to be seen in *Zostrianus* (NHC VIII, 1), which Plotinus' pupil Amelius, at the master's instigation, refuted in no less than forty books (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 16). Especially the mythological Gnostic texts and systems abound in a cascade of divine entities down from the summit of Being, but both the direct and the indirect sources show that there were great differences at this point, which led to quite different pictures of the structure of the divine world. Some Gnostic texts do mention these lower entities, sometimes even by name, but without further information about their origin and mutual relationship.

The divine realm as a whole is mostly called the *Pleroma* ("Fullness"), and described as constituted of a variety of divine qualities and attributes, called *aeons*. These aeons successively develop out of God, which means that the development of the Pleroma in fact represents the self-realization of the ineffable God. The Gnostic mythological texts show a great variety of aeons and their interrelations, but some aeonic systems exerted a particular influence, especially those of the "Gnostics" behind the *Apocryphon of John* and the Valentinians (→ Valentinus and Valentinians). There were

Gnostics who indulged almost exclusively in endless speculations about the structure of the divine world. The most bewildering example of this is to be found in the *Books of Jeû* and the *Untitled Treatise* of the Bruce Codex.

Before discussing some aspects of the development of the Pleroma, a clarification of the concept of aeon may be in order. The Greek word *aiōn* means "(a long space of) time", "age", and in plural "eternity" (e.g. Romans 16:27: 'until the aeons [of aeons]'). In the Hellenistic world, infinite Time was honoured as a God under the name of Aion, especially in Alexandria. From the meaning "age" the word aeon also evolved into another word for "world" (e.g. Matthew 12:32: 'this aeon' versus the 'the coming aeon'). In some early Christian texts, God is called 'the King of the aeons' (1 Timothy 1:17), who through his Son has created the aeons (Hebrews 1:2), so that Clement of Rome (ca. 95 A.D.), in his *Letter to the Corinthians*, 35, 3, could speak about God as 'the Creator and Father of the aeons'. The exact meaning of these expressions is a matter for dispute, but it will be clear that they could easily be interpreted in a Gnostic sense. For a correct understanding of the Gnostic concept of aeons it should be realized that, just like the Pleroma as a whole, the Gnostic aeons have a distinct spatial aspect. That explains why, for instance, it is said in the *Apocryphon of John* that the race of Seth and other Gnostics are placed in specific aeons (BG 36, 1-15 parr. = Synopsis 22, 18-23, 12), and also why in the *Gospel of Truth* the aeons are often called "spaces", which are emanations of the Father (NHC I, 27, 11). The aeons are aspects of the ineffable God, but at the same time they are also forms of time and space. There may be an influence here of Greek interpretations of the Persian Zervan Akarana, the Unbegotten Time, from which the opposed gods Ormuzd and Ahriman have come forth: according to Eudemos of Rhodos (4th century B.C.) this primal principle was called both "Place" and "Time" (Frg. 150, ed. Wehrli, VIII, 71). Although there are clear similarities, the aeons differ from other → intermediary beings because of their often artificial nature (personified abstract concepts) and their functions.

As said above, the development of the Pleroma is the self-realization of God: the Unknown Father becomes conscious of himself. A well-known description of this development is that of the *Apocryphon of John*, which has a close and more original parallel in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I, 29, and partly also in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

Other interesting pleromatic structures are those of *Eugnostus the Blessed* and the Valentinians (Irenaeus, *AH* I, 1). According to the *Apocryphon*, the Unknown Father saw himself reflected in the light-water that surrounded him, he recognized himself, and immediately his thought became an independent female entity, called Ennoia (“Thought”), who is also called Barbelo. The Father and Barbelo generate the Light, who is also called Autogenes and identified with Christ (probably a secondary addition). Then this original trinity of Father, Mother and Son expands into the spiritual, divine world of the Pleroma. The Father adds to Barbelo the aeons Prognōsis (“Foreknowledge”), Aphtharsia (“Incorruptibility”) and Aeōnia Zōē (“Eternal Life”), and to the Light (Christ) he adds the aeons Nous (“Mind”), Thelēma (“Will”), and Logos (“Word”). These two tetrads are then combined into an ogdoad that consists of four pairs, which generate a number of other aeons, which in their turn do the same. The identification of the aeons with abstract concepts that together form the Fullness of God shows that this myth of the development of the Pleroma is of a clearly artificial character. Just as in the *Apocryphon of John*, the top of the Valentinian Pleroma is formed by an ogdoad that also consists of four pairs of aeons. The first pair consists of the Unknown Father, called Bythos (“Depth”), and his Ennoia (“Thought”), also called Charis (“Grace”) and Sigē (“Silence”). They generate the second level of divine being: Nous (“Mind”) and Aletheia (“Truth”), which produce the third level: Logos (“Word”) and Zoē (“Life”), which in their turn bring forth Anthropos (“Man”) and Ecclesia (“Church”). In the myth of the *Apocryphon of John* and Irenaeus, *AH* I, 29, the coming forth of the Anthropos, ‘the perfect and true Man’, also called Adamas, is narrated at the end of the section on the Pleroma. But in both texts the last aeon is called Sophia (“Wisdom”), who becomes responsible for the split in the Pleroma and the origin of evil and, as a corollary, the creation of the world. The insertion of many aeons between the Unknown Father and Sophia was apparently intended to make the distance between the transcendent God and the cause of evil as great as possible.

There are strong indications, however, that the complicated Gnostic myths of the Pleroma developed out of a much simpler model, which was more mythological and presented Anthropos and Sophia as the first manifestations of the transcendent God. According to *Eugnostus the Blessed*, the ‘self-grown, self-created Father’ conceived the

idea of having ‘his likeness come into being’, and ‘immediately the beginning of that Light manifested itself as an immortal androgynous Man’ (NHC III, 76, 14-24). His female aspect is *inter alia* called ‘All-wise Begetress Sophia’ (III, 3-4). Immortal Man and his Sophia put forth another androgynous Man, called the Son of Man, whose female aspect is also called Sophia. This pair generates a third androgynous Man, the Son of the Son of Man, whose female name is again Sophia. In other Gnostic systems, too, the first principles are called Man and the Son of Man, for instance in those of → Monoimus, the Naassenes, and Irenaeus *AH*, I, 30, which is presupposed in the second part of the *Apocryphon of John* (see below). In *Eugnostus*, the addition of the second and third pairs is an obvious amplification of an originally more simple myth that only knew of one Anthropos and Sophia (Schenke 1962 [2]). The figures of Anthropos and Sophia derive from Jewish speculations about the first manifestations of God that were based on biblical texts. Wisdom herself says, in Proverbs 8:22, ‘The Lord created me *the beginning* of his ways, before all else he made, long ago’, which led to the idea of Wisdom as the creative agent of God: in Genesis 1:1 the words “in the beginning” were accordingly interpreted as “through Wisdom”. In Wisdom of Solomon 7:25, Wisdom is described as an emanation of God, ‘a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty, . . . the reflection of everlasting light’. Speculations on the manifestation of God as a heavenly Man were triggered off by Ezekiel 1:26-28, which describes a vision of the Glory of God in ‘the likeness as the appearance of a man’ (King James Version), appearing in fire and light. The figure of a heavenly Man as manifestation of the transcendent God has had an enormous influence in Judaism, → Hermetism (*Poimandres*), and Gnostic and non-Gnostic Christianity. The attribution of a human shape to the radiant manifestation of God’s Glory caused the heavenly Anthropos to be always associated with Light. The Jewish Alexandrian writer Ezekiel the Dramatist (2nd century B.C.) describes in his *Exodus*, 66-89, a vision by → Moses of a man (Gr. *phōs*, with another accentuation also “light”), who sat on a throne, with a diadem on his head and a sceptre in his left hand. Before the man – who is apparently God’s viceregent on earth – disappears, he summons Moses to sit down on the throne and accept the *regalia*, which makes him a divine being. The association of Heavenly Man with light played an important role in Gnostic speculations about the first manifestation of God.



According to *On the Origin of the World*, NHC II, 107, 25-108, 14, the Demiurge became aware that 'an immortal Man of Light had been existing before him', which refers to the primeval light of Genesis 1:3 ('Let there be light!'). At the Demiurge's request, the radiant light manifested itself: 'As that light appeared, a likeness of Man, which was very marvellous, revealed itself in it'. The association with Genesis 1:3 (Light) and Ezekiel 1:26 (likeness of a man) is clearly visible not only in this text, but also in that of *Eugnostus the Blessed* (NHC III, 76, 14 ff.), quoted above (Fossum 1985, 266-291).

It is of interest to note that *Eugnostus* not only describes the apex of the divine world in terms of the Jewish myth of Anthropos and Sophia, but also in those of Platonic philosophy. Immortal Man is identified with Nous ("Mind"; NHC V, 6, 6-7; cf. III, 104, 8) and Sophia with Alêtheia ("Truth"; NHC III, 77, 3-10; V, 6, 8-10). According to Plato, Nous and Aletheia are noetic entities produced by the Good (*Republic*, 517b; cf. also 490b). Plato already placed the Good above Mind and Being and, accordingly, the Middle Platonists identified the Good with the supreme, ineffable God. Read with the eyes of a second-century Platonist, the master himself had taught in the *Republic* that the unknowable, transcendent God puts forth two noetic entities, Nous and Aletheia. The author of *Eugnostus the Blessed* apparently knew a tradition that identified the transcendent Jewish God with the Good of Platonism, and the latter's first products, Nous and Aletheia, with the former's pre-eminent divine hypostases, Anthropos and Sophia. In the Valentinian myth of the Pleroma, Nous and Aletheia also form the second level of being, but there are some considerable differences with the tradition of *Eugnostus*, which make it probable that the priority belongs to the latter. In *Eugnostus*, the supreme, ineffable God is strictly monadic; the principle of androgynous duality is first expressed in Immortal Man and his Sophia. It is to such a conception that Plato's view of the Good as producing Nous and Aletheia could be applied. In the Valentinian system, the principle of duality and fecundity was transferred to the deepest ground of being itself, by changing its monadic essence into Bythos and Sige, Depth and Silence (though there were Valentinians who adhered to a more monadic view of the supreme God). The Valentinian Pleroma seems ultimately based on speculations on the structure of the divine world that were closely related to those expressed in *Eugnostus the Blessed* (van den Broek 1996, 122-129).

#### B. FALL AND CREATION

That the human soul, or at least its higher part, was of divine origin, had somehow fallen into its earthly existence, and had to strive for its return to heaven, was a common idea in the Graeco-Roman world. It had been an integral part of Platonic philosophy since Plato's *Phaedrus*. While the Gnostic view of the origin and destination of one's inner self fits this general scheme, its elaboration was not philosophical but religious and mythological, even if use was made of philosophical categories. An important difference between the philosophical and the Gnostic views in this regard is that the Gnostics assumed a pre-cosmic Fall, which had taken place within the divine Pleroma. In many Gnostic texts this Fall is not mentioned or only vaguely hinted at: they concentrate on the bondage of human beings to the evil powers that dominate our world, and on the way to escape from it. The Gnostic, i.e. esoteric, character of these texts is apparent above all from their emphasis on revealed knowledge as the decisive means of salvation. But other writings, especially those that belong to the great systems of the 2nd century, present a full account of how evil originated within the divine Pleroma and eventually led to the creation of the material world and the body as the prison of man's real self (Dahl, Logan, van der Vliet). However, in this regard too, a clear Gnostic doctrine did not exist; there were only variations on a common theme, namely that of a fatal rupture within the Pleroma.

According to the basic text of Gnostic mythology, the *Apocryphon of John*, the split in the deity was caused by the lowest aeon, Sophia (BG 36, 16-47, 13 parr. = Synopsis 24, 1-37, 5). As the Father had brought forth Ennoia out of himself, she wanted to produce her image in the same way, without the consent of the Father and her counterpart. For that reason she is called "lascivious". As a result of her lewd thought, she produced an ugly, imperfect being: a dragon with a lion's head and fiery eyes, which she called Jaldabaoth. The etymology of this name is still disputed. For a long time, it was thought to mean "Son of Chaos"; more recent explanations are "Begetter of (S)abaoth" (also interpreted as "Begetter of the Powers") and "Son of Shame" (Black). Another name given to Jaldabaoth is Saklas, which derives from the Aramaic *Saklā* ("Fool"). In order to hide her son, Sophia pushed him out of the Pleroma. However, he had extracted a great power from his mother and created his own world and his own aeons, 360 "angels" in all, among them the twelve signs of the zodiac and the seven planets. Having

finished his creation, he said: 'I am a jealous God, there is no one except me!' (a combination of Exodus 20:5 and Isaiah 45:5). It is for that reason that he was called Saklas, for only 'the Fool says in his heart: there is no God' (Psalm 14:1 and 53:2). The myth of Irenaeus, *AHI*, 29, which is so closely related to that of the *Apocryphon* with respect to the constitution of the Pleroma, gives another account of the Fall of Sophia (29, 4). The sect of the Gnostics behind this text denied that Sophia had a pleromatic counterpart. On the contrary, she wanted to have one; and as she did not find it within the Pleroma, she sought it outside the divine realm, but did not find it there either. Realizing that she had acted against the will of the Father, she brought forth a product of herself. She did so with the best intentions, but nevertheless her son was full of ignorance and pride. Sophia repented, but had to remain outside the Pleroma, above the eighth sphere. Though it does not fit its main story, the *Apocryphon* also knows of her 'moving to and fro' outside the Pleroma (which is connected with the moving of the Spirit above the waters of Chaos in Genesis 1:2) and of her repentance and her being placed in the ninth sphere 'until she has corrected her deficiency'. Related ideas are found in *On the Origin of the World* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 4 and 5). It is of interest to note that the Valentinians spiritualized the fall of Sophia. According to them, she wanted to have the same union with the Father as Mind had, i.e. to know him, which means that, in fact, she represents the impossible search for knowledge of the depths of the Father. She would have been swallowed up by the sweetness of the Father, had she not been pushed back (Irenaeus, *AHI*, 2, 2).

The Fall of Sophia and the origin of the bad Demiurge serve as a prelude to what the Gnostics were primarily interested in: the explanation of how the divine element had come to reside in man and how it could return to its original state. The story as told by the *Apocryphon* (BG 47, 14-55, 17 parr. = Synopsis 37, 6-56, 10) is not wholly coherent with the preceding section (which indicates a combination of various sources), but it has much in common with the views that Irenaeus, *AHI*, 30, ascribes to 'other people' than the "Gnostics" he described in I, 29. The incoherence is brought out by the sudden introduction of Man and the Son of Man, as the supreme God and his first manifestation. As Jaldabaoth had declared himself the only God, a voice resounded saying: 'Man exists and the Son of Man!', and 'the holy and perfect Father, the first Man' revealed himself to him in human

form. The radiant image of the heavenly Man was reflected in the waters of Chaos and the Demiurge said to the powers that attended him (or they said to themselves): 'Let us create a man in the image and likeness of God' (cf. Genesis 1:26). The seven planetary powers of Jaldabaoth made up the components from which the *psychic* body of man was made, which shows a clear influence of Plato's *Timaeus* (van den Broek 1996, 67-85). The long recension of the *Apocryphon* even assigns the composition of the body to no less than 365 "angels" (demons), who are all mentioned by name. There is little doubt that this list derives from magical sources (van der Vliet, 179-237). The assistants of the Demiurge proved to be incapable of awakening and raising the motionless psychic body of Adam. Then the Father of the All sent his son Autogenes with four great lights to the world of Jaldabaoth and they advised him: 'Blow into his face something of your spirit and the artefact will arise' (cf. Genesis 2:7). The Demiurge, who is now identified with the biblical Creator, blew his Spirit, i.e. the divine power of his mother, into the body and it began to move. In this way the divine spirit entered the human being, who because of this spirit was more intelligent than the powers and the Demiurge himself. They realized that he was free from wickedness, and to imprison his divine element they made the material body. This is followed in the *Apocryphon* by the story of Paradise, which, however, is explained in a Gnostic sense: the Tree of Life is a tree of death and the command not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was meant to prevent Adam from discovering his divine descent.

Even if a Gnostic text does not presuppose a myth of the kind described above, its perception of the human condition is the same as that of the mythological texts: man's inner self is of divine origin, but he is unaware of it, because he is entangled in this material world and subjected to the passions of the body. He needs to be saved.

### C. SALVATION

Living in ignorance is often compared with a state of drunkenness or a sleep haunted by nightmares, and the attainment of knowledge is compared with becoming sober again and awakening in the bright daylight (for instance *Gospel of Truth*, NHC I, 22, 16-20; 28, 24-30, 16). Gnostic salvation is not the remission of sins but the rectification of a situation of ignorance. It might be said that ignorance is the original sin or, in the words of the *Gospel of Philip*, NHC II, 34, 30-31: 'Ignorance is the mother of all evil'. In the section

that precedes this statement, the author compares ignorance, the root of wickedness, with the root of a tree: if it is hidden in the earth, the tree sprouts and grows, but if it is exposed, the tree dries up and dies. And from this simile he draws the conclusion: 'As for ourselves, let each one of us dig down after the root of evil that is within one, and let one pluck it out of one's heart from the root. It will be plucked out if we recognize it. But if we are ignorant of it, it takes root in us and produces its fruit in our heart. It masters us. We are its slaves'. Gnosis is the spiritual understanding of our divine origin and the world we live in. As such, it is in fact self-knowledge, as Jesus says to his twin-brother Thomas in the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, NHC II, 138, 16-18: 'For he who has not known himself has known nothing, but he who has known himself has at the same time already achieved knowledge about the depth of the All' (a variant of the Armenian hermetic *Definitions* 9, 4; cf. *Gospel of Thomas*, 67, NHC II, 45, 19-20). But this spiritual knowledge of oneself and the All must be awakened: one must learn to understand. The spiritual leader of a Gnostic community can teach his pupils the essentials of Gnosis, but in the end his teachings derive from divine inspiration and revelation. This revelation is mostly given by a divine Revealer, who is often called the Saviour.

In Christian Gnostic texts the Saviour is identified with Christ, but in non-Christian texts, or at least those in which no Christian influence is discernible or which are only superficially Christianized, the Saviour is called by other names. In the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII, 1), the Revealer and Saviour is Derdekeas, the Son or Likeness of the Light, i.e. the second divine being, who gives his salvific revelation to a certain Shem. It has been suggested that this Shem is no other than Seth, the third Son of Adam, but there is no convincing evidence for this. However, in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* Seth appears as the Saviour, who imparts saving knowledge to those who belong to him ("the race of Seth") and who, certainly secondarily, is identified with Christ (NHC III, 64, 1-3; IV, 75, 15-17: 'Jesus the living one, he whom the great Seth has put on'). A similar doctrine about Seth was professed by the → Archontics. In the *Apocryphon of John* it is Christ who answers John's questions, like a teacher instructs his pupil, but the real saving figure is a female power, called Epinoia of the Light, who 'assists the whole creature, by toiling with him, and by restoring him to his fullness (*plērōma*) and by teaching him about the descent of his seed and

by teaching him about the way of ascent' (NHC II, 19-23 parr. = Synopsis 54, 8-13). The word *epinoia* means "thinking, reflection, thought" and is here virtually identical with *ennoia*, which in the *Apocryphon* is used as name of the Mother, the second divine being. At the end of the long version of the *Apocryphon* there is a beautiful *Hymn of Pronoia*, also called the *Providence Monologue*, in which it is not Epinoia or Ennoia but Pronoia ("Providence") who acts as the Revealer and Saviour of mankind. There is no doubt that in this case Pronoia stands for the personified Wisdom, the manifestation of God in the world according to Jewish speculations (Waldstein 1995; van den Broek 1996, 86-116).

For Christian Gnostics, Christ was the Saviour *par excellence*. The *Gospel of Truth*, NHC I, 118, 16-20, says of Jesus that 'he enlightened those who were in darkness through forgetfulness. He enlightened them and showed them a way. The way, then, is the truth which he taught them' (cf. John 14:6). He is the Saviour because he reveals the truth about the unknown Father; his death on the cross has no salvific meaning. The Gnostics usually adhered to a docetic Christology, which means that they denied that Christ had a material body of flesh and blood. For them, and also for those who ascribed to Jesus a real human body and soul, as, for instance, Justin the Gnostic did, the crucifixion was primarily the event in which Christ's pneumatic being was separated from its bodily envelope. Some Christian Gnostic texts, however, described the meaning of salvation in terms that were strongly influenced by biblical images and, for that reason, came close to those found in more "orthodox" writings. Thus the *Gospel of Philip*, NHC II, 52, 35-53, 4, uses the terminology of ransom: 'Christ came to ransom some, to save others, to redeem others. He ransomed those who were strangers and made them his own'. But in this text as well, Christ is the Revealer of the hidden mystery of the Father. The *Gospel of Truth* in particular makes use of biblical images and expressions that even suggest a salvific meaning in the crucifixion. Christ was 'nailed to a tree and became a fruit of the knowledge of the Father. It did not, however, cause destruction because it was eaten (cf. Genesis 2:17), but it gave gladness to those who ate it' (NHC I, 18, 24-28). Jesus, 'the merciful one, the faithful one, patiently accepted the sufferings . . ., since he knows that his death is life for many' (NHC I, 20, 10-14). Nevertheless, the *Gospel of Truth* is a thoroughly Gnostic work: Christ 'became a way for those who were gone astray and knowledge for those

who were ignorant, a discovery for those who were searching, and a support for those who were wavering, immaculateness for those who were defiled' (NHC I, 31, 28-35). Christian Gnostics of the 2nd century could sometimes speak about Jesus with much more warmth and spiritual depth than their non-Gnostic fellow Christians.

The completion of the Gnostic's road of salvation is the return of his divine particle to the Pleroma. This happens at his death, but the salvation is in fact already enjoyed in this earthly life. The divine spark in human beings is often called the Pneuma (Spirit). The Valentinians, in particular, developed a subtle theory about the pneumatic, the psychic and the hylic (material) natures in the individual human being as well as in humankind as a whole. The treatise *On the Origin of the World*, NHC II, 122, 1-9, also distinguishes between three types of human beings: Pneumatics, Psychics and Choics (earthly people), which may point to Valentinian influence. However, many texts simply speak about the soul as the divine element in man. This is found, for instance, in the reports on the Archontics and the Naassenes, who both adhered to mythological forms of Gnosis, and also in non-mythological writings such as the *Treatise on the Soul* (NHC II, 6) and the *Authentikos Logos* (NHC VI, 3). In the *Apocryphon of John*, Christ describes three possible fates of the soul. The soul that has come to knowledge 'is saved and taken up to the repose of the aeons'. Those who have not yet come to know the All are reincarnated in the prison of the body 'until they are saved from forgetfulness and the soul acquires knowledge and thus becomes perfect and is saved'. Only those who once had Gnosis but renounced it 'will be tortured with eternal punishment' (BG 67, 18-71, 2 = Synopsis 70, 19-73, 14).

The ascent of the soul to the divine realm could only take place if it knew the passwords or possessed the seals that permitted it to pass the hostile rulers of the seven heavens. This idea was not typically Gnostic in itself, but it played an important role in the Gnostic imagination. Examples of passwords are to be found in the first *Apocalypse of James*, (NHC V, 32, 24-36, 1), the *Gospel of Mary* (BG 15, 1-17, 7), the *Gospel of Thomas*, log. 50 (NHC II, 41, 31-42, 7), and Origen's *Contra Celsum*, VI, 30-31. The two *Books of Jeû* give an elaborate description, with drawings, of the "seals" and "signs" and the many aeons the soul has to pass through on its way upwards. Finally, the soul or the pneuma arrives at the place of its origin, the Pleroma. The state of bliss that it enjoys there is often called the *Anapausis* ("rest, repose").

The *Gospel of Truth*, in which this conception plays a prominent role, says of those who have found the Anapausis of the Pleroma that 'they rest in him who is at rest, . . . and the Father is within them and they are in the Father, being perfect, being undivided in the truly Good One, being in no way deficient in anything, but they are set at rest, refreshed in the Spirit' (NHC I, 42, 21-33).

#### D. ETHICS

Not only the anti-Gnostic writers, but the authentic Gnostic sources as well, testify that the Gnostic believers felt themselves elected and predestined to Gnosis. They were the 'Immovable race' and belonged to the 'generation without a king' (*Apocalypse of Adam*, NHC V, 82, 19f. and 83, 1ff.), and as such they had overcome the power of evil. The anti-Gnostic writers often inferred from this possibly somewhat arrogant attitude that the Gnostics felt themselves morally free to do whatever they wanted. The accusation of moral licentiousness – a well-known means of bringing opponents into disrepute – was often raised against the Gnostic believers. This has led to the long-standing scholarly opinion that there were two different types of Gnostics: ascetics, who stuck to a thoroughly ascetic way of life, including the rejection of marriage, and libertines, who rejected asceticism and even indulged in sexual licentiousness. However, the reports of the anti-Gnostic authors contain very little information that gives colour to their allegations of immoral behaviour in Gnostic groups; and even if they seem to have a point, for instance in the case of the → Carpocratians and the → Borborites, the evidence asks for a careful interpretation. Of more weight is the fact that there are no authentic Gnostic texts that advocate immoral behaviour. On the contrary, the whole Nag Hammadi Library is thoroughly ascetic, and it may be assumed that it was because of their asceticism that some non-Gnostic writings, such as the *Teachings of Silvanus* and the *Sentences of Sextus*, were included in the collection. But even if the Gnostics themselves taught a strong asceticism and did not show any indication of immoral or non-ascetic behaviour, their opponents suggested that they simply were keeping up appearances. Examples of such negative polemics are Irenaeus on → Saturnilus (*Adversus haereses*, I, 24, 2), Clement of Alexandria on the followers of Prodicus (*Stromateis*, III, 30, 2-3), and Epiphanius on the Archontics (*Panarion*, 40, 2, 4). All the evidence suggests that the adherents of the Gnostic movement propagated and practised an ascetic way of life, which,

however, did not need to imply the rejection of marriage. An important group like the Valentinians, for instance, held marriage in high esteem and considered it an image of the union of the soul with its heavenly counterpart in the Pleroma. The moral ideas of Clement of Alexandria, to whom we owe this information (*Stromateis*, III, 1, 1), did not differ much from those of Valentinus. At most there may have been a relative difference of emphasis between Gnostic and non-Gnostic Christians with respect to moral ideas and practices, in so far as the former tended to have a more negative view of the material world and the body and, therefore, may have been more inclined to a strongly ascetic way of life than their non-Gnostic fellow-Christians.

### 3. BACKGROUNDS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The origin of the Gnostic movement has been the subject of much debate, but this has not led to any kind of scholarly consensus. The main reason for this is that actually there never existed one clearly definable “Gnosticism”, but only a variety of related religious ideas and currents, which had the idea of salvific, revealed Gnosis as their common denominator. Michael Williams (1996) has convincingly argued that it is useless to continue the search for *the* origin of this complicated and variegated religious phenomenon. However, as he also pointed out, it is quite possible to clarify the origin and history of specific Gnostic traditions, such as those of Valentinianism and of what he called the “biblical demiurgical texts”. The authentic Gnostic texts of the Nag Hammadi Library show that important notions derived from Judaism, Greek philosophy and Christianity had a considerable influence on the various elaborations of the central Gnostic idea of salvation through knowledge.

#### A. JUDAISM

There is a broad scholarly consensus that Jewish traditions played an important part in the formation of mythological Gnosis, although opinions differ about the interpretation of this phenomenon [→ Jewish influences I]. As was already pointed out above (2A), the figures of Anthropos and Sophia can only be explained from Jewish speculations about the first manifestations of the transcendent God. Traditions found in the Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, but also speculations known only from Merkavah mysticism (Gruenwald 1982) have contributed to the formation of the Gnostic myths. Close analysis of such basic mythological texts as the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the*

*Origin of the World* has brought to light such a wealth of Jewish parallels that the conclusion that they originated in a Jewish milieu is inescapable. This has raised the question of whether the emergence of the Gnostic Demiurge and his identification with the biblical Creator can also be explained from Jewish sources. Rabbinic polemics show that there were *minim*, dissident Jews, who speculated about the existence of Two Powers in heaven, God and his agent or vice-regent, who was known under various names (Angel of the Lord, the Lesser Jahweh, the Name, Shekina, Man, Wisdom, etc.) and who shared in or was wholly responsible for the creation of the world (Segal, Fossum). The rabbis were vehemently opposed to this idea, because they considered it a serious threat to Jewish monotheism. It should be noticed, however, that in the Jewish (and Samaritan) sources there is no evidence whatsoever that this divine agent or intermediary was ever placed in opposition to God. Various suggestions have been made to explain how Jews could have come to a degradation of the God of their fathers to the status of a lower and bad Demiurge, but none of them have succeeded in convincing the majority of scholars. There is no evidence that suggests the existence of a distinctly mythological Gnosis in Judaism. Nevertheless, it seems certain that the earliest myths about the origin of evil and the world were developed by Jews who were well informed about apocryphal and mystical Jewish traditions, but had apparently lost the faith of their fathers in the God of Israel as the creator of the world. This might be explained out of a deeply felt disappointment with the apparent inability of this God to prevent the tragic events that happened to the Jewish people in the first century. However this may be, there is no reason to see the whole Gnostic movement as derived directly from Judaism.

#### B. GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The authentic Gnostic texts demonstrate beyond doubt the influence of Greek philosophy on Gnostic thought. Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 220) already argued that the Gnostics, like all heretics, had derived their ideas and systems from Greek philosophy and → astrology (Koschorke 1975). More recently, several experts in classical philosophy have studied the complicated relationship between philosophical and Gnostic ideas, with less prejudice and more competence than Hippolytus (*inter al.* Mansfeld, Armstrong, Dillon, Turner). The central question is whether or not Greek philosophy could have given rise to



the Gnostic idea of the bad world and the evil Demiurge. In Orphism and early Pythagoreanism one may find an anthropological pessimism (incarnation as punishment, the body as a tomb) of which most Gnostics would have approved, but it is neither based on nor does it correspond to an equally pessimistic cosmology. Almost all Greek philosophers were convinced of the essential goodness of the cosmos; if they accepted a Demiurge, they declared him to be good as well. Only the Epicureans held that the world is not good, but a 'random, meaningless, transitory and very badly arranged cosmos' (Armstrong); but not only did they reject the idea of a Demiurge, their whole philosophy of life was in sharp contrast with that of the Gnostics. Especially in the 2nd century, there were Platonists who in several respects came close to the position of the more radical Gnostics. Plutarch and Atticus assumed a maleficent world soul as the principle of evil in the material universe, and Numenius taught the existence of two souls, a good and a bad one, both in the universe and in man; but neither of them introduced a Gnostic kind of strict cosmic dualism. The Neoplatonists [→ Neoplatonism I], and Plotinus in particular, espoused a more positive and world-accepting attitude and strongly opposed the Gnostic view of the universe and its maker (Elsas).

The problems that were the philosophers' concern – the relationship between the One and the many, or between the supreme God and lower levels of being, and the origin of evil – were of equal interest for the Gnostic thinkers. Since the latter did not live in a vacuum, they inevitably made use of current philosophical ideas to express their religious convictions. Moreover, from Hellenistic times onward, philosophy, and later Platonism in particular, had become increasingly religious. Under these circumstances, one understands that it is often difficult to draw a sharp borderline between philosophical and Gnostic writings, especially in the case of non-mythological Gnostic texts. In general, however, one can say that the philosophers sought philosophical solutions to philosophical problems, even if their language was religiously coloured, whereas the Gnostic thinkers sought religious answers to religious problems, even if they made use of philosophical terminology. The philosophers aimed at understanding, the gnostics sought and proclaimed salvation through revealed knowledge. A good example of the relationship between (even mythological) Gnosis and philosophical speculation is provided by the Gnostic treatise *Zostrianus*, which was known in the school of Plotinus. Describing the

supreme God by means of the terminology of negative and affirmative theology (NHC VIII, 64, 11–84, 22), the author makes use of the same Middle- or Neoplatonic source that was also used by the fourth-century Christian writer Marius Victorinus in his *Adversus Arium*, I, 49–50 (Tardieu 1996). Comparison of the texts shows that the Gnostic author quotes his source literally. However, he presents its contents as a revelation, which Zostrianus has received from an angelic interpreter called Salamex, during a heavenly journey. This Salamex has revealed to him the three aeons of Barbelo, which contain numerous other aeons, who are mentioned by name. The vision ends with the words: 'Behold, Zostrianus, you have heard all these things of which the gods are ignorant'. Although the work testifies to a considerable Neoplatonic influence on third-century Gnostic speculations, its author was a fully-fledged Gnostic, who adhered to a type of "Sethian" Gnosis. Gnostic thought was not "a Platonism run wild" (Nock), nor was it a department of the "Platonic underworld" (Dillon).

#### C. HERMETISM

The philosophical *Hermetica* [→ Hermetic Literature I] and Gnostic literature in general have much in common, but there are also considerable differences. The similarities between Gnosticism and Hermetism are due to the fact that both originated and developed in the same time, in the same oriental part of the Mediterranean world, Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, and in the same spiritual climate. Both Gnostics and hermetists adhered to the widespread philosophical concept of God as a completely transcendent Being, who can only be described in the terms of negative theology. An important difference, however, was that according to the hermetists, the human mind was able to know God at least partially through the contemplation of the cosmos. Although the hermetists recognized that the material world could wholly absorb the human being, the cosmos always remained for them the beautiful product, the first son, of the supreme God. They could sometimes speak of the world as the 'plenitude of vice' (C.H. VI, 4), but they never ascribed the origin of the world to an imperfect and evil Demiurge. The "Way of Hermes" implied instruction concerning the nature of the cosmos, with the help of all kinds of sciences: theories of space and movement, astronomy (which included → astrology), medicine and → magic. Its aim was to make the world transparent toward God. Gnostic cosmological instruction, especially that of the

mythological and radical type, only aimed at explaining how this world of darkness and evil had come into being. Another difference is that the abundant Gnostic mythology has no counterpart in Hermetism. The hermetic speculations about the divine world have nothing to offer that might be compared with the abundant Gnostic descriptions of the divine Pleroma. The only hermetic text that relates the origin of the world and man in the form of a myth is the *Poimandres* (C.H. I), but it is precisely this text that shows most clearly, *inter alia* by the introduction of the heavenly Anthropos, that it comes from the same background as, for instance, the *Apocryphon of John*. The *Poimandres* could be called a gnosticizing hermetic composition, but the author nevertheless remains a hermetist. He does not teach that the cosmos and the human body are bad in themselves, as the radical Gnostics did, but finds the origin of evil in sexual desire, which makes him an ascetic hermetist. In many respects, Gnosticism seems to have been a radicalization of important hermetic notions. Just like the Gnostics, the hermetists were convinced that the human soul or mind had its origin in God and that only through the gift of knowledge the original integrity could be restored, – an integrity which could already be experienced in this earthly life. Both offered a road to salvation, but this has led to two different religious systems.

#### D. CHRISTIANITY

The Gnostic movement did not arise as a Christian heresy. Although there are no Gnostic works that in their present form are demonstrably pre-Christian, several treatises are certainly non-Christian or so superficially Christianized that the non-Christian original is still clearly recognizable. Moreover, the Gnostic religion of the → Mandaeans (“Gnostics”) cannot by any means be explained as an offshoot of early Christianity. A Gnostic work should only be called Christian if it presents Jesus or Christ as the decisive Saviour, who imparts salvific knowledge to the Gnostic believer.

In New Testament scholarship there has been much debate concerning the question of possible Gnostic influences on earliest Christianity. As an example, we may mention the discussion about the relationship between the prologue of the Gospel of John and the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII, 1). It has been claimed that the latter represents an earlier and better Gnostic version of the threefold descent of the Saviour than the prologue ascribes to the Logos. However, this threefold descent, which also determines the structure

of the *Hymn of Pronoia* at the end of the *Apocryphon of John*, is derived from Jewish speculations about three descents of Wisdom. These speculations have apparently determined the myth of the threefold descent of the Saviour into the world of darkness, both in evidently Gnostic mythological texts and in the Gospel of John (van den Broek 1996, 86-116). Although this Gospel rejects the idea of a bad Demiurge (John 1:3, but cf. 8:44), it may nevertheless be called Gnostic too, since it puts much emphasis on the salvific meaning of Gnosis (John 1:18; 17:3). As a matter of fact, the Gospel of John easily lent itself to Gnostic exegesis (Pagels). If this Gospel had been unknown and had first come to light with the Nag Hammadi Library, it would certainly have been classified as a Gnostic or “gnosticizing” work.

The relationship between the Gnostic movement and early Christianity can be best explained from the fact that both developed in the same spiritual climate, which was strongly influenced by Jewish ideas expressed in mythical forms. As said above (section 3A), Jews must have played an important role in the formation of the Gnostic myths. From Philo we know that there were Jews in Alexandria who rejected the beliefs and practices of their paternal religion. But the deeply pessimistic view of the human condition expressed in the early Gnostic myths cannot have been limited to some apostate Jews. It apparently reflected a more general experience of alienation from the world and a longing for salvation by spiritual knowledge, which is also evident in those Gnostic writings that do not show any specific Jewish influence. The Christian anti-Gnostic works of the 2nd and 3rd centuries testify to the great attraction of Gnostic views, and of the religious experience upon which they were based, on Christian thinkers or teachers and their followers. The result was a distinct Gnostic current within the variegated world of early Christianity. The most influential Gnostic variant of Christianity seems to have been Valentinianism, which was based on older mythological constructions (see above). That Valentinus and even his pupil Ptolemy were simply well educated Christian Platonists, who did not yet teach the “Valentinian” mythological Gnostic system that was taught by their followers, as has been argued from a church-historical point of view (Markschies), is highly unlikely. In the middle of the 2nd century, ecclesiastical leaders in Rome began to define the boundaries of the Church and, accordingly, to reject views that for a time had been acceptable within the Christian communities. The Christian teachers who taught the prevalence

of Gnosis over faith or ascribed the creation of the world to a lower Demiurge were expelled from the Church and vehemently fought.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Gnostic movement in Antiquity has many faces, which makes an unambiguous definition virtually impossible. The scholarly term "Gnosticism" suggests a uniformity that never existed. If used at all – and then, of course, without any pejorative connotation –, the term should be reserved for the more elaborate mythological systems that were developed from the 2nd century onward. The Gnostic character of a considerable number of texts can be disputed, since their contents show a position intermediate between a distinct Gnostic and more philosophical, hermetic, or generally Christian views. The decisive criterion is whether or not esoteric knowledge is held to be indispensable for personal salvation, i.e. the return to one's divine origin. But even this criterion is not always easy to apply, because the indispensability of Gnosis is sometimes merely presupposed rather than explicitly expressed. However, all these ambiguities are no reason to deny the existence of Gnostic religiosity in the Roman world and to declare terms as "Gnostic", "Gnosticism", "Gnostic movement", etc. meaningless. The Gnostic religion, its mythological variants included, was not a degenerated form of Greek philosophy, nor did it arise as a Christian heresy. To some extent it was a religion in its own right, or at least a distinct religious mentality, which expressed itself in an almost inextricable combination of important notions derived from Jewish mysticism, Greek philosophy, and Christian theology. Its central belief found a succinct expression in the Christian Gnostic *Testimony of Truth*, NHC IX, 44,30-45, 6: 'When man comes to know himself and God who is over the truth, he will be saved, and he will crown himself with the crown unfading'.

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## Gnosticism II: Gnostic literature

I. ORIGINAL GREEK TEXTS 2. COPTIC TEXTS DISCOVERED BEFORE 1945 3. THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY (A. INTRODUCTION B. NON-GNOSTIC WRITINGS C. GOSPELS AND RELATED TEXTS D. MYTHOLOGICAL TEXTS E. APOCALYPTIC AND POLEMICAL TEXTS F. VALENTINIAN TEXTS G. ASCENTS TO HEAVEN) 4. THE TESTIMONY OF ANTI-GNOSTIC WRITERS

### I. ORIGINAL GREEK TEXTS

Most of the authentic Gnostic writings have been preserved in Coptic, but there is little doubt that all of them were originally translated from the Greek. The vehement opposition by the leaders of the Church against the basic ideas of → Gnosticism led to the almost complete extinction of the once flourishing Greek Gnostic literature. The works of anti-Gnostic writers, such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius, have preserved many testimonies of the ideas and sometimes even the religious practices of individual Gnostic teachers and their schools or sects. But since these testimonies were written down by opponents who wanted to show how heretical or ridiculous were the ideas that they discussed, one must always ask to what extent any report can be trusted. However, sometimes these authors transmit extensive excerpts from original Gnostic documents, or even a complete treatise. A well-known example of such extracts is the *Excerpts from Theodotus* by → Clement of Alexandria, although in this case it is not always easy to decide where Theodotus' text ends and Clement's begins. A complete 2nd-century text has been preserved in Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, 33, 3-7. It is the famous *Letter to Flora* by the Valentinian Gnostic Ptolemy [→ Valentinus and Valentinians] about the correct interpretation of the five books of Moses. Making an appeal to Jesus, the author distinguishes between the Law of God, the additions by → Moses, and the "injunctions" of the elders. According to Ptolemy, these last two have to be rejected. The first, however, can again be divided into three kinds of law: the pure Law of God, i.e. the Ten Commandments, then those laws that are to be interpreted symbolically, and finally the unjust law of retaliation (an eye for an eye, etc.). Jesus has rejected the latter, introduced the symbolic interpretation, and fulfilled the pure Law of God. In the 2nd century, the interpretation of the Old Testament became a hotly-debated issue in the Christian church. Considerable differences

notwithstanding, Ptolemy's ideas have much in common with those of his contemporary Justin Martyr († 165). His Gnostic point of view becomes visible in his remarks about the nature of the creator and lawgiver. Just like → Marcion's Demiurge, he is said to be righteous; however, he is neither the supreme God nor the devil, but a being midway between them, neither unambiguously good nor thoroughly evil. Moreover, the *Letter to Flora* is obviously an exoteric writing, for at the end Ptolemy promises his 'sister' that she will come to a deeper understanding when she is ready for it. Another Greek text, almost certainly a testimony of Valentinian Gnosticism, is the epitaph for Flavia Sophe (probably 4th century). Sophe's sorrowing husband addresses his beloved wife as follows: 'You whose desire was for the light of the Father, Sophe, my sister, my bride, anointed though the bath of Christ with imperishable holy perfume, you hastened to gaze on the divine faces of the aeons, the Angel of the Great Counsel, the true Son, when you went to the Bridal Chamber and rose [incorruptible] to the Father's house' (McKechnie).

### 2. COPTIC TEXTS DISCOVERED BEFORE 1945

In 3rd- and 4th-century Egypt, Gnosticism (and → Manichaeism as well) continued to attract a considerable number of adherents, whereas elsewhere it had lost much of its influence. Especially in the 4th century, many Gnostic works, most of them written in the 2nd or 3rd century, were translated from Greek into Coptic: the last stage of the Egyptian language, which was spoken by the Christians. Before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945, only a few of these original Gnostic texts were known, having been discovered in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The first of these texts to become known was the *Pistis Sophia*, preserved in the *Codex Askewianus*, called after Antoninus Askew, who bought it from a London antiquarian around 1750. After Askew's death (1772), it was acquired by the British Museum in 1785. Where it was found and how it came to London is still unknown. The best scholarly edition of the text was published by Carl Schmidt in 1925. This edition remains indispensable because of its critical apparatus, which, unfortunately, was reorganized by Violet MacDermot in the reprint of Schmidt's text that accompanied her own English translation (1978). Schmidt had already published an excellent, and much-used, German translation in 1905 (4th edition by H.-M. Schenke, 1981).



The *Pistis Sophia* consists of dialogues between Jesus and his male and female disciples, among whom Mary Magdalen takes first rank. These dialogues are divided into four parts, which are clearly indicated in the text of the manuscript. The first three parts belonged together from the beginning; the fourth part may originally have been an independent treatise. The first three parts contain numerous exegeses of biblical Psalms, of five *Odes of Solomon*, and of some of the *Psalms of Solomon*; all are interpreted with respect to the salvation of Pistis Sophia, the aeon that had become the cause of evil, and its consequences for the individual soul. The fourth part is a revelation about the construction of the aeonic world and the rites that the soul needs to know in order to ascend through the heavens to the transcendent Father. The Coptic manuscript is generally dated to the middle of the 4th century; the date of the Greek original of the *Pistis Sophia* is difficult to establish, but there are reasons to assign it to the second half of the 3rd century (see below).

The second Gnostic manuscript discovered in the 18th century is the *Codex Bruceianus*, called after the Scotch traveller James Bruce, who bought it in Egypt in 1773. Since 1848 it has been in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The manuscript contains two texts, written in different hands, of which the first, in two parts, is usually called the *Books of Jeû* and the second the *Untitled Treatise*. The *Books of Jeû* are also mentioned in the *Pistis Sophia*, 99 and 134, where they are said to have been written by Enoch in Paradise; most probably this reference does indeed refer to the first two books of the Bruce Codex. The full title of this work is mentioned at the end of the first book: the *Book of the Great Initiatory Discourse (of Jeû)*. It contains enumerations of numerous heavenly beings, descriptions (with drawings) of their places or “treasures”, and magical names and formulas that the soul needs to know during its ascent to its place of origin. The second part of the Bruce Codex, the *Untitled Treatise*, certainly did have a title once, but it has been lost because of the bad condition of the manuscript. Tardieu has proposed to call it the *Celestial Topography*. Like the *Books of Jeû*, it deals with the structure of the heavenly world, its places (which are often called “depths”), and the powers that dominate it. The *Books of Jeû* and the *Untitled Treatise* belong to the same spiritual world as the *Pistis Sophia*. There are correspondences with *Zostrianus* (NHC VIII,1) and other works that reflect the influence of Neoplatonism (see below), which implies that

they cannot have been written before the middle of the 3rd century.

In 1896 the papyrological department of the State Museums of Berlin acquired a Coptic codex that, shortly before, had been found in Akhmim (Upper Egypt). The codex was registered as *Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, mostly referred to as BG (= (Codex) Berolinensis Gnosticus) in Coptic Gnostic studies. It contains three Gnostic works – the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Apocryphon of John*, and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* – and one non-Gnostic writing, the *Act of Peter*, which belongs to the literary genre of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. The great Coptic scholar Carl Schmidt (1868–1938) immediately recognized the importance of this codex for Gnostic studies, but his efforts to get it published were very unsuccessful. In 1912, when Schmidt’s edition was nearly ready for publication, the whole of it was destroyed by an accident. Two World Wars and personal circumstances caused the edition of the Berlin codex to be delayed further, until it was finally published by Walter C. Till in 1955. But paradoxically, by that time it might be said that the edition came too early, because meanwhile three other copies of the *Apocryphon of John* and one of the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* had been discovered at Nag Hammadi. Till could do no more than note a number of variant readings of these texts in his critical apparatus. Since these two Gnostic writings from the BG cannot be understood in isolation from the same or related texts in the Nag Hammadi Library, they will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The *Gospel of Mary* is preserved only in a fragmentary state: pages 1-6 and 11-14 of the originally 19 pages of the manuscript are missing. A Greek fragment, which parallels BG 17, 6-19, 3, and shows considerable textual differences, is found in Papyrus Rylands 463. The first part of the preserved text starts with the closing section of a revelatory dialogue between Jesus, called the Saviour or the Lord, and his disciples, which ends with Jesus’ command to go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom. The disciples are afraid of the sufferings ahead, but encouraged by Mary (Magdalen), they begin to discuss the words of the Saviour. Then Peter asks Mary: ‘Sister, we know that the Saviour loved you more than the other women. Tell us the words of the Saviour which you remember and which you know; we do not know them, nor have we heard them’ (BG 10, 1-6). Then Mary tells the disciples about a vision she once had and about a revelation she received from the Saviour about the ascent of the soul and the

formulas it has to know in order to overcome the powers that try to prevent it from moving upwards through the heavens. The apostle Andrew doubts the authenticity of this revelation: 'I at least do not believe that the Saviour said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas'. Peter agrees and makes Mary cry by saying: 'Did he (the Saviour) really speak with a woman without our knowledge and not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?'. Levi rebukes "hot-tempered" Peter: 'If the Saviour made her worthy, who are you to reject her?'. He exhorts the apostles to go forth and preach the Gospel, which they do (BG 17, 10-19, 2). This text testifies to the importance of the female disciple Mary Magdalen, and women in general, in the Gnostic communities. Andrew and Peter, however, seem to give voice to the increasing conviction in non-Gnostic circles that secret and deviant teachings should not be accepted and that women should not be active as teachers.

### 3. THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY

#### A. INTRODUCTION

In December 1945, Egyptian peasants found a pottery jar with Coptic manuscripts in a cave near Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt. The jar contained at least 12 codices and eight leaves of another one that were inside the front cover of what was later called Codex VI. Through middlemen and antiquity dealers all the codices were eventually acquired by the Coptic Museum in Cairo, although it took one of them two decades to arrive there. It was smuggled out of Egypt and bought by the Jung Institute in Zurich, through the mediation of the Dutch professor Gilles Quispel. This codex became known as the Jung Codex; after the publication of its texts, it was reunited with the other codices in Cairo. Following some confusion about the classification of the codices, the scholarly world reached agreement on an internationally accepted numbering: the Jung Codex became Nag Hammadi Codex (NHC) I and the eight leaves in Codex VI were counted as NHC XIII.

Although there are many individual editions of separate tractates, two groups of scholars have set themselves the task of editing and translating the whole Nag Hammadi Library. Under the auspices of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at Claremont, California, a complete edition of all codices with English translations was published under the title "The Coptic Gnostic Library", in the series "Nag Hammadi [later: and Manichaean] Studies" (Brill, Leiden). A group of

French speaking scholars at Laval University, Quebec, started the "Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi" (Université Laval/Peeters, Quebec/Louvain), which at present already contains editions of a considerable number of Nag Hammadi treatises, but is still on its way to completion. The Laval series is especially valuable because of the extensive introductions and commentaries that accompany the texts and French translations. The enormous increase in Gnostic studies that resulted from the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library has been recorded in the excellent bibliographies of D.M. Scholer.

The thirteen codices of Nag Hammadi contain at least 52 texts and 46 different works, of which 40 were previously unknown. Four treatises are present in two copies (the *Gospel of Truth* [NHC I, 3 and XII, 2], the *Gospel of the Egyptians* [NHC III, 2 and IV, 2], *Eugnostus the Blessed* [NHC III, 3 and V, 1], and *On the Origin of the World* [NHC II, 5 and XIII, 2]) and one even in three copies (the *Apocryphon of John* [NHC II, 1, III, 1, and IV, 1]). In order to give an impression of the contents of the Nag Hammadi Library and the location of the individual tractates, it is useful here to enumerate all the texts (using the English titles adopted by the team of the "Coptic Gnostic Library").

- Codex I: 1. *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul*. 2. *The Apocryphon of James*. 3. *The Gospel of Truth*. 4. *The Treatise on the Resurrection*. 5. *The Tripartite Tractate*.
- Codex II: 1. *The Apocryphon of John*. 2. *The Gospel of Thomas*. 3. *The Gospel of Philip*. 4. *The Hypostasis of the Archons*. 5. *On the Origin of the World*. 6. *The Exegesis on the Soul*. 7. *The Book of Thomas the Contender*.
- Codex III: 1. *The Apocryphon of John*. 2. *The Gospel of the Egyptians*. 3. *Eugnostus the Blessed*. 4. *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*. 5. *The Dialogue of the Saviour*.
- Codex IV: 1. *The Apocryphon of John*. 2. *The Gospel of the Egyptians*.
- Codex V: 1. *Eugnostus the Blessed*. 2. *The Apocalypse of Paul*. 3. *The (First) Apocalypse of James*. 4. *The (Second) Apocalypse of James*. 5. *The Apocalypse of Adam*.
- Codex VI: 1. *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*. 2. *Thunder: Perfect Mind*. 3. *Authoritative Teaching*. 4. *The Concept of our Great Power*. 5. *Plato, Republic 588a-589b*. 6. *The Discourse*

- on the Eighth and Ninth. 7. *The Prayer of Thanksgiving*. 8. *Asclepius* 21-29.
- Codex VII: 1. *The Paraphrase of Shem*. 2. *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*. 3. *The Apocalypse of Peter*. 4. *The Teachings of Silvanus*. 5. *The Three Steles of Seth*.
- Codex VIII: 1. *Zostrianus*. 2. *The Letter of Peter to Philip*.
- Codex IX: 1. *Melchizedek*. 2. *The Thought of Norea*. 3. *The Testimony of Truth*.
- Codex X: 1. *Marsanes*.
- Codex XI: 1. *The Interpretation of Knowledge*. 2. *A Valentinian Exposition*: 2a. *On the Anointing*. 2b. *On Baptism A*. 2c. *On Baptism B*. 2d. *On the Eucharist A*. 2e. *On the Eucharist B*. 3. *Allogenes*. 4. *Hypsiphron*.
- Codex XII: 1. *The Sentences of Sextus*. 2. *The Gospel of Truth*. 3. *Fragments*.
- Codex XIII: 1. *Trimorphic Protennoia*. 2. *On the Origin of the world*.

It is useless to discuss the Nag Hammadi writings in the order they appear in the codices. Therefore, to describe the rich contents of this collection, the texts will be arranged according to more or less coherent categories. References to the enormous scholarly literature on these texts are omitted; they can easily be found in the editions of the separate texts and in Scholer's bibliographies.

#### B. NON-GNOSTIC WRITINGS

The Nag Hammadi Library contains several works that certainly did not originate in a Gnostic milieu. The most conspicuous example is NHC VI, 5, a fragment of the ninth book of Plato's *Republic* (588a-589b). This passage was most probably taken from a doxographical handbook, for it also occurs in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, XII, 46, 2-6 and is repeatedly quoted or referred to by Neoplatonic philosophers. The text may have been slightly abridged and gnosticized before its translation into Coptic, but there is no certainty at this point, for the Coptic translator apparently had so little command of Greek that without comparison with Plato's original text the result of his work has become incomprehensible.

Other texts that are non-Gnostic, or of which the Gnostic inspiration is very dubious, are the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I, 2), the *Exegesis on the Soul* (NHC II, 6), the *Authoritative Teaching* (or *Authentikos Logos*; NHC VI, 3), the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* (NHC VI, 1),

*Thunder: Perfect Mind* (NHC VI, 2), the three hermetic writings of NHC VI, 6, 7 and 8 (see → Hermetic Literature I), the *Teachings of Silvanus* (NHC VII, 4) and the *Sentences of Sextus* (NHC XII, 1). One of these works, the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*, though interesting in itself, does not need a separate discussion here: it belongs to the literary genre of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.

The *Apocryphon of James* purports to be a secret revelation received by James and Peter, originally written in Hebrew. The present title of this work is based on its contents; it has no title in the manuscript. A letter by James, to a recipient whose name has been lost, informs the reader that Jesus had appeared to the twelve disciples 550 days after his resurrection and selected James and Peter for the special and secret revelation that follows. The *Apocryphon* contains nothing that is specifically Gnostic. Although Jesus says that only 'through knowledge' the kingdom of heaven can be received (NHC I, 8, 23-27), he also puts much emphasis on the necessity of faith, even to the extent of also saying: 'But you, through faith and knowledge, have received life' (NHC I, 14, 8-10). The speeches of Jesus are often reminiscent of those in the Gospel of John. The *Apocryphon* is a very interesting early Christian document, but there is no reason to declare it a specimen of Gnostic literature.

The *Exegesis on the Soul* and the *Authoritative Teaching* describe the fate of the soul from its fall into matter to its return to heaven. To strengthen his arguments, the author of the *Exegesis* not only quotes texts from the Old and the New Testament, but also from Homer's *Odyssey*. The *Authoritative Teaching* teaches ideas on the soul that are known from Middle Platonism and the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry; the presence of Christian influences is disputed. A common characteristic of these two treatises is their strong emphasis on rigorous moral behaviour and continence in sexual matters. It was most probably for this reason that they were included in the Nag Hammadi Library. The same holds for the *Teachings of Silvanus* and the *Sentences of Sextus*, both of which belong to the rare early Christian sapiential literature. The *Sentences* were already known through the Greek original and translations in Latin and several oriental languages; they are usually dated around 200 A.D. Because of the fragmentary state of the Coptic manuscript only the sentences 157-180 and 307-397 have been preserved. The *Teachings*, which were previously unknown, show some influence of the *Sentences*,

but are much more openly Christian than the latter and may, in their present form, date from the beginning of the 4th century.

*The Thunder: Perfect Mind* is a fascinating hymnal work, but very difficult to classify because of the absence of distinct Christian, Jewish or Gnostic features. It is a revelatory self-proclamation of an unnamed female being, whose utterances mostly begin with 'I am' and in most cases are of an antithetical and paradoxical nature, for instance: 'I am the whore and the holy one. I am the wife and the virgin. I am the mother and the daughter' (NHC VI, 13, 18-21). Similar contradictory expressions in a hymnal style are found in Gnostic, Mandaean and even Indian literature. They most probably served to emphasize the absolute transcendence of the self-revealing deity. There are also parallels in the Isis aretologies and in Jewish Wisdom literature, but without the antitheses and paradoxes. It has been suggested that the revealer is Sophia, but for this there is no conclusive evidence.

### C. GOSPELS AND RELATED TEXTS

The Nag Hammadi Library contains four writings that are labelled as Gospels: the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I, 3 and XII, 2), the *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II, 2), the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3), and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC II, 2 and IV, 2). Only one of them, the *Gospel of Thomas*, can be called, at least partly, a gospel in the usual sense of the word. However, there are some other treatises that transmit traditions about words and deeds of Jesus, which for reasons of convenience will also be discussed in this section: *Thomas the Contender* (NHC II, 7) and the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (NHC III, 5).

The *Gospel of Thomas* contains 114 sayings of Jesus, but no stories about his birth, actions or death. Prior to its discovery, the existence of this gospel was known from a few references and quotations in early Christian literature. After its discovery, the famous but very fragmentary "Unknown Sayings of Jesus", which had been found in Oxyrynchus, proved to represent three different manuscripts of the Greek text of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Only half of the sayings are also found in the canonical gospels. From the beginning, scholarly discussion has concentrated on two major questions: 1. how Gnostic is the *Gospel of Thomas*, 2. does it contain a tradition of the sayings of Jesus that is independent of the canonical gospels? With respect to the first question, according to a growing scholarly consensus this Gospel cannot be called Gnostic, at least if

this term is taken in its usual sense of representing a form of mythological Gnosis; however, there are still scholars who contest this. There can be no doubt, on the other hand, that the label "Gnostic" is appropriate if it is taken in the sense of "esoteric". This is immediately clear from the opening sentences: 'These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote down. And he said: "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death"'. About the second question opinions are still divided, but a majority of scholars now think that, on the one hand, the *Gospel of Thomas* contains at least a nucleus of independent sayings by Jesus, which can be dated around 50 A.D., and that, on the other hand, other sayings are clearly influenced by the synoptic traditions. The authenticity of the previously unknown sayings is disputed: some of them may be authentic, while others obviously presuppose later theological developments. Whatever its early development may have been, in its present form – which is mostly dated to the first half of the 2nd century – the *Gospel of Thomas* proclaims that understanding the esoteric meaning of Jesus' sayings resolves the duality that exists between God and man and within the human being itself.

The introductory words of *Thomas the Contender* are very reminiscent of those of the *Gospel of Thomas*: 'The secret words that the Saviour spoke to Judas Thomas, which I, even I Mataias, wrote down'. Although this shows that the work purports to have an esoteric message, there are no references to a specific Gnostic myth. It is a revelatory dialogue between Jesus and his twin brother Thomas, who is called the Contender (*athlētēs*, 'the one who struggles', i.e. against the passions). Accordingly, the main teaching of Jesus turns out to be strongly ascetic.

The *Dialogue of the Saviour* is, in its present form, the result of a complicated literary history. The greater part of it reflects its primary source: a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples Judas, Mary Magdalen and Matthew. The sayings of Jesus have parallels in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and particularly in those of John and Thomas, but the *Dialogue* seems to reflect an independent tradition. Unfortunately, the text is very fragmentary due to the bad state of the manuscript. For that reason the Gnostic character of this work cannot be determined with certainty; it seems, however, to be rather superficial.

The *Gospel of Truth* is not a gospel in the usual sense of the word, but a Gnostic meditation on the person and work of Jesus as the revealer of salvific

Gnosis. It has no explicit title in the manuscript; its name derives from the first words of the tractate: 'The gospel of truth is joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the grace of knowing him' (NHC I, 16, 31-33). The work shows a considerable number of Valentinian notions, which, however, are not arranged according to the system that the anti-Gnostic writers ascribe to Valentinus and the Valentinians. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, III, 11, 9, says that the Valentinians possessed a *Gospel of Truth*, and another anti-heretical writer, Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses*, 4, reports that Valentinus had his own gospel, but he does not mention its name. There has been much disagreement about whether the Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Truth* and the Valentinian gospel mentioned by Irenaeus are identical. Based on the sources presently at our disposal, the question cannot be settled with certainty, although the arguments in favour of the two texts being identical seem more compelling than those against it. The same holds for the question of the possible authorship of Valentinus. Whoever the author may have been, his work evinces his impressive qualities as a writer. He must have been a highly gifted person, a powerful religious thinker and a poet, who cannot have remained unnoticed by his contemporaries. He might indeed have been Valentinus himself.

The *Gospel of Philip* is not a coherent treatise but a compilation of short notes (in some modern editions numbered 1-127) about various subjects, written from a Valentinian perspective. Important subjects are, *inter alia*, the difference between Gnostic and non-Gnostic Christians and, especially, the sacraments. The author seems to know five sacraments: 'The Lord did everything in a mystery: baptism, chrism, eucharist, redemption, and bridal chamber' (NHC II, 67, 28-31). The mystery of the bridal chamber means the completion of the Gnostic's salvation: it implies the unification of the (female) soul with its "angel", its heavenly counterpart. The work also contains some previously unknown sayings of Jesus and a few stories about him that are not recorded in the canonical gospels, for instance in NHC II, 63, 25-30: 'The Lord went into the dye works of Levi. He took seventy-two different colours and threw them into the vat. He took them out all white. And he said: "Even so has the Son of Man come as a dyer"'.

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* is, in the manuscript, also called *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*. The two copies in the Nag

Hammadi Library are independent translations from the Greek. It is a mythological Gnostic work, closely related to the tradition of the *Apocryphon of John*. There is no relationship with the apocryphal *Gospel of the Egyptians*, of which fragments have been preserved in Clement of Alexandria.

#### D. MYTHOLOGICAL TEXTS

Various forms of Gnostic mythology have found concrete shape in a number of Nag Hammadi tractates. An important mythological tradition, to which modern scholars often attach the label "Sethian" [→ Sethians], is the one found in the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1; III, 1; IV, 1 and BG 8502, 2), the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 4), *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II, 5 and XIII, 2), the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (see above) and other works that are clearly influenced by the same complex of ideas. These texts show considerable differences with respect to concrete details, but they all clearly reflect the same mythological structure. *Eugnostus the Blessed* (NHC II, 3 and V, 1), which only deals with the constitution of the Pleroma, belongs to an early stage of the same tradition. It is also reflected in a part of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII, 2), which for that reason will also be discussed in this connection. The final hymn in the longer recension of the *Apocryphon* (the *Hymn of Pronoia*) belongs to a tradition that has also strongly influenced the mythological structure of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII, 1). The myth transmitted in the *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII, 1), however, has no relationship with that of the texts just mentioned.

The *Apocryphon of John* may be called the basic text of mythological Gnosis. Two versions, a shorter and a longer one, in four manuscripts, testify to its importance. NHC III, I and BG 8502, 2 contain independent translations of the shorter version; NHC II, 1 and IV, 1 present, with variants, a translation of the longer version. After an introduction in which Christ reveals himself to John as the Father, the Mother and the Son, the *Apocryphon* continues with a description of the supreme God, the emanation of the Mother, called Ennoia or Barbelo, the birth of the Son and the further development of the Pleroma. This section has a close and even more original parallel in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, I, 29, and partially also in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. However, the story of the creation of Adam presupposes another tradition about the highest divine beings (Man and the Son of Man). It has a parallel in Irenaeus,



AHI, 30 and other texts, and was apparently borrowed from another source. Thereupon the first chapters of Genesis are retold from a Gnostic perspective, which takes the form of a dialogue between Christ and John. The longer version ends with a beautiful hymn by the female saviour of mankind, Pronoia, which has been suppressed in the shorter version. The esoteric character of the *Apocryphon* becomes apparent at the end of the tractate, when the Saviour says to John: 'I am saying these things to you that you might write them down and give them secretly to your fellow spirits, for this mystery is that of the immovable race' (II, 31, 29-31 parr. = Synopsis 82, 5-9). The complicated textual history of the *Apocryphon* cannot be reconstructed with certainty, and the same holds for the exact development of its myth, of which the basic elements are already ascribed to → Saturnilus (ca. 120). Accordingly, it is impossible to assign an exact date to it: most probably it originated in the 2nd century and then became involved in an ongoing process of rewriting and expanding, which may have continued until the 4th century.

The *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the origin of the World* both present a Gnostic interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis. They are closely related, but at the same time they show so many differences that their relationship has to be explained from the use of common sources. There are also distinct parallels with the *Apocryphon of John*. Both texts are difficult to date, although they are often assigned to the 3rd century A.D. As its name indicates, the *Hypostasis* primarily deals with the threatening reality of the archons, the rulers of the world of darkness, who have enslaved the human being. But in the end the Gnostics will be saved through the gift of Gnosis, 'and they will ascend into the limitless light' (NHC II, 97, 7-8). The untitled treatise of NHC II, 5 and XIII, 2 (of which only a small fragment has been preserved), owes its title, *On the Origin of the World*, to modern scholarship, based on its contents. To describe the primeval history of the world, the author has made use of many sources, which he sometimes mentions by name. The work evinces a strong influence of Jewish apocryphal and apocalyptic traditions, whereas there are only a few superficial Christian elements, which suggests that it is basically a non-Christian Gnostic text. The process of salvation already begins with the activities of Pistis Sophia, who was also the cause of the creation of the world of darkness, and of another divine entity, Sophia Zoë. The Jewish apocalyptic influence becomes apparent in the

description of the total destruction of the world of matter and the forces of evil (NHC II, 125, 23-127, 17).

Other works belonging to the same mythological tradition, or at least influenced by it, are several tractates that were known in the school of Plotinus (see below) and also the small treatise called the *Thought of Norea* (NHC IX, 2). Norea, who in other texts is described as the daughter of Adam and Eve or as the wife of Noah or Shem, is presented here as the saved Saviour, whose vicissitudes reflect the salvation of the Gnostic. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 91, 34-92, 3) she is called 'an assistance for many generations of mankind' and 'the virgin whom the forces did not defile'.

*Eugnostus the Blessed* is a non-Christian Gnostic tractate with strong Jewish influences. It describes the development of the Pleroma, beginning with the transcendent 'self-grown, self-constructed Father' and his shining likeness, called Immortal Androgynous Man, whose female name is All-wise Begettress Sophia. The work only deals with the structure of the heavenly world, not with the origin of evil and the creation of the world. It has been claimed that it once was the first part of *On the Origin of the World*, which, however, must remain a (albeit well-argued) hypothesis. Corresponding ideas in Philo suggest an Alexandrian origin, possibly in the beginning of the 2nd century. A later Gnostic author christianized *Eugnostus*, by making it a dialogue between Christ and his disciples, called the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (NHC III, 4 and BG 8502, 3). He added the figures of Sophia as the cause of evil and Christ as the Saviour who has come from heaven to break the power of the archons. A similar procedure of transforming a non-Christian Gnostic text into a Christian one may also have been applied to other Gnostic texts, such as the *Apocryphon of John* and *On the Origin of the World*.

In the *Apocryphon of John*, the appearance of Christ and the subsequent revelation is provoked by a number of anxious questions that John asks himself. A similar situation is depicted in the *Letter of Peter to Philip*. This tractate opens with a letter of Peter to Philip, in which he invites him to come together with the other apostles. Probably this letter is a later addition, perhaps inspired by the fact that Peter at the end of the text encourages his fellow apostles and sends them away to preach the gospel. A transition to the second part of the tractate is made by the information that Philip agreed and that the apostles assembled on the Mount of Olives. What follows is a revelatory

discourse by Christ, in answer to questions raised by the apostles. They want to know the nature of the deficiency of the aeons and their pleroma, how they themselves have become detained in their earthly existence, and in what manner they should return to their origin. Christ answers with a short summary of the myth as told in the tradition of the *Apocryphon of John*. In addition, Christ informs them that they will have to fight the archons by preaching the Gospel and by suffering for it.

The *Trimorphic Protennoia* betrays a complicated literary development, the basis of which seems to have been three self-predications ('I am . . .') of a female Saviour, called Protennoia ("First Thought"), who reveals herself as Voice, Speech, and Word. She has descended three times from heaven to the world of darkness, to save her fallen "members". The same scheme of a threefold descent is found in the *Hymn of Pronoia* at the end of the longer version of the *Apocryphon* and in the Prologue of the Gospel of John. There has been much discussion about the question of which text can claim priority at this point; it seems certain, however, that there is no direct interrelationship between them, but that all three have been influenced by Jewish speculations on the threefold descent of Wisdom. This basic structure of the *Trimorphic Protennoia* has been expanded by the insertion of several doctrinal passages, which evince some influence from the tradition of the *Apocryphon of John* and also show a superficial christianization.

A completely different mythology is found in the *Paraphrase of Shem*. It describes a revelation which Shem (spelled Sēm) received from a divine being, Derdekeas, during his ascent to heaven. The *Paraphrase* assumes three basic principles of the universe: Light, Darkness and the Spirit between them. Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, V, 19, ascribes the same principles to the Sethians, but for the rest there are no correspondences between their ideas and those of the *Paraphrase*. This work explains how the light of the Spirit came to be held in bondage by Nature, and how the creation of heaven and earth and the subsequent history of the world are part of an attempt to save the power of the spirit. Derdekeas is the son or likeness of the Light, and as such he is both revealer and saviour. The work contains several references to biblical and Jewish traditions (the Flood, the tower of Babel), but distinct Christian elements are lacking. There is some resemblance with Manichaean traditions [→ Manichaeism], but not enough to suggest any kind of interdependency. The *Para-*

*phrase* has a weak composition and is difficult to interpret, perhaps partly due to an inadequate, faulty translation from the Greek into Coptic. Interesting features are the positive evaluation of the Sodomites, the polemics against water baptism, and the prominence of eschatology. As a matter of fact, it can be characterized as a Gnostic apocalypse.

#### E. APOCALYPTIC AND POLEMICAL TEXTS

The Nag Hammadi Library contains several tractates that present themselves as apocalypses: the *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V, 2), the *(First) Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 3), the *(Second) Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 4), the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V, 5), and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII, 3). Other apocalyptic works that must be discussed in this connection are the *Concept of our Great Power* (NHC VI, 4), *Melchizedek* (NHC IX, 1), and *Hypsiphronne* (NHC XI, 4). The *Apocalypse of Peter* contains some interesting polemics against other Christian Gnostics; this is also the case for the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX, 3) and the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII, 2), which for this reason will also be dealt with in this section.

The *Apocalypse of Adam* is the only one of the texts just mentioned that does not show a clear Christian influence. It presents itself as a revelation, received by Adam from three heavenly visitors and narrated by him to his son Seth. Adam explains how he and Eve lost their original Gnosis at the moment they were split into two individuals by the wrathful 'god, the ruler of the aeons and the powers', i.e. when they lost their androgynous unity. The saving knowledge was transferred to the heavenly Seth, who is 'the seed of the great generation' (the Gnostics). Adam reveals to his son Seth, whom he had called after the great Seth, that the creator-god will be unable to prevent the transmission of knowledge through the generations, despite his attempts to destroy mankind by flood and fire. A saviour figure, called "the Illuminator", will prevail over the powers of darkness and save the elect. Although baptism is mentioned several times, the work does not contain explicit references to the Christian tradition. There are some correspondences with the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Untitled Treatise* of the Bruce Codex, *Zostrianus* (VIII, 1) and *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHJC XIII, 1), which *inter alia* becomes apparent by their common use of three sets of angel names: Abrasax, Sablo, Gamaliel – Micheus, Michar, Mnesonous – Iesseus, Maza-

reus, Iessedekeus. The emphasis on baptism in several of these texts may reflect some connection with Jewish baptist circles. According to Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 26, 8, 1, the “Gnostics” used ‘apocalypses of Adam’ and likewise the Cologne Mani Codex, 48, 16-50, 7 cites an *Apocalypse of Adam*, which, however, does not seem to have been identical with NHC V, 5. The absence of clear references to Christian ideas as well as the influence of Jewish apocalyptic and possibly also baptist traditions suggests an early date, probably the 2nd century.

The *Apocalypse of Paul* has no relationship with a Greek work of the same name that has been known for a long time. It relates how a little child, who is also called the (Holy) Spirit, guides Paul through nine heavens to the tenth, where he embraces his fellow spirits. Building on 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, the revelation starts with the visit to the fourth heaven, where the souls are being interrogated and sometimes sent back to another existence on earth, whereas in the fifth heaven the souls are punished. Of the other heavens only the seventh receives a more than superficial discussion. Paul sees there an old man, wearing a white garment and sitting upon a throne that was seven times brighter than the sun (cf. Daniel 7:9). It is the Demiurge, the god of the Old Testament, who does not want to let him pass to the next heaven and threatens him with his “principalities and authorities”. But when Paul gives him the sign he has received from the Spirit, the old man ‘turned his face downwards to his creation and to those who are his own authorities’ and allows him to pass to the Ogdoad (NHC V, 22, 23-24, 1). The *Apocalypse of Paul* most probably dates from the second century: Irenaeus (ca. 180), *Adversus haereses*, II, 30, 7, already knew a Gnostic tradition that ascribed to Paul an ascent to the heavens above that of the Demiurge.

In the manuscript, the tractates of NHC V, 3 and 4 are both called the *Apocalypse of James*, and it is only for reasons of convenience that modern scholars have numbered them. Both texts are revelatory discourses rather than apocalypses in the usual sense of the word. They relate the revelations Jesus gave to James the Just, the Brother of the Lord, who played an important role in Jewish Christianity. The *First Apocalypse* deals with suffering, both of Jesus and James, and with the soul’s ascent to heaven. After his resurrection, Jesus, whom James always addresses as “Rabbi”, informs James about the docetic nature of his crucifixion and teaches him the formulas the soul needs in order to pass by the “toll collectors” of

the various heavens. The *Second Apocalypse* is cast in the form of a two-part report to Theuda, the father of James, by a Jerusalem priest called Mareim. The first section deals with revelations James has received from Jesus; the second section, which most probably had an independent circulation at one time, deals with James’s death. Especially the *Second Apocalypse* shows strong Jewish-Christian influences, but at the same time it is clearly a Gnostic composition: the author alludes to the bad, ignorant Demiurge (NHC V, 54, 7-15; 58, 2-6) and mentions the aeons (53, 8) and the archons (56, 19), and the whole work emphasizes that knowledge is indispensable for salvation. The *Apocalypses of James* are mostly ascribed to the 2nd century, but there is no certainty on this point.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* contains an account of three revelations received by the apostle Peter and explained by Jesus the Saviour. The first vision deals with the hostile Jews who try to kill Jesus and his followers: they are called ‘blind ones who have no guide’ and interpreted as at least six groups of opponents of the author’s Gnostic views, including both orthodox believers and other Gnostics. These inner-Christian polemics take up a considerable part of the whole treatise (NHC VII, 73, 10-81, 3) and seem to have been the author’s main concern. The second and third revelations instruct Peter about the correct Gnostic interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. On the cross he sees a glad and laughing Jesus, who is the ‘Living Jesus’; the one into whose hands and feet the nails are driven is his ‘physical part’, the ‘substitute’. Jesus’ resurrection means the unification of the Living Jesus with the perfect light of the spiritual Pleroma. The work originated most probably in the 3rd century: its vehement polemics against other Christians, both Gnostic and non-Gnostic, makes a date before the end of the 2nd century improbable.

In this connection, attention must be drawn to another treatise in which polemics play an important part, the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX, 3). Almost half of this text has been lost because of the fragmentary state of the manuscript. Its original title being unknown, scholars have given it one that is based on its contents. The work consists of two parts: a well-constructed homily and miscellaneous additions. The homily, addressed to a Christian Gnostic congregation, warns against the erroneous ideas of non-Gnostic Christians, who, for instance, think that martyrdom leads to immediate salvation or that marriage and procreation are allowed, whereas in fact they are ‘defilement’.

The homily then describes the behaviour of the true Gnostic and ends with a characteristic Gnostic confession: 'When man comes to know himself and God who is over the truth, he will be saved and he will crown himself with the crown unfading'. The miscellaneous part starts with a firm rejection of the god of the Old Testament and then continues with polemics against → Valentinus, → Basilides and his son Isidore, the Simonians (see → Simon Magus), and also against water baptism. Unfortunately, this part of the manuscript is in such a bad state that most details of the author's argumentation escape us.

The *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* is a revelation by Jesus Christ to the 'perfect and incorruptible ones'. It reveals the true story of Jesus, including his commission by the heavenly 'multitudinous assembly of the rejoicing Majesty', his descent to earth and his struggle with and victory over the powers of darkness, his seeming crucifixion, and his return to the Pleroma. In a long passage (VII, 55, 14-56, 19) apparently directed against the orthodox interpretation of the crucifixion, Christ explains that he 'did not die in reality but in appearance'. In reality 'I was rejoicing in the height over all the wealth of the archons . . . And I was laughing at their ignorance'. In the second part of the treatise the author attacks the orthodox Christians who persecute the elect: they 'think that they are advancing the name of Christ, since they are vain in ignorance' (VII, 59, 19-60, 1). Christ rejects the Christology of the orthodox and their claim to be the true Church: in fact, the archons made an imitation of the ineffable union that exists among the children of light by 'proclaiming the doctrine of a dead man and falsehoods to resemble the freedom and purity of the perfect assembly' (60, 13-61, 3).

The *Concept of our Great Power* betrays a complicated literary history. It divides history into three "aeons": the 'aeon of the flesh', which ends with the Flood, then the 'psychic' aeon, in which the Saviour appears, and finally the last aeon in which all kinds of disasters occur, ending with the consummation of the world by fire and the redemption of the Gnostic believers. They will go to the 'unchangeable aeon' of the Great Power, who is the supreme God, exalted 'above all powers', including the 'Father of the flesh', i.e. the creator god of the Old Testament. The Saviour is not mentioned by name, but from what is said about him it becomes obvious that he is identified with Christ.

*Melchizedek* is an apocalyptic work, which derives its modern title from the fact that it pur-

ports to transmit the revelation that the Old Testament figure of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18) had received from several heavenly beings. The tractate contains, *inter alia*, a long list of hymnal invocations of divine entities ('Holy are you, . . .') that also appear in the mythological tradition of the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The manuscript of this tractate is severely damaged, but what is left leaves no doubt about the fact that Melchizedek is identified with Jesus Christ.

A further unknown female visionary appears in the short tractate *Hypsiphron* (NHC XI, 4). It contains a vision that was revealed to a certain Hypsiphron ('High-minded One') 'in the place of her virginity', but the manuscript is so badly damaged that it has become impossible to grasp the message of this short treatise.

#### F. VALENTINIAN TEXTS

The Nag Hammadi Library contains several works that can be classified as Valentinian, although none of them completely fits the Valentinian schools and systems described by the church fathers. Valentinian treatises are: the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I, 3 and XII, 2), the *Treatise on Resurrection* (NHC I, 4), the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I, 5), the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3), the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI, 1) and the *Valentinian Exposition* with the fragments on the Anointing, Baptism and the Eucharist (NHC XI, 2).

Although a Valentinian origin has been claimed for all five tractates of NHC I, this can only be proven with respect to its tractates 3, 4 and 5. Most probably the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I, 2) is not a Gnostic text at all (see above), whereas for the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* (NHC I, 1) the evidence is far from compelling. The *Prayer*, which is written on the front flyleaf of the codex, is a hymn of praise and at the same time a prayer for redemption (I, A, 22-23: 'redeem my eternal light-soul and my spirit'). The Creator is called 'the psychic God' (I, A, 31), which is in accordance with the terminology of the Western branch of Valentinianism, but not necessarily an indication that the whole prayer is of Valentinian inspiration. The general similarity to other Gnostic and hermetic hymns and prayers, and to the invocations found in magical texts as well, make it conceivable that the author simply used a term of Valentinian provenance to characterize the creator.

The *Treatise on Resurrection* deals with the question of how to interpret the Christian doc-

trine of the resurrection. It has the form of a doctrinal letter addressed to a certain Rheginus. For this reason the tractate was formerly also called the *Letter to Rheginus on the Resurrection*; it has no title in the manuscript. As a good Gnostic, the author says that the resurrection can already be achieved in this life: 'flee from the divisions and the fetters, and already you have the resurrection . . . why not consider yourself as risen?' (NHC I, 49, 13-24). But that does not mean that the resurrection of the dead is of less importance. As Son of God, Christ vanquished death and as Son of Man he realized the restoration of the Pleroma. He was able to do so, 'because he was originally from above, a seed of the truth', before the cosmos came into being (NHC I, 44, 21-38). This Christology betrays the author's Valentinianism. As could be expected, he denies the resurrection of the flesh: he subscribes to Paul's view that the dead will be raised in a spiritual body.

The *Tripartite Tractate* has no title in the manuscript. It received its modern title because the text is divided by scribal decoration into three parts. It is an elaborate and highly speculative theological treatise, written by an original thinker. The first part describes the transcendent Father and the aeonic world that emanated from him, the second part deals with the creation and the Fall, and the third part with the coming of the Saviour. Though the work obviously belongs to the Western branch of Valentinianism, it presents a radical revision of some important Valentinian notions. One of them is that the function of Sophia as the aeon who stirs the process of creation is taken over by the Logos. At this point, as also with respect to Christology and many other themes, the author comes close to the views of orthodox theologians from the 3rd century, such as Origen, but he has also much in common with the Valentinian Gnostic Heracleon, who wrote an influential commentary on the Gospel of John. The unknown author of the *Tripartite Tractate*, one of the longest of the Nag Hammadi Library (88 pages), was a powerful thinker who obviously did not want to hide his light under the bushel of a Valentinian minority: he wanted to address the Church as a whole.

The *Interpretation of Knowledge* is a homily probably directed at a group of Gnostic believers who were still members of a larger Christian community. The author offers an explanation of the major themes of the Christian tradition, using many terms and expressions that were current among Valentinian Gnostics. The community appears to be torn by jealousy and hatred over the

issue of spiritual gifts. Gnostics should not be proud and presumptuous because of their Gnosis. Christ is the great example of unity and humility. The author takes up Paul's simile of the Church as a composite body, in which the eye and the hand and the foot each have their own function and special gift and are not jealous of each other but work together: 'be thankful that you do not exist outside the body!' (XI, 18, 33-34). This document provides a unique picture of a mixed Christian community, many of which must still have existed at the end of the 2nd and in the first half of the 3rd century.

The *Valentinian Exposition* is also unique in its kind. It presents an original Valentinian account of the origin of the Pleroma, the Fall of Sophia and the creation of the world, together with fragments of a Valentinian celebration of baptism and the eucharist. It is also of great interest because it provides inside information about theological controversies among the Valentinians themselves. The reports of the church fathers about disagreements on specific issues turn out to be right: the author repeatedly argues for certain interpretations of the Valentinian myth, rejecting the views favoured by others, for instance with respect to the cause of Sophia's suffering.

#### G. ASCENTS TO HEAVEN

The Nag Hammadi Library contains several Gnostic treatises that show the influence of Neoplatonism and are focused on the ascent to heaven more than on the Gnostic myth of fall and salvation. These writings are the *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII, 5), *Zostrianus* (VIII, 1), *Marsanes* (NHC X, 1) and *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 3). The *Books of Jeû* and the *Untitled Treatise* of the Bruce Codex belong to the same category.

In his *Life of Plotinus*, 16, Porphyry relates that in the school of Plotinus there were people who 'had abandoned the old philosophy' and held that 'Plato had not penetrated to the depths of intelligible reality'. In support of their views they appealed to 'Revelations by Zoroaster, Zostrianus, Nicotheus, Allogenes, Messos, and other people of the kind'. It is virtually certain that the Nag Hammadi writings *Zostrianus* and *Allogenes* are identical with the books of the same name mentioned by Porphyry. Moreover, the revelations described in *Allogenes* are addressed by Allogenes to his "son" Messos, who is also mentioned by Porphyry. About 265, Plotinus took the offensive against these Gnostics: not only did he himself write a full treatise against them (*Enneads* II, 9: *Against the Gnostics*), but he also induced his



most faithful pupils, Amelios and Porphyry, to do the same. Amelios wrote forty treatises against *Zostrianus*, of which, unfortunately, not a single one has been preserved. Plotinus' main objections to the Gnostics are: 1. they introduce a great number of levels of being, whereas he only accepts three (the One, Mind, and Soul), and 2. they affirm that the world and its creator are bad, whereas he holds that the world is good and beautiful, originating from the divine World-Soul. There is no doubt that Plotinus reacted against what he had read in books like *Zostrianus* or the *Untitled Treatise* of the Bruce Codex. In his attack on the Gnostics' complete rejection of the visible creation and their idea that they will ascend to another, new earth, he remarks that they introduce strange hypostases such as "Exiles", "Antitypes" and "Repentances" (*Enneads*, II, 9, 6). These 'strange hypostases' are also mentioned in *Zostrianus* (NHC VIII, 4, 20-5, 29; 8, 10-20; etc.) and the *Untitled Treatise* (Baynes, 180; Schmidt-MacDermot, 263). The strong influence of later Platonism on *Zostrianus* can also be seen in the latter's description of the transcendent God (VIII, 64, 11-84, 22), which is based on the same Middle- or Neoplatonic source that was used by the fourth-century Christian writer Marius Victorinus in his *Adversus Arium*, I, 49-50. Another indication of philosophical influence is the appearance of the Neoplatonic triad Existence-Life-Thought in the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII, 122, 18-21; 125, 28-32; cf.; 123, 18-21), *Zostrianus* (VIII, 15, 10-17), and *Allogenes* (XI, 49, 26-38; 61, 33-39).

Plotinus' observation that the Gnostics are 'giving names to a multitude of intelligible realities' is abundantly confirmed by these authentic Gnostic writings. Unfortunately, the manuscripts of *Zostrianus* and *Marsanes* are so severely damaged that great portions have been lost. *Marsanes*, in particular, shows that the heavenly ascent was accompanied and effectuated by theurgical rites, which have their counterpart in magical practices and related ideas in the Neoplatonist Iamblichus. The knowledge of the divine world revealed in these texts and the invocations used are apparently sufficient for salvation. The *Three Steles of Seth* contain hymns to the three fundamental levels of divine being: the divine Son (Autogenes), the divine Mother (Barbelo), and God the Unknown Father. A short introduction in prose claims that Dositheus, traditionally seen as the predecessor of Simon Magus, has transmitted these hymns to the elect. This is followed by an interesting personal remark: 'Many times I joined in giving glory with

the powers, and I became worthy of the immeasurable majesties'. This implies that these hymns are to be said during the ascent to heaven, which is confirmed by some remarks, after the third hymn and again in prose, about how the hymns should be used. First they must be spoken one after another in ascending order, and then there should be silence: 'After the silence, they descend from the third; they bless the second and after these the first. The way of ascent is the way of descent' (NHC VII, 127, 11-21). This shows that the mystic experience of the individual was re-enacted in a liturgical celebration by the Gnostic community.

Although there may be some vague allusions to Christian ideas in *Zostrianus*, these texts are fundamentally non-Christian. As far as the entities of the aeonic world are concerned, there are clear links with the mythological tradition of the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. But the classic Gnostic myth as a whole had apparently lost its interest for Plotinus' Gnostics; they were primarily interested in the last stage of the salvation: the ascent to the divine world.

#### 4. THE TESTIMONY OF ANTI-GNOSTIC WRITERS

Before the Berlin Gnostic Codex and the Nag Hammadi writings became known, the student of the Gnostic current in Antiquity had to rely almost exclusively on the reports about Gnostic schools and systems by anti-Gnostic writers. And this was all the more so, since the bewildering original works of the *Codex Askewianus* and the *Codex Brucianus* were generally thought to be late productions of an already declining Gnosis. Most of the anti-Gnostic writers were Christian theologians who considered the Gnostic movement a threat to the Christian Church and its doctrines. But Platonic philosophers such as Plotinus and his pupils also wrote treatises against the Gnostics, because in their view the ideas about a multitude of intelligible realities were not based on solid philosophical reasoning but on very dubious revelations.

The numerous authentic Gnostic works that are now available have made it perfectly clear that there was never one single Gnosticism. Instead, there existed a broad current of frequently inter-related ideas, expressed by individuals, schools or communities, which had one common denominator: esoteric, revealed Gnosis as the only means of salvation. Except for their common emphasis on salvific Gnosis, the author of the thoroughly

Christian *Gospel of Truth* cannot have had much in common with that of the non-Christian *Three Steles of Seth*. The church fathers, however, although admitting its variegated character, described the Gnostic movement as one coherent current, which had started with Simon Magus and through a succession of Gnostic teachers had led to the Gnostic schools, systems and communities they knew or had heard about. Since they were almost exclusively interested in the ideas of Christian Gnostics, they speak about Gnosticism as a Christian heresy – an idea that has long dominated Gnostic studies and is still defended by some church historians even today. Nevertheless, the anti-Gnostic polemics of such writers as Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius contain so much information about the ideas of individual Gnostics, their schools or communities, and even their rituals, that they will always remain of great importance for Gnostic studies. Surprisingly, none of the Nag Hammadi writings proves to be in complete agreement with any of the many systems described by the church fathers. On the other hand, the church fathers give information about a great number of real or alleged Gnostic teachers and groups for which there is no counterpart in the authentic Gnostic writings. A discussion of many of them is to be found elsewhere in the present Dictionary (→ Archontics, Audians, Basilides, Borborites, Cainites, Carpocratians, Cerinthus, Elchasai, Justin the Gnostic, Marcion, Marcus the Magician, Menander, Monoimus, Naassenes, Ophites, Perates, Prodicus, Satornilus, Sethians, Simon Magus, Valentinus and Valentinians).

The study of the early Christian anti-Gnostic writers is beset with many problems. In a few cases they transmit an original Gnostic document (see first section, above), but mostly they give only a summary of the ideas of individual Gnostics or Gnostic groups, sometimes with a few isolated quotations from a relevant Gnostic text. The information is often so sketchy that the real meaning of the views that are being criticized remains in the dark. They use both direct and indirect sources, and the value of the latter in particular is difficult to determine. Since their goal is to fight against views that in their eyes are dangerous, the major question about these polemical writers concerns their trustworthiness. Did they really try to understand their opponents? In how far did they misunderstand their sources, or consciously manipulate them? These questions cannot be neglected in any study of the patristic evidence. They can only be answered, if at all, by carefully analyzing the information in question and evaluate it

against the background of the polemic's theological intentions.

The first anti-Gnostic work we know of is the so-called *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr († 165), which he himself mentions in his first *Apology*, 26: 'We have also a treatise, written against all heresies that have arisen, which, if you wish to read it, we will give to you'. Unfortunately, this work is lost, but it is quite certain that much of it found its way into the extensive anti-Gnostic works of Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius. According to Eusebius, *Church History*, IV, 7, 15-8,1, Justin's younger contemporary Hegesippus also fought the impious heresies, but his work is lost as well. Although there are other authors who provide first-hand information about Gnostics, such as → Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian (ca. 200), Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius are by far the most important and, therefore, deserve a short discussion.

*Irenaeus* originally came from Asia Minor, where he had heard the famous bishop Polycarpus. In 178, he became bishop of Lyons and Vienne in the Rhone valley, where he witnessed the rapidly spreading influence of Christian Gnostics of the Valentinian type. In order to refute their ideas he composed an extensive work in five volumes, entitled *Refutation and Overthrow of the Gnosis Falsely so Called*, mostly referred to as *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*. The work was originally written in Greek, but except for a number of fragments, it has survived completely only in a Latin translation. Irenaeus seems to have had first-hand knowledge of the Valentinian school of Ptolemy and of the teachings and liturgical practices of → Marcus the Magician, but he also gives information about other teachers and groups he considers Gnostic. Irenaeus presents this material in Book I, and in the next books he refutes the Gnostic views from various angles: in Book II from reason, in Book III from the teaching of the apostles, and in Book IV from the sayings of Jesus; Book V is mainly devoted to a defence of the resurrection of the flesh, which was generally rejected by the Gnostics. Although he sometimes demonstrably made use of excellent sources, Irenaeus does not really try to understand his opponents; he characterizes their ideas and myths as ridiculous, unreasonable, impious and contrary to the true faith of the Church.

An important aspect of Irenaeus' work, which had a great influence on later heresiology, and for a long time on the study of Gnosticism as well, is his "historical" approach to the Gnostic

movement. According to him, it was a heresy that had started with Simon Magus and through a chain of teachers had been transmitted and variously elaborated up to its manifestation in the Valentinians and other Gnostics of his own days. This description of the development of Gnostic thought accords with the usual presentation of the history of Greek philosophy: as a succession of teachers within a school of thought, who provide their own interpretation and elaboration of the founder's fundamental ideas. The Greek word *hairesis* was used to indicate such a school or a faction within it, but in the Christian vocabulary of the second half of the 2nd century its meaning began to change from that of a divergent opinion that was open to discussion to that of impious "heresy". Most probably, Irenaeus already found this idea of a Gnostic genealogy in the *Syntagma* of Justin, who speaks about this work in connection with Simon Magus. Justin was a philosopher and a (Christian) school-head himself, which may have induced him to describe the variety of thought within Christianity in the same way as was usually done with respect to Greek philosophy. It is not exactly known which heresiarchs filled Irenaeus' complete list of successive teachers, but according to *AH*, I, 23-27, it comprised at least the following names: Simon Magus, Menander, Satornilus, Basilides, and Carpocrates, with whom Cerinthus and the Ebionites are connected, apparently because they taught the same doctrine about Jesus. Cerdo and his pupil Marcion are said to derive from the Simonians. There is a general scholarly consensus that this Gnostic genealogy and similar ones in later authors have no historical value whatsoever.

*Hippolytus* was a learned Roman priest, who around 220 became the first "anti-pope", after a conflict with his bishop Callistus on doctrinal and moral issues. He wrote two anti-heretical works, the *Syntagma against all heresies* and the *Refutation of all heresies* (*Refutatio omnium haeresium*). The former is lost, although some scholars think that it can be partly reconstructed from Pseudo-Tertullian's *Adversus omnes haereses*, Philastrius' *Liber de haeresibus* and Epiphanius' *Panarion*. The *Refutatio*, written after 222, consists of ten books, of which books II and III are lost. The first book deals with the Greek philosophical schools and opinions, the fourth with astrology and magic; books V-IX contain a refutation of 33 Gnostic sects, whereas book X, *inter alia*, gives a summary of the previous refutations. Hippolytus consistently tries to prove that the Gnostic systems and myths he describes have

simply been derived from Greek philosophy or mythology; however, his arguments are far from being convincing, and often amount to sheer nonsense.

A major problem with Hippolytus' *Refutatio* concerns the presence in his work of what, with a German term, is usually called his "Sondergut", i.e. his description of Gnostic systems for which there is no counterpart in Irenaeus or other sources. It comprises at least the whole of book V (Naassenes, Perates, Sethians, Justin the Gnostic), VI, 9-18 (the Simonian *Apophysis megalē*) and 29-37 (Valentinians), VII, 20-27 (Basilides), VIII, 8-11 (Docetists) and 12-15 (Monoimus). An intriguing feature of this "Sondergut" is that the systems it describes are characterized by evident parallels with respect to both content and wording, by frequent allegorical interpretations of Greek mythological material, and by a much more frequent and variegated use of biblical texts than is found in the authentic Nag Hammadi documents. Of the various solutions that have been proposed to explain these common characteristics, three may be mentioned here, the last one of which is most likely: 1. Hippolytus himself has adapted a collection of sources he had at his disposal, 2. this dossier had already been composed and adapted by a non-Christian Gnostic before it came into Hippolytus' possession, 3. this was done by a Christian Gnostic. In any case, the fact that the sources used by Hippolytus have obviously been manipulated often prevents firm conclusions about (details of) the systems described and refuted in his *Refutatio*.

*Epiphanius of Salamis* (ca. 315-403) served for thirty years as head of a monastery near Eleutheropolis in Palestine, before he was consecrated bishop of Constantia in the island of Cyprus in 367. He was famous for his learning and his zeal for ecclesiastical orthodoxy. Between 374 and 377 he wrote an extensive anti-heretical work called *Panarion* or *Medicine Chest*, intended as an antidote to those who had been bitten by the serpent of heresy. It deals with 80 heresies of which the first 20 belong to the Greek and the Jewish world. The Christian heresies start with Simon Magus and end with the 4th-century Messalians. Epiphanius' work is indispensable because of the many and sometimes excellent sources he quotes or makes use of, but at the same time its value is very much restricted by the fact that he is obviously incapable of handling his sources. His reports about the individual heresies are confused and confusing; he often misunderstands what he has read or heard; he sees connec-

tions between persons and currents that certainly did not exist; he often contradicts himself; and his explanations are seldom to the point. It is no wonder that scholars have reached sometimes completely divergent opinions about the Gnostic and other sects that are dealt with by Epiphanius. Reading his work is mostly frustrating and often unrewarding, but it cannot be ignored.

The discovery of so many original Gnostic writings at Nag Hammadi has not made the study of the testimonies of the church fathers superfluous. Notwithstanding their often scanty information and their biased attitude, the anti-Gnostic authors testify to the existence of Gnostic works and systems other than those contained in the Coptic codices. In late Antiquity, there must have circulated a great number of Gnostic books, which varied enormously with respect to both content and style. The authentic works that have been preserved are often difficult to interpret because of their obscure language and unknown presuppositions, and sometimes the testimonies of the church fathers do contribute to a better understanding. Only by careful analysis of the direct and indirect sources, combined with in-depth studies of the spiritual and social climate of late Antiquity in which the Gnostic movement originated and flourished, may we nourish hopes of reaching a better understanding of the Gnostics' experience of the divine and their interpretation of the world in which they were living.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von,  
\* 28.8.1749 Frankfurt am Main,  
† 22.3.1832 Weimar

Goethe's relationship to esoteric traditions is a constant throughout his life, and its complexity reflects that of the mystical and esoteric currents as they developed from the end of the 18th century into the era of → Romanticism. As both a witness and a participant in the successive phases of interest in esotericism between 1770 and 1830, his point of view adjusted to the evolving contexts of esoteric knowledge and their changing impact on culture and society. His relation to this tradition was not free from ambivalence and was sometimes critical, giving rise to parodic and satirical expressions (e.g. in the play *Der Groß-Cophta*, 1791).

We can distinguish several main phases in Goethe's relationship to esoteric traditions, the first being that of Frankfurt (1768-69), where he was introduced into some alchemical and theosophical works. This was due to the pietist Susanna Catharina von Klettenberg (1722-1774), who was the niece of the alchemist Johann Hector von Klettenberg (1684-1720), and to her doctor, Johann Friedrich Metz (1720-1782). The famous episode told in the eighth book of Goethe's autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Poetry and



truth), describes his reading at this time as having been marked by an eclectic approach to such works as the *Aurea catena Homeri* (Golden chain of Homer, 1723) by Anton Josef Kirchweger, the *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum* (Magic-kabbalistic and theosophic work) of → Georg Welling (1735), and the *Eröffneter Weg zum Frieden mit Gott und allen Creaturen* (Open way to peace with God and all creatures, 1747) by Johann Conrad Dippel (1673-1734). The reception of → Paracelsus and → Paracelsianism, of → Jacob Boehme's theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy], and their continuation in the writings of → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger were decisive for Goethe's intellectual formation, while → Rosicrucianism, with the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* (1616), was also part of this background. In all his writings, Goethe shows familiarity with the main philosophical themes of Hermeticism: macrocosm and microcosm, the idea of polarity, the unity of living nature and the divine, the alchemical idea of transformation. These would remain major themes of his work until the end of his life. The young Goethe's interest in esotericism also belongs within the context of a personal religious crisis which went in parallel with the advance of collective secularization. The religious framework within which the alchemical [→ Alchemy], gnostic [→ Gnosticism], and Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism] traditions were transmitted to him was that of → Pietism, which, as represented by → Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), was a bearer of the esoteric and alchemical traditions. This group of influences led Goethe to develop a "private religion", not identified with any confessional structure, which was still at the center of his preoccupations during his late period. His stay in Strasbourg in 1770, one of the European capitals of esotericism at the end of the Enlightenment, brought him into contact not only with Johann Gottfried Herder (1754-1803) but with Johann Heinrich Jung, called → Jung-Stilling (1740-1817). In the latter's presence, Goethe encountered another approach to esotericism, from which he quickly distanced himself.

This first phase was followed in the last decade of the 18th century by a more critical, even sceptical one as Goethe, now established in Weimar and exercising political functions, came into contact with the world of secret societies. Like Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and several of his contemporaries, Goethe was personally involved in → Freemasonry and → Illuminism. His *Groß-Cophta* presents an intrigue centered on the charlatan → Cagliostro, embroiled in the "Diamond Necklace

Affair"; it is a violent satire on the mystifications to which certain "magi" resort, and a criticism of the collective forms of embracing esoteric doctrines. Goethe also expressed a sort of scepticism in the first part of *Faust* (1808), which reveals all his ambivalence towards certain aspects of the occult. But these critical positions in no way detracted from his deep convictions as a thinker, who in the course of his development took notice of Kant's doctrine and of its proclaimed limits to knowledge, but never renounced a Hermetic vision of the world and of man. Many of Goethe's works are marked by the presence of Hermetic themes. An example from his lyric poetry is *Die Geheimnisse* (The secrets, 1784), but it is above all his narrative works that reveal the presence of an esoteric anthropology. Some of them are constructed around the symbolism of the alchemical Great Work, such as his *Märchen* (Fairytale, 1795) and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (The elective affinities, 1809).

After 1800, Goethe's theoretical reflections and literary work were affected by contact with the romantic philosophy of nature and with its major works, such as that of → F.W. Schelling. More particularly, he was influenced by the reception of the → animal magnetism theory: by Franz Anton Mesmer, Adam Karl August von Eschenmayer (1768-1852), Josef Ennemoser (1787-1854), → Johann Wilhelm Ritter, and → Justinus Kerner, who inspired Goethe's mediumistic personages such as Odile in the *Wahlverwandtschaften* and Makarie in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's years of travel). Esotericism is present not only in the literary work but also in his scientific and aesthetic writings, with the *Farbenlehre* (Theory of colours, 1810) and the Goethean conception of the symbol. His notions of systole and diastole and the archetype of an "original" plant (*Urpflanze*), already formulated in 1790 in the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (Metamorphosis of plants), seek to preserve the concept of a unity of nature and of man, as against the mechanistic and mathematical model imposed by the Newtonian paradigm. On the basis of the *Bildungsroman* (novel of education) tradition, which he helped to form, Goethe wrote novels of initiation: *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's apprentice years, 1795-1796), where Wilhelm is received into a mysterious "Society of the Tower"; *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1829), with the presence of a female initiate, Makarie; and the intrigue of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), based on alchemical symbolism.

The ultimate achievement of Goethe's esotericism was the second part of *Faust*, finished in the

year of the author's death, which is a succession of "mysteries" founded on alchemical figures such as the "homunculus". Many modern interpretations of the esoteric tradition (e.g. → Carl Gustav Jung, → Rudolf Steiner) have treated Goethe, and more particularly *Faust*, as a major point of reference.

The continuity of Goethe's relationship with the esoteric traditions is visible throughout all these phases. By means of representations drawn from Hermeticism, then a philosophy of nature that follows in the same channels, he aimed at a unitary comprehension of reality, natural, human, and divine, and of Nature as a totality. His approach to Hermeticism did not rest on outmoded positions, but took notice of current developments in science, in thought, and in anthropology (e.g. the theories of Rousseau, the idea of "genius", sensualism, Kantian criticism, the Romantic philosophy of nature), and often embodied a personal response to them. Goethe's esoteric culture was also at the service of a religious aim, and marked by tension between a Christian esotericism and the vision of a religion beyond all confessional anchorage, such as presented in the doctrine of the "three respects" in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*.

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CHRISTINE MAILLARD

**Gohory, Jacques** (also known as **Leo Suavius**), \* 20.1.1520 Paris, † 15.3.1576 Paris

Perhaps of Italian descent, Gohory belonged to a family of the lesser nobility that destined him to study law, then to an overly demanding career as a diplomat and lawyer. These important functions did not agree with him. He is thus seen to complain in an epistle dated 1544 about 'the fortune of his birth', that had placed him in a family whose chief members were employed in the affairs of the kingdom. Repelled by 'the Courts as much of Princes as of Justice', as he says himself in the introduction to his *Instruction sur l'herbe petum*, he retired of his own accord 'to the contemplation of Nature', in order to deal with 'only her, beyond the troubles, vices and confusions of the world' and to discover her 'beautiful secrets'. In fact, without thus renouncing his duty as a lawyer at the Parliamentary court, where he remained incumbent for thirty-two years, until his death, Gohory would devote himself mainly to literature and research and would produce many works whose diversity evinces the encyclopedic breadth of his culture. He thus translated *Le premier livre de la première decade de Tite-Live* (1548), and two works by Machiavelli, *Discours sur la première decade de Tite-Live* (1544) and *Le Prince* (1571). He further added to the last text the first French biography of the Italian philosopher; he collaborated on the translations of Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1546) and the novel *Amadis*, of which he made known books X (1553), XI (1554), XIII (1571) and XIV (1575). Beyond his taste for history, politics and literature, his writings reflect a constant interest in natural philosophy, which is

often identified in his mind with occult philosophy [→ occult / occultism]: his interest in medicinal plants or natural curiosities led him to defend the therapeutic virtues of tobacco in his *Instruction sur l'herbe Petum* (1572) or to make a French version of *Occulta Naturae Miracula* (1567) by Lemnius Levinus, a collection of surprising observations in which superstition, science and erudition form an inextricable mixture. But it was especially as the introducer of → Paracelsianism into France that Gohory would be known in the scholarly community of his era: as he reports it himself, he was notably in relationship with Jean Fernel (1497-1558), Ambroise Paré (ca. 1509-1590), Jean Chastellan and Leonardo Botal, as many famous interlocutors with whom he discussed his ideas on medicine and spagyric. In the Saint-Marceau district, his “Lyceum philosophal” (1571-1576), a botanical garden that also functioned as a little academy, in addition often served as an outdoor setting for his scholarly conversations.

Excepting the *Clavis totius philosophiae chymistae* by Gérard Dorn published in Lyon in the same year 1567, the *Theophrasti Paracelsi . . . universale compendium* by Gohory is the first French work devoted to → Paracelsus. As its title indicates, the *Compendium* is a summary of the philosophy and therapeutic principles of the German doctor, with his biography, a bibliographical draft, and one of his writings: the *De Vita longa* followed by commentaries. The tone of the text is often polemical: Gohory criticizes notably the translations of Paracelsus furnished by Dorn in his *Clavis*; he defends → Trithemius against the criticisms of Charles de Bovelles (1479-1553), and Jean Wier (1515-1588) against the censure of Cardano (1501-1576). Elsewhere he tones down the novelty of the Paracelsian system by attaching it to distant historical origins. Thus, its sources are to be discovered among the ancient alchemists, and in the works of → Roger Bacon, → Marsilio Ficino or Joannes Valentianus. As Allen G. Debus has emphasized, Gohory gives of the Paracelsian doctrine a representation strongly influenced by the *Philosophia ad Athenienses*. He conceives of Man as a small microcosm whose intimate functioning is organically and analogically connected with the laws of the natural world; he rejects the theory of humors and insists on the need for a doctor to have a full knowledge of chemistry and astronomy: the first in order to prepare his remedies, and the second to know at what propitious time to administer them. Among medications, he recommends the use of antimony and drinkable gold. Animism, → magic and kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] fur-

ther play a primary role in this work, no doubt less faithful to the spirit of Paracelsus than to that of the hermeticist tradition such as it was illustrated, for example, in the occult philosophy of → Cornelius Agrippa.

As the *Compendium* reveals, spagyric medicine, → alchemy and magic are fundamentally mysterious subjects for Gohory. Indeed, for him science is combined with a secret tradition that he traced back, as did many of his contemporaries, to Egyptian origins. This initiatory understanding of knowledge led him to be interested in steganography in a short tract, *De usu et mysteriis notarum liber* (1550), strongly impregnated with the teachings of Johannes Trithemius, or again to gloss alchemically a series of engravings dedicated to the quest for the Golden Fleece in *Hystoria Iasonis Thessaliae Principis de Colchica velleris aurei expeditione* (1563). His literary activities themselves reflect his taste for a scholarly exegesis responsive to esoteric allusions. Also in his Commentary on the *Livre de la Fontaine Périlleuse* (1572), he gives his readers many keys of alchemical interpretation applied to an allegory of courtly style. In this respect, Gohory reveals himself an heir to the lessons in hermeneutics already dispensed in the works of the Italians Aurelio Augurelli (1456-1530) and Giovanni Bracesco (ca. 1481-?), but also appears as an innovator in his own country where, before him, such an approach to literary texts had never been taken so far. Perhaps as much as his Paracelsian stances, his speculations as a subtle interpreter would make a mark. Pierre Borel (toward 1620-1671), in any case, would still remember him in the mid-17th century, listing in his *Bibliotheca chimica* (1654) the novel *Amadis* and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* by Colonna, works partially translated by Gohory and that, according to him, hid under a fabulous veil an interesting alchemical content.

*De usu et mysteriis notarum liber . . .*, Paris: V. Sertenas, 1550 ♦ *Hystoria Iasonis Thessaliae Principis de Colchica velleris aurei expeditione: cum figuris aere excusis, earumque expositione, versibus priscorum poetarum*, Paris, 1563 ♦ (Translation) Lemnius Levinus, *Les Occultes merveilles et secrets de nature*, Paris 1567 ♦ *Theophrasti Paracelsi philosophiae et medicinae utriusque universale compendium, . . .* Paris: Roville, 1567 ♦ (Commentary) *Le livre de la fontaine périlleuse avec la chartre d'Amours, autrement intitulé le Songe du verger*, Paris: Jean Ruelle, 1572.

Lit.: W.H. Bowen, *Jacques Gohory (1520-1576)*, unpublished thesis, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University, 1935 ♦ A.G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and*

*Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. 1, New York: Science History Publications, 1977, 146-148 ♦ E.T. Hamy, *Un précurseur de Guy de la Brosse: Jacques Gohory et le Lyceum philosophal du faubourg saint-Marceaux-Paris (1571-1576)*, Paris: Nouvelles Archives du Museum d'Histoire Naturelle, 1899 ♦ D. Kahn, *Alchimie et paracelsisme en France (1567-1625)*, Geneva: Droz (forthcoming) ♦ G. Polizzi, "La fabrique de l'énigme: Lectures alchimiques du *Poli-phile* chez Gohory et Béroalde de Verville", in: J.C. Margolin & S. Matton (eds.), *Alchimie et philosophie à la Renaissance*, Paris: Vrin, 1993, 265-282 ♦ L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science (1941)*, vol. 5, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, 636-638.

FRANK GREINER

## Golden Dawn → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

Grashof, Carl Louis Fredrik →  
Heindel, Max

## Grail Traditions in Western Esotericism

According to most contemporary scholars, the Grail mythology in the Middle Ages was not connected to extra-Catholic esotericism, but either to a Roman Catholic eucharistic spirituality or to a literature designed for the purpose of providing (non-esoteric) entertainment. After what the Italian historian Franco Cardini called 'the eclipse of the Grail', the myth resurfaced in the 19th century in the Romantic literary and artistic milieu [→ Romanticism], particularly that of the composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and the painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). The romantic interpretation of such artists was influential in introducing the Grail into Theosophical circles [→ Theosophical Society], in which scholars such as Charles Williams (1866-1945) and Jesse Weston (1850-1928) promoted a non-Catholic interpretation of the Grail as a universal symbol with pre-Christian origins. Within the same milieu, → Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942) tried to reconcile the Christian and the pagan interpretation of the Grail, by establishing a "Hidden Church of the Holy Grail", the membership of which was largely drawn from the Theosophical Society and the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In fact, one of the splinter groups of the Golden Dawn, established in Havelock North, New Zealand in 1916 by Robert William Felkin (1853-1926) and Reginald Gardiner (1872-1959), following an esoteric

"work" started by Gardiner in 1907 before Felkin's arrival in 1916, created a cult of the Grail and an Order of the Table Round (not to be confused with the Order of the Round Table, which was a juvenile branch of the Theosophical Society). Other esoteric authors who had been members of the Golden Dawn also developed their own Grail rituals, including → Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), whose Grail was definitely anti-Christian, and → Dion Fortune (pseudonym of Violet Firth, 1890-1946), whose thinking, in turn, evolved from a Christian to a pagan interpretation of the myth within her Community of the Inner Light (the Christian element re-emerged in the Community after Fortune's death). A Christian esotericism centred on the Grail was promoted in France by Lithuanian poet → Oscar Venceslas de Lubicz Milosz (1877-1939), and it later inspired the establishment of an Order of the Grail by Auguste-Edouard Chauvet (1863-1946), James Chauvet (1885-1955, not a relative of the former), and Octave Béliard (1876-1951). A Christian-oriented esoteric reading of the Grail myth also emerged within → Anthroposophy, thanks to → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), whose insights were developed particularly by Walter Johannes Stein (1891-1957) and by the Italian Anthroposophist → Massimo Scaligero (pseudonym of Antonio Scabelloni, 1906-1980), whose interest in the Grail originally derived from his encounter with the pagan interpretation of the myth elaborated on by → Julius Evola (1898-1974). Although not supported by academic historians, the idea that the Grail was a symbol of the Cathar [→ Catharism] resistance to Catholicism acquired widespread support within the Neo-Cathar movement [→ Neo-Catharism] of Antonin Gadal (1877-1962) and Déodat Roché (1877-1978). Through this milieu, the alleged Cathar connection to the Grail inspired in the 1930s the mysterious activities of Otto Rahn (1904-1939), an SS officer who visited Southern France looking for the Grail reputedly hidden there by the Cathars, as also the esoteric spirituality of → Jan van Rijckenborgh (pseudonym of Jan Leene, 1896-1968) and his Lectorium Rosicrucianum, that Gadal himself eventually joined after World War II. Through these authors, the Grail continued its ubiquitous career among contemporary esoteric movements in three different incarnations: Christian (although not necessarily Catholic and eucharistic), neo-pagan, and Gnostic.

The larger esoteric movement centred on the Grail myth is the Grail Movement, founded by Oskar Ernst Bernhardt (1875-1941), a German esoteric author known under the pen name of



Abd-ru-shin (“Son of Light” in the Persian language). He was born in Bischofswerda in 1875, and from 1900 on travelled extensively in the Middle and Far East, the United States, and Europe; he also published several novels, short stories, and theatrical pieces. The outbreak of World War I found him, a German citizen, in an enemy country, the United Kingdom, and he was interned on the Isle of Man. In 1923, he circulated the first parts of *The Grail Message*, the publication of which continued through to 1937. *The Grail Message*, a complicated esoteric work, found interested readers particularly in Germany, France, the former Czechoslovakia, and Austria. Bernhardt decided, in fact, to settle in Austria, at the Vomperberg (Tyrol), together with a handful of followers of what later became known as the Grail Movement. In 1938, Austria was occupied by Nazi Germany, whereupon *The Grail Message* was banned, the Vomperberg centre closed, and Abd-ru-shin arrested. Released from jail in September 1938, he was banished firstly to Schlauroth (near Görlitz, Saxony), and then to Kipsdorf, where he died in 1941.

*The Grail Message* includes 168 talks, which purport to explain the structure of the whole universe and of the laws that govern it. The border between the divine and human realms is the Grail Castle, where the Holy Cup of the Grail represents God’s direct irradiation. Creation is the spread of God’s rays, with their consequent and gradual cooling beyond this border. This is how different planes of the universe were generated, a scheme very reminiscent of what we find in the Theosophical Society. Firstly the “original spiritual” level, then the “spiritual” level and so on down to matter, originated, it is believed, from the cooling and solidification of the divine rays. Crucial for this descent of the rays are two characters, known as Parsifal and the pristine Queen, or Mother. A Force flows down from the Holy Grail and sustains the whole of creation. Planet Earth is part of the creation’s denser and lower level. Human beings, however, keep within themselves a spiritual spark capable of reminding them of their divine origin. By cultivating this spark through their subsequent reincarnations, humans can transcend the lower planes of matter, achieve a higher spiritual consciousness, and ultimately return to their heavenly home. At the Vomperberg, and in other places, the Grail Movement celebrates three spiritual feasts each year: the Feast of the Holy Ghost (Pentecost) on May 30; the Feast of the White Lily on September 7; and the Feast of the Radiant Star on December 29.

After World War II, the Vomperberg centre was re-opened and the Movement re-established under the leadership of Maria Kauffer Freyer (née Taubert, who was later adopted into the wealthy Kauffer family: 1887-1957), who was Bernhardt’s second wife (his first wife, Martha Oener, her daughter Edith Nagel, and Nagel’s descendants never played a role in the Movement, whilst the only male child of this first marriage died in World War I). Maria married Bernhardt in 1924, and her three children by her first marriage (Irmgard [1908-1990], Alexander [1911-1968] and Elizabeth [1912-2002] Freyer) also legally changed their last name from Freyer to Bernhardt. Maria led the movement until her death in 1957, and was succeeded first by Alexander and then by Irmgard (whose name had been changed to Irmingard by Abd-ru-shin himself, for esoteric reasons). The fact that Maria’s children succeeded her, was never recognized by an important part of the large Brazilian constituency of the movement, which under the leadership of Roselis von Sass (1906-1997), who had been one of Abd-ru-shin’s and Maria’s most beloved disciples, created a splinter group under the name Ordem do Graal na Terra (web site: [www.graal.org.br](http://www.graal.org.br)). Brazilian loyalists to Alexander and Irmingard remained in the Sociedade do Graal no Brazil, the local branch of the Movement; in 1989, after thirteen years of litigations, the Sao Paulo court ruled that the latter could not claim the exclusive copyright on Abd-ru-shin’s writings in Brazil.

The most important schism occurred between 1999-2001, although its origin can be traced back to Irmingard Bernhardt’s will. When Irmingard died in 1990, she left the Grail properties, including the Vomperberg, to Claudia-Maria (1961-1999), a natural child of Irmingard’s adopted daughter Marga (b. 1943); both Claudia-Maria and her husband Siegfried (b. 1955) had legally adopted the surname Bernhardt, with Irmingard’s blessing. The International Grail Movement, led by Siegfried Bernhardt, maintains to this date the control of the headquarters at the Vomperberg (web site [www.gralswerk.org](http://www.gralswerk.org)) and of the trademark “International Grail Movement”, except in the English-speaking countries. Irmingard, on the other hand, left the copyrights of the Grail literature to an International Grail Foundation, led by Herbert Vollmann (1903-1999, the husband of Elizabeth Bernhardt, Irmingard’s younger sister). It was Irmingard’s hope that the two legal entities, the Movement and the Foundation, would peacefully cooperate. In fact, Siegfried’s alleged infidelity to his invalid wife, Claudia-Maria, provoked a family



crisis, and in 1999, shortly before his death, Vollmann asked his followers to no longer acknowledge “the Mountain” (i.e. the Vomperberg) but to follow “the Light” (the Foundation and its literature, for which he appointed Jürgen Sprick as his successor, and the Foundation’s current leader). The Foundation maintains ownership of the copyright on the founder’s writings, and controls both the publishing house Stiftung Graalsbotschaft and the web site www.graal.org. In the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and Nigeria, the Foundation has maintained the “International Grail Movement” trademark, and operates under this name, thereby creating a certain amount of confusion with the International Grail Movement led by Siegfried Bernhardt from the Vomperberg. A substantial number of members followed Vollmann in the separation from the Movement, and are currently establishing places of worship alternative to the Vomperberg, to which they are prevented entry, with many unsolved legal issues remaining. The total membership of the two main branches of the Grail Movement (including the International Movement and the Foundation, but not the splinter groups, the larger of which is the Brazilian Ordem do Graal na Terra, with smaller branches in the Czech Republic and elsewhere following local leaders, some of whom claim to receive visions and revelations from the founder) is currently 20,000. The international readership of *The Grail Message* is certainly much larger.

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MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Grand Jeu, Le

Historians are today restoring to *Le Grand Jeu* (“The Big Game”) the prominent place that it deserves in the spiritual, artistic and literary history of the first half of the 20th century. Long eclipsed

by Surrealism, the *Le Grand Jeu* group now appears in a new light that permits us to better outline its contours and appreciate its originality – particularly as regards its metaphysical perspectives – in relation to the endeavors of André Breton (1896-1966) and his epigones.

The adventure of *Le Grand Jeu* began at the Lycée de Reims (France) in 1922, when a few students of the class of *troisième* (Br: fourth year, US: 9th grade), about fifteen years old, exceptionally precocious, and passionate about the absolute, began a little initiatory society. They decided to challenge social values and break through the rational limits of the mind in order to reach the “Beyond”, by means of all kinds of experiments inherited from the practice of ‘deranging all the senses’ advocated by Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891). Roger Vailland (1907-1965), Roger Gilbert-Lecomte (1907-1943), René Daumal (1908-1944) and Robert Meyrat (1907-1997) were trying to rediscover the holistic knowledge of the world that they believed had once been the spontaneous possession of traditional people, and still existed primarily in children today. To distinctly mark their wish of returning to the origins, and their faith in the creative virtues of child-like awareness, these young men soon called themselves the “Phrères [sic] Simplistes”. Their revolt against social and intellectual shackles was exhibited by pataphysical or dadaist provocations; but on a deeper level – inspired by *La saison en enfer*, by Lautréamont (1846-1870), by Poe (1809-1849), → Nerval, → Huysmans and → Novalis – they often identified themselves with visionary angels, fallen creatures close to Satan, ‘come down from heaven on a stretcher’ (R. Gilbert-Lecomte). They claimed to be able to travel in other realms, to perceive the musical rhythm of the universe and to discern the expansion and metamorphoses of time. All their experiences took place in the context of what would soon become “experimental metaphysics”. This included techniques for “projection of the astral body”, the inhalation of carbon tetrachloride (by Daumal), and experiments in extra-retinal vision and extrasensory perception. As early as this period, it was a matter, for them, of transcending the limits of the mind and gaining access to the immediate perception of another universe believed to be incommensurable with our sensory knowledge and irreducible to our understanding. The Simplistes were thus engaged in a true revolution of consciousness, systematized and proclaimed by *Le Grand Jeu* from 1928 on.

In Paris, in 1927, Daumal, Vailland and Gilbert-Lecomte grouped around the painter Joseph Sima

(1891-1971), an artist of Czech origin fascinated by the spiritual quest. Sima in his work was concerned with abolishing matter-spirit dualism and recovering a vision of the original unity. The Simplists were enthusiastic about such endeavours, which echoed their own aspirations and went far beyond traditional aesthetics, being presented as an authentic means of knowledge, a “clairvoyance” in Rimbaud’s sense of the term; art should be a metaphysical experience, free of any hedonistic connotations. The friendship with this artist whose concerns were so close to theirs strengthened the Simplists’ aspirations, and other kindred spirits soon joined them – André Rolland de Renéville (1903-1962), Monny de Bouilly (1904-1968), Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes (1884-1974), Maurice Henry (1907-1984), Hendrik Cramer (1884-1945), Arthur Harfaux (1906-1995), and Pierre Minet (1909-1975). Supported morally and financially by Léon-Pierre Quint (1895-1958), the Simplists published in the course of summer 1928 the first number of the review *Le Grand Jeu*. Two more would follow, one in the spring of 1929, the other in the autumn of 1930. The three issues of this review – and a few pages of a fourth that did not make it beyond the planning stage – constitute the basic referential corpus for anyone who attempts to understand the *Le Grand Jeu* enterprise and evaluate its influence, especially in relation to esoteric thought.

The inner quest of the protagonists of *Le Grand Jeu* may be compared with a mystical endeavor to attain an immediate omniscience, whose secret, lost since times immemorial, must urgently be rediscovered so that Man can attain the perfect realization of his condition. The prenatal universe, the return to origins, and the condition of childhood are as many recurrent themes in the texts of Daumal and Gilbert-Lecomte. Avid readers of → René Guénon’s works on the primordial Tradition and on the *Crise du monde moderne* (1927), and aware of Lévy-Bruhl’s (1857-1939) writings on primitive mentality, the poets of *Le Grand Jeu* were also vitally interested in the intuitions of hermetic thought, with the main representatives of which they were familiar. Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Plato, Plotinus, Apollonius of Tyana, → (Pseudo-) Dionysius Areopagita, → Giordano Bruno, → Swedenborg, → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, and → Fabre d’Olivet are cited or mentioned, sometimes several times, in the three numbers of their review. This apparently disparate list of philosophers, magi or great initiates conceals, however, a basic coherence: the idea – a true act of faith for these young explorers of thought – that the

world is a unity, that there is neither spirit nor matter, but only Spirit-Matter, and that dualism has been transcended. Coupled with this is the conviction that everything acts and reacts upon everything else, and the microcosm and the macrocosm, in line with the hermetic tradition, are in symbolic correspondence and exercise a secret power on each other.

To attain the awareness of this unity, and especially to *live* it from the inside, the mind must break through its limits, lose its individuality, transcend the narrow self, and become universalized, until it regains the primordial integrity of its nature. As Gilbert-Lecomte wrote, ‘the particle of being that was assigned to our consciousness at the beginning of the world was not irremediably separated from the universal being’. In order for man to *reintegrate* himself – in the sense that theosophy confers on this term –, it is his duty to transgress all the boundaries, revolt against all conditioning and against all social, cultural, moral, ecclesiastical or religious constraints – in short, to practice a systematic ‘Break-Dogma’ (*Le Grand Jeu*, no. II). The goal is to shatter the principles of Aristotelian logic that, by the radical distinction of subject and object or of dream and reality, impose on us a deformed and false vision of the nature of things. The adepts of *Le Grand Jeu*, adopting Rimbaud’s opinion that ‘our pale reason is hiding infinity from us’, wanted ‘... to tear down the colossus with a cretin’s head that represents Western science’ (*Grand Jeu*, no. II).

The “experimental metaphysics” put into practice by the partisans of *Le Grand Jeu* would offer a means of acceding to ‘this still point in its own vibrating interior’, to the ‘*punctum stans* of the old metaphysics’ (Gilbert-Lecomte) where all contradictions are abolished. But such a breakthrough is possible only if we take leave of our habitual mental categories and dare to engage, at the risk of our annihilation, all our physical and spiritual potentials in a quest that fundamentally challenges the very act of knowing. Identification with the Vision comes at this price. *Le Grand Jeu* tells us first to establish a connection between the visible and the invisible, the separation between which is only apparent and which represents a gross limitation of our deficient and atrophied senses and ways of thinking. One has to restore unity to the body, and learn to conceive of it, not in the Cartesian manner as a substance radically different from the spirit, but rather as its symbolic image. From there on, by means of new so-called “extra-sensory” experiences, psychic states of various degrees of intensity will manifest

themselves, and as many stages of knowledge; the initiatory process may finally lead to ideal omniscience. Drugs, narcotics, perception of the “subtle body”, paramnesia, sleep deprivation, waking dreams, extra-retinal vision, and the experience of death itself are only means to gain access to a higher consciousness, a different plane of reality analogous to the astral plane defined by the occultists. Perhaps more precisely, this plane is the *mundus imaginalis* (the imaginal), the intermediary space of which → Henry Corbin (1903-1978) speaks in relation to the theosophies of Islam: a *mesocosm* situated between the perceptible and the intelligible, where spirits are incarnated and where bodies are spiritualized. The coveted Absolute thus has a precise and unambiguous position in relation to perceptible experience: ‘The spirit is ONE’, says Gilbert-Lecomte, ‘and has nothing in common with the perceptible world’. Therefore “experimental metaphysics” cannot start from sensations alone. It makes use of the body only in order to escape from it. The sensory experiences that it uses like a trampoline are not directed to the acquisition of powers – which would imply magic – but toward the pursuit of Knowledge, a spiritual awakening, and a continuously expanding field of consciousness. For consciousness, at the very instant when it expands unto infinity and risks dissolving into the void of emptiness or fall into sleep, can, in ‘a lightning-flash’ (Gilbert-Lecomte), reconquer the lost unity. A note, composed collectively for number II of *Le Grand Jeu* (May 1929) clearly explains this point: ‘. . . A Man can, according to a certain so-called mystical method, attain the immediate perception of another universe, incommensurable with his senses and irreducible to his understanding . . . Knowledge of this universe belongs in common to all those who, at one period of their life, have wished desperately to pass beyond the possibilities inherent to their species and have begun the mortal departure’.

Although the adepts of *Le Grand Jeu* never spoke of the Fall in the sense of → Christian theosophy, they considered man a fallen creature. To regain his true nature and original state, man must attempt to change his current and limited mode of consciousness in order to acquire the supplement of soul that will rescue him from the “absence” here on earth and lead him to rediscover the “true life” glimpsed by Rimbaud. Although certainly desecralized, this approach remains formally faithful to the religious scheme of Christianity and its theosophical avatars. The fault that casts Man down to a status lower than his original one is strongly stigmatized by *Le Grand Jeu*. This catas-

trophe is the result, especially in the West, of the immoderate cult of reason and science; of the break of the connection that used to magically unite us to nature; and finally, of the lethal tendency among Westerners to take into account only matter, only the reign of quantity, and ignore the qualitative essence of things. Such is the original sin of our technico-scientific civilization in the eyes of Dauland and Gilbert-Lecomte.

To rise again after this Fall is possible, as we have seen, only by engaging the whole being of Man in a metaphysical adventure, fully lived and boldly risked, that involves the individual’s body and soul. This adventure requires him to play a crucial game, a sort of “who loses wins”, in the course of which, by venturing as far as the extreme limits of the mind, he may either glimpse the supreme illumination, or else be dramatically annihilated in insanity or death. Mere research of an intellectual nature does not suffice; a quest that remains limited to conceptual speculation will prove ineffective in restoring to consciousness the ability to embrace the infinite. While *Le Grand Jeu* finds its place in the history of modern esoteric thought, it bears rather few similarities to purely gnostic endeavors; it relates more to the alchemical process [→ Alchemy], which attempts to harmonize the different planes of being by means of a purification and transmutation of psychic and physical elements. The adepts of *Le Grand Jeu*, like the initiates of the Great Work, were aware of the dangers of this most perilous path and subscribed to the famous adage: “Nonnulli perierunt in opere nostro” (some have perished in our work). The discovery of the Philosopher’s Stone, the access to the Self as a unique principle presiding over the *hierogamos* (the sacred marriage that reconciles the opposites), and the contemplation of the “circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere”, in short: all these hermetico-alchemical approaches account for the undertaking of *Le Grand Jeu* better than traditional metaphysical constructs can. The latter are not considered to have any truly effective impact insofar as they do not proceed to a total metamorphosis of Man seen in his double nature of incarnated creature and spiritual principle.

When the members of *Le Grand Jeu* dispersed (end of 1932) and the review ceased to appear, the two main protagonists of this dazzling odyssey took different paths and their destinies definitively separated. Gilbert-Lecomte, a modern archetype of the *poète maudit* (cursed poet), did not succeed, despite repeated efforts, to tear himself away from the deadly demands of the “black goddess” (opium). In a fatal, suicidal impulse, consumed

more than ever by the desire for self-annihilation and dissolution, he pursued his asymptotic quest for the Absolute as far as the final destruction, which tragically came wearing the hideous mask of tetanus (1943). As for René Daumal, he freed himself from the grip of drugs. After his encounter with Alexandre de Salzmann (1874-1933), a disciple of → Gurdjieff whose powerful influence he experienced, he progressively gave up poetry to devote himself to a deep study of Sanskrit and the translation of Indian sacred texts. At the same time, he made ceaseless efforts at realizing his desire for integral transformation, practicing a strict asceticism to accede to the heights of spiritual simplicity (*Le Contre-Ciel*, 1936; *Le Mont analogue*, posthumous, 1950); he died prematurely of tuberculosis in 1944.

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JEAN-LUC FAIVRE

**Guaita, Stanislas, Marquis de,**  
\* 6.4.1861 Alteville (Moselle),  
† 19.12.1897 Alteville

The descendant of a noble Catholic Italian family settled at the Château d'Alteville in imperial Lorraine, young Stanislas was educated at the religious boarding-school of la Malgrange, near Nancy. Here in 1878-1879 he discovered literature, in the company of the future novelists Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) and Paul Adam (1862-1920), as well as another writer, Albert de Pouvoirville (1861-1940), who holds an important place in Parisian occultism [→ occult / occultism] under his

Taoist initiate's name, Matgioï. Guaita tried his luck in Paris as a poet, publishing in 1881 *Oiseaux de passage: rimes fantastiques . . .* (Birds of passage: fantastic rhymes), followed by *La muse noir: heures de soleil* (The black muse: sunny hours, 1883) and *Rosa mystica* (Mystic rose, 1885). His reading of → Péladan's initiatic novel *La Vice Suprême* (The supreme vice, 1884) excited him by opening up new horizons; but, along with all those occultists of the period who had inherited the Romantic concept of the spiritual mission of the writer, literary expression would remain fundamental for him. Guaita's apartment at Rue Trudaine, Paris, became a meeting-place for the esoteric world, all the more attracted by an extraordinary library that his fortune had allowed him to acquire. Associated from 1884 on with Joséphin Péladan, who claimed to be the inheritor of the initiation into a Toulouse branch of the Rose-Croix, Guaita progressed rapidly in his knowledge of the occult. In 1886 he published a kind of historical résumé of the masters of the occult after the fashion of → Eliphas Lévi: *Au seuil du mystère* (At the threshold of the mystery), and at the end of 1887, turning to the practical side, he founded an "Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix". This was directed by six known members (Péladan, → Papus, Paul Adam, → Barlet, then → Sédir and the Abbé Alta [1842-1933]) and six unknown ones.

The functioning of this initiatic society was chaotic, like that of the contemporary Martinist Order "reawakened" by Papus together with Guaita. Like most of the occultist groups, they were obsessed with the idea of accomplishing an historical social mission. The themes developed in Guaita's written work, *Le temple de Satan* (Satan's temple, 1891), *La clef de la magie noire* (The key to black magic, 1897), and his articles in *L'Initiation* confirm the fact: the great names of esoteric thought, from → Khunrath to → Boehme, → Fabre d'Olivet, and Eliphas Lévi, are utilized within the perspective of a final unveiling of the truth by means of a synthesis of the knowledge gained by science with the experience of the past transmitted by esotericism. Initiatic degrees were conferred after the model of university examinations: e.g., the "Licentiate in Kabbalah" obtained through library study. In 1887, Guaita employed a secretary who would play an important role in the renaissance of symbolic and spiritualist → Freemasonry in France, Oswald Wirth (1860-1943). After the latter conveyed to Guaita some papers of the Abbé Boullan (1824-1893), an occultist priest of Lyon who directed a community founded by the "prophet" Pierre-Michel Vintras (1807-1875), Guaita embarked on a

veritable “magical war”, whose echoes reached the popular press. The affair ended with a spectacular duel (1893). Boullan was indirectly the model for → Huysman’s character in *Là-bas*. Another typically Parisian polemic opposed Guaita to Péladan, who quit the Rose-Croix Kabbalistique (1890-1891) to create a branch that was exclusively Catholic and oriented to artistic activities. In poor health and a great consumer of morphine, Guaita returned home to die at age 36 in his paternal château, where his family sought to dispel the memory of his life as an occultist.

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JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Guénon, René Jean Marie Joseph,

\* 15.11.1886 Blois, † 7.1.1951 Cairo

Guénon was born in central France in the town of Blois in November 1886. His parents – and family – were strict Catholics. The strong sense of tradition found in late 19th-century French Catholicism was ingrained in Guénon during his earliest and most formative years, and was to affect his perspective throughout his life. As a boy, and again throughout his life, he was afflicted with *une santé fort délicate* (a very delicate health) – to the degree that at one point in his graduate school career it prevented him from attending classes. Education and learning were early and strong influences upon his life, owing largely to the proximity and involvement of his childless maternal aunt, Mme. Duru, who lived next door and was a primary school teacher. His father was an architect. Thus Guénon was raised in a home environment where learning generally, and mathematics and geometry specifically, were prominent.

Guénon’s early education was in Jesuit-run institutions. At the age of twelve he was enrolled in Notre-Dame des Aydes, where he remained until 1901, when he was transferred by his father to the Collège Augustin-Thierry. His academic record throughout these years was exceptionally good; he won several prizes, among them two for physics and Latin. In 1902 he received his baccalaureate, and in the following year his Bachelor of Philosophy with honors. In 1904 Guénon arrived in Paris, where he enrolled in the Collège Rollin. His field was advanced mathematics, and he was studying to prepare for the *licence de mathématique*. After two years, however, he withdrew from the university for reasons which are unclear. One of his biographers, Paul Sérant, speculates that it was due either to ill health or to the seductions of the intellectual life that Paris could offer a provincial and bright, curious youth.

Regardless of the reasons for his withdrawal from the university, this action proved to be a decisive one in Guénon’s life, since it was at this point, in 1906, that he began in earnest to pursue a course of study to which he had been introduced only shortly before, viz., the study of esotericism and occultism [→ occult / occultism]. It is fair to say that for the first of these years from 1906, Guénon was a protégé of Gérard Encausse (a.k.a. Papus), described by Paul Chacornac as the ‘undisputed leader’ of the French occult movement since 1888, the year in which Encausse became Corresponding Secretary of the → Theosophical Society in France. Guénon had first met Encausse while attending classes at the Ecole Hermétique, a school that formed the outer or public vehicle of the Parisian occult movement directed by Encausse. Guénon was admitted into all the various occult organizations controlled by Encausse, including the Ordre Martiniste. Throughout these years, while centered in Paris, Guénon both participated in and carried out research in occult and Masonic groups and esoteric religious doctrines. In 1908 he broke away from Encausse and his organizations and, until 1911 upon its dissolution by Guénon, he was head of the Ordre du Temple Renové (O.T.R.). For a period he was heavily involved in the → Gnostic Church in Paris, where he assumed the Gnostic name of Palingenius and the role of holy bishop. Upon the urging of Synesius, patriarch of the Gnostic Church, Guénon began a review called *La Gnose*, of which he was editor until 1912.

It was also in this period, around 1912, that he adopted Islam through the medium of a Swedish Theosophist named John Gustaf Aguéli, a.k.a. Abdul-Hadi, and was accepted as a pupil



by Aguéli's teacher Sheikh Abder-Rahman Elish el-Kebir for preparation and initiation into a Sufi sect. Several of Guénon's biographers view 1912 as a pivotal year in his life, not only because of his new association with Islam and his corresponding break with most of the former occult organizations with which he had been associated, but also because of his marriage.

In 1912 Guénon married Berthe Loury from Tours, which marriage lasted sixteen years until he was left a widower by her untimely death in 1928. Guénon's life during the period from 1912 to 1930 was shared between Blois and Paris, except for a short interim during 1917-1918 when he was appointed instructor of philosophy at Setif, Algeria. He tried, but failed, to earn a *docteur-ès-lettres* from the Sorbonne following his short stay in Algeria. In 1923 Guénon marked the end of his investigations and interest in occultism and → spiritualism with the publication of *L'Erreur spirite* (The Spiritist Error), and turned his concentration solely on that area for which he was to become renowned: metaphysics, *la Tradition primordiale*. Beginning in 1925, Guénon began submitting articles to the journal *Le Voile d'Isis* whose editor was Paul Chacornac. Within the space of three or four years Guénon became that journal's principal contributor; he remained so through 1936 when the journal's name changed to *Études Traditionnelles*, and thereafter throughout his life.

In the Fall of 1929, Guénon met Marie Dina, the wealthy daughter of a Canadian railroad baron, and the widow of an Egyptian engineer. As a great admirer of Guénon's work she proposed to become, essentially, his patron, and offered to establish a publishing house (*Véga*) to serve as the vehicle for his writings. *Véga* was to publish Guénon's original metaphysical works in addition to all the French translations he could make of traditional Islamic texts. Guénon and Mme. Dina embarked for Cairo, Egypt on March 5, 1930, in order to obtain the first of the Sufi texts for translation and publication. They planned to be in Egypt only for three months, but circumstances changed and Mme. Dina returned to France while Guénon remained in Cairo. Mme. Dina's enthusiasm for the whole project waned, and Guénon was left in Cairo where he began a process of gradual assimilation into the Arabic culture. By the end of 1932 he had apparently decided not to return to France, and committed himself to becoming both a Muslim Sufi and an Egyptian.

Guénon remained in Cairo until his death in 1951. There he perfected his Arabic and became, in effect, a practicing Sufi and fully integrated

into Egyptian society. In 1933 Guénon met Sheikh Muhammad Ibrahim, an elderly lawyer whom he visited often. The following year he married his second wife, the Sheikh's daughter, Fatima, and they moved to Doki, a suburb of Cairo. Toward the end of his life he began to suffer continuous bouts of ill health, so he and his family moved back into central Cairo. Two daughters were born to them in 1944 and 1947; a third child – a son – was born in 1949, and another son was born four months after Guénon's death in 1951. In 1948 he officially became a naturalized Egyptian citizen, but throughout his expatriation, Guénon always kept abreast of the intellectual and political climate of France, and the West. His writings remained constant and prolific as they had been before his departure from France, during this period focusing more on the process of attaining effective metaphysical insight, though still under the same genre of "Tradition", or *sophia perennis*.

While Guénon published scores of articles and reviews in numerous journals, he is best known for his major works published in book form. Though the subjects of his books cover a relatively wide range of fields of inquiry, within the larger context of world religions and esotericism and metaphysics, there are several common themes that run through them all. There is, first, the theme of a "universal principle", which inheres in all, and of which it may be said that every other principle is derived. Then there are the related subjects of revelation, initiation, and Intellect (this last concept contains a component of "intuition", by means of which knowledge and understanding of an esoteric truth may be directly apprehended without recourse to reason and dialectic). These and certain other, related subjects such as periodicity, polarity, correspondence, and aeviternity, collectively, are referred to as "first principles". Guénon held that the first principles of the Tradition, or *philosophia perennis*, are essential, and that substance proceeds from essence; that Traditional societies were those wholly informed by these first principles and thereby unanimous and substantively reflective of the essential principles; that a key characteristic of Traditional culture is the absence of a bifurcation (or, alternatively, a fusion) of sacred and secular; that the description "Traditional" encompasses pre-modern non-literate or tribal societies as well as literate civilizations; and that due to inexorable cosmic cycles the modern world is at present virtually entirely secular and therefore the antithesis of → Tradition.

Guénon's first book, *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues* (unsuccessfully

submitted as a thesis for the title *docteur-ès-lettres* at the Sorbonne) was published in 1921, and during the thirty-year period that began then and ended with his death in 1951, he published seventeen seminal works of metaphysics and esotericism whose lucidity and penetration have been described as mathematical in their precision and personal detachment. Two of his greatest books, *La crise du monde moderne* (The Crisis of the Modern World) and *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps* (The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times), deal primarily with the vicissitudes of modernity in the West, *i.e.*, since the Middle Ages, and the inversions of metaphysical truths that according to Guénon form the structure of modern culture. Two of his other books, first translated into English in 2003, reflect Guénon's substantial deficiency in what he himself referred to as the "historical method" (his only two books to make an attempt in that direction): *L'erreur spirite* (The Spiritist Error) a book about the rise of spiritualism in the 19th century and the problems associated with it, and *Le Théosophisme: Histoire d'une pseudo-religion* (Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion), a putative history of the Theosophical Society that purports to be an exposé of its esoteric *bona fides*. The remainder of his books are expositions of symbolism, metaphysics, and esotericism as these are expressed within the world's religions, and discussions of the primordial Tradition, in which subjects – and in the treatment of which – he excelled.

During the last three decades of his life, and especially after his immigration to Egypt, Guénon engaged in a long-term correspondence and close relationship with Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), the curator of the Indian and Asian collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in the United States. Coomaraswamy, who had received his Ph.D. from the University of London in 1906 and who was a master of Greek, Latin, Pali, and Sanskrit, produced a tremendous published corpus of scholarly materials on the *philosophia perennis* – a term more or less interchangeable with Guénon's *Tradition primordiale* – based upon his own translations of the sacred texts of these languages. Together, Coomaraswamy and Guénon became the founders, with no prior plan or intention to do so, of what has come to be referred to as the "Traditional school" of esotericism and metaphysics in the 20th century. Another principal proponent of these Traditional views in the succeeding generation was → Frithjof Schuon, considered by many to be the preeminent expositor of the Tradition in the second half of the 20th century. The Tra-

ditional school would attract to it numerous other students and writers on the subjects of esotericism and metaphysics, including Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings, Marco Pallis, Leo Schaya, William Stoddart, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, to name a few.

In addition to the Traditionalists *per se*, there exist many individuals in the West who were and are to varying degrees affected by the thought of Guénon, but who were or are not part of this central core of the Traditional school. In France, for example, Guénon had a relatively significant impact on literature and contemporary thought: André Breton, Georges Vallin, Romain Rolland, René Daumal and, to a degree perhaps more apocryphal than actual, André Gide, were all influenced by the writings of Guénon.

The Italian → Julius Evola had been a spokesman for his own particular theories of political philosophy, one of which he referred to as "pagan imperialism", but in 1930 Evola turned to the concepts of Tradition and Traditional cultures as espoused by Guénon. This was the same year Guénon left France for Cairo, and it marked a significant turning point in Evola's philosophy. From this basic Traditional foundation, Evola began his assiduous critiques of liberalism, Marxism, nationalism, and even Christianity, which gained him the reputation – at least in Italy – of being a *maître à penser*.

Among the more reputable and renowned scholars in the United States who have written about and to some extent have been influenced by Guénon are Mircea Eliade, Huston Smith, and Jacob Needleman. Others, like Roger Lipsey, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Joseph Epes Brown, are more directly identified with the school of Traditional thought *per se*. Although the former are typically cautious not to rely excessively or even expressly on Guénon in their writings, *i.e.* with regard to citations, their reliance on Traditional perspectives is most significant. Huston Smith, more than Mircea Eliade or Jacob Needleman, expressly incorporates the works of Guénon and of Coomaraswamy, whom he cites in his publications. In *Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition* (1976), Smith was careful to avoid the terms "Tradition" and *philosophia perennis* (in Latin or English), referring instead to the "primordial philosophy" and similar constructions. He nonetheless made perfectly clear to whom he was indebted and what constitutes, for him, the primordial tradition.

Guénon's influence, whether effected directly or through those who followed him in the Traditionalist forum, has continued to spread since the first half of the 20th century. Those who openly admit that their expressions are wholly or partially

shaped by the Traditional perspective may be said to be within the Traditional forum. Others may not acknowledge the influence expressly but nonetheless infuse it in their oeuvre. Those in the latter category range in scope from poets like T.S. Eliot and Kathleen Raine to scholars like Mircea Eliade and → Henry Corbin to mendicants like Swami Ramdas and Thomas Merton. Many more could be added to this list by tracing in further detail the emanations of pervading influence of the Tradition as espoused by Guénon. Guénon's influence has also grown within the Muslim world. Prior to the Islamic revolution in Iran in the 1980s, Tehran was a very active center for Traditionalist thought and activity. It continues to retain strong elements of a Traditionalist interpretation of Islam, though somewhat more guarded in the present day's milieu. Another venue for the appreciation of Guénon and his Traditionalist vision of Islam is Turkey where, owing to the process of reintegrating an intellectual Islam into its post-1949 culture, the views of Guénon and Traditionalists such as S.H. Nasr have found a certain acceptance.

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WILLIAM QUINN

**Gurdjieff, George Ivanovitch,**  
\* 13.I.1866 (?) Alexandropol (Russia),  
† 29.IO.1949 Neuilly, Paris

Greco-Armenian holistic philosopher, thau-maturge, and teacher of Sacred Dances (whose ancillary personae as musicologist, therapist, hypnotist, raconteur, explorer, polyglot, and entrepreneur exercise the taxonomic mind). Gurdjieff's work comprises one ballet, some 250 Sacred Dances, 200 piano pieces composed in collaboration with his pupil Thomas Alexandrovitch de Hartmann (1886-1956), and four books, the *magnum opus* being *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. For more than 35 years he privately taught, by example and oral precept, a previously unknown doctrine styled "The Work", attracting – and often quixotically repulsing – groups of gifted disciples: Russian, English, American, and French. His system integrated a semantic critique, a social critique, an epistemology, a mythopoeic cosmogony and cosmology, a phenomenology of consciousness, and a practical *Existenzphilosophie*.

Gurdjieff's sketch of his infancy and early childhood (1866-1877) finds a modicum of corroboration in vestigial family memories, traditions, and photographs. The eldest son of a Cappadocian Greek father and an illiterate Armenian mother, he was born in the Greek quarter of Alexandropol, a Russian garrison town bordering Ottoman Turkey. In practically Old Testament conditions, Ioannas Giorgiades, a well-to-do grazier on the Shiraki Steppe, imposed on his son a character-forming, even Spartan, regime; and, as an amateur *ashokh* or bardic poet, imbued him with an inextinguishable interest in an oral tradition at once living and archaic (not least the Epic of Gilgamesh). Cattle plague (1873) impoverished the family, and the Russo-Turkish war (1877) drew them hopefully to the captured Turkish citadel town of Kars.

At this early juncture balanced encyclopaedism is balked by Gurdjieff's cavalier burning of his personal papers in spring 1930 and by a curious absence of collateral evidence. For the ensuing thirty-three years we are, *pro tem*, chasteningly reliant on Gurdjieff's four autobiographic-

didactic texts which – although innocent of consistency, Aristotelian logic, and chronological discipline – have the ring of a poetic truth. From these alone derives our notion of Gurdjieff's private tutoring by "Dean Borsh"; his unprogressed vocations as a doctor and a priest; his wonder at a succession of paranormal phenomena; and his burgeoning existential question as to the cosmic function of the biosphere and of humanity. Gurdjieff's auto-mythopoesis equally furnishes us the twenty-six adult years (1885-1911) of his long quest for, and synthesis of, valid esoteric sources. None of Gurdjieff's fifteen companions, the "Seekers of Truth", have resolved into recognisable historical entities. His apologists' attempts to differentiate and substantiate five successive expeditions – to Egypt, Crete, and the Holy Land; to Abyssinia and the Sudan; to Persia and Transoxiana; to Siberia; and finally to Afghanistan, the Pamirs, and India – display ingenuity but are necessarily compromised by self-indexicality, i.e. reliance on the correlation of purely internal evidence. Soberingly, Gurdjieff's putative decade in Central Asia (1897-1907), including his pivotal initiatic experience in the "Sarmoung Monastery", finds no support in the meticulous journals of contemporary explorers (Sven Hedin, Sir Aurel Stein, Albert Le Coq, Paul Pelliot, and Count Kozui Otani).

Yet, given the vastness of the territory, Gurdjieff's verve, and his predilection for aliases and disguise, these important caveats fall well short of conclusively invalidating his spiritual Odyssey: absence of proof is not proof of absence. Wholesale scepticism as to Gurdjieff's Central Asian venture confronts its own difficulties in accommodating his relevant linguistic command, his well-attested knowledge of the region's musical modalities and tribal carpets, and his arguably unique grasp of its dance – folk and liturgical.

With Gurdjieff's arrival in Metropolitan Russia (ca. New Year 1912), biography finally rests on defensible ground. Significant among Gurdjieff's earliest associates in Moscow is his cousin the monumental sculptor Sergei Dmitrievich Mercourov (1881-1952). In St Petersburg in 1913, while affecting the title "Prince Ozay", Gurdjieff briefly engages with his first British pupil: the young musical student Paul [later Sir Paul] Dukas (1889-1967); and in 1914 attracts the Finnish alienist Leonid Robertovich de Stjernvall (1872-1938). In November 1914, Gurdjieff enticingly advertises his prospective ballet *The Struggle of the Magicians* as 'the property of a certain Hindu'. Consequently, in April 1915 Gurdjieff attracts the

Russian journalist and polymath → Piotr Demianovich Ouspensky, successful author of the speculative metaphysical study *Tertium Organum*; and, in December 1916, the well-established Russian classical composer de Hartmann. These two crucial accessions in war-time Petrograd bracket a concentrated teaching phase, arguably the most significant and brilliant of Gurdjieff's entire ministry: certainly he will never again so explicitly exhibit his teaching's arithmosophical constituent and systemic integration, nor recruit pupils as contributive to its dissemination.

Mere days before Tsar Nicolas II is deposed (February 1917) Gurdjieff presciently goes south, soon followed by his cadre whom he shepherds through the ensuing Russian Civil War. In Essentuki he contrives two seminal "workshops" of intense psycho-somatic experimentation, which witness *inter alia* his inception of life-long work on Sacred Gymnastics (later termed "Movements" or Sacred Dance). Finally, in August-September 1918, he audaciously extricates his nucleus (excepting an increasingly disaffected Ouspensky) on foot over the Caucasus mountains, crossing Red and White lines five times.

The year 1919 in Menshevik Georgia is quadruply notable: for the accession (Easter) of Jeanne de Salzmänn (1899-1990) a gifted young French-Swiss eurhythmic pupil of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, and of her husband Alexandre Gustav de Salzmänn (1874-1934) an associate of Rilke and Kandinsky; for the inaugural public demonstration of Gurdjieff's Sacred Dance in Tbilisi Opera House (22 June); for the notional founding of Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (September); and thereafter for Gurdjieff's work (co-opting de Hartmann) on the scenario and music of *The Struggle of the Magicians*. Relatively unproductive are Gurdjieff's transitional spells in Constantinople (July 1920-July 1921) and Germany (August 1921-July 1922). The latter, however, is enlivened by Gurdjieff's extravagant prospectus for his Institute and by two brief spring visits to London, where he quarrels irretrievably with Ouspensky, but from whom he captures the allegiance of "Alfred Richard" (James Alfred) Orage (1873-1934), the mystically predisposed editor of the critical weekly *New Age*.

In July 1922, on a restricted Nansen Passport for Russian refugees, Gurdjieff relocates in France (where he will remain domiciled for twenty-seven years until his death). On 1 October he settles in his most famous seat, the Prieure des Basses Loges at Fontainebleau-Avon, and opens his Institute: thus, at 56, Gurdjieff is finally circumstanced to



bring West his gleanings in the East. His Russian nucleus is soon substantially augmented by new pupils, whose preponderant British element includes Orage and Dr Henry Maurice Dunlop Nicoll (1884-1953), a former protege of → C.G. Jung. More illustrious is the terminally consumptive New Zealand short story writer “Katherine Mansfield” (Kathleen Mansfield Murry, b. 1888), whose death on 9 January 1923 undeservedly stigmatises Gurdjieff, most enduringly in France. Although, in summer 1923, “open evenings” of music and Sacred Dance in the Prieure Study House attract some international notables, e.g. Diaghilev and Sinclair Lewis, the mixed reception given Gurdjieff’s flamboyant and fully orchestrated demonstration at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (December 1923) predicates a decade of French indifference.

Exceptionally significant is 1924. A pivotal demonstration (2 February) at the Neighbourhood Playhouse, Greenwich Village (on the first of Gurdjieff’s nine American excursions) excites the New York intelligentsia, drawing *inter alia* Jane Heap (1883-1964), co-editor of *The Little Review*, Gorham B. Munson (1896-1969), the critic, and “Jean” (Nathan Pinchback) Toomer (1894-1967), author of *Cane*. After founding his Institute’s New York branch (April), Gurdjieff returns to France, where his work is bluntly recanalised by a near-fatal car accident (8 July). Still convalescent, Gurdjieff formally disbands his Institute (26 August); empowers Orage to supervise America; ceases teaching Movements; and – resolved henceforward to propagate his ideas more enduringly – embarks (16 December) on his vast trilogy *All and Everything*.

Milestones on the problematic decade 1926 to 1935 are: the death (26 June 1926) of Gurdjieff’s wife Julia Osipovna Ostrowska (b. 1889); his self-sacrificial dismissal of intimate Prieuré retainers (May 1928); his effectual expulsion (June 1929) of Thomas de Hartmann; and (February 1930) of the composer’s wife Olga Arkadievna (1885-1979), Gurdjieff’s devoted secretary and amanuensis; his contrived break with Orage, and enturbulation of the American groups (December 1930); the closure of the Prieuré and disbandment of the Institute (May 1932); the private publication (March 1933) of Gurdjieff’s imprudent tract *Herald of Coming Good* (hastily repudiated and suppressed); the outright loss of the Prieuré (May 1933); the deaths of Alexandre de Salzmann (March 1934) and Orage (November 1934); and, finally, Gurdjieff’s irrevocable abandonment of writing (May 1935). Against these must be handsomely weighed: Gurdjieff’s

unprecedented musical collaboration (July 1925-May 1927) with Thomas de Hartmann, yielding 170 new piano compositions; and, above all, his prodigious accomplishment of *Beelzebub* and *Meetings* (see bibl.).

In October 1935 Gurdjieff far-sightedly prompts Jane Heap to propagate his work in London; and from among her former expatriate associates in Paris constitutes (January 1936) “The Rope”, a minuscule group of lesbian literati, with whom he constructively experiments until autumn 1937. In summer 1936 – now aged 70, and deprived, not least by his own will, of virtually all his closest companions – Gurdjieff acquires a modest Paris apartment at 6 rue des Colonels-Renard. Here in 1938 transpires his first personal contact with René Daumal (1908-1944), poet and former member of → *Le Grand Jeu* a prior student of Work ideas first under Alexandre de Salzmann then Jeanne de Salzmann. With World War II looming, Gurdjieff makes a brief penultimate trip to New York (spring 1939) but resists promptings to settle securely in New Jersey, and returns (May) to France; similarly he declines to vacate Colonels-Renard when the Germans invest Paris (June 1940). In October 1940 Jeanne de Salzmann (already Gurdjieff’s *de facto* deputy) presents to him her gifted preparatory group including the journalist and photographer Henri Tracol (1909-1997) and his wife Henriette (née Lannes) (1899-1980). Despite the Occupation’s hazards and rigour, Gurdjieff’s Paris group progressively enlarges. At the *Salle Pleyel* (in morning classes supported only by piano extemporisation) Gurdjieff works indefatigably on new Movements – the “39 Series”. In afternoons and evenings he supervises readings of his texts and hosts ritualistic meals featuring an inviolable succession of ceremonious “Toasts to the Idiots”. VE-day (6 May 1945) heralds Gurdjieff’s consumatory phase (richly documented in memoirs), as tributary streams of British and American pupils merge with the French. Momentum is lent by the death of Ouspensky (2 October 1947) and by the near death of Gurdjieff himself in a second car crash (8 August 1948). On a final visit to New York (December 1948-February 1949) Gurdjieff confides his American endeavour to Henry John Sinclair, 2nd Baron Pentland (1907-1984); and approves publication of Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous*. In Paris in October 1949 Gurdjieff’s health finally collapses: his receipt (21st) of a proof copy of *Beelzebub* crowns his life’s work; he gives instructions to Jeanne de Salzmann (27th) for his texts’ posthumous publication, and sends a message to de Hartmann requesting compositions for the 39



Series. Aged 83, Gurdjieff dies at the American Hospital at Neuilly (29th), and is buried (November 3) at Fontainebleau-Avon according to the rite of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Gurdjieff's followers view his teaching as implicated in the man himself ('the function of a master is not limited to the teaching of doctrines, but implies an actual incarnation of knowledge'). He nevertheless bequeaths posterity a free-standing critique, nourishingly, if contentiously, explanatory on three levels: individual, social and cosmic. This panoramic and triple-tiered ideology coheres, constituting a *concordia universa* which by any standards is impressive. Underpinning its integration are Gurdjieff's two axiomatic, universally interacting laws: a dialectical "Law of Three" and a more technically complex "Law of Seven" (assigning to each completing process seven *irregularly* developing phases). Tempering the high intellectuality of this model is Gurdjieff's manifest practicality: he is not offering a set of self-supportive notional abstractions – rather he is harnessing his deepest ontological findings about "world creation and world maintenance" to an eminently approachable *Existenzphilosophie*. As to axiology, Gurdjieff's *summum bonum*, his supreme intrinsic value, is the universal evolution of consciousness: all his subordinate values, ethical, psychological, aesthetic etc. are pragmatically ranked according to this exacting criterion.

Gurdjieff's mythopoeic cosmogony (see *Beelzebub*) presents the Megalocosmos as issuing by *Fiat* from God the Father, expressly to circumvent the encroachments of His holy adversary and coeval – Time. Thereafter, the laws, constants, and parameters in-built in the Megalocosmos preclude God's intervention there; Gurdjieff's is thus a classic Deism of the "absentee landlord" type, in which God, notwithstanding his intuited compassion, lacks effectuality at creation's periphery and forfeits direct transactions with earth. To this scenario Gurdjieff poignantly adds the idea of God's unassuageable sorrow at His inability to alleviate the suffering of far-removed sentient beings. Substituting the term "Absolute" for God, Gurdjieff's formal cosmology (Petrograd group 1916) elaborates in arithmosophical detail a "Ray of Creation" – a cosmicization of being, hierarchically disposed through an involutory *solfeggio* (*DOminus* the Lord, *SIdera* the stars, *LActea* the Milky Way, the *SOLar* system etc.). This model of the universe aspires to bridge incrementally the discontinuity between creation and an ultra-transcendent Creator (the "Wholly Other" of Kierkegaard and Barth); to resolve the "ghost in the machine"

dilemma of Cartesian dualism; to give the broadest conceivable canvas to principles of relativism and scale; and to submit the entire natural order to a discrete principle of discontinuity with a musical analogue (redolent of certain late 20th century paradigms in quantum physics).

Overall, however, Gurdjieff's philosophy of nature issues an uncompromising challenge to the hegemony of reductionist technoscience. Gurdjieff's universe is sacred, qualitative, and dramatic: science's universe is secular, quantitative and mechanical. Gurdjieff's universe has a centrum (the "Holy Sun Absolute"): science's universe is isotropic. Gurdjieff's universe is growing in "being": science's growing in "space-time". Gurdjieff's universe is living (hylozoistic in Spinoza's sense): science's inherently inanimate. Gurdjieff's universe has an ontological dependence on the Creator, and a hierarchy of subordinate levels; science's universe is value-free. Arguably Gurdjieff's prime scientific heresy is his attribution to the moon of unsubstantiable macro-effects on the earth and its fauna and flora. Gurdjieff's "moon" transpires as a nascent body (cf. Kepler), symbiotically coupled with the biosphere, activating all organic life on earth (just as a clock's pendulum impels its mechanism), and "fed" by certain "wavicles" liberated at the death of all terrestrial life forms (cf. Posidonius).

Gurdjieff's "Ray of Creation" is not static: its key dynamic of "reciprocal feeding" anticipates, indeed extrapolates, various Green and holistic paradigms (Schweitzer's "reverence for life", Vernadsky's biosphere, and Arne Naess's "deep ecology"). At play on the cosmological level, Gurdjieff's symbiotic principle mimics a Benthamite utilitarianism, its *idée fixe* being the greatest good of the greatest entities: in the big Thrasymachean pecking order – cosmos, galaxy, sun, planets – the earth ranks poorly and its intricate and beautiful biosphere is merely epiphenomenal. Unsurprisingly, human beings en masse are dismally situated: reified on a scale not dreamt of by Adorno, they are eternally subservient to an alien solar economy and demiurgic politics – in effect (to invoke metaphor) factory-farmed for the sweet savour of their abjection and the phosphorescence of their mortality.

Gurdjieff's space-Odyssey *Beelzebub* elaborates an historical and social critique of feignedly extra-terrestrial objectivity (the literary device termed "celestial optics"). Following the three Abrahamic world religions, Gurdjieff initiates human history with a variant of The Fall which complements his favoured theodicy and axiology. Thereafter, in Manichaean temper, he models two discrete streams of human history: conscious v. uncon-

scious; initiatic v. profane; the first current everlastingly transports true spiritual authority and morally vindicated elites (cf. Ortega y Gasset), and the second current temporal power and culturally inflected oligarchies (cf. Robert Michels).

Notwithstanding the cordiality of Gurdjieff's fraternal ideal and his abundantly attested "good Samaritanism", he never surrenders ideologically to modernity's politically correct egalitarianism; in his historiography the masses essentially constitute the genetic humus whence arise, with tragic rarity, authentically "learned beings" e.g. Leonardo da Vinci. *Beelzebub's* Everyman, by contrast, is exhibited as deeply asleep, blindly and aimlessly struggling and suffering; torn by war and passion, fouling everything he touches; sporadically aroused from torpid preoccupation with 'digestion, mother-in-law, John Thomas, and cash', only to be duped by the Caesarism of powerful demagogues (themselves the unsuspecting dupes of planetary imperatives). In sum, man is a pitiable creature who, by virtue of malign residues of The Fall, clings ingeniously to the very instruments which wound, the patterns which betray.

In stressing 'The Terror of the Situation' Gurdjieff is neither neutral nor fatalistic: his is no perverse celebration of the socially Dadaesque but an epic lamentation at the ascendancy of paranoid forms over normative. Freighting *Beelzebub* with value-judgements (pietistic, patriarchal, traditionalist, pacifist, internationalist, holistic etc.), Gurdjieff tenders ethology as critique, with abundant *Sollen* implicit in his *Sein* (cf. Dickens & Marx). His wry bitter-sweet iconoclasm thus allies itself not to the nihilistic paradigm (as does Adorno's) but to a revolutionist paradigm of meaning; he sweeps the ground clear professedly to build a new and better world. Yet whether Gurdjieff seriously presents as a social reformer, or even entertains the possibility of esotericism's accomplishing benign and stable effects on a Weberian scale, remains highly debatable. His life evidences no political adhesion; his teaching no breath of millenarianism; and his Ray of Creation dooms all generalised humanistic utopias to wither in the chill of the cosmic *Realpolitik*.

Although Gurdjieff salutes the magnanimity and efficacy of traditional esoteric schools down the ages, he reserves to a minuscule segment of humanity the prevenient grace and spiritual hunger which plants one's feet on an authentic Way. For this small candidate-meritocracy Gurdjieff himself propounds an evolutionary, dynamic, or redemptive psychology – not cultivated in religious seclusion (still less on a psychiatrist's couch) but

in the vortex of day-to-day life. Gurdjieff's call is urgent and uncompromising: awake from your unsuspected hypnotic sleep to consciousness and conscience; struggle to attain imperishable "being"; elevate the taste of "I am" from cheap egotism to an essential presence replete with noetic content; come to know yourself – then create, by dint of 'conscious labour and intentional suffering', the soul you imagine you already possess.

In assessing this exhortatory prospectus, encyclopaedism must concede the danger of false cognates (Gurdjieff's Petrograd phase, incidentally, reveals him sharply differentiating *signifiant* from *signifié*). The key words of Gurdjieffian psychology – "self-observation", "self-remembering", "awakening", "being", "essence", "presence", "sensation", "inner work", "centres" – contest ground already colonised by multiple preconceptions and misconceptions. If the specificity of Gurdjieffian terminology is to be respected, it must be grasped that his seasoned pupils dedicated years of arduous experiential pupillage to discovering, and ceaselessly refurbishing, empirically valid referents for these expressions. *Hic labor, hic opus est*.

Abjuring lop-sided genius, Gurdjieff promotes the harmonious development of head, heart, and hand – respectively supporting the intellectual, emotional, and physical temperaments through his writings, music, and Movements. He nevertheless issues a ubiquitous demand for mobilised attention. Contemplatively deployed, this ever-refined attention builds a progressively deeper awareness of nuances of one's physical existence – approaching the Cartesian mind/body mystery in profound interior silence, while putatively opening the psyche to benign supernal influences.

Albeit Gurdjieff emerges as an agent and advocate of tradition, braiding recognisable and hallowed strands of Western and oriental esotericism, he is certainly no mere syncretist. Even jettisoning his surreal ideological provocations (e.g. that the sun neither heats nor lights), his system abounds in markedly original extrapolations and paradigms. Consider his stress on semi-tonal intervals and shocks in the diatonic scale, which differentiates his system from → Robert Fludd; or his intricate synthesis of the Laws of Three and Seven (in his key symbol the "enneagram" and in the "Food Diagram", correlating food, air, and impressions).

Gurdjieff necessarily bears his share of the irony which the 20th century's overweening currents of positivism, scientism, and structuralism reserve for esotericism *in toto*. But, beyond this generalised alienation, Gurdjieff's case is exacerbated by his emphatic individuality – a "hero" of sorts in the

age of the anti-hero; an unrepentant patriarch in a phase of post-feminist sensibility; a proponent of spiritual hierarchy in a world where equality is a social shibboleth. Throughout his life Gurdjieff curiously courted opprobrium by charlatanesque role-playing (while his teaching, incidentally, has posthumously contended with ill-considered revisionism, slipshod and counter-productive advocacy, and many distorting appropriations). All in all – with the important caveat that the “missing years” may yet fall prey to investigative scholarship – Gurdjieff’s emerging cultural status is impressive. His writing, music, and dance are respectively acclaimed by André Breton, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Lincoln Kirstein, while the dismissive epithets of → René Guénon, D.H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, and François Mauriac seem curiously ill-considered today – eclipsed by positive and markedly better informed valuations e.g. from Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, and Basarab Nicolescu.

Gurdjieff’s is a life and a teaching suffused with the starkest of ontologies: ‘I travail: therefore I am’. To populate this concept mythopoetically, to structure it dialectically, to loft it, level by level, towards the conceived fountainhead of consciousness – such is Gurdjieff’s intellectual achievement. But heart, as well as head, begs recognition here. The noteworthy photographs of Gurdjieff in grandfatherly old age, and the poignancy of his late improvisations on the harmonium, hint at this affective dimension. Gurdjieff is palpably anguished by humanity’s reeling disorientation. He abominates war. He suffers from our suffering. Full of years, full of sorrows, the “Teacher of Dancing” emanates an implacable compassion. Yet to “domesticate” him, to divest him of the sharp sting of the real, would betray fact: incontestably among the most influential 20th century esotericists, he stands formidably at the root of a potent contemporary tradition, whose vector resists scrutiny. Strange, nevertheless, that one intuits in him, finally, a benign source candidly and generously approachable.

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JAMES MOORE

## Gurdjieff Tradition

The tradition definable as Gurdjieffian derives its specific character and inspiration from the direct teaching of → G.I. Gurdjieff. Before his death, Gurdjieff entrusted the task of transmitting the teaching to his chief pupil, Jeanne de Salzmann (1889-1990), and a small circle of other pupils in France, England and America who acknowledged her leadership. Under her guidance, the first centers of “the Work” – as the teaching calls itself, echoing alchemical terminology – were established in Paris, London, New York and Caracas. Over the past half-century other centers have radiated from them to major cities of the Western world. Most of the groups maintain close correspondence with the principal centers, usually in relationship to one or two first-generation Gurdjieff pupils who personally guide the work of these affiliated groups. The general articulation of these various groups is a cooperative one, rather than one based on strictly sanctioned jurisdictional control. There are also groups which no longer maintain close correspondence with the main body of pupils and operate independently. And there are numerous other organizations led by individuals who claim no historical lineage with either Gurdjieff or his direct pupils. We limit ourselves here to the teaching as

it has been studied and transmitted by the direct Gurdjieff lineage. This teaching can historically be designated as the Gurdjieff tradition.

The theoretical teaching embraces an all-encompassing body of ideas dealing with universal laws and how they govern the whole of man's life on Earth, and in the past half century a vast body of exposition and commentary has accumulated about these ideas (see bibl.). Nevertheless, the teaching remains essentially an oral tradition, continually unfolding – without fixed doctrinal beliefs or external rites – as a way towards freeing humanity from the waking-sleep that holds man in a kind of hypnotic illusion. At the same time, Gurdjieff taught that man's possibilities are very great, and that his destiny is to actualize his true individuality as a bridge between a subtle world above and the unknown world below.

A central focus of the Gurdjieff teaching is the awakening to consciousness and the creation of proper conditions that can support this multi-leveled process. For this, a preparatory work is necessary, as stated by Jeanne de Salzmann: 'According to Gurdjieff, the truth can be approached only if all the parts which make the human being, the thought, the feeling, and the body, are touched with the same force in a particular way appropriate to each of them – failing which, development will inevitably be one-sided and sooner or later come to a stop. In the absence of an effective understanding of this principle, all work on oneself is certain to deviate from the aim. The essential conditions will be wrongly understood and one will see a mechanical repetition of the forms of effort which never surpass a quite ordinary level' (Foreword to *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*).

Gurdjieff gave the name of "self-remembering" to the central state of conscious attention in which the higher force that is available within the human structure makes contact with the functions of thought, feeling and body. The individual "remembers", as it were, who and what he really is and is meant to be, over and above his ordinary sense of identity. This attention is not a function of the mind but is the active spiritual force which all the functions of man obey as the "inner master".

Consistent with the knowledge behind many contemplative traditions of the world, such as the pre-Socratics and especially the Niptic current of Hesychastic Christianity – which speaks of an "attention that comes from God" – the practice of the Gurdjieff work places chief emphasis on preparing the inner world of man to receive this higher attention. When the inner world is prepared

the spirit enters instantly – to use the language of Meister Eckhart.

Great care was taken by Gurdjieff to delineate the cosmic laws that at one and the same time govern both the processes of the universal world and the processes of man's inner life and development. Of these laws, two are fundamental – the law of three and the law of seven or the law of the octave. The law of three states that three forces – active, passive and neutralizing – are necessary for any creation, either at the cosmic level or within the process of the individual search for inner rebirth. The law of seven, for its part, governs the nature of process, stating that all processes develop in seven steps – with two intervals, as represented in the major scale in music with its two intervals of the semi-tone. Both the law of three and the law of seven are contained in the esoteric symbol of the enneagram – a symbol which has been appropriated by individuals and groups outside of the tradition and employed in ways having no correspondence with its meaning in the Gurdjieff tradition.

It is clear that from the beginning of his mission, Gurdjieff adapted the transmission of the teaching to the subjectivity of his pupils, explaining elements that corresponded to their capacities and needs, while holding back other aspects of the whole teaching until they could be received. It is therefore misleading to take any one exposition or interpretation as definitive. → P.D. Ouspensky, for example, considered his own deeply influential and faithful account as no more than 'fragments of an unknown teaching'.

Seen in this light, and as in other spiritual teachings, the dynamic life of the tradition supports the individual search, and helps to overcome the seemingly universal impulse of resistance or inertia: the tendency toward attachment or "identification", as the Gurdjieff teaching expresses this idea, and the gradual fixing on partial aspects, institutionalized forms, dogmatic doctrines and a habitual reliance on the known rather than facing and entering the unknown. According to the Gurdjieff teaching, the forms exist only to help to discover, to incarnate, and to elaborate a formless energy of awakening, and without this understanding the forms of the teaching become an end in themselves and lose their meaning.

At present, the comparatively invariant general forms of practice in the Gurdjieff tradition may be characterized as follows:

*Group Meetings:* Gurdjieff taught that one man alone cannot see himself. In group meetings students regularly come together to participate in a

collective atmosphere that is said to function as a principal means for the transformation of the individual state of consciousness. Although questions are shared and responded to in words, the fundamental support of the group is directed to the individual work of facing oneself and consciously suffering one's own inner lack until the descent of a new energy is possible. The leader, as part of his or her own search, strives to be sensitive, not so much to the content of the exchange, but to the process of the developing energy. In their turn group leaders just as urgently need to work in groups, albeit at a more advanced level. In this way, a redefinition of the conventional image of the spiritual leader is inevitable. At each level, what is apparently understood needs to be re-examined and verified in the movement of a dynamic living esoteric school.

The *dances and movements*, which Gurdjieff taught, were partially a result of his research in the monasteries and schools of Asia, and are of a nature that seems unique in the modern Western world. In certain respects, they are comparable to sacred dances in traditional religious systems (for example, the 'Cham dances of Tibetan Buddhism or the dervish dances of the Sufis). Like them, the Gurdjieff movements are based on the view that a series of specific postures, gestures, and movements supported by an intentional use of melody and rhythm and an essential element of right individual effort can help to evoke an inner condition which is closer to a more conscious existence, or a state of unity, which can allow an opening to the conscious energy of the Self. The movements are now regularly given at major centers of the work by specially prepared pupils who emphasize the need for exactitude and sincerity of intention, without which the movements cannot provide the help for which they were brought.

The Gurdjieffian practice of *guided meditation* is difficult to characterize in a few words apart from observing that, although it is far from being a technique or method, it corresponds in its essentials to the contemplative aspect of life that is embedded in the heart of all the religious traditions of the world. The Gurdjieffian approach to sitting meditation was gradually emphasized and developed by Jeanne de Salzmann in the 1960's. Here the pupil searches for a quality of seeing and an embodied presence that sustains and supports his attempt to know and directly experience what he is, including both his limitations and his possibilities.

*Work in Life.* To be able to work in life in the full sense would be considered a very high achievement. The struggle to be "present" in everyday life

constitutes a major aspect of the Gurdjieff practice, a struggle which entails the question of full engagement in the duties and rewards of the life of man on Earth, now and here. In this context, Gurdjieff restored and created many inner exercises, some intended mainly for the meditative practice and others for the conditions of everyday life. Such exercises are understood as providing a structure that makes possible use of everyday life as material for self-observation and the gradual growth of self-awareness. Through repetition of such exercises, the individual may begin to come into touch with a deep sense of need which allows an opening to the spiritual energies within oneself. According to Gurdjieff, without a relationship to this more central aspect of oneself, everyday life is bound to be an existential prison, in which the individual is held captive, not so much by the so-called forces of modernity as by the parts of the self which cannot help but react automatically to the influences of the world around him. The help offered by the special conditions of the work is therefore understood not as replacing man's life in the world, but as enabling him, in the course of time, to live life with authentic understanding and full participation.

Briefly, the movement toward awakening which is meant to be supported by the ideas and these forms of practice becomes in fact an organic process in life and movement and for that reason, dogmatic approaches will inevitably fail. The movement toward awakening, then, requires an understanding not only of the constituent forces and laws which govern man's psyche and actions, but also a deep sensitivity and appreciation of individual subjective needs and conditions. In other words, for an effective guidance, the principle of relativity must be recognized in the transmission of the teaching: individuals must be approached according to their respective levels of development and experience. Gurdjieff might have stressed one view to a student at a certain level of understanding and quite another view when that student had reached another level. This might give the appearance of contradiction, but in fact it was consistent in applying only those aspects of the whole teaching truly necessary at a given moment. The same principle applies to the ideas, some of which seemed more accessible at one period while others still remained to be revealed in the unfolding life of the teaching. In this light, it is interesting to note that groups that break away at different moments to work by themselves and on their own run the risk of clinging dogmatically to certain specific forms and practices.



For example, the work of “self-observation” is given new meaning as the developing attention lets go of its effort, joining and willingly submitting to an impartial conscious seeing, resting in its vision. The action that might take place in this condition – meditation or even outer action – is held to reflect the simultaneous dual nature of an impersonal consciousness and a personal attention which has a new capacity to manifest and act in the world. The qualities of both these aspects of consciousness and attention are considered quite unknown to the ordinary mind. In this new relationship of individual attention and a divine impersonal consciousness, man is believed to become a vessel, serving another energy which can act through him, an energy which at the same time transforms the materiality of the body at the cellular level. This understanding of inner work introduced by de Salzmann has been transmitted in the oral tradition of the Gurdjieff teaching and can be found today in many of the Gurdjieff Foundation groups worldwide.

The half century that has passed since Gurdjieff’s death has witnessed dramatic developments with respect to the reception of his ideas – as well as a proliferation of interpretations and applications. Louis Pauwels’ derogatory *Monsieur Gurdjieff*, published in 1954, was for a time the only book about Gurdjieff, other than Ouspensky’s. Although late in his life Pauwels repudiated his earlier views and spoke of the great value of Gurdjieff’s teaching, the negative tone of *Monsieur Gurdjieff* strongly influenced public opinion in France and elsewhere. Starting in the early 1960s, however, numerous accounts and testimonies by pupils who were close to Gurdjieff began to present a far more comprehensive view of the ideas, as well as a positive description of Gurdjieff the teacher. The number of these accounts has continued to grow until the present day and, taken together, they offer a far more balanced and nuanced picture of the teaching and the man than was available in the first decade after his death (see *Bibl.*).

The broader cultural influence of the Gurdjieff teaching has also become clearer. In the field of psychology, the practice of group therapy (e.g. Skynner and Slavson) owes much to the Gurdjieff idea about the necessity of group work; and the very phrases “self-observation” and “work on oneself” have not only entered into many psychological and psychotherapeutic disciplines, but have even entered into the vernacular of the English language. The idea of consciousness as the key to spiritual development owes much to Gurdjieff’s identification of this aspect of the psyche as the

uniquely human element, over and above the analytic and combinatory powers of the mind.

In the arts, the insights of Gurdjieff have been acknowledged by leading figures such as Frank Lloyd Wright (architect), Thomas de Hartmann (composer), Peter Brook (theater), Lincoln Kirstein (dance) and in many other venues including literature, philosophy and the study of religion. Often, his ideas are applied without acknowledgement, and a study of this aspect of the reception of his teaching needs to be undertaken to show the surprising extent to which his ideas and terminology, in widely varying interpretations and alterations, have become a significant cultural and philosophical influence in contemporary arts, letters and various forms of therapeutic praxis, including such unexpected areas as corporate management training.

Among pupils who broke away from the main community of pupils after Gurdjieff’s death and established groups of their own which continue to be active, the most significant are Willem Nyland, and J.G. Bennett. The reasons behind these breaks are not easily discernible from the outside, and are not “doctrinal” in the familiar sense of the term. Doubtless, personal issues are often prominent. During Gurdjieff’s lifetime, as is known, many advanced pupils were compelled to leave by Gurdjieff himself, who rigorously resisted any tendency toward devotion or attachment to his person. This was most notably the case with Thomas de Hartmann. In many other instances, such as with P.D. Ouspensky, Gurdjieff may have considered it necessary to place strong emotional challenges before his pupils at certain key junctures in the process of their inner work, and the result was sometimes that they broke away from him. However, it is idle to speculate in this general area; it is still too early in the life of this teaching to speak in broadly familiar categories of “orthodoxy”, “schisms” or “heresies”. It is sufficient to note that each generation of the Work has witnessed this process of independent creation of groups, whereby individuals, after a period of membership in the mainstream tradition, leave to create their own organizations. It is impossible to estimate the number of individuals involved in these organizations, although probably all of them combined have fewer members than the main network of some 10,000 pupils worldwide.

[For more extensive bibliographical information and history, see J. Walter Driscoll and The Gurdjieff Foundation of California, *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography* and *The Gurdjieff International Review*, [www.Gurdjieff.org](http://www.Gurdjieff.org).]

*Lit.*: James Moore, *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth*, Boston, Mass.: Element Books, 1999 ♦ Jacob Needleman, “G.I. Gurdjieff and his School”, in Antoine Faivre & Jacob Needleman (eds.), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, New York: Crossroad, 1995, 359-380 ♦ John Pentland, *Exchanges Within: Questions from Everyday Life Selected from Gurdjieff Group Meetings with John Pentland in California 1955-1984*, New York: Continuum, 1998 ♦ William Segal, *Opening: Collected Writings of William Segal 1985-1997*, New York: Continuum, 1998 ♦ A.L. Stavely, *Memories of Gurdjieff*, Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1978 ♦ Henri Tracol, *The Taste For Things That Are True: Essays and Talks By A Pupil of G.I. Gurdjieff*, Shaftsbury: Element Books, 1994 ♦ James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers*, New York: Putnam’s, 1980.

JACOB NEEDLEMAN

**Hahn, Michael**, \* 2.2.1758 Altdorf,  
† 20.1.1819 Sindlingen

Hahn came from a family of Pietists [→ Pietism]. He felt the presence of God within him as early as the age of twelve. Toward 1777, he received the grace of an illumination that he himself called a *Zentralschau* (Central Vision). He compensated for a neglected education by much reading. In 1784, a second illumination confirmed him in his desire to center his whole life on God and to preach his kingdom. Through his zeal and piety, he attracted to himself crowds of believers eager to hear him. His disciples, the *Michelianer*, would endeavour to continue his work. Often neglecting the theosophical [→ Christian Theosophy] aspect of his thought, they would especially retain its pietistic tendency.

This Swabian theosopher deserves particular mention for his tireless efforts to order his theosophical concepts in a coherent system, whence a certain rationality that is never absent. One cannot consider him a Pietist, a separatist or a pure mystic. His thinking always evokes these tendencies, but his insistence on demanding personal reflection from the believer makes him a son of the *Aufklärung*. Nevertheless, Hahn, whose faith found equal support in esoteric gnosis, was indeed a Christian theosopher even if his system can at times appear incomplete. All his thinking flowed from his “Central Vision” (*Zentralschau*), which he strove to explicate as clearly as possible.

To understand the Bible, keystone of all, erudition is less important than a personal encounter with God. Knowledge of God and knowledge of

self must blend in the intimate experience that operates in the *Centralgrund* (inner Center) of man. The whole mystery of the complex relationships between God, Man and the universe is written in Man the microcosm. It is enough for a free will to be united with a deepened personal will for it to be clarified and elucidated. From then on, by sinking into the contemplation of the image of divinity, Man can “see” with the eye of God. However, the depth of thinking gives this inexpressible experience all its scope. The true Christian must think for himself. He will then grasp all the intimate motivations of the divine Economy by observing that what is in God is also in Man.

Conscious of having developed a system that was proper to himself, Hahn was nonetheless indebted to → Boehme and to → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger for elements that are part of it. The undetermined foundation of the Boehmean *Ungrund*, the unmanifest transcendent God, similar to the Father, is revealed in the Son in a plural immanence that affects all creation. In its ardent desire to know itself, the *Ungrund* gives birth to the *Urgrund*, the Son, who becomes the “Central point of God” and of all creatures. The Father is Fire, but less wrathful than in Boehme, and more harmonious even if duality inhabits Him. The Son is Light manifested, the *männliche Jungfrau* (masculine virgin) who controls, by His central position, the good and the evil activated in the creative process. A reflection of the Son, the primordial Adam was androgynous. One finds in Hahn, together with the Oetingerian idea that any spirit tends to manifest itself “in bodies” (*Geistleiblichkeit*), the theory of the double fall. Both Lucifer, who wanted to arrogate the Son’s nature, and Man fell, tempted by the fallen angel and enclosed in the opaque matter of our visible world, where a few rays of the divine Light still shine through. Although Christ has redeemed the whole of undeserving humanity, the true Christian must tend to spiritual perfection for a true rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*) and not remain content with a conventional faith. God is not only merciful, he is also just: our faults are forgiven and there are no eternal punishments (*Apocatastasis*), but a purifying fire (*Läuterungsfeuer*) is necessary, the trials that accompany it being an integral part of the grace that God grants us.

The Unity of God in all his living members is the object of the quest of every true Christian community. The Roman Church and the neology rife in the Protestant milieu are far from this ideal. The Evangelical Church, by the free will that it grants the believer, is preferable. Neither a separatist nor a

Pietist, Hahn hardly got along with the members of the clergy, who saw in him an eccentric with an equivocal doctrine. Nevertheless, in his apocalyptic and eschatological considerations, he had the prudence, contrary to Johann Albrecht Bengel, not to make short-term prophecies. If the influence of Gerhard Tersteegen and German → mysticism is perceptible in his work, the influence of Boehme and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger is more so. However, the extreme tension of a Boehme seeking to circumscribe the good and evil at work in creation, and the considerations of Oetinger on → alchemy and palingenesis remain equally foreign to him. Far from straining over the insoluble problem of evil, he stresses the profound harmony of the consubstantial elements in God, Man and the universe. He considers that Boehmenism contains a good share of unresolved dualism and insists rather on the primacy of divine unity. Without beginning or end, God uses linear time as a material apt to open up eternal perspectives through the history of salvation set forth in the typology of Holy Scripture. One must ceaselessly scrutinize Holy Scripture to grasp its hidden truths, because faith does not go without understanding nor understanding without faith. Hahn's christology is too anchored in the depths of the God-filled soul for the Son, despite the theosopher's requirement that his presence be apprehended equally by reason, ever to be regarded as a mere principle exemplifying redemption and grace.

Hahn's rich personality and charisma explains the number of his admirers and disciples. Little concerned about orthodoxy, he exhorted them, on the one hand, to read the Bible and its most inspired commentators from Luther to Bengel, and, on the other hand, to exercise their personal thinking. It alone, according to him, was capable of providing answers relevant to the times in which they were living.

Hahn'sche Gemeinschaft (ed.), *Auszug aus Michael Hahns Schriften* (1857-58) & *Ausgewählte Betrachtungen* (1924-1929), 2 vols., Stuttgart, 1945 and 1959.

Lit.: Joachim Trautwein, *Die Theosophie Michael Hahns und ihre Quellen*, Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1969 ♦ Gerhard Schäfer (ed.), *J. Michael Hahn: Gotteserkenntnis und Heiligung. Aus seinen Briefen, Betrachtungen, Liedern*, Metzingen: Franz, 1994.

JACQUES FABRY

**Halatophilus Irenaeus** → Oetinger,  
Friedrich Christoph

**Hall, Manly Palmer**, \* 18.3.1901  
Peterborough, Ontario, † 29.8.1990  
Los Angeles

Writer, Collector, Lecturer. Hall was raised by his maternal grandmother, Mrs. Arthur Whitney Palmer, and spent a wandering childhood in San Diego, Washington, New York, Sioux Falls, and other cities of the United States. Apart from a short spell at a military school, he was without formal education. In California he came under the influence of the → Theosophical Society. He began his public career in 1920 in Santa Monica, giving a series of lectures on → reincarnation. He became a lifelong admirer of → H.P. Blavatsky and her *Secret Doctrine*. In 1921 he conceived the plan of an encyclopedic work on esoteric traditions and began to collect materials for it. In 1922 he founded a journal, *The All-Seeing Eye* (first monthly, then irregular). At about this time, he became the pastor of a church called The Church of the People, which met at Trinity Auditorium at Ninth and Grand in Los Angeles. In 1923-1924, thanks to a wealthy patron or patrons whose identity was never revealed, he was able to make an extensive tour of Europe, Egypt, and Asia, and to lay the basis for a magnificent collection of books and artefacts representing the spiritual traditions of East and West. The following years were spent writing, compiling, financing, and commissioning the illustrations for his masterwork *The Secret Teaching of All Ages* (1928). This oversized volume, often reprinted, contains 54 color plates by Augustus Knapp and hundreds of illustrations from books and manuscripts, many of them by now in Hall's library. It was designed by the eminent typographer John Henry Nash. The text is an introduction to almost every facet of Western esotericism, and, more briefly, to Eastern religions. It carries a strong atmosphere of → Freemasonry and of Theosophy.

Southern California, with its Theosophical and Rosicrucian centers [→ Rosicrucianism] and its openness to exotic religions, was a natural home to Hall's endeavors. In 1934 he founded the Philosophical Research Society, whose initials, P.R.S., stood also for the combined wisdom of Philosophy, Religion, and Science. In 1934-1935 he went to London and Paris to acquire rare books dispersed in the Lionel Hauser sale (see his *Codex Rosae Crucis*). A large building adorned with sphinxes (3910 Los Feliz Boulevard, Los Angeles) was built to house Hall's library and the lecture-room in which he gave addresses on Sunday mornings.

These long impromptu talks and other lectures continued regularly until shortly before his death, and formed the basis for innumerable publications of the P.R.S.

Hall is said to have authored over 200 books, in addition to hundreds of essays and to editing the *P.R.S. Journal* (called *Horizon* from 1940-1954). They were virtually all published by his Hall Publishing Company, then by the P.R.S. Hall was honored by the 33rd degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. In 1950 he married Marie Bauer, a fellow-adherent of the theory that Sir → Francis Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare (see her *Foundations Unearthed*, 1940). After Hall's death, there was a long lawsuit between his widow and other claimants to his estate. This was settled to Mrs. Hall's satisfaction in 1993, allowing the P.R.S. to continue its activities. Many of the library's treasures were sold, notably the collection of Japanese art and many of the alchemical books. Hall's alchemical collection, including the manuscripts of Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom which Hall had owned since 1923, was acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu.

Hall was a blend of the scholar-collector with the inspirational writer and speaker. He formed his own "academy" of followers and readers who appreciated the depth, sincerity, and wide sympathies of his learning. Hall's philosophy also had a strong element of → "New Thought", and he always dwelt on the positive aspect of things. From a scholarly point of view, his writing may appear inaccurate and banal, but he had a gift for making complex subjects, such as → Neoplatonism or occult anatomy, comprehensible to a lay audience. Although open to the claims of the occult sciences [→ occult/occultism], he did not promote them, and in later life moved closer to Buddhism. Hall is most comparable to G.R.S. Mead and to the American Platonists Thomas M. Johnson (1851-1919), and Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (1871-1940). He may be remembered as the last link in the American Transcendentalist tradition.

*The Secret Teaching of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*, San Francisco: H.S. Crocker, for the Author, 1928 and many re-editions ♦ *Lectures on Ancient Philosophy*, Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society [hereafter PRS], 1929 ♦ *The Phoenix: An Illustrated Review of Occultism and Philosophy*, Los Angeles: PRS, 1931 ♦ *Man, Grand Symbol of the Mysteries*, Los Angeles: PRS, 1932 ♦ *Codex Rosae Crucis: A Rare and Curious Manuscript of Rosicrucian Interest, Now Published for the First Time in Its Original Form*, Los Angeles: PRS, 1938.

*Lit.*: Information on Hall's life is scarce, and the scholarly world has totally ignored him. On his relation to the Theosophical Society, see *Secret Doctrine Centenary: Report of Proceedings, October 29-30, 1988*, Pasadena: Theosophical Society, 1989, 23-27 ♦ For a romanticized early autobiography, see his *Life with Grandmother*, Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1985 ♦ On his collecting, see Ron. Charles Hogart (ed.), *Alchemy: A Comprehensive Bibliography of the Manly P. Hall Collection of Books and Manuscripts, Including Related Material on Rosicrucianism and the Writings of Jacob Boehme*, Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1986 ♦ On the scandals following Hall's death, see Bob Pool, reports in *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1993; December 22/23, 1994 ♦ A full-length biography of Hall by Lawrence Sahagun is in preparation.

JOSELYN GODWIN

### Hamvas, Béla, \* 23.3.1897 Eperjes (today Presov in Slovakia), † 7.11.1968 Budapest

Hungarian philosopher, and one of the most comprehensive gnostic thinkers of the 20th century. Hamvas was born in a family of Lutheran pastors serving in Upper Hungary, today's Slovakia. After World War I the family moved to Budapest, where Hamvas studied classical languages, read German and Hungarian at the university, and received his MA in 1923. He started working as a journalist, but soon settled as a librarian at the Budapest Public Library, a most congenial occupation for him. In 1935 he became the co-founder of Karoly Kerényi's circle, *Sziget* (Island), in the context of which he published essays on a wide variety of topics, including Russian mystics (Berdjaev) and existentialist philosophers (Heidegger and Jaspers). During the war he served at the Russian front, then resumed his job in the library from where in 1948 he was released because his views were incompatible with the communist regime. A particularly shocking event to him was the destruction of his manuscripts as well as his private library during a bombing attack on Budapest in 1945. From that time on a long series of afflictions followed. Georg Lukács, chief ideologue of the Hungarian communist government, prohibited the publication of his works. Being expelled from the library, Hamvas had to take a job as a stock-attendant in an industrial plant. In the 1950s he was forced to work at a power station outside Budapest and could go home only on weekends. Even after 1956 when he applied for rehabilitation, his request of being restored to his position as a librarian was refused. He retired in 1964 and spent his last years in



Budapest as a charismatic mystic around whom a growing circle of students gathered. After he died of a stroke, immediately a cult around his person began. His works were typed and passed from hand to hand as “samizdat” (illegal publications bypassing state censorship) until the late 1980s, from which time on his writings have been published in comprehensive editions. Today he is widely appreciated as one of Hungary’s most original philosophers.

Hamvas’s literary output is large and versatile. He excelled in *belles lettres*, and wrote a number of strange novels in which modernist and mystical elements are mixed with grotesque irony. Most famous among them is *Karnevál* (Carnival, 1948-1951, published in 1985). He was an accomplished essayist, one of the finest in 20th century Hungarian literature. He put together several collections of essays during his career, such as *Láthatalan történet* (The invisible story, 1940-1941), *A bor filozófiája* (The philosophy of wine, 1947), *Silentium* (1950), and *Patmosz* (Pathmos, 1959-1966). Another genre in which he felt at home was translating and editing/annotating works of mystical philosophy from a wide range of cultures and periods, including 25 chapters of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and *The Flowers of Tao* (1943); the Apocalypse of Enoch (1944); Jakob Boehme’s *Psychologia vera* (1946); the *Tabula smaragdina* (1950); and *Sefer Yetsirah* (1954). Particularly notable is his annotated anthology of “the Tradition” [→ Tradition] which was published under the title *Az ősök nagy csarnoka* (The great hall of the ancestors, 1943) and to which he added a monumental introductory essay titled “Ekstasis”.

Beyond these, Hamvas also wrote major individual works in the form of carefully constructed and logically arranged monographs, none of which appeared in print during his lifetime. His “opus magnum” is *Scientia sacra: the Spiritual Tradition of the Ancients* (1943-1944, first published 1988), a compelling account of human wisdom in the midst of the madness of war. The second part of this work deals with a comparison of Christianity and “the Tradition” (*Scientia sacra II*, 1960-63), while his *Mágia szutra* (Magia sutra [1950], first published 1994) discusses the practical application of “the Tradition” in view of attaining the ideal of ‘a consciously purified way of life’.

Hamvas’s philosophy may be referred to as “sacral metaphysics”, and his approach is related to that of → Julius Evola, → Leopold Ziegler, and → René Guénon. His main concern was the most ancient past, as remote as the lost Golden Age. As opposed to → Rudolf Steiner, he never thought of

mixing the spheres of natural science with that of hermeticism, and claimed that the investigation of nature was confined to the surface material world only. For a philosopher like him, the occult relations of the universe are effective in the transcendental and supernatural spheres, to which the development of science is irrelevant.

In *Scientia sacra*, Hamvas aimed at synthesizing the Tao, the Vedas, Buddhism, the Hebrew kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], Egyptian hermeticism, and the teachings of the Persian → Zoroaster. In the first part of the work Hamvas discusses the tradition that has preserved the memory of the Golden Age and that, according to him, may lead humankind back to the happiness of the lost antediluvian state. The second book is devoted to archaic man, who still participated in the occult knowledge. Hamvas reviews various accounts about the loss of Eden, and against that background provides a reconstruction of the major stages of man’s historical existence: the primordial state – sin – the awakening – repetition (the “development” constituting the further phases of awakening) – the outer darkness (offering a choice between purposeful pilgrimage and random roaming) – and liberation. Liberation is the state towards which the magus is striving; and since occult knowledge is embedded in the analogical symbols of the ancients, the magus has to become a philologist of sorts in order to be able to analyse and interpret the esoteric tradition. The subject of the third book is “Cult and Culture”. A comparison of ancient and modern cultures reveals that real knowledge is not to be gained from rational and analytical science, but belongs only to the sacral way of life.

Hamvas’s personal experience of the “world crisis” of the 20th century, culminating in two World Wars, was of decisive importance to his life. He saw no other way of escaping from this apocalyptic collapse than by means of a reintegration of the individual in the community in the context of a revitalization of inspired ancient laws and wisdom. His continuing popularity proves that this program still has a strong appeal.

*A világválság* (“The world crisis”, 1935-37), Budapest: Magvető, 1983 ♦ *Karnevál* (“Carnival”, 1948-51), Budapest: Magvető, 1985 ♦ *Scientia sacra, Az őskori emberiség szellemi hagyománya* (“The spiritual tradition of the Ancients”, 1943-44), Budapest: Magvető, 1988 (English translation by Andrea Kibedi is as yet unpublished; Italian translation Milano 2001) ♦ *Hamvas Béla művei* (“Collected works”), Szombathely-Budapest: Életünk-Medio, 1990 ♦ *Silentium*, Szentendre: Editio M., 1999 ♦ *Philosophie des*



Weines, Szentendre: Editio M., 1999 ♦ *La philosophie du vin*, Szentendre: Editio M., 1999.

Lit.: Dúl Antal, "A sors és a szó – Hamvas Béla kísérlete" ("Fate and Words – The Experiment of Hamvas"), in: Hamvas, *A láthatatlan történet* ("The invisible story"), Budapest: Akadémiai, 1988, 7-16 ♦ György E. Szőnyi, "Occult Ascension in Troubled Times: The Ideals of Mankind in Rudolf Steiner and Béla Hamvas", in: M. Kronegger and A.-T. Tymieniecka (eds.), *Ideals of Mankind* (Analecta Husserliana 49), Dordrecht–Boston–London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996, 29-43 ♦ Endre Török, "Ami teljes, és ami részleges" ("Of what is complete and what is fragmentary"), attached to Hamvas, *Scientia sacra* (1988), 547-73.

GYÖRGY E. SZŐNYI

## Hardenberg, Friedrich von → Novalis

**Hartmann, Franz**, \* 22.11.1838  
Donauwörth, † 7.8.1912 Kempten

German physician, author, and leading German Theosophist. Hartmann first worked as a pharmacy assistant in Kempten. In 1859 he was enlisted as a volunteer in the 1st Artillery Regiment of Bavaria during the Austrian-Italian War. In 1860 he commenced studies in pharmacy (receiving his state qualification in 1862) and medicine at Munich University. In July 1865 he took passage as a ship's doctor on a vessel bound from Le Havre to New York and spent the next eighteen years in the United States. The same year 1865 he completed his medical training and opened a practice for eye ailments at St Louis. In 1867 he acquired U.S. citizenship; and in 1870 he travelled to New Orleans and thence by ship to Mexico, visiting Mexico City, Cordova and Orizaba, where he became acquainted with Indian tribes. He resumed medical practice at New Orleans, where he became interested in American → spiritualism, attending the seances of Mrs Rice Holmes and Kate Wentworth and studying the writings of Judge Edmonds and → Andrew Jackson Davis. In 1873 he travelled to Texas where he bought a ranch, married the sister of a neighbour but widowed after seven months. In 1878 he settled in Georgetown, Colorado, engaging in gold and silver mining besides his medical practice, and from 1882 served as coroner for Clear Creek County; he continued to be interested in spiritualism, encountered Theosophical literature, and entered into correspondence with → H.S. Olcott. In 1882 he joined the → Theosophical Society in the U.S.A. In September 1883 he left Colorado to visit the Theosophists

in India, with brief visits to Japan and China en route. In December he arrived at Adyar, where he came to play a major role at Theosophical Society headquarters. In April 1885 he returned to Europe with → H.P. Blavatsky. In 1891 he became founder-director of a sanatorium at Hallein, near Salzburg, and in August 1896 President of a new German Theosophical Society at Berlin founded by Katherine Tingley of the American Theosophists. In September 1897 he founded the *Internationale Theosophische Verbrüderung* at Munich. From 1899, Hartmann collaborated with Hugo Vollrath (b. 1877) on Theosophical lecture tours and publishing. In 1906, Vollrath founded the *Theosophische Verlagsbaus* in Leipzig, which systematically publishes Hartmann's works besides translations of H.P. Blavatsky, → Annie Besant and → Charles Leadbeater.

From his youth, Hartmann combined mystical and idealistic speculations with his interest in medicine and science. Following experiments with spiritualism in the United States, Hartmann discovered Theosophy, which became his life's work. While Blavatsky and Olcott were in Europe, Hartmann presided at Theosophical Society headquarters in Adyar during the investigation of the Society of Psychical Research into the Coulomb scandal in 1884. After his return to Europe in 1885, Hartmann decided that Theosophy required a new foundation to counter negative publicity. At Kempten he frequented the pietistic group around the weaver Alois Mailänder (1844-1905). In September 1889 Hartmann founded, together with Alfredo Pioda and Countess Constance Wachtmeister, a Theosophical lay-monastery at Ascona, Switzerland. His Theosophical monthly periodical *Lotusblüten* (1892-1900), later revived as *Neue Lotusblüten* (1908-1912), provided a forum for the fast-growing number of German Theosophists. Although Hartmann's collaboration with the American theosophists under Katherine Tingley in 1896 was short-lived, his *Internationale Theosophische Verbrüderung* acted as a major platform for the movement in Germany. Between 1894 and 1907 Hartmann collaborated with the German Theosophical publishers C.A. Schwetschke of Brunswick, Wilhelm Friedrich and the Theosophische Centralbuchhandlung, both at Leipzig. Their extensive book-series attracted a German readership for the writings of Hartmann and other German Theosophists such as Rudolph Böhme, Hugo Göring and Arthur Weber, together with translations of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater.

Besides his Theosophical activities, Hartmann was also linked with other occult and fringe-

masonic orders. He was associated with Carl Kellner (1851-1905), initiator of the → Ordo Templi Orientis, who used ligno-sulphite in the manufacture of cellulose at Hallein. Hartmann used a by-product of this process for the treatment of lung ailments at his neighbouring sanatorium. Hartmann was associated in 1897 with Leopold Engel (1858-1931) in an Order of the Illuminati at Dresden, which was absorbed by → Theodor Reuss in 1902. In September 1902 Hartmann became Deputy Grand Commander General in Reuss's Rite of Memphis and Misraim; and in October 1905, following Kellner's death, Hartmann became Honorary Grand Master General. These fringe-masonic groups were succeeded by Reuss's Ordo Templi Orientis in 1906.

Hartmann was one of the most prolific writers of his generation on Theosophy, → magic and esotericism. His publications, written in both English and German, almost all follow his involvement with the Theosophical Society. Hartmann's earliest works were devoted to → Rosicrucianism, → Paracelsus, → Jacob Boehme, magic, the astrological geomancy of → Cornelius Agrippa and other topics in the Western esoteric tradition. *The Life of Jehoshua, Prophet of Nazareth* described the psychical and spiritual processes experienced on the path of initiation. From 1892 he developed his prodigious output on Theosophy. He wrote two translations in prose and verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* and was instrumental in the German translation, in collaboration with Dr Robert Froebe, of Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1897-1901). He also translated Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* and several oriental scriptures, such as the *Atma Bodha*, the *Tattwa Bodha*, and the *Tao-Teh-King*. His own publications in German number more than thirty books and hundreds of articles in his magazine. The books include commentaries on Theosophy, studies of karma and → reincarnation, the doctrine of Buddhism, as well as further studies of Paracelsus and → alchemy.

*Report of Observations made during a Nine Months' Stay at the Headquarters of The Theosophical Society at Adyar (Madras), India*, Madras: Scottish Press, 1884 ♦ *Magic, White and Black*, London: George Redway, 1886 ♦ *The Life of Paracelsus and the Substance of his Teachings*, London: George Redway, 1887 ♦ *An Adventure among the Rosicrucians*, Boston: Occult Pub. Co., 1887 ♦ *Cosmology or Universal Science*, Boston: Occult Pub. Co., 1888 ♦ *The Principles of Astrological Geomancy*, London: Theos. Pub. Co., 1889 ♦ *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, London: Kegan Paul, 1891 ♦ *Selbsterkenntnis und Wiederverkörperung*, Brunswick: C.A. Schwetschke, 1894 ♦ *Die Geheimelehre in der christlichen Religion*

*nach den Erklärungen von Meister Eckart*, Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1898 ♦ *Die Religionslehre der Buddhisten*, Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1898 ♦ *Denkwürdige Erinnerungen*, Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1898 ♦ *Kurzgefaßte Grundriß der Geheimelehre*, Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1899 ♦ *Die Erkenntnislehre der Bhagavad Gita*, Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1900 ♦ *Mysterien, Symbole und magisch wirkende Kräfte*, Leipzig: Lotus, 1902 ♦ *Was ist Theosophie?*, Leipzig: Theosophische Centralbuchhandlung, 1903.

*Lit.*: H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings: 1887*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1960, Volume VIII, 439-457 ♦ Walter Einbeck, "Leben und Wirken Dr. Franz Hartmanns", *Theosophische Kultur* 12:9 (1925), 258-266 ♦ Hugo Göring, *Dr Franz Hartmann, ein Vorkämpfer der Theosophie*, Brunswick: C.A. Schwetschke, 1894 ♦ Robert Hütwohl (ed.), *Some Fragments of the Secret History of the Theosophical Society by Franz Hartmann*, Theosophical History Occasional Papers Vol. VIII, 2000 ♦ Robert Hütwohl, *Bibliography of Franz Hartmann, M.D. with an addenda: His Stay in Georgetown, Colorado*, Santa Fe: Spirit of the Sun, 2001.

NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE

**Haslmayr** (or Haselmayer),  
Adam, \* ca. 1560 Bolzano,  
† 1630 Augsburg (?)

Haslmayr was born around 1560 in Bolzano, South Tyrol. By 1588 he was the organist in a Cordelier convent, while teaching Latin and fulfilling the duties of an imperial secretary (*Notarius Caesareus*). In 1593, Archduke Ferdinand of the Tyrol granted him a patent of nobility. According to Haslmayr's own account, in the following year he began to discover the works of → Paracelsus. It was the latter's belief that God reveals himself to mankind both through his Word and through the marvels of Nature, which it is man's mission to discover. Thanks to → alchemy, conceived in its broadest sense, man is therefore able, and obligated, to transform the world, to realize the "new man" in himself, and to lead Nature to its perfection.

Reading this aroused Haslmayr to such enthusiasm that in 1603 he did not hesitate to address to Archduke Maximilian of Austria a compendium of Paracelsus's ideas, which, to say the least, were not completely orthodox. The Archduke apparently took notice of this: he ordered an inquiry, in consequence of which Haslmayr was summoned to Innsbruck and underwent an interrogation, in which Jesuit theologians took part. They condemned the non-Catholic ideas of his writing, but considered him more as a person of confused mind than as a

true heretic, who should no longer be entrusted with educational duties.

In 1605 Haslmayr settled near Innsbruck in the town of Schwaz, where mining activity had aroused a lively interest in alchemy. After that he lived in Hall (Tyrol), where he translated medical works of the French Paracelsian Joseph Duchesne (known as Quercetanus). In 1607 he came to know the Paracelsian Benedictus Figulus, author of a *Rosarium novum*, whose thought was very close to certain ideas expressed in the *Fama Fraternitatis* (see Edighoffer 1987, II, 695). Manuscript copies of this Rosicrucian manifesto [→ Rosicrucianism] were circulating in the Tyrol from 1610 onwards. At this time, Haslmayr was in correspondence with Archduke Maximilian, to whom he had sent a Paracelsian recipe on the making of an *aurum potabile* intended to protect from poisons and to cure gout.

However, Haslmayr brought many serious troubles on himself by requesting the Archduke to ban an anti-Paracelsian book published by an emulator of the Jesuits, the official physician of Hall, Hippolyte Guarinoni. The latter immediately hit back, accusing Haslmayr of being a heretic and of preventing his own children from attending church. Haslmayr replied by accusing Guarinoni of being a “cacosopher”, but his arguments were weak, seeing that he himself had ignored the obligations of the Concordat of 1605.

Denounced by his adversary, Haslmayr was imprudent enough to write a number of pamphlets explaining his position: that his absence from the sacraments was not due to any leanings toward the ideas of Luther, Calvin, or Zwingli, but to the conviction that with Paracelsus and the Rosicrucians, the time of the Holy Spirit had begun. His naïveté went so far as to bring his profession of faith in person to Vienna in July 1612, and to request an audience with Maximilian. Summoned to the Chancery, he was charged to bear to the privy councillors of the Archduke in Innsbruck a sealed letter, which in fact sealed his fate: it stated that on presentation of this document, the bearer was to be arrested and sent to the galleys in Genoa until he had repented and begged the Archduke for mercy.

On the eve of this dramatic event, Haslmayr was innocent enough to address the Archduke once again, with a letter in which he asked for a grant to go in search of the Brethren of the Rose-Cross! He thought that he could find them in the region of Montpellier, probably on the strength of the prophecy known as the “Lion of the North”. On August 21, 1612, he naïvely presented this *Epistola adhortatoria humilitate demissa* (A Letter of

Encouragement, Sent with Humility), together with the sealed letter, to the Chancery of the Tyrol. On interrogation, he refused to retract. Condemned to the galleys on October 15, he was sent to Genoa and chained on a trireme. His sentence would last four and a half years, because it was only in January, 1617 that Archduke Maximilian allowed him to be transferred to a hospice in Genoa.

All the same, Haslmayr seems to have had certain privileges during this period. At Genoa he was protected by the powerful Andea Grimaldi, a lover of alchemy, as well as by Antonio de’ Medici, and he had kept many correspondents in Europe. Some of his friends had even suggested escaping from the galleys. He also found the time to write treatises which he dedicated to his benefactors and to Cosimo de’ Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany.

In Germany, his best defenders were Carl Widemann and Prince August von Anhalt. The former was a physician, but in practice a copyist and collector of manuscripts by Paracelsus, → Weigel, and Schwenckfeld. As for the Calvinist Prince August, he preferred a spirituality of the Weigelian type to the organized church. August had read Johann Arndt’s *Vom wahren Christenthum* (On True Christianity), he venerated Paracelsus, and owned an alchemical laboratory. He had founded a press for the publication of esoteric works, and planned at one point to appoint Haslmayr as its director. Ever since 1611, August had wanted to read the manuscript of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, and it was probably he who financed the printing of Haslmayr’s *Responsio*, or *Antwort An die lobwürdige Brüderschaft der Theosophen von Rosen-Creutz* (Response to the Praiseworthy Fraternity of the Theosophers of the Rosy Cross).

In March, 1612 came the first printing of this text, which would be published regularly in the editions of the first Rosicrucian writings between 1614 and 1617, with the exception of the one which contains both the Latin text and the German translation of the *Confessio Fraternitatis* (Cassel 1615). Haslmayr’s encomium is marked by a large number of biblical citations; by a hope inspired by the prophet Isaiah (ch. 65) when he promises to a “small remnant” of the righteous a life of felicity on a renovated earth; and by reference to the *Theologia Germanica*, of which Luther had published two editions. But the deepest inspiration stems from Paracelsus, to whom Haslmayr often refers and whose prophecies of the Three Treasures and the Lion of the North he quotes. Haslmayr believes that the Rosicrucians are called upon to spread ‘the

eternal, divine and Theophrastic truth', in view of which he expects the advent of "Elias Artista" as described by Paracelsus. According to Haslmayr, the end of time is imminent: 1613 will be the year of the Judges, and 1614 that of the Judgment.

Haslmayr's vision of the Rose Cross does not, in fact, accurately reflect the spirit of this multiform and polyvalent myth. → Johann Valentin Andreae, who was its principal creator, wrote in the preface to his utopian work *Christianopolis* that the Fraternity 'offered vast and strange things for the *curiosi* to browse upon'. Haslmayr was certainly one of the first among these *curiosi*.

*Discantus: Neue Teütsche gesang / mit vier / fünff / und sechs Stimmen*, Augsburg, 1612 ♦ *Antwort An die lobwürdige Brüderschafft der Theosophen von Rosen-Creutz N.N.* . . ., Hall, 1612 (reprinted in Carlos Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr*) ♦ *Philosophia Mystica* (collective work), Newstadt, 1618 ♦ *Nucleus sophicus* (collective work), Frankfurt am Main, 1623.

*Lit.*: Anton Dörner, "Die Tragödie des Bozner Tondichters Adam Haslmair", *Der Schlern* 20 (1946), 43-45 ♦ Roland Edighoffer, "Le Lion du septentrion", *Etudes Germaniques* 22 (1967), 161-189 ♦ idem, *Rose-Croix et société idéale selon Johann Valentin Andreae*, 2 vols., Paris, 1987 ♦ Carlos Gilly, *Adam Haslmayr: Der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1994 ♦ Walter Senn, "Adam Haslmayr: Musiker, Philosoph und 'Ketzer'", in: *Festschrift Leonhard C. Franz*, Innsbruck, 1965, 379-400.

ROLAND EDIGHOFFER

**Haugwitz, Christian (August?) (Karl?) Heinrich (Curt?), \* 11.6.1752 Peucke bei Oels (?), † 9.2.1832 Venice (?)**

Christian Karl Heinrich, first Baron (Freiherr) and later Count (Graf) of Haugwitz, is known as a statesman whose political career with the Prussian government in Berlin culminated in his becoming President of the Province of Silesia, Ambassador to Vienna, then, in 1791, Minister of State and member of the Cabinet. Simultaneously, he played an active and lifelong role in the world of European → Freemasonry, exemplifying the mystical and religious current that flourished in France and Germany from the 1760s onwards. Being an aristocrat and politically quite conservative, after the French Revolution he became a determined enemy of Freemasonry.

After studies at the University of Göttingen, Haugwitz emulated many wealthy young men of his time by making a long Italian journey. In Flo-

rence he frequented the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who showed a marked taste for mysterious sciences and mystical secrets. Returning to Germany, he was initiated into the Minerva Lodge of Leipzig, then affiliated to the Union Lodge of Frankfurt. Subsequently he joined lodges that were "rectified" according to the Dresden Reform, i.e., the Stricte Observance Templière. Soon he was made Chevalier Profès in the Ordre Intérieur, and took as his masonic name (*nomen ordinis*) Eques a Monte Sancto (Knight of the Holy Mountain). From then onward he displayed a somewhat muddled eclecticism, adding an affinity to the system of Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and taking part in the activities of the Provincial Lodge which represented the Swedish Rite in Silesia.

From 1777, Haugwitz was much taken with the mystical doctrines of the Swiss Christian Kauffmann (1753-1795), described in → Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* as 'the apostle blest by the Divinity', and associated his master's theosophic teachings with those of the Moravian Brethren. As an ardent Pietist [→ Pietism], Haugwitz rapidly became the head of a group first called Les Confidants de Saint-Jean (The Confidants of Saint John), then Les Frères de la Croix (The Brothers of the Cross). Haugwitz and his brethren wished to 'penetrate the mysteries of the natural world and the divine world which Jehovah long ago, in his infinite goodness, revealed to Adam'. They also believed that through interior prayer, 'by uniting oneself to the Lord by virtue of the cross and the grace of Jesus Christ, initiates might receive strength, power, and domination over all earthly things, as well as a portion of the Divine Wisdom' (cited in Le Forestier, 584).

It was in this spirit that Haugwitz undertook to reinterpret, and if possible reform Freemasonry. In 1778 he came to know Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick (1721-1792), and became very close to Landgrave Charles of Hesse-Cassel (1744-1836). Thanks to these two eminent leaders of the Stricte Observance, he was able to enter into relations with → Jean Baptiste Willermoz (1730-1824), who had consigned to the two secret classes of Profès and Grand Profès, codified at the Convent of Lyon (1778), the secret and supreme teachings of what would become the Régime Ecosais Rectifié. There was an uneasy confrontation between the Silesian Pietism of Haugwitz and the esoteric Christianity of the → Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte, and even more so with the → Élus Coëns, which Willermoz had inherited after the death of his master → Martinès de Pasqually (1708/9-1774).



In 1781, Charles of Hesse-Cassel informed Willermoz that Haugwitz had communicated to him ‘the first degrees of true masonry’, i.e., those of the Frères de la Croix – whereas Willermoz himself seemed to be hesitating to reveal to Haugwitz all the mysteries of the Grande Profession. In April of the same year, Ferdinand of Brunswick envisaged a kind of fusion between Haugwitz’s system and that of Willermoz; and in August, the latter at last consented to receive Haugwitz into the Grande Profession.

The divergences soon became evident between Willermoz’s system, founded on impressive ceremonies and complex teachings, and the humble and submissive prayer that Haugwitz advocated for attaining illumination. Haugwitz came to the point of demanding justifications and explanations concerning the sources of the doctrinal texts used by Willermoz – of which the latter was himself the author. Willermoz preferred to evade this problem, which highlighted two very different conceptions of mystical masonry. From the beginning of 1782, he preferred to advise Ferdinand, the Magnus Superior Ordinis, to leave it to the general Convent assembled at Wilhelmsbad. Ferdinand decided for Willermoz, provoking Haugwitz to an angry and definitive retreat. However, we still find Haugwitz involved with the preparation of the Convent of the Philalèthes, held in Paris in 1785, which ended in confusion.

When in September 1810 the aged Willermoz, after twenty years of silence, re-established contact with Charles of Hesse-Cassel in a long and moving letter, he asked the prince ‘what has become of this dear and worthy Baron d’Haugwitz (a Monte sancto) of Kapitz, and the wise school that he founded on solid instructions which had been communicated to you, and of which several essential portions are in my hands? Do he and his school still exist? Has he attained the final goal of his labors? Has he been authorized to communicate them *in plenis* [fully] to prepared and selected men?’ As for Haugwitz, having quit the Régime Ecossais Rectifié out of pique, he seems to have lost none of his rancor when in 1822, at the Congress of Verona, he stated against all the evidence ‘that a plot against the social order and the sovereigns [was] hatched at Wilhelmsbad’. Fortunately Willermoz, who died two years later, never knew anything of this.

*An meine Brüder* [authorship uncertain], Breslau: Löwe, 1774 ♦ *An unsere Brüder*, Breslau: Löwe, 1779 ♦ “Fromme Erklärung von einem deutschen Meister. Erster Grad”, in: *Der Signatstern, oder die entfüllten sämtlichen sieben Grade der mystischen Freimaurerei* . . ., Berlin: Schöne, 1803, part 2, 152-202 (last

ed.: Freiburg im Breisgau: Ambra/Aurum, 1979, 2, 181-238) ♦ “Denkschrift des Grafen von Haugwitz über die Freimaurerei, in französischer Sprache auf dem Congress zu Verona (1822) eingereicht, dann von ihm selbst ins Deutsche übersetzt”, in: von Dorow (ed.), *Denkschriften und Briefe zur Charakteristik der Welt und Literatur*, Berlin: Duncker, 4 (1840), 211-221.

*Lit.*: René Le Forestier, *La Franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux 18<sup>e</sup> et 19<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: La Table d’Emeraude, 1987 (last ed. 2003), 582-592, 596-608 ♦ C.C.F.W. von Nettelblatt, *Geschichte Freimaurerischer Systeme in England, Frankreich und Deutschland*, Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1879 (reprinted Walluf bei Wiesbaden: M. Sändig, 1972), 422-434, etc. ♦ Charles Porset, *Les Philalèthes et les Convents de Paris: Une politique de la folie* (Nouvelle Bibliothèque Initiatique 18), Paris: H. Champion, 1996, 119-122, 564, etc.

ROGER DACHEZ

**Heindel, Max** (ps. of Carl Louis Fredrik Grasshof), \* 23.7.1865 Aarhus (Denmark), † 6.1.1919 Oceanside (California)

According to the biography written by his second wife Frau Augusta Foss, née Voß (1865-1949) which has been taken over by almost all later authors, Heindel was a member of the aristocracy. However, according to the church register and the baptismal certificate issued at Aarhus on 15.10.1865, Heindel was the son of an immigrant baker from Germany, Frantz Ludvig Grasshof and his Danish wife, Anne Sörine Withen, the daughter of a clog-maker. When he was three years of age, Heindel lost his father through an accidental explosion. At the age of sixteen (perhaps nineteen) Heindel went to Glasgow and worked as a tobacconist, as can be inferred from the local marriage register. In 1885 he married Catherine Wallace, the daughter of a maid servant, who bore him two girls. Heindel subsequently worked as a ship’s mechanic with the merchant navy at Liverpool, but he returned to Denmark, where he ran an import business with his brother. In 1896 he emigrated to the USA, first settling in Somerville near Boston and then in Los Angeles (1903). At this time he was plagued by health problems (lameness and a heart disease) and financial difficulties. In 1903 he attended a lecture of the → Theosophical Society, where he met the woman who was to become his second wife, Frau Augusta Foss, an astrologer and active Theosophist. Heindel joined the Theosophical Society and within a year he



had already become vice-president in California; however he left the Society after three or four years. In 1905 his first wife had died, after what seems (according to his second wife) to have been an unhappy marriage. At a Theosophical Society lecture in Minnesota in 1907 Heindel met Frau Dr. Alma von Brandis, who gave him money for a trip to Germany, in order to make the acquaintance of → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). During a stay of several months in Berlin, Heindel studied Steiner's Rosicrucian teachings. Augusta Foss writes in her biography that Heindel was disappointed by Steiner's teachings and received the Rosicrucian doctrine from 'elder brothers' near Berlin, where he spent a month in their temple. However a statement of Rudolf Steiner himself and Heindel's fundamental text *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, written after this stay and the first edition of which (1909) contains a dedication to Steiner 'for much valuable information', suggest that Heindel largely took over the ideas of Steiner (secret at the time) and published them with the financial and stylistic assistance of friends. In 1908, in Columbus, USA, Heindel founded his first Rosicrucian group [→ Rosicrucianism]. Further groups soon followed, in Seattle, North Yakima, Washington and Portland. Probably with the help of rich followers, Heindel was finally able to buy property on "Mount Ecclesia" in Oceanside, 120 km south of Los Angeles, where the headquarters of his Rosicrucian Fellowship was established. Its official dedication as such did not occur until 25 December 1920. In 1910 Heindel married Augusta Foss, and in the same year he just barely survived an acute heart problem. During the following year he built up his Rosicrucian Fellowship and wrote books on its fundamental doctrines, until his death in 1919. His wife then assumed leadership of the community until her own death in 1949. The Lectorium Rosicrucianum of Haarlem, Holland (established in 1924), is probably a schismatic group of the Rosicrucian Fellowship.

Heindel's doctrine is essentially a form of Christian esotericism, the foundations of which may be traced to the influence of Steiner. At the time of Heindel's visit, Steiner was still the head of the German section of the Theosophical Society, but was already turning against the latter's increasing emphasis on influences from the far east and looking for an alternative in Rosicrucianism. Esoteric Christianity is proclaimed by Heindel the coming world-religion. The community is characterized by a certain ecclesiastical tendency including the celebration of mass, usually without priests, in its own places of worship, decorated with a rose-

decked cross. There are also specific ceremonies for weddings and funerals. Cremation is forbidden. A twelve-sided white temple stands in Mount Ecclesia itself, and there are guest-houses and a sanatorium. The community demands from its members to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and the eating of meat, because man must be purified of his bestial sympathies before his divine powers can be consecrated and employed. Higher initiates also abstain from sexual love. Prior to being received into the Rosicrucian Fellowship as a regular member one must serve as a "probationer" and practice entirely independently, while observing a rule of silence. Members living at a distance are instructed by correspondence courses. There is a special emphasis on spiritual healing, which is taught in addition to → astrology. Healing the sick, and selfless service of one's neighbour, are counted among the highest commandments of the community. Apart from the number seven (the outer symbol of the community is a cross with seven roses and a pentagram in the background,  $7 + 5 = 12$ ), the number twelve possessed a very special significance for Heindel. According to his teachings, twelve great spiritual hierarchies assist mankind in its evolution. The Rosicrucian order is said to consist of twelve brothers who congregate around a thirteenth (as the twelve apostles did around Jesus Christ), who forms the connecting link to a higher Central Council. Only seven brothers may fulfil their good deeds in the world, while the remaining five are active on an inner plane. The number twelve also refers to the zodiac, in connection with the extraordinary importance of astrology within the community. Through its continuous publication of the ephemerides since World War I, the Rosicrucian Fellowship has probably contributed significantly to the widespread practice of astrology in the USA.

Throughout, Heindel's doctrine bears the stamp of Theosophy and → Anthroposophy, including these movement's belief in → reincarnation and the law of karma. Christ (the highest initiate of the solar period) incarnated at the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth, who still had to atone for bad karma by means of his crucifixion. According to Heindel, the universe consists of seven worlds (the world of God, of primal spirits, of the spirits of life, of the Divine Spirit, of thoughts, of desires, and at the lowest level, of bodies). In addition there are four kingdoms: those of minerals, plants, animals and men. Like the cosmos as a whole, men must develop through seven periods, each one ruled by one of the seven planets. The evolution of mankind is thus achieved through a succession of higher

ances, reminiscent of Theosophy and Anthroposophy. In the current time-period, the germ of the last race will develop from the melting-pot of nations in the USA, which as yet has no racial spirit of its own. The representative of this new race will be marked by a special kind of perfection. Heindel's conception of God is hierarchical as well, being composed of a supreme essence followed by seven great logoi. The cosmic sphere is the lowest and consists of 823,000 hierarchies. Christian Rosenkreuz is the symbolic name of an advanced spiritual teacher, who came to Europe in the 13th century. He remained in constant incarnation (although in different bodies) and influenced people like → Francis Bacon, → Jacob Boehme, → Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Richard Wagner.

In 1995 the Rosicrucian Fellowship reported a number of 8,000 members worldwide. Most members are found in the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the United Kingdom, and Brazil.

*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, Oceanside: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1909 ♦ *The Rosicrucian Mysteries*, Oceanside: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1911 ♦ *The Rosicrucian Philosophy: Questions and Answers*, Oceanside: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1922 ♦ *Letters to Students (Dec. 1910 to Jan. 1919, inclusive)*, Oceanside: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1925 ♦ *Simplified Scientific Astrology*, Oceanside: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1928.

*Lit.*: Monthly magazine *Rays from the Rosy Cross* ♦ Augusta Foss, *The Birth of the Rosicrucian Fellowship*, Rosicrucian Fellowship: Oceanside n.d. ♦ Augusta Foss, *Max Heindel, "A Short Biography"*, in: Max Heindel, *Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine*, Los Angeles: Phoenix Press, 1933, 19-31 ♦ Augusta Foss Heindel, *Memoirs about Max Heindel and the Rosicrucian Fellowship*, Oceanside: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1997 ♦ Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians*, York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1997, 124-125, 132 ♦ J. Gordon Melton, *Biographical Dictionary of American Cult and Sect Leaders* (Garland Reference Library of Social Science, vol. 212), New York/London: Garland, 1986, 108-109 ♦ J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, Detroit: Gale, 1996 (Fifth Edition), 720 ♦ Massimo Introvigne, *Il Cappello del Mago*, Milano: SugarCo., 1990, 204-205 ♦ Harald Lamprecht, *Neue Rosenkreuzer: Ein Handbuch*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004, 205-248 ♦ Horst E. Miers, *Lexikon des Geheimwissens*, München: Goldmann, 1993, 283-284 ♦ *Mitteilungen der anthroposophischen Gesellschaft* 1 (March 1913), 23-24 ♦ Pierre Montloin & Jean-Pierre Bayard, *Les Rose-Croix*, Paris: Culture, Art, Loisir, 1971, 243-247 ♦ Horst Reller (ed.), *Handbuch Religiöse Gemeinschaften*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1979<sup>2</sup>, 539-553 *passim* ♦ Eric Sablé, *Dictionnaire des Rose-Croix*, Paris: Dervy, 1996, 107-109,

202-203 ♦ A.A.W. Santing, "Notities bij de geschiedenis der R+Cr bewegingen in de 20<sup>e</sup> eeuw", *Das Rosenkreuz* 1 (1923), 13-16 ♦ Robert Vanloo, *Les Rose-Croix du Nouveau Monde*, Paris: Claire Vigne, 1996, 83-95 ♦ Fr. Wittemans, *Histoire des Rose-Croix*, Paris: Adyar, 1925, 166-168.

HANS THOMAS HAKL

## Helmont, Franciscus Mercurius van, \* 20.10.1614 Vilvorde, † 12.1698 Ter Borg

Son of → Joan Baptista van Helmont. Adviser to Prince Karl Ludwig, Elector of the Palatine (1617-1680), and Prince Christian August of Sulzbach (1622-1708). Granted patent of nobility and title of Baron by Emperor Leopold I for conciliation efforts among German princes. Imprisoned by the Roman Inquisition on the charge of "Judaizing" (1661-1663), but freed on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Famous as an alchemist, Kabbalist, Quaker convert, author, and physician. Skilled weaver, wood-worker, and tailor. Reputed to be a Rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism] and to possess the philosopher's stone (he denied both). Collaborated with → Christian Knorr von Rosenroth in the publication of the *Kabbala denudata* (1677, 1684). Close friend of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Locke, → Henry More, Anne, Viscountess Conway, and Sophie, Duchess of Hanover. Authored and co-authored books on chemistry, medicine, kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], philosophy, and theology.

Little is known about van Helmont's early life except that he was educated entirely at home by his father, the renowned chemist J.B. van Helmont, whose eclectic philosophy combined Paracelsian iatrochemistry, stoic and neoplatonic vitalism, and mystical elements. With the death of his two older brothers, van Helmont became even closer to his father, acting as his laboratory assistant. He did not attend university, probably because of his father's dissatisfaction with his own university education. Consequently the most formative influence on his early thought was that of his father. Like him, he was a vitalist and rejected material or mechanical explanations of physical events. He also rejected the galenic theory of humors and accepted his father's view that diseases are specific entities that attack specific organs and require specific chemically prepared remedies. Both the elder and younger van Helmont emphasized the psychological roots of illness, a theme emphasized in a work published toward the end of van Helmont's life, *The Spirit of Diseases* (1694). As a

result of his laboratory work with his father he became a skilled chemist and gained a reputation for discovering and compounding miraculous medicines, which explains why he was sought after as a physician throughout his life.

Van Helmont was not entirely happy with his education. In the preface to the posthumous edition of his father's works, which he edited and published in 1648, he describes himself as 'not content', desiring 'thorowly to know the whole sacred Art, or Tree of Life, and to enjoy it' (*Oriatrike*, 3). To this end he taught himself Latin and German by reading the New Testament many times in both languages and traveled throughout Europe seeking enlightenment from a variety of unorthodox sources, which included mystics, followers of → Jakob Boehme, Kabbalists, Collegiants, and Quakers. Between 1644 when he left home after his father's death and 1648 he became acquainted with members of the Palatine family, becoming especially close in later years to the two eldest sons, Karl Ludwig (1617-1680) and Rupert (1619-1682), and to the two most distinguished and learned of the Palatine Princesses, Elizabeth (1618-1680), to whom Descartes dedicated his *Principia Philosophiae*, and Sophie (1630-1714), later the Duchess of Hanover and patron of Leibniz. In 1650 he was invited to Sulzbach by Duke Christian August (1622-1708), who asked for van Helmont's help in resolving the conflict between the Lutherans and Catholics in his territories. Van Helmont received a patent of nobility from Emperor Leopold in 1658 in recognition of the diplomatic and practical services he performed for these members of the German aristocracy.

The second major influence shaping van Helmont's mature thought were the teachings of the Jewish Kabbalah. How he became acquainted with the Kabbalah is unknown, although it is probable that he came into contact with Jewish and Christian Kabbalists in Amsterdam. By the time he published his first book in 1667 his kabbalistic philosophy was formulated in a way that would never change throughout his long life. He was convinced that the Kabbalah represented the *prisca theologia* granted by God to Adam and that it consequently offered profound insights into the natural and supernatural worlds. Through the Kabbalah mankind would come to share a single religion and obtain the philosophical basis for a complete understanding of the natural world.

Van Helmont's role as advisor to Prince Christian August of Sulzbach led to his arrest by the Roman Inquisition on the charge of "judaizing" in 1661, which suggests that his kabbalistic phi-

losophy was already in place six years before the publication of his first book. Christian August's ardently Catholic cousin Philip Wilhelm, Duke of Neuburg, was convinced that van Helmont was undermining Christian August's Catholic faith by encouraging him to study Hebrew and the Kabbalah and by advocating the settlement of Protestants and Jews in the Sulzbach territories. He persuaded the Inquisition to imprison van Helmont on the grounds that van Helmont's judaizing had led him to reject the Sacraments, to interpret Christ's death and resurrection allegorically, and to claim that anyone could be saved in his own faith. Van Helmont was released after a year and half probably due to the intervention of Christian August.

While imprisoned van Helmont began work on his first book, his *Kurtzer Entwurff des eigentlichen Naturalphabets der heiligen Sprache* (Short sketch of the truly natural alphabet of the holy Hebrew language). In this work, van Helmont argued that Hebrew was the *Ursprache*, the divine language of creation in which words exactly expressed the essential natures of things. While time and ignorance had led to the corruption of Hebrew, van Helmont contended that he had rediscovered its original written form, which corresponded to the tongue movements made while pronouncing individual letters. Van Helmont was convinced this discovery would lead to the correct understanding of the biblical text and consequently provide the basis for an ecumenical religion rooted in the Jewish Kabbalah and capable of uniting Christians, Jews, and pagans. Furthermore, because it was the *Ursprache* Hebrew provided access to both the divine and natural worlds. Studying it would therefore lead to a better understanding of the natural world and to the advancement of learning in all fields, including natural science.

Van Helmont collaborated with Christian Knorr von Rosenroth in the publication of the *Kabbala denudata* (1677, 1684), a collection and translation of the largest number of kabbalistic texts (particularly Lurianic kabbalistic ones) available to the Latin-reading public until the 19th century. The first part was published in Sulzbach at the Hebrew press jointly financed by van Helmont, Knorr, and Christian August. On the basis of two kabbalistic concepts, *tikkun* (restoration) and *gilgul* (→ reincarnation), van Helmont believed he had discovered the foundation for an impregnable theodicy. By attributing the inequalities and misfortunes of life to the faults of previous existences, the Kabbalah reaffirmed God's goodness and justice. Human beings were responsible for their own sin

and suffering; but God was lenient and granted every soul the necessary time and assistance to achieve redemption. On the basis of the doctrine of *tikkun* van Helmont categorically rejected the existence of an eternal hell. Punishment was “medicinal”; it was only inflicted on a creature for its own good and improvement. This was an unorthodox and unusual view at the time since the fear of hell was considered the only way to keep most people virtuous.

Like → Francis Bacon, van Helmont envisioned Solomon’s Temple as a haven for the arts and sciences revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. He was convinced he had found a key to unlock the door to this Temple in the kabbalah, an idea illustrated in the frontispiece of the *Kabbala denudata*, which shows the kabbalah as a young maiden running towards the entrance of a building marked *Palatium Arcanorum* (Palace of Secrets). This explains why the *Kabbala denudata* was dedicated not simply to the “lover of Hebrew”, but also to the “lover of philosophy” and to “the lover of chemistry” (which, in this case, meant natural philosophy in general). For van Helmont science and religion, or chemistry and the Kabbalah, were two routes to recovering God’s original revelation.

Van Helmont’s life-long interest in reform and social progress is illustrated by two other early works he published in collaboration with Knorr, translations of Octavius Pisani’s *Lycurgus Italicus* (1666) and Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* (1667). Pisani, a lawyer and scholar, argued that crime was the product of social inequality and to prevent it required improved education, health, and welfare, a view endorsed by van Helmont. Like Boethius, van Helmont was both a philosopher and a statesman deeply concerned with the issue of justice. He shared Boethius’s neoplatonic and stoic orientation and concurred with his view that true happiness can be found only in God, who is the highest good. A constant theme in van Helmont’s writing is that real evil does not exist because God is all powerful and all good. Everything that happens to an individual happens for his ultimate benefit; virtue is never unrewarded, just as vice is always punished.

When it comes to defining the key elements in van Helmont’s alchemical and kabbalistic philosophy, his merging of the material and spiritual realms is crucial. His vitalistic, organic philosophy allowed no place for dead matter in the form of lifeless atoms propelled by external forces. Matter and spirit were dual aspects of a single entity, substance, and every created substance was engaged in constant transmutation and evolution towards a

higher state. Van Helmont took this idea from the Lurianic kabbalah, a form of kabbalah that arose in the 16th century among the disciples of Isaac Luria (1534-1572). Luria believed that everything was alive and full of souls, and that as a result of repeated reincarnations every soul would return to its divine source. This was the message of the treatise “Concerning the Revolutions of Souls”, written by his disciple Hayyim Vital, and included in a Latin translation in the *Kabbala denudata* (II, pt. 3, 244ff.). Van Helmont echoed this idea in his short treatise published in the *Kabbala denudata* (I, pt. 2, 308ff.) and later in English as *A Cabbalistical Dialogue* (1682).

Van Helmont’s epistemology, which stresses the role of the → imagination, intuition, and experiment in the acquisition of knowledge, reflects his alchemical, kabbalistic, and Paracelsian background. For van Helmont, as for many of his contemporaries, imagination and illumination are powerful forces that reveal hidden levels of reality and provide access to divine knowledge. The elder van Helmont stressed this point in all his works. Like his father, van Helmont also advocated experiment. An emphasis on experimental learning and the rejection of written authority is a constant refrain among natural philosophers during the scientific revolution, although scholars have recognized it as an exaggeration of actual scientific practice.

Van Helmont was an extensive traveler and a tireless proselytizer for his kabbalistic philosophy. In 1670 he arrived in England, where he met the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, who implored him to treat his good friend Anne, Viscountess Conway for her increasingly severe and incapacitating headaches. Although van Helmont could not help Conway as a physician, he could as a kabbalist by enabling her to envision her own suffering as part of the divine redemptive process of *tikkun*. Van Helmont stayed with Conway until her death nine years later. During this period they collaborated on several kabbalistic works (*Two Hundred Queries Concerning the Doctrine of the Revolution of Humans Souls*, 1684 and *A Cabbalistical Dialogue . . .*, 1682). Conway also wrote a small treatise on her own, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, in which she employed kabbalistic theories to refute the theories of Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza.

Van Helmont’s association with Conway is not only memorable for their mutual interest in the kabbalah but also for the profound effect their kabbalistic philosophy had on contemporary Quakers. The Quakers were ardent proselytizers.

But when they made their first missionary visit to Conway in 1675, they found more than they bargained for in van Helmont. A sect of “Helmontian” Quakers arose from this encounter. These Quakers found in the kabbalistic idea of reincarnation a solution to the problem posed by the fact that Christianity could not offer salvation to those who lived before Christ or in parts of the world that never heard of him. The doctrines of *tikkun* and *gilgul* solved this problem by providing individuals with the opportunity to be reincarnated until they achieved salvation. This solution was not to the liking of the Quakers as a whole. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, was particularly critical. After Conway’s death he called for a meeting to investigate van Helmont’s ideas. They were eventually rejected, and van Helmont left the Society, although he spoke with admiration of the Quakers to his dying day.

Van Helmont was a close friend of both Leibniz and Locke and may have acted as an intermediary between the two. He visited Hanover, where he discussed the kabbalah, → alchemy, medicine, and natural philosophy with Leibniz and Sophie, Duchess of Hanover. The Leibniz archives in Niedersächsische Bibliothek in Hanover provide evidence that the friendship between van Helmont and Leibniz was close. They shared an interest in chemical experiments and arts and manufacturing processes, discussing at length such practical inventions as more efficient wheelbarrows, improved flax combs, shoes with springs for fast getaways, a carriage that would run on a flat surface, better cooking pots, a method of spinning with two hands, and a way to print with feet. Leibniz was interested in van Helmont’s kabbalistic philosophy, encouraging him to publish his ideas and even helping him to the point of ghostwriting his last book, *Quaedam praemeditatae & consideratae cogitationes super quatuor priora capita libri primi Moysis* (1697), a kabbalistic interpretation of Genesis. Leibniz’s epitaph for van Helmont is a striking tribute to their friendship: ‘Here lies the other van Helmont, in no way inferior to his father./ He joined together the arts and sciences and/ Revived the sacred doctrines of Pythagoras and the Kabbalah./ Like Elaus he was able to make everything he needed with his own hands./ Had he been born in earlier centuries among the Greeks./ He would now be numbered among the stars’ (Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hanover, MS Helmont, LBr 389, fol. 125).

It has been alleged that Leibniz derived the term “monad” from various philosophers, ranging from → Giordano Bruno to Henry More. However,

a strong case can be made for van Helmont as his most direct and important source. Van Helmont accepted the kabbalistic idea that every created entity progresses to an increasingly higher state as a result of repeated reincarnations. “Dull”, “sluggish”, or “sleepy” monads, to use van Helmont’s adjectives, would eventually become “active”, and “awake” monads. Leibniz adopted this scheme in his own work, expressing it more philosophically. Michael Gottlieb Hansch described Leibniz drinking a cup of café latte and speculating that the monads existing in it might one day become human souls (*Godofredi Guilielmi Leibnitii Principia Philosophiae More Geometrico Demonstrata*, Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1728, 135). Leibniz’s correspondence with the Lutheran millenarian and advocate of universal salvation Johann Wilhelm Petersen reveals that by the end of his life he accepted the radical, kabbalistic idea of *tikkun* and believed that every created thing would eventually reach a state of perfection.

Van Helmont figures prominently in Locke’s correspondence. He met Locke during the 1680s when Locke was in exile in Holland and visited him later in England. Locke read van Helmont’s books, commented on them, and even helped to get them published. Excerpts from the *Kabbala denudata* exist among Locke’s manuscripts. Locke is clearly critical of the kabbalah. He entitles one of his notes “Dubia circa philosophiam Orientalem” and brings up a point he makes so forcefully throughout his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* about the danger of using ‘words without a clear and distinct notion’. But he was clearly interested in the very same questions broached in that work: what is the nature of God, the Messiah, spirits, and matter; why was the world created, and why did souls fall; do souls preexist and are they restored to their original purity? Furthermore, Locke accepted the possibility of reincarnation (*Essay*, II.xxvii.27).

Van Helmont’s medical and scientific theories also interested Locke. Locke was a member of the Royal Society and a practicing alchemist. In the journals Locke kept while in Holland, he included van Helmont’s recipes for making boot polish, preparing a primitive blackboard from kid’s skin, and preserving beer. Like Leibniz, Locke shared van Helmont’s interest in practical inventions, which explains the presence among Locke’s papers of a drawing dated 1688 illustrating a device made by van Helmont for polishing stones. Locke also recorded van Helmont’s cures for gangrene, plague, and scabies and his observations on the way crystals and pebbles ‘grow and nourish’.

Van Helmont’s friendship with Leibniz and



Locke indicates the difficulty of making clear-cut distinctions between rationalists, empiricists, esotericists, and scientists during the 17th century. Leibniz and Locke associated with van Helmont because of their mutual interest in alchemy and natural philosophy, their sincere interest in religious issues, and their desire to restore religious peace by promoting tolerance and ecumenism. For all their philosophical differences, Leibniz and Locke shared certain unorthodox religious views that were similar in many regards to those advocated by van Helmont. All three men rejected the doctrine of original sin, predestination, and the eternity of hell. Even more significantly, they rejected Christ's essential role in salvation. Orthodox Christians routinely dubbed any diminution in Christ's role as "Jewish". We have seen that van Helmont was imprisoned by the Inquisition as a "judaizer". The same label was attached to Locke, for he was accused of being, and probably was, a Socinian or Arian. The Arian Jesus is far more like the Kabbalah's *Adam Kadmon* than the Christian Christ. He is the first among creatures and the mediator between God and man, but not in any way equal or consubstantial with the Father.

Van Helmont offers an example on the contribution made by heterodox and esoteric thinkers to ideas that became the hallmark of Enlightenment thought, namely a belief in scientific progress and a commitment to religious toleration. Van Helmont's published work advocates an ideal of toleration that makes inspiring reading to this day, especially towards the Jews. His philosemitism was unique because he accepted Jews as Jews and not simply as potential Christians converts. Through the process of *tikkun* anyone could and would be saved, whatever his faith. Furthermore, human beings were responsible for restoring the world to its prelapsarian perfection. Experimental science was therefore a laudable occupation and the key to progress.

*Alphabeti vere naturalis Hebraici brevissima Delineatio*. . . Sulzbaci, 1657 [1667] [German edition (1667); Dutch (1697)] ♦ *Des fürtrefflichen hochweisen Herrn Sever. Boetti weil. Bürgermeisters zu Rom, christlich-vernunftgemesser Trost und Unterricht, in Widerwertigkeit und Bestürzung über dem vermeyten Wohl – oder Uebelstand der Bösen and Frommen*. . . Sultzbach, 1667 [2nd German edition (1697)] ♦ A

*Cabbalistical Dialogue in answer to the Opinion of a learned Doctor in Philosophy and Theology, that the World was made of Nothing*. . . To which is subjoined a Rabbinical and Paraphrastic Exposition of Genesis I. . . London, 1682 [First part appeared *Kabbala denudata*, I, 308ff.] ♦ *The Divine Being and its Attributes*. . . London, 1693 [Dutch edition (1694)] ♦ *Lycurgus Italicus*. . . Sulzbaci, 1666 [German edition (1666)] ♦ *Paradoxal Discourses of F.M. van Helmont*. . . London, 1685 [German edition (1691)] ♦ *Quaedam praemeditatae & consideratae cogitationes super quatuor priora capita libri primi Moysis*. . . Amsterdam, 1697 [German edition 1698; Dutch (1698); English (1701)] ♦ *The Spirit of Diseases, – or Diseases from the Spirit*. . . London, 1694 [Latin and Dutch edition (1692)] ♦ *Two Hundred Queries moderately propounded concerning the Doctrine of the Revolution of Humane Souls*. . . London, 1684 [German edition (1686)].

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 \* 12.1.1579 Brussels, † 30.12.1644  
 Brussels

1. LIFE 2. PSYCHOLOGY AND  
 EPISTEMOLOGY 3. NATURE  
 4. MEDICINE 5. PHARMACOLOGY  
 AND ALCHEMY

#### 1. LIFE

Joan Baptista van Helmont was the youngest child of Marie de Stassart and Christian van Helmont, who died one year after his son's birth. Van Helmont's education was considered of prime importance. At an early age he began his studies in philosophy and classics at the University of Leuven, but both the academic climate and the subjects taught left him deeply disappointed. Frustrated, he turned to astronomy, algebra and Euclidean geometry, hoping to find more truth than in scholastic logic. His enthusiasm waned when he discovered that the Ptolemaic worldview was less accurate than the Copernican; certainty concerning the world system seemed unobtainable. Van Helmont claimed that he finished his philosophical studies at the age of fourteen, but refused the title *magister artium* to express his contempt for the curriculum. He was offered a well-endowed canonry on the condition that he would read theology, but he declined on the grounds that a servant of the church should be poor. By then, the Jesuit order in Leuven had developed an alternative philosophy curriculum and van Helmont decided to take several courses. He studied with the renowned Martinus del Rio (1551-1608), who lectured on → magic and authored the *Disquisitionem magicarum*, a monumental work on → witchcraft and the occult [→ occult / occultism] in all its forms. But van Helmont could not identify with the Jesuits either and turned to Stoicism, aspiring to the strict lifestyle of silence and obedience characteristic of the Pythagoreans. Then, he had a spiritual experience; through a vision, he realized that he had taken the wrong path and, while apparently modest, had become arrogant. This episode marks the beginning of his life as a Christian mystic. He began to study the works of Thomas à Kempis and Johannes Tauler. Influenced by these writers, he yearned for God to impart the ultimate truth to him. In the same period, he developed an interest in medicinal herbals. After reading Matthioli and Dioscorides, he concluded that since late antiquity no progress had been made in the field – there had only been speculation upon the

“grades” and “qualities” of herbs. He then briefly studied law, but lost interest when he discovered that human law is always subject to change. Driven by altruism and the desire to know nature, he again turned to medicine. He read Fuchs, Fernel, and other contemporary authors. He studied the complete works of Hippocrates and → Avicenna, and read Galenus twice. By his own account, he read and took notes on six hundred books on the subject. At the age of seventeen he was offered a lectureship in surgery, but after a couple of months he realized he was ill-equipped for the task – he had neither the necessary education nor the research facilities. In 1599 he earned his doctorate in medicine, but he was so disillusioned by the academic world that he abandoned it permanently. Upon graduation he started to practice a form of chemical medicine. From 1599 to 1605 he toured Europe. He visited Switzerland and Italy from 1600 to 1602, and France and England from 1602 to 1605. The ignorance and pedantry he encountered on his travels left him disappointed yet again. He rejected offers of private employment by people of influence, such as Ernest of Bavaria and Emperor → Rudolf II. In 1609 he married Margarite van Ranst, a relative of the Merode family, and retreated to their country estate in Vilvorde on the outskirts of Brussels. From 1609 to 1616 he dedicated himself to meditation and experimental research. Van Helmont was fascinated with *pyrotechnia*, which he hoped could penetrate the nature of things, and called himself *Philosophus per ignem*. To him, *pyrotechnia* specified chemical research conducted within a broad and modernized alchemistic conceptual framework. In studying the works of → Paracelsus he believed he was on the right path – but he also believed he needed divine enlightenment to discern the falsehoods in → Paracelsus' writings. Seven years later van Helmont had another mystical experience, after which he considered himself initiated as an *adeptus naturae*. By that time he had fathered four daughters, and a son who would follow in his footsteps. Believing that he had succeeded in getting gold from mercury, he baptized his son Mercurius in 1618 [→ Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont].

In 1617 van Helmont wrote a treatise that would have a dramatic impact on his life. *De magnetica vulnerum curatione* concentrated on the controversy between Rudolphus Goclenius, a protestant professor of philosophy and medicine from Germany, and Jean Roberti, a Belgian Jesuit. In his works, Goclenius had championed a magnetic weapon-salve said to cure wounds from

a distance when applied to the weapon that had inflicted the wound. The cure was based on the pseudo-Paracelsic writing *Archidoxis magica*. In 1617 Roberti attacked Goclenius and accused him of idolatry, blasphemy and black magic. A number of learned men, including van Helmont, joined the discussion. Although in his treatise van Helmont declared himself both a Paracelsist and a fervent Catholic, he nevertheless found fault with both parties. He attacked Goclenius on the basis of factual evidence, Roberti for his theological approach of the matter: theologians do not know about medicine and therefore should not concern themselves with medical questions. The argument was punctuated with venomous remarks against the Jesuits. In 1621 the treatise, which until then had been distributed in small circles only, appeared in print in Paris, most likely without van Helmont's permission. Roberti reacted and the incident resulted in van Helmont's formal indictment by the Inquisition. He confessed in 1627 and 1630, and recanted, but was nevertheless arrested in 1634. His works were confiscated, and he was temporarily incarcerated and placed under house arrest until 1636. Despite his public renunciation, his letters to Marin Mersenne (written between 1630 and 1631) show clearly that his convictions had not changed significantly since 1621. This would suggest that van Helmont's most innovative works were written during the last ten years of his life. Until that he remained rather faithful to the ideas of Paracelsus. It is only in his final years, when he wrote his *Opus Magnum* that, for various reasons, he clearly distanced himself from his predecessor in the pyrotechnical art.

Van Helmont did not receive an ecclesiastical imprimatur for his work on fevers until 1642, the final year of legal procedures against him. He died in 1644. Two years after his death, his widow obtained official vindication of her late husband. Van Helmont's principal work, the *Ortus medicinae*, and the collected *Opuscula medica inaudita* were published posthumously in Amsterdam in 1648 by his son, Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, and received wide international acclaim.

## 2. PSYCHOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Van Helmont's psychology is integral to his theory of knowledge and was firmly rooted in the neoplatonic tradition [→ Neoplatonism]. Man alone was created in the image of God. Contrary to angels, man has a physical body, but while angels are an image of the image of God, man

is *imago Dei*. Distinguishable but not separable from the immortal *mens* is the knowing part of the highest soul, the *intellectus*. From Paracelsus, van Helmont adopted the concept of the *archeus* as the vital principle. Man is governed by the *archeus influens* situated in the *duumvirate* (stomach and spleen). The *archeus influens* moves freely through the body; the *archei institi* are secondary and govern the individual organs. Before the Fall, the human body's *archei* were governed directly by the *mens-intellectus*. After having eaten from the tree of knowledge – interpreted as a cryptic reference to sexual intercourse – the immortal mind was left in a state of shock. Then, disgusted by the animal urge to procreate, it obeyed both nature and the divine will, and withdrew into one locus, the *archeus* of the stomach, located in the cardiac orifice (*in ore stomachi*). There it curled up in the center of the sensitive soul, which took control of the body. Van Helmont believes that since the Fall man is condemned from the moment of conception: in accordance with the rest of nature, he must spend his time on earth in a “middle-life” (*media vita*), a state of reduced vitality in which the *archei* ultimately get exhausted, especially by digestion and disease. When they have finished their inner cycles they end in “ultimate life” (*ultima vita*). The lower mortal soul, which man shares with animals, is no more than a vague reflection of the *mens-intellectus* from which it receives its light. The cognitive faculty of this *anima sensitiva* is the *ratio*. The sensitive soul is governed by the *duumvirate* (the stomach and the spleen), while the light of the immortal soul radiates via the heart up to the head. Conform neoplatonic thought, the highest form and its light become less distinctive as they distance themselves from the center. (i.e.: the rational brain is less enlightened).

The sensitive soul's faculty of thought is guided by the *imaginatio* [→ Imagination]. Given that this process leads to uncertain knowledge, van Helmont opposes scholastic exaltation of the *ratio*: scholasticism should never have adopted the heathen, Aristotelian definition of man as an *animal rationale*. Traditional Aristotelian logic, expanded upon by scholasticism, provokes van Helmont to a radical, hermetically inspired skepticism. True knowledge is only obtainable through divine enlightenment of the *mens-intellectus*, and this enlightenment is only bestowed on elect Christians. God touches all forms, but only in a state of ecstasy can man reflect the light he receives back to God. Then, for a moment, Adamic knowledge is restored, and man compre-

hends the essence of things in God and in himself. To this end, man must practice a “spiritual Paternoster”. Van Helmont explains this practice by referring to the Pseudo-Dionysian [→ Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita] method of *unknowing* as elaborated in *De mystica theologia*, a method by which thought is gradually separated from the world of the senses. In this context, van Helmont refutes the warnings issued by both rabbis and schools of → mysticism that ecstasy should be avoided because of its harmful consequences. It should be noted that van Helmont’s concept of divine enlightenment does not imply that it will lead to full knowledge; it only steers the pyrotechnician’s investigations of nature in the right direction. Van Helmont constantly emphasizes the value of experimental research, but also considers dreams and visions of prime importance in the quest for knowledge. The method he employed himself was to visualize the object of research and enter into imaginative conversation with it. Subsequently, he would fall asleep and experience a meaningful dream containing the answer to his questions. Late in life, for example, he envisioned the immortal soul of man as having no gender traits and as therefore androgynous.

Van Helmont states that research into nature should always serve true medicine. God has given doctors the role of mediator; they are meant to cure people of diseases. He justly inflicts upon them as punishment for their sins. Although Hippocrates was a heathen, van Helmont considers him an enlightened spirit whom he values over → Hermes Trismegistus, and often refers to his ideas. Van Helmont refutes mainstream medicine as taught by the scholastics, who based their theories on Galenus and his Arab commentators, particularly Avicenna. Like all Paracelsists, he exaggerates scholastic conservatism for the sake of controversy. On the other hand, he strives to correct several misguided opinions of Paracelsus. Van Helmont himself was to be the first to explain the foundations of true medicine, which he claims were revealed to him by God.

### 3. NATURE

Van Helmont rejects the doctrine of the four elements and their qualities, which had dominated western thought since Empedocles. He bases his own doctrine of the elements on the biblical Creation story. Water, heaven and earth pre-existed the first day of creation. God separated the higher from the lower waters by creating the firmament and ordained that the firmament would separate the waters for as long as the world existed. There

are two original elements: water and air. The bible does not mention their creation; both are referred to cryptically by the word “heaven”. Water and air are original elements because it is impossible to convert one into the other, as van Helmont claims to have proven through experiment. Earth to him was no element. God created earth simultaneously with water and air, but because earth can be made fluid *per ignem*, it is essentially water. Given that the elements were created before God created the sun on the fourth day, they are cold by nature. The creation of fire is not mentioned in Genesis and fire is therefore not an element. In fact, van Helmont considers this a heathen opinion. Fire can only turn the elements inside out, so to speak, so that objects are reduced to their smallest components. According to van Helmont, Aristotle was mistaken in postulating the non-existence of *vacua* in nature. Van Helmont lacked the proper experimental framework to prove the existence of a vacuum, but given the fact that air can be compressed, he argues that there are many empty spaces in air which together constitute a whole, the *Magnale magnum*. This *Magnale magnum* functions as the soul of the world. It is not a *lumen* but a *forma adsistens*: not a constituent of air, but co-existing with it.

The primary reason for van Helmont’s lasting reputation as a scientist is his introduction of the term *gas*, which he most likely derived from the word *chaos*. He identified fifteen different gases, including (the one, now known as) carbon dioxide, and was the first to articulate the difference between air, water-vapour and *gas*. Gases are object-specific: they embody objects in their finest material form. *Gas* equals the *archeus*, which is partly spiritual and partly material although its kernel is predominantly spiritual.

In conjunction with the concept *gas* van Helmont invented the concept of *blas*, a term derived from the Dutch word *blazen* (to blow). Together they form a duality in van Helmont’s philosophy of nature. *Blas* is astral in origin and functions as the general principle of movement. Van Helmont associates it with the Hippocratic *enhormon*. *Blas* exists in various forms: *blas motivum*, for example, spurs things into motion and *blas alterativum* catalyzes change. Van Helmont proposes his concept of *blas* as an alternative to Aristotle’s doctrine of movement, considered by him a heathen doctrine since the concept of God as the “unmoved mover” curtails God’s omnipotence. Instead, he postulates that God implanted all forms of *blas* in the original *semina*, out of which all things come into being. This theory would explain the

possibility of “action at distance” in the Paracelsic worldview, which is dominated by the concept of *sympathia*. All of nature is animated by a certain *sensus*. Together, the planets emanate a *blas astrorum*, which, through the *Magnale*, can spread through the whole world. Its influence, however, is limited.

Van Helmont explicitly rejects traditional → astrology: the planets do not control the movements of animals and plants, and certainly not those of men; and neither do they determine the future. They can, however, predict it, because God has preordained their movements for all eternity in conjunction with events on earth. Therefore the *blas humanum* follows the *blas stellarum*, but without the causality assumed in traditional astrology. Thus, van Helmont also rejects the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm in the Paracelsian sense. In this context, van Helmont repeatedly cites Psalm 19:2: ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork’. Knowledge of the future is primarily a question of revelation, he claims, citing Acts 2:17: ‘... and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams’. Here, the spleen, connected with both the *mens-intellectus* and the *anima sensitiva-ratio*, plays a crucial role. Despite his profound criticism of Aristotle, however, van Helmont maintains the entelechic principle and thinks in a wholly vitalistic way.

#### 4. MEDICINE

Van Helmont rejects the view held by Galenic medicine that the digestive system is threefold. He describes it as sixfold, with a specific fermentation process occurring at every stage. According to van Helmont, fermentation takes place everywhere in nature and in man, and is in close connection with the *archaeus*. He derives his definition from the fermentation concept used in alchemy, though the two are not identical. After the first stage of digestion, when the acids of the spleen are blown into the stomach, the food is converted into a white gastric juice called *chylum*. In subsequent digestions (in the small intestine, the mesentery veins, and the left ventricle) the venous blood becomes more subtle. In line with the Galenic view that the heart partition is porous, van Helmont states that the venous blood is pumped from the right to the left ventricle. There, a local *fermentum* transforms it to arterial blood and it becomes spiritualized. The final digestion of the blood takes place in the individual organs. If diges-

tion processes are disrupted, various diseases can occur. It is, for instance, harmful for the gastric juice to pass the first digestion. Strangely, nothing in van Helmont’s works indicates that he was familiar with Harvey’s views on blood circulation. Van Helmont rejects Galenist physiology and pathology, which are based on the doctrine of the humours (blood, slime, yellow bile and black bile), and hold that an excess of any of these humours causes disease. Van Helmont considers this doctrine a malicious fiction. Van Helmont’s own pathology, which he himself calls “Platonic”, maintains that disease is caused by local chemical changes. Every disorder has its own form. Disease is a light that develops into an *archeus* and penetrates the body. This hostile *archeus* then attacks a vital *archeus* and tries to overpower it. Part of the vital *archeus* is subsumed, while another part continues to resist. Eventually this leads to inflammation of a larger or smaller part of the physical body. Using various anatomical, physiological and logical arguments, van Helmont tries to refute the ancient doctrine of the catarrh once and for all. The catarrh doctrine stipulated that disease occurs when food fumes rise from the stomach to the head, condense and subsequently pour throughout the body. Notwithstanding the connection with his own concept of local *semina*, van Helmont criticizes the Paracelsic idea of *Tartarus* as a catalyst of disease for being too materialistic. And he believes Paracelsus is again mistaken when explaining disease as linked to the *Tria prima* (sal, sulphur and mercury), as he does in his widely read *Archidoxis*. In accordance with his rejection of the paracelsian system of → correspondences between the macro- and microcosm, he also rejects the doctrine of signatures.

#### 5. PHARMACOLOGY AND ALCHEMY

Adam and Solomon are believed to have been acquainted with the medicinal properties of herbs, stones and words. From the work of Flavius Josephus, van Helmont concludes that Solomon wrote many books on the power of herbs and plants; they were lost during the reign of his son Rehabiam, when a prophet ordered these books to be burned out of fear that the Jews would forget their God. Van Helmont believes that through initiation and experimentation the medicinal qualities of these herbs can be rediscovered, although the secret knowledge will only be truly revealed with the coming of Elias Artista (the mysterious “Messiah of Nature” first mentioned by Paracelsus). Van Helmont has not written an extensive Pharmacopoeia, as one might have



expected. He does, however, emphasize that the medicinal qualities of naturally poisonous herbs and metals can be restored through *pyrotechnia*. Purified metals have especially powerful medicinal properties because, contrary to herbs, they are immutable. He also believes in the use of medicinal minerals, and in the therapeutic effect of words and texts. In this respect, he does not refer to *kabalah*, but to certain incantations used by the catholic church.

Van Helmont's discourse on "Butler's Stone" reflects his interest in → alchemy. The treatise concerns an Irish nobleman, Butler, who for some time was detained as a prisoner at van Helmonts estate at Vilvorde. Butler had in his possession a stone with which he seemed to be able to swiftly cure all illnesses; van Helmont had read about such cures in Paracelsus but had never before witnessed one in reality. After Butler had dipped the stone in a bottle of olive oil, van Helmont found that the oil indeed cured several of his patients, although they suffered from different kinds of illness. After some time, however, the olive oil lost its healing power, and Butler refused to reveal the secret of his stone. After several years of experimentation, van Helmont was convinced he was able to reproduce the stone; he called it "Drif", and his treatise contains almost the complete formula. This universal medicine he believed reflected the unity of the immortal *mens-intellectus*.

In his work on the fountain of Spa, of 1624, van Helmont had described an important experiment which disproved the natural transmutation of metals: he demonstrated that iron could not be converted into copper by adding copper sulphate. Later, he claimed that although he could not produce the Philosophers' Stone himself, an initiated visitor had given him a piece of it. For him, there was no contradiction: while he remained convinced that the transmutation of metals was not possible by natural chemical reactions, he believed it could take place as a supernatural process, similar to what took place in the eucharist. In the presence of witnesses, van Helmont demonstrated this by bringing about a transmutation.

As a Paracelsist, however, he was far more interested in the elixir of life, which could be produced from the tree of life. After extensive research, van Helmont had a vision in which he experienced himself in a "timeless state". He saw the Cedars of the Lebanon, which, as he concludes in retrospect, had existed since the beginning of the world. The wood is the basic ingredient for the elixir; this "tree of life" (as he calls the Cedar) can prolong

human life for up to 120 years. The key to the formula, however, was in the liquor *Alkabeſt*, the universal solvent, which would lead to numerous speculations well into the 18th century. Van Helmont indicated that revealing the secret would be like casting pearls before swine, and therefore withheld the formula.

Van Helmont is a transitional figure in the history of chemistry: while theories and terminologies associated with traditional alchemy are present in his work, his methodologies have more in common with those of the modern chemist. In fact, he is considered to be one of the founders of iatrochemistry, a discipline that employs chemistry for medical purposes. He is also considered the most important and original representative of the second generation of Paracelsists. While clearly taking his distance from Paracelsus in various respects, he critically developed the latter's method and concepts. Paracelsus is praised by him mostly for his pyrotechnical abilities and his arcana, but van Helmont believes to be superior to his predecessor even in these domains. It is important that van Helmont's (al)chemical, scientific experiments and his philosophical speculations be seen in the context emphasized by himself: they are parts of a new kind of medicine. Traditional school medicine is satanically inspired and based upon an uncritical copying of the heathenish Galen. Among the Christians, God has elected a small group of people to introduce a new medicine, and it has fallen to van Helmont to establish its foundations. By doing so, he opens a new era in the history of humanity.

Standard edition: *Ortus medicinae. Id est, initia physicae inaudita. Progressus medicae novus, in morborum ultionem, ad vitam longam . . . Edente auctoris filio, Francisco Mercurio Van Helmont, cum ejus praefatione ex Belgico translata*, Amsterdam, apud Ludovicum Elzevirum, 1648 ♦ *Opuscula medica inaudita*. 1: *De lithiasi*. 2: *De febris*. 3: *De humoribus Galeni*. 4: *De peste*. *Editio secunda*, Amsterdam: apud Ludovicum Elzevirum, 1648; Facsimile edition: Impression Anastaltique, Culture et Civilisation, 115, Bruxelles: Avenu Gabriel Lebon, 1966.

*Dageraad, oft nieuwe opkomst der geneeskunst, in verborgen grondregelen der Nature . . . Noit in 't licht gesien, en van den Autheur selve in het Nederduits beschreven*, Amsterdam: Jan Jacob Schipper, 1659; Rotterdam: Johannes Naeranus, 1660 ♦ Antwerp: facsimile reprint of the Rotterdam edition by the Vlaamse Academie der Geneeskunde (Flemish Academy of Medicine), 1944; idem, Amsterdam: W.N. Schors, 1978 ♦ Letters: these are published in P. Tannery and C. de Waard (eds.), *Correspondance du P. Marin Merſenne*, vols. 1-3 (Paris, 1932-1946). Of the fourteen letters written between 1630 and

1631, three are to be found in part II and eleven in part III.

Translations of the *Ortus Medicinae: Aufgang der Artzney-Kunst, das ist: Noch nie erhörte Grund-Lehren von der Natur, zu einer neuen Beförderung der Artzney-Sachen, sowol die Kranckheiten zu vertreiben als ein langes Leben zu erlangen. Geschrieben von Johann Baptista von Helmont, auf Merode, Royenborch, Oorschot, Pellines etc. Erbherrn. Anitzo auf Beyrathen dessen Herrn Sohnes, Herrn H. Francisci Mercurii Freyherrn von Helmont, In die Hochteutsche Sprache übersetzt in seine rechte Ordnung gebracht, mit Beyfügung dessen, was in der Ersten auf Niederländisch gedruckten Edition, genannt Die Morgen Röhre . . . auch einem vollständigen Register*, Sultzbach: Johann Andreae Endters Sel. Söhne, 1683; Reprinted and edited by W. Pagel and F. Kamp, 2 vols., Munich: Kösel, 1971. This translation by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth was made in close cooperation with Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont. They added several previously unknown treatises to the *Opera omnia* and inserted supplementary passages translated from the *Dageraad*. This translation still stands the test of contemporary criticism.

*Oriatrike, Or, Physick Refined. The Common Errors therein Refuted, And the whole Art Reformed & Rectified: Being a New Rise and Progress of Philosophy and Medicine, for the Destruction of Diseases and Prolongation of Life . . . now faithfully rendred into English, in tendency to a common good, and the increase of true Science*; by J.C. Sometime of M.H. Oxon [John Chandler of Magdalen Hall, Oxford], Printed for Lodowick Loyd, 1662, London: Second edition, 1664 as *Van Helmont's Works*. This translation is useful, although sometimes incorrect.

*Les Oeuvres de Jean Baptiste Van Helmont, traittant des principes de médecine et physique, pour la guérison assurée des maladies: De la traduction de M. Jean Leconte, docteur médecin*, Lyons: I.A. Huguétan, 1670. An unsatisfactory selection of pieces.

*Lit.*: Walter Pagel, *J.B. Van Helmont: Einführung in die philosophische Medizin des Barock*, Berlin, 1930 ♦ idem, *Joan Baptista Van Helmont: Reformer of science and medicine*, Cambridge-Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1982 ♦ idem, *The Smiling Spleen: Paracelsianism in Storm and Stress*, Basel-Sydney: S. Karger, 1984 ♦ idem, *Religion and Neoplatonism in Renaissance Medicine*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1985 ♦ idem, *From Paracelsus to Van Helmont: Studies in Renaissance Medicine and Science*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1986 ♦ Allen G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2 vols., New York: Science History Publications, 1977, vol. 2, 295-379 ♦ idem, *Chemistry and the Medical Debate, van Helmont to Boerhaave*, Canton: Science History Publications, 2001 ♦ Paulo Alves Porto, *Van Helmont e o Conceito de Gas: Química e Medicina no século XVII*, Sao Paulo: Educ, 1995 ♦ Berthold Heinecke, *Wissenschaft und Mystik bei J.B. van Helmont (1579-1644)*, Bern-Wien: Peter Lang, 1996 ♦ Paul Nève de

Mévergnies, *Jean Baptist van Helmont: Philosophie par le feu*, Liège-Paris, 1935 ♦ Henri de Waele, *J.B. Van Helmont*, Office de Publicité, S.C., Anc. Etabliss. Bruxelles: J. Lebègue & C., 1947 ♦ Franz Strunz, *Johann Baptist Van Helmont (1577-1644): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften*, Leipzig und Wien, 1907 ♦ Friedrich Giesecke, *Die Mystik Joh. Baptist van Helmonts (1577-1644)*, Leitmeritz: Buchdruckerei von Dr. Karl Pickert, 1908 ♦ A.J.J. Van de Velde, "Helmontania", in: *Verslagen en mededelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, Ledeberg/Gent: N.V. Drukkerij Erasmus, 1929, 453-476; 715-737; 857-879; 1932, 110-122; 1936, 3-51 ♦ William R. Newman & Lawrence M. Principe, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

ALBERT ROODNAT

## Hermes Trismegistus I: Antiquity

1. THOT AND HERMES 2. HERMES TRISMEGISTUS 3. THE GENEALOGY OF HERMES 4. HERMETIC DISCIPLES AND TEACHERS

### 1. THOT AND HERMES

In the later Graeco-Roman world Hermes Trismegistus was seen as an Egyptian sage of remote antiquity whose knowledge of both the material and the spiritual world and their interrelationship were of great help to get some control of the vicissitudes of life and to bring the soul into harmony with its divine origin. Though his name shows that the Greeks saw some correspondences between this sage and their own god Hermes, the figure of Hermes Trismegistus was in reality firmly rooted in the religious soil of Egypt. Already in the 5th century B.C., Herodotus identified the Greek Hermes with the Egyptian god Thot, and most probably he was not the first to do so: without any comment he called the cult-centre of Thot "Hermopolis" (later Hermopolis Magna) and mentioned the existence of a temple of Hermes at Boubastis (*Histories*, II, 67 and 138, resp.). Hermes Trismegistus originated as the Greek interpretation of the god Thot (*interpretatio graeca*), just as on the Jewish side Thot was identified with → Moses (*interpretatio judaica*).

The career of the moon god Thot in the Egyptian pantheon and his complex relationship with many other gods is well known (Boylan, Kurth). His most characteristic feature, which in some way determined most of his other qualities, was that he was considered the inventor of count-

ing and writing. He was represented as an ibis or a baboon and as an ibis-headed or baboon-headed man. Since the moon receives its light from the sun, he was considered the latter's nightly representative and as such he often appears with the sun god in the solar bark, as the "Scribe of Re". At the same time, he was also the protector and healer of the moon: its waning and reappearance was associated with the stolen or damaged Eye of Horus, which on the day of the full moon was retrieved or healed by Thot, who thus became the restorer of cosmic order. As a god of the moon, Thot became the chief measurer of time, who distinguished seasons, months and years and also determined the regnal years of the pharaohs. Under this aspect, he became the ordering principle of civil and religious life in general, the "Lord of laws". The institutions of temple-worship and the plans of the temples were ascribed to him. He was the "Lord of the divine words", i.e. of the sacred formulae of ritual and cult, including the invocations of the gods in magical practices, but he was also the one who spoke for the gods. His wisdom concerning things divine made him the magician *par excellence*, the one "great in magic", to whom a great number of charms and spells were attributed. As the "One who knows", the "All-knowing", he was considered the inventor of script, language and literature and of all kinds of sciences, and even, especially in the Ptolemaic period, the creator, who had made the world by thought and speech. Thot was also an important god of the dead: from the earliest times to the Greek period, he was seen as psychopompus, the one who brought the dead to the other world, where he also played a part in the judgment ceremony. Just as he had done in the case of Osiris, he reconstructed the corpse of the deceased and opened his mouth in order to give him the breath of life. In the 4th century B.C., the main characteristics of Thot were already known to the Greeks. Plato, who calls him Theuth, knew that he was an Egyptian God, to whom the ibis was sacred and who had invented numbers and counting, geometry and astronomy, draughts and gambling, and in particular the art of writing (the usefulness of which was questioned by king Thamus, who is the humanized Egyptian god Ammon; *Phaedrus*, 274c-275b).

Thot's function as psychopompus may have been one of the reasons that prompted the Greeks to identify him with their god Hermes. According to the *Homeric Hymn on Hermes*, 19, he was the son of Zeus and Maia, born on Mount Cyllene. The name Hermes derived from the heaps of

stones (*herma*, *hermaion*) that served as landmarks. From the earliest times Hermes had been the god who guided and protected the wayfarer. Originally a squared ithyphallic pillar with a head, his image became gradually more anthropomorphic, which resulted in his most well-known representation, with winged sandals, a staff, and his characteristic traveller's hat. Herms were *inter alia* set up at crossroads, on market places, at the gateways of cities and the borders of estates. As god of the road he also became the god who guided the dead to the underworld, which became a popular literary motif but had firm roots in ordinary life. Because of his inventiveness he was called "cleverest of the gods", even "crafty", and so he also became the god of merchants and thieves. Having made the lyre and played it on the first day of his life (*Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, 17, 39-61), he became the patron of → music and the musicians. He was the eloquent messenger of the gods (cf. also Acts 14:11-12), the interpreter (*hermēneus*) of their will, which led Plato to a more philosophical interpretation of Hermes as expressing both the positive and the negative power of speech (*Cratylus*, 407e-408b). This view was further developed in the later philosophical, especially Stoic, tradition, in which Hermes became identical with the Logos and so even became the creator of the world. The anti-gnostic writer Hippolytus (ca. 225) says of the Greeks, and the gnostic → Naassenes, that they honour Hermes as the Logos, 'because he is the interpreter (*hermēneus*) and creator (*dēmiourgos*) of everything that has come into being, that comes into being and that will come into being' (*Refutatio* V, 7, 29; cf. IV, 48, 2: 'The Logos is called Hermes by the Greeks'). These Hellenistic philosophical speculations did not yet exist when the Greeks began to identify their Hermes with the Egyptian Thot, but they certainly facilitated the emergence of Hermes Trismegistus in the centuries around the beginning of our era. In the Hellenistic period Hermes also became a god of → magic, but it seems most likely that this was primarily due to his merging with Thot. The two gods came from completely different cultural and religious backgrounds, and, in fact, their identification was only based on a superficial resemblance. The common features that led to their identification may have been their role as guides to the underworld, as messengers of the gods, and as inventors of arts and crafts.

## 2. HERMES TRISMEGISTUS

It would be wrong to see in Hermes Trismegistus no more than Thot in Greek disguise.

This even holds for the magical papyri, as can be seen from the prayers that are sometimes addressed to Hermes (Trismegistus), though it is in these papyri that the continuity between the Egyptian Thot and the Hellenistic Thot-Hermes is most clearly visible (Festugière, *Révélation*, I, 283-308). Nevertheless, even in the later period there remained authors who liked to describe Hermes Trismegistus with almost all the characteristic features of the Egyptian Thot, as, for instance, appears from a hermetic text quoted by Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julianum* I, 41. The hermetist, the same who composed 15 hermetic book in Athens, declared that Hermes, *inter alia*, had measured the land of Egypt and divided it into nomes and smaller units, had cut the irrigation canals, and that he was the maker of contracts and the inventor of all kinds of sciences and arts.

The name Trismegistus also reflects Egyptian usage. It is first attested in the late 2nd century A.D., in Athenagoras, *Legatio*, 28, 6, who says that Hermes, 'who is called Trismegistus', just like Alexander the Great linked his family with the gods (Fowden, 216-217). The closing line of the Roman satirist Martial's epigram on the gladiator Hermes (*Epigrammata*, V, 24, 15), 'Hermes, the only one who is all things, the thrice-one' (*Hermes omnia solus ter unus*), cannot be taken as proof of the existence of the term Trismegistus in the last decades of the 1st century A.D. (Versnel). In Egyptian the superlative was expressed by repeating the positive two or three times, and this was taken over in literal Greek translations: "great (*megas*) and great (*megas*) (and great [*megas*])" means "very great" or "greatest". Probably because of a Greek misunderstanding of the Egyptian writing of the superlative, already the Raffia decree of 217 B.C. calls Hermes 'the greatest (*megistos*) and the greatest (*megistos*)'. In an oracle text from Saqqara which dates from 168-164 B.C., mention is made three times of "the greatest (*megistos*) and greatest (*megistos*) and great (*megas*) god Hermes". It seems quite certain that we have here a Greek combination of two well-known divine epithets: "the greatest and the greatest" and "the great god" (Versnel, Quaegebeur). However, there existed demotic forms as "great, great, great" with an adverb indicating the superlative = "three times very great" (first attested in an inscription of 105 B.C.; in the Roman period even the title "five times very great" was used for Thot), which, in fact, simply means "the greatest" (Quaegebeur). The Greek form "greatest and greatest and greatest", which would be the exact equivalent of Trismegistus, has

not been found so far and may have never existed, but there is little doubt that the demotic expression has given rise to the Greek epithet. From its Egyptian background it should have been translated as *megistos*, "the greatest" or as *trismegas*, "the thrice-great" (which occurs in a 3rd century papyrus). However, similar abundant superlatives with the prefix *tris-* were not uncommon in later Greek: the form *trismakaristos* ("thrice-most blest" = *trismakar(ios)*, "thrice-blest"), is found in the 2nd-century writer Lucian, i.e. contemporarily with the first attestation of the epithet Trismegistus in Athenagoras.

### 3. THE GENEALOGY OF HERMES

There was an important difference between the Egyptian and the Greek views of Thot/Hermes: the Egyptians always considered Thot a god, whereas the Greeks mostly saw him as a human being, a teacher of divine wisdom. The latter view is predominant in the philosophical Hermetica, though there are some treatises in which Hermes distinctly appears as a god, e.g. in the *Korē Kosmou*, or suddenly becomes identical with the divine Mind, as in the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (for both, see → Hermetic Literature I). Already Plato left it undecided whether Thot (Theuth) was a god or a divine man (*Philebus*, 18b), and in the discussion between Thot and king Thamus, reported in the *Phaedrus* and mentioned above, he has the king argue as if Thot, 'the father of writing', was one of his subjects. The humanization of Thot was certainly furthered by the Hellenistic theory of Euhemerism, which implied that the gods were in fact deified kings. Athenagoras, who, as we saw above, said that Alexander the Great and Hermes Trismegistus had linked their own family with the gods, as many others had done, concluded from this that 'there is no longer any reason left to doubt that they were regarded as gods because they were kings'. This euhemerist explanation became part of the more general criticism of traditional religion by the Sceptics, as can be seen in the third book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*. There the Sceptic Cotta attacks the Stoic view of religion in a long exposition, in which he *inter alia* gives a long list of gods who have the same name but according to tradition were born from different parents (e.g. three different Jupiters, III, 53). There are even five gods with the name Hermes (Mercurius), of whom the third is Hermes the son of the third Jupiter and Maia and the fifth is the Egyptian Theyt (Thot), who had fled to Egypt after the murder of Argus and had given laws and the art



of writing to the Egyptians (III, 56). Lactantius adopted this identification of Trismegistus and Cicero's fifth Hermes, but he also explicitly expressed the euhemerist view that this Hermes originally had been a man, who long ago had been deified (*Divinae Institutiones*, I, 6, 1-3). It seems that the Greek hermetists tried to counter the devastating effects of this criticism by introducing the idea of a lineage of Hermeses. In the *Asclepius*, 37, Hermes Trismegistus says that his grandfather, called Hermes too, resides (i.e. has been buried) in his natal city that is named after him, where 'he gives aid and protection to mortals who come to him from everywhere'. → Augustine, in a discussion of the superiority and priority of Hebrew culture even with respect to that of the Egyptians, adopted this genealogy from the *Asclepius*, but made the first Hermes the son of Jupiter and Maia. He argued, in his *City of God*, XVIII, 39, that Hermes, 'who is called Trismegistus', taught philosophy in Egypt long before the Greek philosophers, 'and yet after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and, in fact, Moses himself'. Atlas, 'the maternal grandfather of the elder Mercury', lived in the time of Moses, which implies that his grandson, 'this Mercury Trismegistus', lived three generations after Moses. It has often been suggested that Augustine transmits here information he had found in the Roman writer Varro (1st century B.C.). This might be possible, but it seems more probable that he has adapted the information he found in the *Asclepius* for apologetic reasons. Notwithstanding Augustine's authority, the idea that Hermes Trismegistus was a contemporary of Moses, or even had lived before him, prevailed in the later medieval tradition (cf. the floor mosaic in the cathedral of Siena: 'Mercurius Trismegistus contemporaneus Moysi'). That Thot was 'the first Hermes' is explicitly stated in an interesting text of uncertain date, which is preserved in the Byzantine chronograph Georgius Syncellus († ca. 810) and attributed to the Egyptian historian Manetho (ca. 280 B.C.). The text is slightly corrupt, but less than is usually assumed (Fowden, 30-31; Copenhagen, xv-xvi). According to Pseudo-Manetho, Thot, the first Hermes, had engraved his wisdom on steles in the 'sacred language' and in hieroglyphs. After the Flood, 'the second Hermes', who was the son of Agathodaimon and the father of Tat, translated these texts from the sacred language into Greek and deposited them in books in the inner sanctuaries (*adyta*) of Egyptian temples (Syncellus, *Chronographia*, I, 72, ed. Dindorf; Scott, III, 491-492, with many emendations). According to *Korē Kosmou*, 5-6, which

makes no difference between a first and a second Hermes, Hermes had already engraved everything he knew on steles before the creation of the world, and left it to Tat, his son and successor, Asclepius and others to explain his teachings. However, there are authors who tell another story about how the Egyptian texts of Hermes Trismegistus had been translated into Greek. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, VIII, 5 and X, 7, mentions the prophet Bitys as the one who found hieroglyphic texts of Hermes in Egyptian temples and translated them into Greek, and he also aptly explains the Greek philosophical elements in the Hermetica by saying that those who made these translations were skilled in Greek philosophy (VIII, 4).

The separation between Thot, the god of Hermetopolis, and Hermes Trismegistus made it easier, on the one hand, to explain how the original hermetic writings had been translated from the Egyptian into Greek and, on the other, to consider Hermes as a divine man, a teacher of divine wisdom from remote antiquity.

#### 4. HERMETIC DISCIPLES AND TEACHERS

A curious result of the separation of Thot and Hermes Trismegistus was the re-emergence of Thot in the figure of *Tat*, as the son, pupil and successor of Hermes, to whom many tractates are addressed. The hermetic authors were apparently completely unaware of the fact that both personalities originally had been identical. In C.H. XVII it is Tat himself who instructs an unnamed king, probably Ammon.

*Asclepius* was another important pupil of Hermes Trismegistus. The *Perfect Discourse/Asclepius* was devoted to him, but he also acted as a teacher himself, as appears from the title of C.H. XVI, *Definitions of Asclepius to King Ammon*. In Hellenistic Egypt, the cult of the Greek god Asclepius merged with that of the Egyptian Imhotep, especially in Memphis and Thebes. The two gods had in common that they were gods of healing and medicine and had both started their career as deified men. Nevertheless, they were rarely completely identified, because Imhotep's healing capacity was only one of his qualities. In fact, he had many features in common with Thot and was seen as the personification of wisdom. In Greek literary texts he retained an independent existence as Imouthes. This state of affairs is reflected in the *Asclepius*, 37, where the two gods are clearly distinguished: Imhotep is said to be Asclepius' grandfather, just as Thot is the grandfather of Hermes Trismegistus.



King *Ammon* is a much less important hermetic figure. He is no other than the euhemerist version of the Egyptian god Amun, who was called Zeus-Ammon by the Greeks and had a great reputation as oracle god. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, 274de, already mentioned above, it is Thot himself who discusses with King Thamus, i.e. the humanized Ammon, all kinds of sciences, in particular the art of writing. Whereas C.H. XVI makes him a disciple of Asclepius, he participates, as Hammon, with Asclepius and Tat in the discussions of the *Asclepius*, and it was for him that, according to Iamblichus, the prophet Bithys had translated the teachings of Hermes into Greek (see above). This *Bithys* remains a mysterious personality, but from Iamblichus and → Zosimus we know that he was a theurgical authority (Fowden, 150-153).

The goddess *Isis* was also seen as a teacher of hermetic doctrines. In the Hellenistic and Roman period she was identified with almost every Egyptian, Greek and Oriental goddess, 'you are the One who is everything' (*una quae es omnia*). In Greek aretalogies, hymns of praise, she was hailed as 'educated by Hermes' and, *inter alia*, as having invented, together with Hermes, the hieroglyphic and demotic scripts (Bergman). She was said to have taught the medical, mantic and alchemical arts [→ Alchemy] to her son Horus (Festugière, in NF III, CXXXVI-CXXXVII). In Stobaeus, *Fragm.* XXIII-XXVII, she acts as the hermetic teacher of Horus, while she is supposed to have been instructed herself by Hermes Trismegistus. This is explicitly stated in Stobaeus, *Fragm.* XXIII (*Korē Kosmou*), though this writing also has another tradition about Kamephis as intermediary between Hermes and Isis (see below).

*Agathodaimon* (*Agathos Daimōn*), who according to Pseudo-Manetho was the father of Hermes Trismegistus, plays an unimportant part in the philosophical Hermetica, but his role in ancient magic and alchemy is all the more important and equals that of Hermes. Having started in Greece as a rather vague domestic god of luck and prosperity, he finally became associated with a variety of Greek deities and, in Hellenistic Egypt, with the Egyptian snake-god Kneph (Knephis, Chnoubis) in particular, but also with Amon, Thot, Isis, Horus, and others (Ganschinietz, 51; Copenhagen, 164-165). In *Korē Kosmou*, 32, Isis pretends to transmit to her son Horus 'a secret doctrine that my ancestor Kamephis learned from Hermes, the recorder of everything, and I from Kamephis, who is older than all of us'. It seems that Kamephis is none other than the late Egyptian god Kematef,

who was identified with Kneph and Agathodaimon (Barta; but see Festugière, NF III, CLXII-CLXVIII). Sayings of Agathodaimon are quoted in C.H. XII, 1, 8 and 13, though in the second passage Hermes deplors that Agathodaimon has not given it out in writing. Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julianum*, II, 30 (NF IV, 136-140, *Fragm.* 31 and 32; Ferguson, in Scott IV, 213-214), knew a *Discourse to Asclepius*, in which Hermes quotes some teachings of Agathodaimon to Osiris about the origin of the earth and the sun. It remains unclear, however, whether this information was actually found in a philosophical or alchemical treatise under the name of Agathodaimon or is simply a case of literary fiction.

*Lit.*: For the text edition by Nock & Festugière and the studies of Festugière, Fowden, and Scott & Ferguson, → Hermetic Literature I: Antiquity ♦ W. Barta, "Kematef", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, III, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980, 382-383 ♦ G. Baudy & A. Ley, "Hermes", in: *Der Neue Pauly*, 5 (1998), 426-432 ♦ J. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis: Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isis-Aretalogien* (Acta Universitatis Upsalensis, Historia religionum, 3), Uppsala, 1968 ♦ F. Daumas, "Le fonds égyptien de l'hermétisme", in J. Ries (ed.), *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: Actes du Colloque de Louvain-La-Neuve (11-14 mars 1980)* (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste Louvain, 27), Louvain-La-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1982, 3-25 ♦ M.-Th. Derchain-Urtel, *Thot à travers ses épithètes dans les scènes d'offrandes des temples d'époque gréco-romaine* (Rites Égyptiennes, 3), Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1981 ♦ W. Fauth, "Agathos Daimon", in: *Der Kleine Pauly*, vol. 1, München: Artemis Verlag, 1975 (paperback: München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979), 121-122 ♦ idem, "Hermes", in: *Der Kleine Pauly*, vol. 2, 1069-1076 ♦ R. Ganschinietz, "Agathodaimon", in: G. Wissowa et alii, *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplementband 3 (1918), 37-60 ♦ D. Kurth, "Thot", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, VI (1986), 498-523 ♦ L.H. Martin, "Hermes", in: K. van der Toorn, B. Becking & P.W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd extensively revised edition, Leiden: Brill, 1999, 405-411 ♦ J. Quaegebeur, "Thot-Hermès, le Dieu le plus grand", in: H. Altenmüller et al., *Hommages à François Daumas*, Montpellier: Institut d'Égyptologie, Université Paul Valéry, 1986, 525-544 ♦ H.S. Versnel, *Ter Unus: Isis, Dionysos, Hermes. Three Studies in Henotheism* (Studies in Greek and Roman Religion, 6), Leiden: Brill, 1990 ♦ R.L. Vos, "Thoth", in: Van der Toorn, Becking & Van der Horst, *Dictionary*, 861-864 ♦ D. Wildung, "Asklepios", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, I (1975), 472-473 ♦ idem, "Imhotep", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, III (1980), 146-148.

## Hermes Trismegistus II: Middle Ages

Throughout the Middle Ages the figure of Hermes Trismegistus is portrayed in a discordant manner because of disagreements over the Hermetic “revelation” among the varying interpreters within Latin culture. These disagreements concern, first, the *Asclepius*, the only philosophical-religious Hermetic text translated into Latin; second, during the 12th-13th centuries, they concern the vast technical-operational Hermetic literature (→ astrology, medicine and natural → magic, divination [→ Divinatory Arts], necromancy); and, third, the relations between philosophical concepts and operational knowledge.

But before examining the judgments concerning Hermes, in both their contrasts and their continuities, it is necessary to recall that the mythology of the *Asclepius* makes a distinction between Hermes the god, who dwells in the temples of Hermopolis and grants aid and salvation to all mortals, and his grandson Hermes Trismegistus who in his books unveils the secrets of divine wisdom. This duplication of Hermes is accepted by the first Christian writers: Lactantius in his *Divinae institutiones* and a century later → Augustine in book VIII of *De civitate Dei*. Reference is made to the two figures of Hermes by Hermann of Carinthia in his *De essentiis*, by → Daniel of Morley in his *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum* in the 12th century, and by other scholars later on.

In the Christian era the figure of Hermes Trismegistus (or Mercurius) is drawn in opposing profiles by Lactantius and Augustine. In his *Divinae institutiones* (304-313) Lactantius sees Hermes as an ancient prophet of Christian revelation, who in some mysterious way, perhaps by evoking the great spirits of the past, rose to an understanding of almost the whole truth, *veritatem paene universam*, and learned the mysteries on the Father and the Son. In the pages Lactantius devotes to him, the great Egyptian seer heralds the Holy Scriptures: the eternal and ineffable divine nature, the birth of the Son, the creation of the world, providence, the creation of man, the nature of angels and devils, religious worship, the contemplation of God, and the final descent of the Son for the salvation of the righteous. But in book VIII (415-417) of *De civitate Dei* Augustine unmasks the demonic origin of Hermetic theurgy (referring to the statues that dwell in temples among men, granting good and decreeing evil) and Hermes' words are transformed, in his tirade, into the voice of evil demons: the ancestors of Hermes Trismegistus are the founders of all idola-

trous cults. The “Christian” interpretation of Lactantius would nevertheless prevail over Augustine's invectives: a sermon of Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage, which simplifies Lactantius' perspective and brings it still closer to Christian sensibilities, was inserted in the North African collection of Augustine's *Sermons* and under his unquestioned authority came to influence the entire Middle Ages.

In the 12th century Hermes' presence becomes deeply entrenched in intellectual discussion, and the foundations are laid for a new and more complex portrayal of him. This change occurs for various reasons: due to the fragments of “Augustine” and the wide circulation of the *Asclepius* Hermes is credited with a superior wisdom not ignorant of Christian truths; the text of a famous pseudo-epigraph like the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* (attributed to Hermes in many manuscripts and by the almost unanimous opinion of philosophers and theologians) places him in the perspective of the purest Christian → Neoplatonism and attributes to him an awareness of the mystery of the Trinity; the text of another apocryphal work, the *Liber de sex rerum principiis*, contains a systematic treatment of divine and natural causality, and traces this back to Hermes' philosophy; the new translations from the Greek and Arabic present him as the first inventor of both “natural” and “necromantic” → magic. If we add to all this the fact that Albumasar's *Introductorium maius*, translated by John of Seville (1133) and later by Hermann of Carinthia (1140), credits Asclepius and Hermes with a prophecy of the birth of “Jesus”, we can well understand the varieties and contradictions the portrayal of Hermes will acquire in the next centuries. But in the 12th century there still persists the single powerful image of an ancient sage who by inner revelation anticipated parts of Christian teaching: the most distinguished examples are the great *magistri* of the period, Abelard and Theodoric of Chartres, → Bernard Silvester and Alain of Lille.

A very significant testimony comes from the *Glosae super Trismegistum*, written at the turn of the 13th century, perhaps a work of Alan of Lille or a disciple of his. Hermes, one reads in the prologue, is the greatest philosopher of the pagans, and we know that he composed many volumes on the supreme artificer of all things: in a book which Augustine calls *Logos tileos* (that is, in the fragments cited by Quodvultdeus) he exceeded others and himself, since in treating of the Father and the Son he seems to elevate himself to our theology (*ad nostram videtur aspirare theologiam*). In

another book entitled *Trimegistrus* (namely the *Asclepius*) not only did he speak of the Creator and the creation, but in discussing the “uncreated Spirit” he did not omit the mysteries of theology: his purpose was to confute the ancient philosophers by affirming the unity of the Creator, his power, knowledge and goodness.

In the 13th century we encounter some harshly contrasting views of Hermes. While the *Asclepius* and the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* enjoyed an almost universal respect, and the texts on astrology and “natural” magic received attention and respect consistent with official doctrine, the “necromantic” books (Hermes, Belenus, Toz the Greek, Germa the Babylonian) led to renewed accusations, formerly levelled by Augustine, of idolatry and trafficking with evil demons.

This debate on Hermes begins toward 1230 and lasts until the end of the century. The first to pose the problem in radical terms clearly deriving from Augustine is the bishop of Paris → William of Auvergne, who in his *De legibus* (1228) traces to Hermes the ‘philosopher and sorcerer’ all the idolatrous cults that are praised in the books of necromancy. This criticism of Hermetism proceeds with emphatic harshness, uniting in a single condemnation both the philosophical and the magical-astrological strands of Hermetism: in William’s tirade the *Asclepius*, which had inspired and moved the philosophers of the 12th century, is transformed into an impious vehicle of errors, illusions and deceits induced by diabolical spirits. That Mercurius is the prophet of diabolical operations, seduced by “evil spirits”, finds confirmation in ancient Egyptian idolatry: Egypt is in fact the country which more than any other was familiar with the cult of idols and the presence of hellish spirits, and Hermes himself calls his land *templum mundi* since all demons were worshipped there.

During the same years → Michael Scot – translator, astrologer, sorcerer – in his *Liber introductorius* (1231-1236) does not hesitate to present Hermes and other *nigromanti* as the origin of a secret knowledge that exalts man and enables his body to sense paradise. Of course, the Church condemns writings of this kind, but magical doctrine and operations, even if forbidden, are nevertheless real and possible, since they have a scientific statute and constitute a true “ars”. Scot confesses that he has himself carried out magical operations for himself and his friends, and has experimented with their truth and effectiveness by applying the teachings of the Hermetic *Liber imaginum Lunae*. And moreover, despite ecclesi-

astical prohibitions Michael reproduces two texts in their entirety: the *Liber imaginum Lunae* by Belenus, ‘secundum Hermetem’, which sets forth the magical-astrological effectiveness of the lunar mansions; and the *De viginti quattuor horis* by Belenus, with the names of the hours of the day and night, and the operations that can be performed with images, characters and invocations.

But a new showdown of “Hermes the magus” was near at hand. First, → Roger Bacon, while recognizing in Hermes one of the first “moral” philosophers of antiquity and the author of doctrines concordant with Christian truth, rejected the necromantic texts. He declared that these *libri pessimi*, composed by demons and corrupt men, had been falsely attributed to great personalities – Adam and → Moses, Solomon, Aristotle and Hermes – to seduce the human spirit. Hermes, the author of the *Asclepius*, is thus not responsible for the books on sorcery that bear his name. Toward 1260-1265 an extremely violent condemnation was pronounced in the *Speculum astronomiae*, attributed by many to → Albertus Magnus. As part of its project of salvaging true astrology, which is defended as being in accordance with Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology and Christian ethics, the text denounces the idolatrous nature of necromancy: that is to say, that part of the “science of images” which, while being associated with astrology, fashions talismans and evokes demons by means of religious rituals. The science of images based upon Hermes, Belenus, Toz the Greek and Germa the Babylonian (that is the whole Hermetic necromantic corpus), which calls for suffumigations and invocations, is *abominabilis* because idolatrous, and induces man to pay to earthly creatures the homage he owes God. Before listing them, the author recalls having read on previous occasions many necromantic books; while reading them he had experienced horror, and his mind had fled from them with dread. Thus, once again, after the accusations of Augustine and of William of Auvergne, Hermes is considered the first and the most impious of idolaters.

At this point the portrayal of Hermes, depicted as it is with such incongruous features, seems to have divided into two directions: that of the prophet of Christian truths, and that of the diabolical sorcerer. How could the author who had risen to the peaks of trinitarian contemplation have plunged into the abysses of idolatrous perdition? The *Asclepius* and the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* on the one hand, and the body of necromantic writings on the other, create a split

which seems irreparable. Which one is the true Hermes? How can the admiration of celebrated theologians (Alain of Lille and William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure) for the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* and the unanimous respect for the *Asclepius* be reconciled with the invectives of William of Auvergne and of the *Speculum astronomiae*? Is it possible to find an interpretation that can transcend such radical oppositions?

A response to this challenge, although not without inconsistencies, is provided in the long and balanced reflection of Albertus Magnus, the medieval author who was most familiar with the full extent of the Hermetic writings. Hermes is the *primus philosophus*, who lived in Egypt in very ancient times: chief among the Greek, Egyptian, Chaldaean and Indian sages, inspirer of Pythagoras and Empedocles, Socrates and Plato, he is the prophet and forerunner of all philosophers. The most admirable aspect of Albertus' analysis is his critical attitude. He is the only one who, faced with the universal admiration for the theological maxims of the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, shows some reservation, for philological and philosophical reasons: he declares that he has never read this book, but that if in the maxim of the "generating monad" Hermes spoke of God in triadic terms, he could not have been announcing the divine Trinity and certainly meant something else. Even with respect to the *Asclepius* Albertus takes a very guarded position. Hermes has expressed great truths: the omnipotence and causality of God, His unity and ineffability, the ideal forms and the flux of forms from the first cause to being created by causation, and man in the image of God and the link between God and the world. There are open expressions of agreement: Hermes statements on fate are concordant 'with us in the same truth' and it is not difficult to trace the sayings of Trismegistus to the doctrine of Aristotle. But in his reading of the *Liber de sex rerum principiis* and of the *Asclepius* Albertus does not hesitate to identify conceptual errors: in the former the thesis of a hypostatic universal nature *non placet Aristoteli*, and in the latter the affirmation that the first principle penetrates all things and is the being in itself of all things is a *pessimus error*. In Albertus' pages, therefore, Hermes emerges as endowed with the powers of a great philosopher, but as operating within the limits of human reason. There still remained the problem of Hermes' magical writings. In his *De mineralibus*, written at a time when Albertus was not yet very familiar with talismanic literature, he

deals with necromantic images and indicates, *propter bonitatem doctrinae*, the first inventors: Toz the Greek, Germa the Babylonian and Hermes the Egyptian. At first sight this text seems to be a re-evaluation of the Hermetic science of images, contrasting with the judgment of the *Speculum astronomiae*. Actually Albertus is dealing with "astronomic" images, that is to say, with those images, produced by nature or fashioned by man, which channel the influx of the stars and acquire a marvellous power. When, later on, in his *Summa theologiae*, Albertus becomes aware of his error, he does not hesitate to condemn necromantic images, recalls that someone has associated them with idolatry, and proclaims the illusory nature of necromancy, a craft carried on by demons and wicked persons and in antiquity made popular by 'Achoth Graeco et Grema Babylonico et Hermete Egyptio'. Still, even in this later judgment Hermes is not portrayed with the features of idolatry; in fact, shortly afterwards he is reaffirmed as the exponent of a pure monotheism. The result is a Hermes who did not write the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, who in the *Asclepius* proclaimed many truths and upheld some errors, who was deceived by necromantic images, but who never repudiated a philosophical and religious monotheism. A more critical and mature interpretation of Hermes Trismegistus was not possible in the Middle Ages.

The perspective opened by Albertus Magnus would inspire later investigations, which made explicit what Albertus merely implied. In the 14th century Thomas Bradwardine opens his *De causa Dei* (ca. 1335-1344) by calling attention to Hermes, who in the *Asclepius* proclaims the perfection, sanctity and eternity of God. Praised and venerated by the Greeks, master of Plato and Aristotle, Hermes, by his wisdom which was not ignorant of the Holy Spirit, is invoked along with the Prophets and Christians. Thomas Bradwardine could nevertheless not ignore the polemic about Hermetic theurgy. Like Albertus Magnus, he observes that in many pages Hermes has defined the only God in all His power, wisdom and goodness, and he adds that hence there is no point in affirming in the *Asclepius* the existence of 'other gods or another god' and in consecrating idols to evil spirits. This is reason for Thomas to rebuke Hermes for the fault of imprudence and inconsistency, but not – as opposed to Augustine, William of Auvergne and the *Speculum astronomiae* – for the sin of idolatry.

Shortly afterwards Berthold of Moosburg concludes his imposing commentary on Proclus'



*Elements of Theology* (ca. 1340-1360). In Berthold, too, the figure of Hermes is delineated in all its grandeur, as representing a substantial concordance between the Platonic tradition and Christian theology. The many references to the *Logos teleios*, the *Asclepius* and the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, from the Prologue throughout the commentary, confer on Hermes an unquestioned authority. However, Berthold, too, must confront the problem of the polytheistic theurgy of the *Asclepius*. His answer is founded – as previously, although with different nuances, in Albert and in Thomas Bradwardine – on the authenticity of Hermes' monotheism. Such a wise and prudent man, who stated profound truths on God, the first causes, the world and man, was deluded and is not to be believed when he glorifies idols consecrated with chants and liturgies. Hermes' polytheism is "superstitious" because it fashions idols considered to be gods through the infusion of a divine force. And yet, when Berthold describes "non-superstitious" polytheism, as found in Plato and the Platonists, he still makes reference to Hermes for the concept of "gods by participation", that conforms with the truth.

With → Nicholas of Cusa the long voyage of Hermes through the Latin Middle Ages draws to a close. An interest in the Hermetic writings runs through all his works, from *Sermo I* (1430) to *De ludo globi* (1463): the knowledge of the divine Word, the doctrine of divine names, and the concept of matter, world and man are taken from the *Asclepius*. Illustrative of his interest are the numerous glosses as well as textual corrections in Nicholas' own hand, found in the margins of the most ancient manuscript of the *Asclepius* (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 10054-10056). On the matter of Hermetic polytheism he offers prudent and moderate considerations. If in *De pace fidei* (1453) he cannot avoid, for ecclesiastical reasons, condemning the consecrated idols which threaten man's salvation, philosophical reasons lead him in *De docta ignorantia* (1440) to absolve Hermes of any accusation of idolatry: the ancient philosophers conceived the traditional plurality of the gods as a personification of divine attributes, "explications" of the One, and so Hermes explicates in the figures of Cupid and Venus the creative force of divine causality.

Following the contrasts between Augustine and Lactantius, which express the two different responses of Christian culture to the figure of Hermes, we see how his presence became ever more complex and indecipherable over the centuries. The appearance of celebrated apocryphal

works, the translations from Greek and Arabic, and the harsh conflicts over sorcery, tended to rend the image of the Egyptian sage apart, making him into an ambiguous figure between good and evil, at once divine philosopher and idolatrous sorcerer. If William of Auvergne saw Hermes as combining the philosopher and the sorcerer, and if the *Speculum astronomiae* attacks the Hermetic science of images, Albertus Magnus arrives at an honest and critical judgment which privileges the speculative wealth of the *Asclepius* and rejects, even while condemning necromantic practice, the accusation of idolatry. This path was also trodden, with different premises and conclusions, by Thomas Bradwardine and Berthold of Moosburg. At the end of the 14th century, Hermes is once again the great philosopher of antiquity, father and forerunner of all philosophers: he committed errors, of course, but these seem more due to imprudence or inconsistency than to wickedness of spirit. Along this path, taken also by Nicholas of Cusa, the history of Hermes Trismegistus in the Middle Ages and up to the threshold of the modern era comes to an end.

*Lit.*: Roelof van den Broek, "Hermes and Christ: Pagan Witnesses to the Truth of Christianity", in: R. van den Broek & C. van Heertum (eds.), *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme: Gnosis, Hermeticism and the Christian Tradition* (Pimander, 4), Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2000, 369-384 ♦ Charles Burnett, "The Establishment of Medieval Hermeticism", in: P. Linehan & J. Nelson (eds.), *The Medieval World*, London, New York: Routledge, 2001, 111-130 ♦ Peter Dronke, *Hermes and the Sibyls: Continuations and Creations* (Inaugural Lecture Delivered 9 march 1990), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes: from Greek God to Alchemical Magus*, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Phanes Press, 1995 ♦ Carlos Gilly, "Die Überlieferung des Asclepius im Mittelalter", in: van den Broek & van Heertum, *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme*, 335-367 ♦ Paolo Lucentini, "L'Asclepius ermetico nel secolo XII", in: J. Westra (ed.), *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Edouard Jaeneau*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992, 397-421 ♦ idem, "L'ermetismo magico nel secolo XIII", in: M. Folkerts & R. Lorch (eds.), *Sic itur ad astra: Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik und Naturwissenschaften. Festschrift für den Arabisten Paul Kunitzsch zum 70. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000, 409-450 ♦ P. Lucentini, V. Perrone Compagni & I. Parri (eds.), *Hermeticism from Late Antiquity to Humanism: La tradizione ermetica dal mondo tardoantico all' Umanesimo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Napoli, 20-24 novembre 2001* (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 40), Turnhout: Brepols, 2003 (especially: Zénon Kaluza, "Comme une branche d'amandier en fleurs: Dieu dans Le Liber



viginti quattuor philosophorum”, 99-126; Pasquale Arfé, “Ermete Trismegisto e Nicola Cusano”, 223-243; Vittoria Perrone Compagni, “I testi magici di Ermete”, 505-533; Sylvain Matton, “Hermès Trismégiste dans la littérature alchimique médiévale”, 621-649) ♦ Claudio Moreschini, *Storia dell'ermetismo cristiano*, Brescia: Morcelliana, 2000 ♦ David Pingree, “Learned Magic in the Time of Frederick II”, *Micrologus* 2 (1994), 39-56 ♦ David Porreca, *The Influence of Hermetic Texts on Western European Philosophers and Theologians (1160-1300)* Ph. Diss. Warburg Institute, University of London, 2001 ♦ Antonella Sannino, “La tradizione ermetica a Oxford nei secoli XIII e XIV: Ruggero Bacon e Tommaso Bradwardine”, *Studi filosofici* 18 (1995), 23-56 ♦ Paolo Siniscalco, “Ermete Trismegisto, profeta pagano della rivelazione cristiana: La fortuna di un passo ermetico (Asclepius 8) nell'interpretazione di scrittori cristiani”, *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino. II. Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche* 101 (1966-1967), 83-117 ♦ Loris Sturlese, “Saints et magiciens: Albert le Grand en face d'Hermès Trismégiste”, *Archives de Philosophie* 43:4 (1980), 615-634.

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### Hermes Trismegistus III: Modernity

The fictional personage of Hermes Trismegistus did not disappear after the end of the Middle Ages, but remained very much alive throughout the following centuries. As early as the end of the 15th century he began to enjoy a great vogue. Indeed, within the general context of a renewed interest for ancient mythology in the Renaissance, he profited from the craze for Hermes Mercurius (Mercury). Both figures were often blended together, with the result that “Hermes” entered the cultural imagination under these two forms – Hermes Mercurius and Hermes Trismegistus – to the point of serving as a sort of catch-all name.

But apart from his proximity with Hermes Mercurius, the new interest in Hermes Trismegistus had much to do, of course, with → Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* published in 1471 and his commentaries on it [→ Hermetic Literature IV]. Ficino gave a genealogy of Hermes Trismegistus slightly different from those proposed by authors of late Antiquity such as Lactantius and → Augustine, and by medieval authors. But like them, he held that he had lived after the time of → Moses, and considered him a major link in a chain of great philosophers. Ficino and → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola considered “Hermes” as one of the “first theologians” (for Ficino, only Zoroaster was earlier); and whereas Ficino believed Hermes to have lived after Moses, → Lodovico Lazzarelli

even concluded (from Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* I, 13ff.) that Hermes lived far before Moses. Regardless of such differences, Renaissance adherents of the *prisca theologia* concurred in giving Hermes an important place in their genealogies of wisdom, consisting of lists such as e.g. Enoch – Abraham – Noah – Zoroaster – Moses – Hermes Trismegistus – Orpheus – Pythagoras – Plato – the Sybils.

Already in the Middle Ages Hermes Trismegistus had been represented in pictures, albeit rarely (for example, in an illuminated text of Augustine in the 14th century), but as of the 15th century such representations became more frequent. Thus he appears in Bacchio Baldini's *Florentine Picture Chronicle* as well as in several alchemical treatises (like *Aurora Consurgens*, and Thomas Norton's *Ordinall of Alchymy*). At that time and as late as the 16th century he, or sometimes Apollonius instead, is represented as a sage seated in a crypt, tomb, pyramid or temple, holding the *Emerald Tablet* in his hands. In Botticelli's *Primavera* (1482), the god Hermes is represented as looking upwards and playing with clouds, touching them lightly as if they were beneficent veils through which transcendent truths might reach the beholder; therefore, a connection could be established between that representation and Hermes Trismegistus (Wind, 122-124). Six years later, an artist inlaid the pavement of Siena Cathedral with a panel representing Hermes Trismegistus as a tall and venerable bearded man, dressed in a robe and cloak, wearing a brimmed mitre and in the company of two personages (Moses and Plato?), with the inscription “Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus Contemporaneus Moysi”. Not long after, Pope Alexander VI, the protector of Pico della Mirandola, commanded Pinturicchio to paint a great fresco in the Borgia Apartments of the Vatican. It abounds with hermetic symbols and zodiacal signs, and there we see Hermes Trismegistus, young and beardless, in the company of Isis and Moses. Around 1500 he was painted on a wall of the church Sint-Walburgis in Zutphen in the Low Countries, in the company of Maria, the newly-born Jesus, angels and sibyls. On a pilaster of a Sistine room in the Biblioteca Vaticana, a painting (1587) shows him with attributes of Mercurius; the caption informs us that he is “Mercurius-Thoth, inventor of the alphabets”. Other examples of his presence in Roman-Catholic buildings could be adduced.

Hermes Trismegistus occasionally served as a figure within fictional narratives, as in François Rabelais, the author of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*

(1532/1564). Rabelais not only evinces a good knowledge of traditions related to Hermes Mercurius, but also gives Panurge, one of the main heroes of the story, many traits of Hermes Trismegistus. Panurge refers to the latter when he claims having a “thrice greatest” codpiece and being fond of the “thrice greatest Bottle” (of wine, obviously). Through his medical knowledge, Panurge claims to possess the Philosopher’s Stone; he is not only connected to the tradition of “hermetic” magic, but has also something of the Humanist Hermes, i.e. the ideal figure of the Renaissance savant.

Quite a few other commentators dealt with the figure of Hermes Trismegistus in the 16th century, not least → Francesco Patrizi, whose *Discussiones peripateticæ* (1581, see vol. IV) abounds in references to him. But already in Patrizi’s time – beginning in 1567 with Gilbert Genebrard – his great “antiquity”, and by the same token that of the hermetic writings, had been seriously called into question; what followed was an agonizing process of reappraisal, culminating in Isaac Casaubon’s demonstration, in 1614, that these writings could not have been written prior to the 2nd-3rd centuries A.D. (see Mulsow 2002, correcting Frances Yates, who had presented Casaubon as the first protagonist in the dating debate). In spite of this outcome, interest in Hermes Trismegistus did not disappear; but it occasionally took on additional forms, not least political ones. In the Elisabethan period, the figures of Hermes Trismegistus and Mercury were utilized with a view to justifying the pretension of realizing an ideal Empire. The idea that a “magical” or “Mercurian” monarch could achieve an ideal kingdom or empire seems to have first appeared in English literature with Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* (1590-1596, see Book V), written under the reign of Queen Elisabeth. Spenser identified monarchy and → magic through the figure of Mercury, more specifically of Hermes Trismegistus – considered as a channel of divine influence. Elisabeth, herself interested in magic (she consulted → John Dee), was presented therein as the sovereign who would restore the Golden Age and undo the ravages wrought by the Fall of man. Elisabeth’s Protestantism was thus seen metaphorically as a return to the old “Egyptian” religion, as opposed to Catholic imperialism, understood as a perversion, to the true religion of Isis and Hermes Trismegistus. Likewise and much later, in his *Penseroso* (1645), in which Hermes is the central character, John Milton would link poetry, hermeticism and Protestant reform (see Brooks-Davies 1983). Later, in Germany, one

sees Hermes Trismegistus playing a similar role in W.Chr. Kriegsmann’s *Conjectaneorum de Germanicæ gentis origine, ac Conditore, Hermete Trismegisto* (1684), where he appears not as a benefactor of humanity in general, but only as the patron of the “German race”. Kriegsmann resorted to weighty philological demonstrations aimed at proving he had been the founder of the German people; he associated the Egyptian Thoth with “Theut” (by the same token, Hermes Trismegistus) and “Teutonic”.

Hermes Trismegistus continued to play a positive role as one of the guardians or representatives of true wisdom. For example, in Heinrich Nollus’ novel *Parergi philosophici speculum* (1623), which stands in the wake of early rosicrucian literature [→ Rosicrucianism], the hero, Philarethes, goes to Egypt in order to meet Hermes Trismegistus, who has been put in charge by God of instructing human beings about how to find the *arx fortunæ*. Likewise, the learned Jesuit → Athanasius Kircher (notably in his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 1652) saw in him the inventor of the hieroglyphs and of the truths inscribed on the stone obelisks. Alchemical treatises (e.g. → Michael Maier’s *Symbola aurea mensa duodecim nationum*, 1617) occasionally devote an entire, laudatory chapter to him. Besides, many such books of the 17th century are rich in pictures on which Hermes Trismegistus appears, usually on the front page, either alone or in the company of personages such as Hippocrates, Galen, Aristotle, Geber, → Paracelsus.

At the dawn of the Enlightenment, in 1700, the Jesuit Joachim Bouvet, a mathematician and musician who was corresponding with Leibniz about the *I Ching*, wrote to him that this Chinese document ‘is like a symbol invented by some extraordinary genius of Antiquity, such as Mercury Trismegistus, to render visible the most abstract principles of all the sciences’. According to Bouvet, Fo-Hi (the supposed inventor of the *I Ching*) is the same as Enoch, who is the same as Hermes Trismegistus; and both are prototypes of Christ. He further claimed that Enoch/Fo-Hi/Hermes taught the mathematical symbols of that divinatory instrument to men endowed with superior intelligence. We also encounter him in Michel de Ramsay’s novel *Les Voyages de Cyrus* (1727). There, we learn through the discourse of a pontiff in Thebes that after a shipwreck Hermes Trismegistus’ mother gave birth to him on a desert island, but died shortly after. Then a goat fed him with its milk. He passed his early years in the desert eating dates. Eventually he was gratified with an apparition of ‘the First Hermes, or Mercury’, who taught him and gave him the name

“Trismegistus”. From that time on, he was called upon to become himself a great teacher in symbols and mysteries.

Many authors in alchemical literature followed in the footsteps of earlier ones, granting Hermes Trismegistus a distinguished place in their works. Editions of alchemical books in German show him decked out in Rococo style and decor (for example, Friedrich Roth-Scholz's *Deutsches Theatrum Chemicum*, 1728; F.J.W. Schröder's *Neue alchmyistische Bibliothek*, 1772). Nicholas Langlet-Dufresnoy (*Histoire de la philosophie hermétique*, 1742) presented him as identical with King Siphos who reigned around 1900 B.C. In 1733 another alchemist, Ehrd de Naxagoras (*Aurum Vellus oder Guldenes Vliess*, 1733), claimed that ‘a plaque of precious emerald engraved with inscriptions was made for him after his death and discovered in his tomb by a woman named Zora, in the Valley of Hebron’. → Hermann Fictuld, in one of his alchemical/theosophical books (*Turba Philosophorum*, 1763), gave a long narrative halfway between mythical history and literary fiction. It opens with a scene representing Hermes, the Egyptian priest, strolling between the Elysian Fields and the Great World Ocean. This passage is designed to introduce a dialogue between Hermes and a few other fictitious persons and is partly inspired by Michael Maier's book (see above). Such examples are all the less surprising since “hermetic science” had come to be frequently used to qualify “alchemy”, with “Hermes” or “Hermes Trismegistus” designating the tutelary figure of that science.

Outside the pale of alchemy, Johann Gottfried Herder, in *Über die Älteste Urkunde der Menschheit* (About the Most Ancient Document of Mankind, 1774), presents Hermes Trismegistus and/or Thoth as the founder and inventor of numbers, letters, languages, etc., and hence as the great benefactor of humanity. In addition, in 1801 he wrote for his journal *Adrastea* a long poetical dialogue titled “Hermes and Pymander” (the two figures who appear in *Corpus Hermeticum* I). Shortly after, in his *Manière de se Récréer avec le Jeu de Cartes Nommées Tarot* (1783), → Etteilla (ps. of Jean-Baptiste Alliette) claimed that the Book of Thoth (i.e., the deck of Marseilles) had been devised by a committee of Sages presided over by Hermes Trismegistus himself in the 171st year after the Flood. Etteilla's book was to be newly edited and reprinted several times, and played an important role in encouraging further discourses about Hermes Trismegistus.

Also in the same period, he came to be identified with Hiram, mentioned in the Bible and present

in the Masonic degree of Master mason. Such is the case in a German or French fringe-masonic Rite established around 1790, the “Magi of Memphis”. The instructions of this Rite contain a series of drawings, one of which represents Hermes Trismegistus (instead of Hiram proper) rising from the grave and giving a statement ending with these words: ‘Remember me. My true name is Mercurius for the Egyptians, Thoth for the Phoenicians, Hermes Trismegistus for the Greeks, and all over the earth I am Hiram’. Prior to that picture, and besides others on paper, there survives a coloured painting on wood panel (63 × 142 cms.), anonymous and probably made around 1740, now in the Museum of Pharmacy in Basel; it depicts Hermes Trismegistus standing alone, carrying the armillary sphere and a scroll containing the first verse of the *Emerald Tablet* (see commentary in Neugebauer-Wölk 2001).

In the Romantic period, the figure of Hermes Trismegistus receded to the background, replaced as it was by other ones, Orpheus in particular. But later, in the period of the Occultist current, → Edouard Schuré, in his influential and heavily syncretistic book *Les Grand Initiés* (1889), devoted to “Hermes” – here again, a blending of Mercurius and Hermes Trismegistus – a long chapter, which is a vibrant homage. The other chapters deal with Rama, Krishna, Moses, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato and Jesus — therefore, what we have here is a chain of initiates comparable to that which had flourished in the Renaissance, but now extended to include Eastern traditions.

At the same time the personage also inspired the American writer Henry W. Longfellow, whose strong interest in esoteric traditions is well documented. His drama *The Golden Legend* (1851) contains a passage of twenty-four verses in which the Nile, Geber's alchemy, and Hephaistos, are evoked in a blend of Egyptian and Arabian wisdom. His poem “Hermes Trismegistos” (written around 1881) evokes in eighty verses the existence of a forlorn Tradition to be recovered thanks to Hermes Trismegistus, with whom the author identifies himself.

The American esotericist → Manly P. Hall ranges among the authors of the 20th century who were most influential in continuing to spread Hermes Trismegistus' image, not least through his book *The Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Philosophy* (1928, in fol., several new editions). Not only does it contain a chapter and many other passages devoted to him, but it also presents what seems to be the latest noteworthy “portrait”. It is in colour, and shows Hermes-Thoth with his foot upon the back of

Typhon. The caption informs us that he is ‘the personification of Universal Wisdom’. He wears ‘the ancient Egyptian Masonic apron’, and is surrounded by other symbols (like dog, caduceus, scarab).

It is evident from these examples that Hermes Trismegistus as imagined and represented since the Renaissance has served many purposes. Often considered to have been a real person, he has thus been holding an intermediate position between Olympus and Earth, which contributed to make him an axial figure of the philosophical history of mankind, notably whenever he was seen as the representative par excellence of a perennial philosophy. In this respect, his enduring existence has been fostered by the production of a neo-alexandrian hermetic literature until the present time. He also appears to have been the patron of alchemy, a welcome symbol for egyptophilian settings, a kind of logo accompanying the titles of books, a name used to legitimate political aims, and occasionally an inspirational personage for novelists and poets. The existence of Hermes Mercurius, sometimes his twin or even siamese brother, as it were, may partly account for the variety of these roles. Indeed, Hermes Trismegistus possesses several of the essential attributes of Hermes Mercurius: mobility and mutability (an eclectic figure, Hermes Trismegistus easily adapts himself to various religious creeds); a liking for discourse and interpretation (he is the “inspirer” of the variegated forms of neo-alexandrian hermeneutics); and not least, his position at crossroads (as exemplified by the irenicism of neo-alexandrian authors).

*Lit.:* Douglas Brooks-Davies, *The Mercurial Monarch: Magical Politics from Spenser to Pope*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes: From Greek God to Alchemical Magus*, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Phanes Press, 1995 (see chapters I, III, V [V is devoted to iconographic documents]; revised and expanded version: *I volti di Ermete*, Rome: Atanor, 2001) ♦ Antoine Faivre (ed.), *Présence d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Cahiers de l'Hermétisme), Paris: Albin Michel, 1985 ♦ M. de la Garanderie (ed.), *Mercurie à la Renaissance*, Paris: H. Champion, 1988 ♦ Jean-François Maillard, “Hermès théologien et philosophe”, in: *Mercurie à la Renaissance* (see above), 11-14 ♦ idem, “Mercurie alchimiste dans la tradition mytho-hermétique”, in: idem, 117-130 ♦ Martin Mulrow (ed.), *Das Ende des Hermetismus: Historische Kritik und neue Naturphilosophie in der Spätrenaissance. Dokumentation und Analyse der Debatte um die Datierung der hermetischen Schriften von Genebrard bis Casaubon (1567-1614)*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2002 ♦ Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, “Denn dis ist Müglich, Lieber

Sohn!”: Zur esoterischen Übersetzungstradition des Corpus Hermeticum in der frühen Neuzeit”, in: Richard Caron, Joscelyn Godwin, Wouter J. Hane-graaff, Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (eds.), *Esotérisme, gnosés et imaginaire symbolique: Mélanges offerts à Antoine Faivre*, Leuven: Peeters, 2001, 131-144 ♦ Mirko Sladek, “Mercurius Triplex, Mercurius Termaximus et les ‘Trois Hermès’”, in: Faivre, *Présence d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 88-99 ♦ Cesare Vasoli, “Mercurie dans la tradition ficinienne”, in: de la Garanderie, *Mercurie à la Renaissance*, 27-43 ♦ Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1958), Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967, 121-124.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

## Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor

A short-lived secret organization devoted to practical occult work, active in England, France and the United States in the mid-1880s but possessing an influence far greater than its size and duration might suggest. It came to public notice in late 1884 in the form of a notice appended to Robert H. Fryar's republication of *The Divine Pymander*, that advised searchers after the truth and Theosophists disillusioned with “Hindoo Mahatmas” willingness to dispense wisdom, to contact “Theon” in care of Fryar. The public propaganda continued in the pages of a journal published by the order, *The Occult Magazine* of Glasgow (February 1885-October 1886), and at that point the H.B. of L. already had corresponding members as far afield as Russia, France and the United States. The editor of the journal and Provisional Grand Master of the North (of Great Britain) was a Scotsman, Peter Davidson (1837-1915), a cabinet- and violin-maker and visionary with an interest in secret brotherhoods, Rosicrucians [→ Rosicrucianism] and magic mirrors. Associated with him in governing the H.B. of L. was Thomas Henry Burgoyne (born Thomas Henry Dalton; c. 1855-c. 1895), and beyond both of these, as Grand Master of the Exterior Circle, was → “Max Theon” (Louis Maximilian Bimstein; ca. 1848-1927), a Polish or Russian Jew. According to its own mythology (later adopted by → René Guénon and other advocates of the so-called “Hidden Hand” theory of history), the H.B. of L. was the outward manifestation of the Western branch of the Great Brotherhood of initiates and adepts, which differed from the Eastern branch (exemplified by the → Theosophical Society) in denying → reincarnation on this earth and in advocating active, practical magical and ritual work to gain individual spiritual advancement



(clairvoyance and astral travel). It was this magical practice, based almost exclusively on the sexual magical teachings of → Paschal Beverly Randolph, that primarily sets the H.B. of L. apart. The order's doctrinal and practical teachings were circulated to the scattered members by mail. The H.B. of L. recruited members largely from the ranks of the Theosophical Society and for a period can be said to have constituted a practical order within the T.S. composed of most of its leading lights: W.A. Ayton, → F.-Ch. Barlet (ps. of Albert Faucheux), A. Chaboseau, → Papus (ps. of G. Encausse), J.D. Buck, T.M. Johnson, Elliott Coues, and Eliot B. Page, among others.

The order came to naught when, in October 1885, it began touting and then raising subscriptions for a Colony Scheme – a project which promised to buy a large section of land in America where the members of the order could participate in the restored mysteries of antiquity. Ayton's name was used in the promotional material without his consent. When he discovered the deception, he made enquiries, found out that Burgoyne was actually Dalton, who had been convicted of a petty fraud in 1883, and hastily wrote to all concerned to denounce the imposture. Davidson and Burgoyne then fled to America. Davidson settled down in Georgia, near the place chosen for the colony, where he instituted a new Order of the Cross and Serpent, published a journal, *The Morning Star*, and continued to be active in various French occult groups around Papus. Burgoyne settled in Colorado and then California, making his living by writing and selling lessons on occult → astrology (published as *The Light of Egypt*) and continuing to initiate groups in the western United States into the mysteries of the H.B. of L. His work survives today in the form of the Church and Order of Light, which traces its origins back to “C.C. Zain” (Elbert Benjamin). At least some portion of the secret sexual teachings of the H.B. of L. also found their way, via Sylvester Clark Gould († 1909), into the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light and through it into the → Ordo Templi Orientis, and into the Societas Rosicruciana in America of George Winslow Plummer (“Khei”). Theon and his wife moved to Tlemcen, Algeria, where they continued the work of the H.B. of L. under the name *Tradition Cosmique* and trained, among others, Mirra Alfassa, who went on to become “the Mother” in Sri Aurobindo's ashram at Pondicherry.

Zanoni (ps. of T.H. Burgoyne), *The Light of Egypt, or, the Science of the Soul and the Stars*, vol. 1,

Chicago & London: Religio-Philosophical Publ. House/Redway, 1889; vol. 2, Denver: Astro-Philosophical Publishing Co., 1900. See also Godwin, Chanel & Deveney (under *Lit.*).

*Lit.*: Christian Chanel, *De la “Fraternité Hermetique de Louxor” au “Mouvement Cosmique”*: L'Oeuvre de Max Théon. Contribution à l'étude des courants ésotériques en Europe à la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle et au début du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, Diss. Doctorat d'Etat, E.P.H.E., 5<sup>e</sup> section, Paris, 1994 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, “The Hidden Hand”, *Theosophical History* 3:2-5 (April 1990-January 1991), 35-43, 66-76, 107-117, 137-148 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel & John Patrick Deveney, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor: Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism*, New York: Weiser, 1995.

JOHN PATRICK DEVENEY

## Hermetic Literature I: Antiquity

I. INTRODUCTION 2. TECHNICAL HERMETICA 3. PHILOSOPHICAL HERMETICA (A. CORPUS HERMETICUM B. SOME TREATISES OF THE CORPUS HERMETICUM C. GREEK AND LATIN FRAGMENTS D. THE ASCLEPIUS E. COPTIC TEXTS F. THE ARMENIAN DEFINITIONS) 4. “GENERAL” AND “DETAILED” DISCOURSES 5. DATE AND PLACE OF ORIGIN OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL HERMETICA

### I. INTRODUCTION

The literary works attributed to → Hermes Trismegistus reflect the various activities he was thought to have deployed. In accordance with his function as a teacher of → magic, → astrology, → alchemy and philosophically coloured religious knowledge, there are under his name magical spells, astrological and alchemical treatises and religious-philosophical discourses. In recent scholarship, there has been much discussion about the relationship between the “occult” magical, astrological and alchemical works on the one hand and the more philosophical religious tracts on the other. The two great scholars who worked on the Hermetica in the 20th century, Walter Scott and André-Jean Festugière, made an almost complete separation between the two kinds of literature. Festugière's distinction between “popular Hermetism” (*hermétisme populaire*) and “learned” or “philosophical” Hermetism (*hermétisme savant/philosophique*) became almost universally accepted. In recent research, however, the more neutral term of “technical Hermetica”



has become current for the magical, astrological and alchemical texts that go under the name of Hermes. This term indeed fits these texts better than the word “popular”, since they present primarily techniques to achieve personal objectives. The second kind of hermetic writings is still mostly called “philosophical”, and sometimes “theoretical”. The latter term should be avoided since it suggests that these works provide a theoretical basis for the technical, more practical Hermetica, which is by no means certain. In the first centuries of our era, Greek philosophy became increasingly religious and thinking about religion became more and more philosophical. To find confirmation of their ideas on ultimate reality, philosophers turned to divine revelation, and religious thinkers liked to express their beliefs in terms of Greek philosophy. Therefore, the term “philosophical Hermetica” is acceptable for almost all the works that are usually covered by that name, since they are strongly influenced by Greek philosophical ideas, especially those of Platonism and Stoicism. It would be wrong, however, to consider them as primarily philosophical works. On the contrary, they are essentially religious tracts, which make free use of Greek philosophical ideas to express their views on religious knowledge and individual salvation. As a matter of fact, the word “theosophical” would provide a better term, if it could be stripped of its modern connotations.

In recent research, the sharp distinction between technical and philosophical hermetic texts has been questioned. Scott and Festugière were convinced that the authors and audiences of the two kinds of hermetic literature were almost completely different. However, Garth Fowden has convincingly argued that both the technical and the philosophical hermetic writings emanated from the same cultural and religious milieu, namely that of Graeco-Roman Egypt in the centuries around the beginning of our era. According to Fowden, the technical and the philosophical Hermetica corresponded to successive stages on ‘the way of Hermes’, but there is no decisive proof for this contention. In some hermetic treatises initiation into the hermetic mysteries is attended by magic and astrology, but that does not imply that all magical or astrological texts ascribed to Hermes presuppose the typical ideas about knowledge and salvation that characterize the philosophical Hermetica.

Unfortunately, an edition of all the technical Hermetica in one or more volumes does not exist, but there are two editions of the Greek and Latin philosophical Hermetica. Walter Scott made an

edition in four volumes (1924-1936), with English translations and notes (the fourth volume, containing *testimonia* and fragments, was published by A.S. Ferguson). Though Scott’s works remains very valuable because of its wealth of information, the text edition itself is generally considered a failure, because of its hypercritical character, which resulted into a great number of unwarranted textual emendations. The standard edition of the Greek and Latin Hermetica, also in four volumes, has become the one published by A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière (1946-1954).

## 2. TECHNICAL HERMETICA

The basic idea behind the technical Hermetica, and the philosophical as well, is the notion that all things that exist, both in the spiritual and in the material world, in some way or another are interconnected. This universal coherence or *sympatheia* could be the basis for quite different practices. It enabled the magician to bend gods or daemons to his will if he knew the appropriate divine names and the required materials to make a spell, but it also enabled the astrologer to foretell which days would be auspicious or inauspicious to take certain actions, because of the unalterable course of the heavenly bodies (*fatum*). The art of alchemy was based on two fundamental assumptions. The first is that there is a material substratum, some kind of “first matter”, which forms the basis of ordinary matter, and the second that all precious metals derive from lead and therefore can be made from it by performing the right alchemical procedure. In the first volume of his *Révélation*, Festugière has collected, translated and thoroughly studied a great number of astrological, magical and alchemical texts and fragments in Greek and Latin that are ascribed to Hermes. Though most of these texts date from the first centuries of the present era, there is little doubt that similar texts already circulated in the Hellenistic (Ptolemaic) period. In his *Stromateis*, VI, 35-37, → Clement of Alexandria describes a procession of Egyptian priests, possibly derived from the Egyptian priest and Stoic philosopher Chaereon (1st century A.D.), who each carry the symbols and books that mark their position in the hierarchy. Clement mentions forty-two books, which he all attributes to Hermes, i.e. Thot. Among them are books containing hymns and instructions concerning the cult of the gods, but also four astrological books, ten hieroglyphic books on cosmography and geography, Egypt, the Nile, the construction of temples etc., and six medical books. Similar books

are mentioned in a catalogue of books, inscribed on the walls of the library of the temple of Edfu. The library, which dates from 140-124 B.C., contained, *inter alia*, magical and astrological books, such as *Spells for the averting of the evil eye*, *Knowledge of the recurrence of the two stars* (i.e. sun and moon) and *Control over the recurrence of the stars* (cf. Fowden, 57-59). Hellenistic astrology owed only a little to earlier Egyptian observations of the celestial phenomena, even though its invention was ascribed to Thot/Hermes, but the Greek magical texts continued the early Egyptian magical literature under the name of Thot, even though they show unmistakable Hellenistic features.

### 3. PHILOSOPHICAL HERMETICA

#### A. THE *CORPUS HERMETICUM*

The standard edition by Nock and Festugière has the comprehensive title *Corpus Hermeticum* on the front-page of each of the four volumes. As a matter of fact, all the hermetic philosophical texts preserved from Antiquity could indeed be said to constitute one great hermetic Corpus, for they all have the same literary structure, that of a dialogue, and the same kind of teaching. However, the title *Corpus Hermeticum* (C.H.) usually refers to a specific Byzantine collection of 17 hermetic texts, and it is in that sense that also Nock and Festugière take the term in their introductions and notes. The Byzantine scholar Michael Psellus (11th century) seems to have known the C.H. proper in roughly its present form, but there are no witnesses that attest its existence in earlier centuries. Stobaeus (5th century, see below) cited parts of C.H. II, IV, and IX in his *Anthology*, but he apparently did not yet know the C.H. as a collection. Nevertheless, the Vienna hermetic fragments, published by Mahé, show that such collections already existed at an early date. These fragments, which date from the late second or early 3rd century, were apparently part of a collection of at least 10 numbered treatises, for fragment B contains the end of treatise number 9 and the beginning of number 10. Bishop Cyril of Alexandria [ca. 440] also knew a collection of 15 books, called *Hermaika*, which had been composed by someone in Athens (*Contra Julianum* I, 41), but his quotations show that he had not the present C.H. before him. This evidence proves that the C.H. as a collection may be much older than the 11th century.

The C.H. became known in the West through → Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation (1463; pub-

lished 1471) of a Greek manuscript that had been brought to Florence by the monk Leonardo of Pistoia, who presented it to Cosimo de Medici in 1460. This manuscript of the 15th century contains only the treatises I-XIV (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 71, 33, ff. 123<sup>r</sup>-145<sup>r</sup>; Gentile & Gilly, 41-43). Ficino apparently did not know that the Greek cardinal Bessarion, already in 1458 and also in Florence, had acquired a more complete 14th century manuscript of the C.H., which also contained the tractates XVI-XVIII (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana [Venice], Cod. Marc. Gr. Z. 242 [= 993]; Gilly & Van Heertum, II, 15-16). Treatise XV has never existed. Adrien Turnèbe, the first editor of the Greek text (Paris 1554; Gentile & Gilly, 126-128), made a fifteenth tractate from some hermetic excerpts by Stobaeus. This artificial treatise was left out again by later editors, who, however, retained Turnèbe's numbering, so that the C.H. contains the treatises I-XIV and XVI-XVIII. Ficino gave his 14 treatises the collective title of *Pimander* (later editors wrote *Poemander*), after the title of the first tractate, *Poimandres*. However, the writings of the C.H. are not chapters of one and the same work, as Ficino thought, but completely independent compositions. The criterion that determined their selection into one collection is unknown. It has been suggested that Byzantine scholars selected them because of their relatively pure philosophical and religious contents; according to another view, they may have expurgated them of suspicious magical and astrological elements. As a matter of fact, the Coptic treatise *On the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (see below) gives these elements a prominent place in its description of an inner religious experience, whereas they are lacking in the otherwise closely related C.H. XIII. The *Asclepius* (see below) has in chapter 37 a famous passage about the theurgical conjuration of divine powers into the statues of the gods (a related idea is expressed in C.H. XVII), but the book as a whole is an excellent summary of hermetic religious philosophy. In view of the fact that magic and astrology were integral parts of the spiritual world in which the Hermetica originated, it may be assumed that magical and astrological elements appeared in many hermetic philosophical treatises. With respect to the C.H. we can only say that some cleansing by Byzantine editors cannot be excluded, but the *Asclepius* shows that there is no need to assume that this has happened on a large scale. It is not the place here to discuss the importance of the C.H. for our knowledge of classical → Hermetism, but some of its tractates deserve a closer examination.

B. SOME TREATISES OF THE  
CORPUS HERMETICUM

C.H. I, the first tractate of the C.H., entitled *Poimandres*, is the most well-known and one of the most important hermetic writings, but at the same time it is singular because of its strongly mythological character. It is not a first-hand teaching of Hermes Trismegistus to a pupil but a report of an unnamed person about a revelation received from a divine being, who introduces himself as 'I am Poimandres, the intelligence (*nous*) of the supreme authority'. The recipient of this revelation was later identified with Hermes Trismegistus, as appears, *inter alia*, from the title in the manuscripts and C.H. XIII, 15. The idea that the divine *Nous* instructs Hermes is also found in C.H. XI. The name Poimandres has often been interpreted as "Shepherd (*poimèn*) of men (*andres*)", both in the later hermetic tradition and by modern scholars, but this is linguistically impossible. Peter Kingsley has convincingly argued that the name is a Greek form of the Egyptian *p-eime nte-rē*, 'the intelligence (or understanding) of Re', and that the rest of the introductory formula, 'the intelligence of the supreme authority (*tēs authentias nous*)', simply is a Greek translation of the name Poimandres.

After the introduction, the *Poimandres* presents, in the form of a vision, a cosmological, anthropological and eschatological myth, followed by the command to preach the hermetic message, and a final hymn. The *Poimandres* teaches a dualism between light and darkness, spirit and matter, but not an absolute dualism. Primeval matter was a watery substance that came into existence within the darkness, which somehow had originated out of the light. The light was the divine Intelligence or Mind (*nous*), and out of it appeared the Word (*logos*), which is the 'Son of God'. From this, the author immediately draws an anthropological consequence by establishing a distinct parallelism between God and man: 'That what sees and hears within you is the word of the Lord, and your mind is God the Father; they are not separate from one another, for their union is life' (I, 6). In the process of creation, the Word separated the elements, so that fire and air went on high, whereas water and earth remained below. The divine Mind, 'being androgynous and existing as light and life', gave birth to two other divine beings: a second Mind (*nous*), a craftsman, who created the seven planets 'whose government is called fate', and Man (*Anthropos*), who had his father's image and was loved by him as his own form and received from him the dominion over everything that had been made (I, 9-13). The heavenly Anthropos looked though the cosmic

framework and displayed the form of God to lower nature. Nature saw his shape in the water and his shadow on the earth, and she smiled with love (similar ideas on the Anthropos in → Gnosticism). When the divine Man saw the reflection of his image, he loved it and wanted to be united with it, and nature 'enfolded him completely and they united, for they loved each other'. For this reason, man is a double being: 'mortal because of the body, immortal because of the real Man' (I, 14-15). After a period of seven androgynous generations the human beings became male and female, for which no reason is given, and they were commanded to increase and multiply. This command is clearly influenced by Gen. 1:28, but it has some negative overtones, for the dissolution of androgyny entailed sexuality, procreation, birth and death. By all this, human beings run the risk of forgetting their divine descent, and, therefore, the injunction to increase and multiply is followed by the warning not to lose sight of one's origin: 'Let him who is endowed with mind (*nous*) recognize that he himself is immortal and that sexual desire is the cause of death, and let he so know all that exists' (I, 18). Who has understood himself comes to God (I, 21), which is the basic idea of hermetic salvation. In ascending to its origin the soul leaves its characteristic (mostly bad) features to the planets from which it had received them at its descent, and then, stripped of the astral influences, its real self enters the eighth sphere and joins the hymns sung by those who are there. Finally, they all ascend to the heaven above the eighth sphere, become powers and are merged in God: 'This is the final good for those who have received knowledge (*gnosis*): to become God' (I, 26).

After the command to preach the hermetic gospel, a short description of its contents and the reaction it received (I, 26-29), the *Poimandres* concludes with a hymn of nine lines, which might be called a triple Trishagion since all lines begin with "Holy": "Holy is God" (3x) and "Holy are you" (6x). The hymn passes into a prayer in prose, in which "Hermes" bears witness to his salvation: 'I go to life and light. You are blessed, Father' (I, 32). This hymn has also had an independent circulation and was even included in a Christian hymn book of the 3rd century, but most probably it was part of the *Poimandres* from the beginning. The hymn and the *Poimandres* as a whole are permeated with Jewish ideas, which suggest that this writing originated in a milieu in which Jews played an important part (Dodd, Philonenko, Pearson). Other elements can be best explained from an Egyptian background, which points to

Alexandria as its place of origin. Since the large Jewish community in Alexandria was almost completely extirpated during the revolt of A.D. 117-119, it seems probable that the *Poimandres* dates from the 1st century or the beginning of the second, which would make it one of the earliest hermetic writings. It has some central themes in common with the Gospel of John, e.g. God as life and light, but there is no indication of a direct Christian influence, let alone that it would represent a "paganization" of original Christian ideas (Büchli).

– C.H. IV has a double title: *The mixing bowl (Crater) or the Monad*, which refers to the two parts of this "Discourse of Hermes to Tat". The first part (IV, 1-10) argues, contrary to the whole Greek philosophical tradition, that intelligence or mind (*nous*) is not the possession of every human being, but a heavenly gift which may be added to his reasoning capacity (*logos*). As a result the text distinguishes between two classes of men, the 'reasonable people' (*logikoi*) and those who have received *nous*. Closely related ideas are found among the Valentinian Gnostics [→ Valentinus and Valentinians]. As a matter of fact, the *nous* of this treatise identifies with the *pneuma* that characterizes the Gnostic. Though being a gift of God, the *nous* is in this treatise at the same time a prize, in the form of a mixing bowl, which has to be won in the contest of life. The crater is presented as a kind of baptismal font, in which the souls of the *logikoi* that make use of their *logos* have to immerse themselves. It has often been suggested that this passage alludes to a hermetic initiatory rite or "sacrament", which implied the drinking from a crater, as in the Greek mystery religions. The second part of this treatise, which deals with God as a Monad, the origin and root of everything, remains within the framework of Greek philosophy.

– C.H. V is also a discourse of Hermes to Tat, entitled: *God is invisible and entirely visible*. It argues that God can be known from the contemplation of his works, which in itself is a common Stoic idea. According to the author, however, this is not a "natural" knowledge of God, for God is unknowable; it is a divine gift, an act of divine grace: 'Ask him the grace to enable you to understand so great a God, to permit even one of his rays to illuminate your thinking' (IV, 2).

– C.H. VI has often been used to demonstrate that in Antiquity there existed a radical negative form of Hermetism, alongside a more positive one. Starting from the common idea that the Good is in fact identical with God, the author draws a conclusion that would have been subscribed by radical

Gnostics only. It is aptly expressed in the title of the treatise: *The Good is alone in God and nowhere else*. For that reason, 'the cosmos is the plenitude (*pleroma*) of evil, as God is the plenitude of the good, or the good of God' (VI, 4).

– C.H. VII, entitled *Ignorance concerning God is the greatest evil*, is a hermetic sermon, an incitement to leave the drunkenness of ignorance behind and to seek the way to the 'gate of knowledge', where the pure light is and nobody gets drunk but all are sober and look with the heart at Him who wants to be seen, but who can only be seen by the *nous* and the heart. The human body is in the strongest terms described as an impediment to see the beauty of truth and the Good.

– C.H. X, entitled *The Key*, is a discussion of some basic hermetic tenets: God the Father as the supreme Good, the contemplation of God as a divine gift, ignorance as the greatest evil for the soul, the immortal Cosmos as the second level of being and mortal man as the third. This treatise is interesting in particular because of its doctrine of the soul and its fate after death (X, 13-25). The mind (*nous*) is enclosed within reason (*logos*), reason within the soul (*psychè*), the soul within the astral body (*pneuma*), which passes through veins, arteries and the blood and moves the living carnal body. At death the *nous* of a pious soul puts on its own garment of fire and becomes pure *Nous*, but the impious soul has to reincarnate in a new human body.

– C.H. XIII is one of the most important hermetic writings. It is a 'discourse of Hermes Trismegistus to his son Tat', entitled *A Secret Discourse on the Mountain about Rebirth and the Promise to be Silent*. As a matter of fact, it is a dialogue that is said to have taken place after Hermes and Tat had come down from a mountain. Hermes says about his own rebirth that he has come out of his former self into an immortal body, which has no colour and cannot be touched or measured; he is re-born in the divine *Nous* (XIII, 3). Tat is exhorted to turn into himself and to cleanse himself from the twelve tormenting spirits of the material world, which are somehow connected with the twelve signs of the Zodiac: ignorance, sorrow, intemperance, lust, injustice, greed, deceit, envy, treachery, anger, recklessness, and malice. They withdraw one by one from the one who receives God's mercy: 'This is the manner and meaning of rebirth' (XIII, 7 and 12). Spiritual rebirth is actualised by the arrival of ten good 'spirits': knowledge of God, joy, self-control, steadfastness, justice, generosity, truth, the good, life and light. Whoever has attained divine birth by God's mercy 'knows himself as constituted of these

powers and he rejoices' (XIII, 8-10). Within the exposition of the twelve bad and the ten good powers, the tractate somewhat unexpectedly describes a spiritual experience by Tat, which apparently is the effect of his own rebirth. This experience, in which he falls together with the whole cosmos (XIII, 11), differs from that of the ascent to the ninth sphere as described in the *Poimandres* and in the *Ogdoad and the Ennead*, which shows that initiation into the hermetic mysteries could lead to quite different mystical experiences. Through his rebirth Tat has been born a god, a child of the One, and he wants to hear the hymn of praise that according to the *Poimandres* was sung in the Ogdoad (I, 26). This song, the hymn of rebirth, can be heard in silence only; it cannot be taught; it is a secret kept in silence. Then follows, after some instructions, a beautiful hymn, which celebrates the beauty of the cosmos and the glory of its creator. It is indicated in the manuscripts as 'Secret Hymn Book, Song 4', which suggest that once it was part of a collection of hymns and may have had an independent circulation. Whether this is true or not cannot be established with any certainty, but it is by no means impossible, for also the hymns at the end of both the *Poimandres* and the *Asclepius* were transmitted independent of the texts to which they now belong. C.H. XIII concludes its report of a spiritual enlightenment with the words: 'Now you have come to spiritual knowledge of both yourself and our Father'.

– Whether the last three writings (XVI-XVIII) were part of the C.H. from the beginning or were added at a later date is difficult to decide, but they certainly stand a little apart from the rest of the collection. Not Hermes Trismegistus, or the Nous through Hermes, is the teacher but Asclepius (XVI), Tat (XVII, a fragment, in which a king is exhorted to honour the statues of the gods), and an unknown panegyrist, who hardly can be called a hermetist at all (XVIII).

C.H. XVI, which presents itself as a letter of Asclepius to king Ammon, is a distinct hermetic writing. It pretends to have been written in the Egyptian language, 'which preserves the (magical) power of the words', and urges the king not to have it translated, 'in order that these mysteries do not reach the Greeks' (XVI, 1-2). In this treatise, the Creator is identified with the Sun, whose energy gives life to the whole cosmos (XVI, 5-9). The role of daemons, who are subjected to the planets, is extensively discussed: they are not only responsible for natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, but also for the evil deeds of human beings, while at the same time they serve to

punish them for these deeds (XVI, 10-17). The tractate concludes with a summary of a hymnal character (XVI, 18-19). It praises God the Father and the Sun as the creator of everything: 'All things are parts of God, but if all things are parts of God, then everything is God. Therefore, in making all things, he makes himself'.

### C. GREEK AND LATIN FRAGMENTS

The great number of quotations of now lost hermetic texts in authors of the 4th and 5th centuries shows that in late Antiquity many more hermetic philosophical treatises were in circulation than have been preserved today. The earliest quotation of a hermetic writing is found in Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200), *De anima*, 33, 2 (Nock & Festugière, IV, 104). Forty fragments have been preserved in the *Anthology* that John of Stobi, usually called Stobaeus, composed in the first decades of the 5th century for the instruction of his son Septimius. Ten of them derive from C.H. II, IV and IX and one from the *Asclepius*; they are valuable since they represent an earlier and better textual tradition than the preserved complete manuscripts. The other 29 fragments of Stobaeus were taken from hermetic writings that are now lost. Most of them deal with the central themes of hermetic philosophy, God, cosmos and man, but there are some remarkable exceptions. In *Fragm.* VI (NF III, 34-39), for instance, Hermes explains to his son Tat the activity of the 36 decans and their relationship with the other celestial bodies, which shows that astrology and philosophical Hermetism did not belong to completely separate areas. A very interesting fragment is Stobaeus' large excerpt from 'a holy book of Hermes Trismegistus' called *Daughter* (or *Pupil*) *of the World*, mostly indicated by its Greek title *Korē kosmou* (*Fragm.* XXIII, NF III, 1-50). In this writing, the teacher is not Hermes but Isis, who instructs her son Horus after herself having been instructed by Hermes. 'All-knowing Hermes' is said to have written down all the cosmic mysteries before the creation of the world and to have hidden the books near the secret symbols of Osiris, with a prayer and magical formulas (XXIII, 1-8). Then follows an artificial myth about the creation of the cosmos: first God made Nature, then 60 different kinds of souls of diminishing grades of purity, and the bodies of birds, fish and quadrupeds. The human body was made to imprison and punish disobedient souls (XXIII, 9-52). Ignorance reigned on earth, but Osiris and Isis, 'instructed by Hermes of the secret ordinances of God' were appointed to regulate life on earth by giving laws and teaching crafts and sciences (XXIII, 53-70).



The author has apparently used a lost hermetic treatise as one of his sources, which explains the inconsistencies that can be observed in this work (Festugière, in NF III, CXXXIII-CLXVIII).

A considerable number of important fragments have been preserved in the Christian writers Lactantius and Cyril of Alexandria. Lactantius, who was born and educated in Africa, became a professor of Latin rhetoric in Nicomedia in Bythnia by special request of the emperor Diocletian (284-304). Since he had become a Christian, he had to resign his chair in 303, when the Great Persecution began. About 317, the emperor Constantine the Great summoned him to Treves in Gaul to become the teacher of his son Crispus. In his most important work, the *Divinae Institutiones* in seven volumes, written between 304 and 314, he frequently invokes Hermes Trismegistus as a pre-Christian witness to Christ. The work contains a great number of hermetic quotations (Wlosok, 261-262), of which 13 are unknown from other sources (NF IV, 106-114). Some quotations are in Greek, which is sometimes very helpful to recover the original text, especially in the case of the Latin *Asclepius*. Lactantius himself composed an *Epitome* of his principal work, which has some value of its own, since he used the opportunity to make corrections and additions that sometimes affect his hermetic quotations.

Cyril of Alexandria, who occupied the Alexandrian see from 412-444, appealed 13 times to Hermes Trismegistus in his *Apology against Julian* (*Contra Julianum*), which was directed to emperor Julian's *Against the Galilaeans*. Cyril wrote this work between 430 and 440, when vehement polemics against Nestorius and the Nestorians, about God and man in Christ, monopolized his attention almost completely. That he nevertheless felt himself compelled to write this enormous work of at least 20 volumes, of which the first ten books have been preserved and fragments of books 11-20 exist (books 20-30 were probably never written), about 80 years after the death of Julian "the Apostat" (363), shows how dangerous he even then still considered Julian's attack on the Christians. Cyril did not embrace Hermes as wholeheartedly as Lactantius had done, but he adduced his testimony as a pre-Christian prophecy of the coming of Christ and even of the doctrine of the Trinity. Though he seems to have had a direct knowledge of hermetic sources, in some cases Cyril apparently borrowed his hermetic passages, and their interpretation as well, from a work on the Trinity, *De trinitate*, which by tradition and also by most modern scholars is ascribed to Didymus

the Blind (313-398), the last head of the famous Alexandrian School. In *Contra Julianum* I, 47, Cyril presents an alleged testimony of the Trinity by Plato and two hermetic fragments (nrs. 23 and 24, NF IV, 126-129), which, together with their interpretation, are already found in Didymus' *De trinitate*, II, 27, though not in the same order (Scott, IV, 171-173).

After the publication of the then known Greek and Latin fragments by Scott and Nock & Festugière some new material has come to light: the Greek Vienna fragments, published by Mahé (see above), and some Greek extracts, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, published by Paramelle and Mahé, of which some derive from an otherwise unknown treatise *On the Soul* and others from a work called *Definitions*, which has been preserved in Armenian (see below). Another hermetic fragment, quoted by C. Iulius Romanus (3rd century) and preserved in Charisius (4th century), *Ars grammatica* II, 239, was noticed by I.G. Taifacos (Fowden, xvii).

#### D. ASCLEPIUS

The largest preserved hermetic treatise is the *Asclepius*, which has always had an independent existence. Its original Greek title was *Logos Teleios* (*Perfect Discourse* or *Perfect Revelation*), but the Greek text has been lost, except for a few fragments in later writers. Though some scholars prefer an earlier date, it was most probably written in the second half of the 3rd century. Augustine is the first to quote the Latin *Asclepius*, in his *City of God* (between 410 and 426), whereas Lactantius does not seem to know it, which might be an indication that the Latin translation dates from the 4th century. It survived among the works of Apuleius (ca. 150), who can hardly have been the translator of the Greek text, as has been suggested (Hunink), and it became the only known complete hermetic treatise in the West until the Renaissance.

The Latin *Asclepius* appears to be a rather free translation of the Greek *Logos Teleios*. That became apparent after the discovery of a Coptic translation of *Asclepius*, 21-29, which *inter alia* contains the famous "Hermetic Apocalypse" (24-26), in Codex VI of the Nag Hammadi Library. Comparison between the Latin and Coptic translations shows that the Latin translator took the liberty to abridge or expand the Greek original. A good example of the abridgement is offered by the description of the desolate state of the land of Egypt after the gods' withdrawal from the earth to heaven. Having said that in those days the Egyptians will be prohibited from worshipping God and even punished if they do so, the Latin text simply

says, in chapter 24: 'Then this most holy land, seat of shrines and temples, will be completely filled with tombs and corpses'. The Coptic translation, however, presents this prophecy in a more elaborate form, NHC IV, 70, 30-36: 'On that day, the country that was more *pious* than all (other) countries will become *impious*. No longer will it be full of *temples* but it will be full of *tombs*, neither will it be full of *gods* but (it will be full of) *corpses*.' The Latin translator has obviously suppressed the distinct antithetic parallelism of the original (*pious/impious, temples/tombs, gods/corpses*); the gods are even not mentioned at all. That the Coptic translation represents the original text is confirmed by Augustine's polemics against a pagan interpretation of this prophecy, in his *City of God*, VIII, 23-27 (van den Broek [1]). The discovery of the Coptic translation has also made an end to the widespread scholarly opinion that between Lactantius and Augustine the Latin "Hermetic Apocalypse" had been interpolated with allusions to the Christian persecution of paganism. These "allusions" were already to be found in the Greek text that underlies the Coptic translation and must necessarily have been written down before the persecution of pagan religions began. As a matter of fact, the idea that strangers will occupy the land and destroy the traditional religious institutions of Egypt is one of the stock themes of ancient Egyptian prophetic and apocalyptic texts (Mahé 1982, II, 68-113).

Of the original Greek text of the *Asclepius* only a few fragments are left. Two of them deserve to be mentioned here separately: a very influential quotation by Lactantius and the Greek version of the final hymn of the *Asclepius*. In his *Divinae Institutiones* IV, 6, 4, Lactantius cites the Greek text of the beginning of *Asclepius* 8, about the creation of the second god, which he interprets in a Christian sense as referring to the generation of the Son by the Father. The passage was translated into Latin by Quodvultdeus († ca. 453) in his *Adversus quinque haereses*, III, 4, a work that later gained great authority because of its attribution to Augustine. In a somewhat abbreviated and occasionally Christianized form the passage became one of the most cited hermetic texts in medieval theological literature. Its best-known variant is found in the famous representation of Hermes Mercurius in the Siena floor mosaic by Giovanni di Stefano (1488; van den Broek [2], 135).

The final hymn of the *Asclepius*, in chapter 41, has had an independent circulation. The somewhat lacunal Greek text is found in a magical papyrus in Paris, the so-called Papyrus Mimaut (Pap. Louvre, N. 2391), where it is part of a longer prayer. A Cop-

tic translation of the Greek text, usually called the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, is found in Codex VI, 7 of the Nag Hammadi Library, where it immediately follows the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (see below). Scholarly opinion is divided about the question of whether the hymn was part of the *Asclepius* from the beginning and afterwards started its independent circulation or that the process went the other way round. On the basis of the Latin, Coptic and Greek texts it has been possible to reconstruct the original Greek text to a high degree of probability. It is a beautiful hymn of thanksgiving for the gift of Gnosis, which glorifies the androgyne nature of the supreme God in such a bold language that the Latin translator thought it wise to mitigate it: 'We know you, O spiritual Light, O Life of our life. We know you, O Womb of every creature. We know you, O Womb that is pregnant by the member (*physis*) of the Father. We know you, O begetting Father who eternally exists' (NHC VI, 64, 22-29 par.).

It is impossible to detect a detailed structure in the *Asclepius*: the subjects discussed are only loosely connected, mostly by association, and often interrupted by the insertion of other material. But that does not diminish its importance, for it is an extensive compendium of ancient Hermetism, most probably based on existing hermetic treatises, which the author extracted and abridged 'without much intelligence' (Ferguson, in Scott, IV, x-xxxiii). It has the form of a discussion between Hermes, Asclepius, Tat and Ammon, situated in the *adyton*, the inner sanctuary, of an Egyptian temple. Already before Tat and Ammon have arrived, Hermes discloses to Asclepius a fundamental hermetic idea: 'All things are part of the One, or the One is all things' (*omnia unius esse aut unum esse omnia*). In the following discussion about the structure of the universe, matter and soul, gods and demons, the position of the human being receives special attention (ch. 6-12). The section begins with what might be the most renowned statement of the *Asclepius*, which had such a great influence on the Renaissance concept of man (→ Pico della Mirandola): 'Man is a great wonder, a living being to be worshipped and honoured' (*magnum miraculum est homo, animal adorandum et honorandum*). A special human faculty, which according to the *Asclepius* shows the greatness of man, is his power to create the earthly gods by conjuring heavenly powers into their statues (37, 38, cf. 24). This view has aroused the interest, and the opposition as well, of many later writers; it shows beyond doubt that the philosophical hermetists did not shun theurgical practices.

## E. COPTIC HERMETIC TEXTS

The Nag Hammadi Library presented the scholarly world with three Coptic Hermetic texts and a scribal note about other hermetic texts in his possession. The Coptic translations of two important parts of the *Asclepius*, namely chapters 21-29 (NHC VI, 65, 15-78, 43; with the “Hermetic Apocalypse”), and chapter 41 (NHC VI, 63, 33-65, 7; the “Prayer of Thanksgiving”) have already been discussed in the preceding section. Between these two texts there is a note (NHC VI, 65, 8-14) in which the scribe directly addresses those who had commissioned him, declaring that he has only copied ‘this one discourse’ of the very great number of treatises that he had at his disposal, because he did not know whether his addressees already had them in their possession. It is improbable that this note was taken over from the Greek manuscript upon which the translator based his translation, but it remains undecided whether ‘this one discourse’ refers to the preceding hermetic text or to the subsequent translation of *Asclepius* 21-29. In any case, it shows that in the 4th century there existed much more Coptic translations of hermetic texts than the three that are extant in NHC VI. The discovery of the first of these three texts, preserved in NHC VI, 52-63, was a surprise, for it was not only completely unknown previously, but it also proved to be of great importance. It has lost its original title, but on the basis of its contents it is usually called the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth (Sphere)* or *On the Ogdoad and the Ennead*. Interspersed with didactic explanations, it describes the mystical experience of a pupil who is initiated into the hermetic mystery. The first part of the treatise explains that the elevation of the pupil’s mind into the eighth and the ninth sphere is not only a personal experience but at the same time the adoption into the brotherhood of the hermetic community, which makes him a son of Hermes Trismegistus. The initiate’s future brothers, all sons of Hermes Trismegistus, join his prayers during the initiation (VI, 52, 1-54, 22). The vision of the eighth and the ninth spheres concludes a way of spiritual progress, which comprised a study of hermetic books (VI, 54, 6-32) and a pious life. This was apparently compared to a journey through the seven planetary spheres, VI, 56, 27-32: ‘We have already advanced to the seventh sphere (the Hebdomad), since we are pious and walk in your law and always fulfil your will’. After a prayer to the supreme God, ‘to whom one speaks in silence’ (VI, 56, 11-12), Hermes and his pupil embrace each other (VI, 57, 26-27) and then experience the coming down of the divine Light-power. In this experi-

ence, the initiator, Hermes, somehow becomes identical with the supreme Mind that reveals itself, and the initiate attains an ecstatic state of mind: ‘I see myself. I want to speak. Fear restrains me. . . . I see a fountain bubbling with life! . . . I have seen!’ (VI, 58, 8-14). Language is of no use any more; to sing a hymn in silence is the only way to adore the divine Mind [→ Hymns and Prayers], just like the souls and the angels do in the Ogdoad (VI, 58, 17-21; 59, 28-32). A discussion of the importance of singing spiritual hymns in silence, with some examples of this form of mystic prayer, concludes the description of the initiation proper (VI, 58, 17-61, 17). Moreover, the initiate is exhorted to keep silence about his experience: ‘Do not speak about the vision from now on. It is proper to sing a hymn to the Father until the day to quit the body’ (VI, 60, 3-5). It is of interest to note that the author speaks about prayer in words that betray a distinct biblical influence. In VI, 55, 10-14, Hermes says that it is fitting ‘to pray to God with all our mind and all our heart and our soul’, and in 57, 18-23, he calls the hermetic prayers spiritual sacrifices, ‘which we send to you with all our heart and our soul and all our strength’. It will be clear that this phraseology is strongly coloured by one of the basic texts of Judaism, Deuteronomy 6:5: ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength’ (cf. Mark 12:29 parr.).

One of the most interesting features of *The Ogdoad and the Ennead* is its use of magical and astrological elements. The supreme God is addressed by the same enumeration of the seven vowels that is often used in magical papyri to express the deity’s hidden name. In VI, 56, 17-22, the series of vowels is preceded and followed by the magical names Zōxathazō and Zōzazōth. Each vowel is followed by a series of omegas (with scribal mistakes after the vowels i and o): ‘Zōxathazō. a oō, ee oōō, ēēē oōōō, iiii oōōōō, ooooo oōōōōō, uuuuuu oōōōōōō, oōōōōōō oōōōōōōō. Zōzazōth’. A similar but not identical series is found in the prayer at VI, 61, 8-15 (with three scribal mistakes): ‘I praise you. I call your name that is hidden within me: a o, ee oō, ēēē oōō, iiii oōōō, ooooo oōōōō, uuuuuu oōōōōō, oōōōōōō oōōōōōō’. Immediately after this prayer, Hermes instructs the initiate to write down what had happened on turquoise steles in hieroglyphic characters and to place them in his sanctuary at Diospolis (most probably Diospolis Magna, Thebes, which possessed a temple of Thot). The steles should be guarded by the sun and eight guardians, those on the right being male and frog-faced, those on the left female and cat-faced. They have to be placed

there at an astrologically important moment, when the sun is in the first half of the day and the planet Mercury (Hermes) is in the Sign of the Virgin and has passed 15 degrees, i.e. when the influence of Hermes' planet is most strongly felt (VI, 61, 18-62, 20; Mahé [1978] I, 129-130). The treatise ends with an oath to be sworn by everyone who reads the book: he has to swear by the four elements, the seven rulers of being and their creating spirit, and 'the unbegotten God and the self-begotten one and him who has been begotten'. Who keeps this oath will be reconciled with God and the deities mentioned, but who violates it will experience their wrath (VI, 22-63, 30). All this shows again that hermetic authors who described highly spiritual experiences felt no hesitation to make use of magical and astrological ideas and practices: it all belonged to their world.

#### F. THE ARMENIAN DEFINITIONS

The Coptic *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth Sphere* and the Armenian *Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius* are the most important hermetic texts discovered in the 20th century. The Armenian translation of the original Greek text most likely dates from the second half of the 6th century. It was first edited with a Russian translation in 1956, but it was only through Mahé's magisterial edition, translation and commentary (1982, II) that its basic importance for the study of Hermetism became clear. Some Greek fragments of the *Definitions* have been discovered in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Mahé & Paramele, 1990-1991), which have been integrated into Mahé's English translation of the Armenian text (1999). The *Definitions* do not have the usual form of a dialogue; they are a collection of short, often aphoristic summaries of the main points of hermetic doctrine. A similar collection has been preserved in Stobaeus' *Fragm. XI*. In C.H. XIV, 1, Hermes seems to refer to such collections, when he writes to Asclepius that he will send him a summary of the most important points (*kephalaia*) he had discussed with Tat. These short sentences apparently had a mnemonic function (Stobaeus, *Fragm. XI*, 1), which explains that, with variations, they turn up through the whole of ancient hermetic literature. At the same time, they are meant to be the object of silent meditation: 'When you keep silent, you understand; when you talk, you just talk' (*Def.* 5, 2). The *Definitions* 'as a whole can be regarded as a general outline of hermetic spiritual exercises aimed at developing individual *nous* and making the disciple worthy of undergoing mystic initiation' (Mahé 1999, 103). They deal with the three great themes of hermetic thought – God,

world and man –, which can be distinguished from one another but not completely separated: 'God is within himself, the world is in God, and man is in the world' (7, 5). The *Definitions* predominantly deal with the world (2-3) and man (4-10), but the relationship of these 'images of God' to each other and, above all, to God himself is never lost sight of.

The aphoristic nature of Stobaeus' *Fragm. XI* and the *Definitions* has led Mahé to an interesting theory about the development of hermetic literature, not in a pure chronological but in a more ideal-typical sense. According to him, the earliest form of hermetic literature was a series of independent sentences expressing the basic ideas of hermetic religious philosophy, such as still found in Stobaeus' *Fragm. XI*. The next step was the grouping together of related sentences into chapters, as in the *Definitions*. In the third stage, the sentences were linked together into a coherent treatise, which might be interspersed with reflections and didactic expositions. Even in such mythological texts as the *Poimandres* (C.H. I) the hermetic maxims appear at the key points of the myth, determining both its structure and the arrangement of the mythic elements borrowed from older sources (Mahé 1982, II, 408-436). Moreover, based on the observation that the *Poimandres* reflects a considerable number of sentences of the *Definitions*, Mahé dated the original Greek version of the latter work to the 1st century A.D. Moreover, he also tried to establish a direct link with the earlier Egyptian wisdom literature (also Mahé 1999). These views have met with strong opposition from Powden (71-72). It should be observed, however, that the development from hermetic sentence to hermetic treatise, as described by Mahé, has a distinct and undisputed parallel in Greek gnomic literature, as can be seen from an analysis of the sententious structure of Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* and, on the Christian side, the *Teachings of Silvanus*. Though the Egyptian connection is not to be excluded completely, it seems quite certain that the literary forms and contents of the hermetic sentences and treatises are more closely related to the Greek gnomic tradition than to Egyptian wisdom literature.

#### 4. "GENERAL" AND "DETAILED" DISCOURSES

In the hermetic literature itself, a distinction is made between "general" and "detailed" discourses. This may be no more than a literary device, reflecting the usual practice in philosophical school teaching (Festugière, *Révélation*, II, 34-40), for there are no hermetic treatises that explicitly designate themselves as general or detailed discourses. Hermes (C.H. X, 1 and 7;

Stobaeus, *Fragm.* III, 1; Vienna, *Fragm.* B, 6; *Ogdoad and Ennead*, NHC VI, 63, 2) or his pupils (C.H. XIII, 1; Stobaeus, *Fragm.* VI, 1) often refer to the “General Discourses” (*genikoi logoi*), which Hermes had delivered previously. C.H. X presents itself as a summary of the general lectures Hermes had given to Tat the preceding day. The second category of hermetic discourses is mentioned by Cyril of Alexandria (*Contra Julianum*, I, 46; NF IV, 135/6, *Fragm.* 30), who quotes a teaching of Hermes from ‘the first of the Detailed Discourses (*diexodikoi logoi*) to Tat’. The word *exodikos*, a shorter form of *diexodikos* and also meaning “detailed”, most probably appears in *Asclepius* 1, when Hermes says that he has written many *physica* and *exotica* for his son Tat. Here the word *physica* seems to refer to the technical Hermetica and the word *exotica* to the “detailed discourses”. An interesting passage of the Coptic *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead*, mentions both kinds of hermetic instruction, NHC VI, 62, 33-63, 8: ‘And he who will not first be begotten by God should stick to the general (*genikos*) and detailed (*exōdikos*, corruption of *exodikos*) discourses. He will not be able to read what has been written in this book, although his conscience is pure within him . . . Rather by stages he advances and enters into the way of immortality’. Most of the preserved hermetic treatises can be assigned to these two types of hermetic instruction, though it is often impossible to distinguish them clearly. They suggest that the aspirant initiate was first instructed on an elementary level and then in a more detailed and fundamental manner, as succeeding stages on the way to initiation. The initiation itself, the direct vision of God, is a personal experience, which is not described but only hinted at in the hermetic oral or written instruction. This idea is clearly expressed in the opening sentence of C.H. XIII: ‘In the general lectures, O Father, you spoke in riddles and not openly about the divine nature. You have not revealed anything, saying that nobody can be saved before rebirth’. The only works that describe the initiation proper, though interspersed with didactic expositions, are C.H. XIII and the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead*, but the quotation of the latter work, cited above, shows that the real meaning of these works can only be understood if one has been ‘begotten by God’, i.e. after the initiation.

##### 5. DATE AND PLACE OF ORIGIN OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL HERMETICA

Since Hermes was thought to have lived in remote Egyptian antiquity, his works were also generally dated to a time that long preceded

Graeco-Roman civilization. The hermetic writings sometimes explicitly claimed to have been translated from the Egyptian (see about C.H. XVI above), but implicitly this was suggested by all of them. The idea of the extreme old age of the hermetic literature held the field until the beginning of the 17th century. That Luther had already declared the *Asclepius* a fraud in the thirties of the preceding century remained widely unnoticed. In his *Disputations* (ed. Hermelink, Weimarer Ausgabe, 39, 1, 179-180), he argues that the Greek philosophers did not know anything about God the Creator and man made of the dust of earth. He refers briefly to Augustine, who in his *Confessiones* VII, 13-14, had said that in the books of the Platonists he had found the same ideas about the Word of God that are also to be found in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, with one exception: that the Word became flesh. Then Luther continues: ‘But Hermegistus (*sic*) composed that book of Plato and stole everything from the Gospel of John. That book then came into the hands of Augustine and by its persuasive force he was deceived’. The suggestion is that Augustine’s Platonists did not teach similar ideas as John in his Gospel, but that they were dependent on it. It seems that Luther with ‘that book of Plato’ meant the *Asclepius*, which was extensively discussed by Augustine in his *City of God*, and not only in a negative sense. But the final blow to the idea that the Hermetica were authentic writings of the Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus came from Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614). He was not the first to put the authenticity of the Hermetica, or at least of some parts of it, in doubt (Purnell; Mulsow), but his criticism proved to be decisive, even in the eyes of those who adhered, and continued to adhere, to the hermetic world view (Grafton). In 1614 Casaubon published his *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes* XVI, in which he attacked Cardinal Cesare Baronio’s *Annales ecclesiastici* (12 vols., 1588-1607). He shared with Baronio the common view that Hermes was a historical person, who had lived in Egypt before Moses and had invented the art of writing and all kinds of sciences. What provoked his reaction was Baronio’s passing remark that there had been pre-Christian pagan prophets, such as Hermes Trismegistus, Hydaspes and the Sibyls, who had predicted the coming of Christ. Against this view Casaubon’s main arguments were: 1) that the book *Poemander*, i.e. what we now call the C.H., was completely unknown to pre-Christian authors, which leaves little doubt about its pseudographic character, 2) that it could not have been written by Hermes, because it is inconceivable that God had already revealed the coming of Christ to a



pagan before the Law was given to Moses, 3) that the hermetic writings 'do not contain the Egyptian doctrines of Mercurius, but ideas which are partly Greek, taken from the books of Plato and the Platonists and often with the same words, partly Christian, drawn from the Sacred Scriptures'. In his discussion of these groups of texts, Casaubon showed his great philological skill and vast knowledge. He pointed out that the style and vocabulary of the Hermetica are typical for the late Greek and Christian period, without any indication that they had been translated from the Egyptian. He found a strong Christian influence especially in the treatises I, IV and XIII of the C.H. Casaubon's criticism, especially his philological arguments, convinced all serious philologists and historians. After him, it became an established fact of classical scholarship that the Hermetic writings date from the first centuries of our era and betray a strong influence of later Platonism and Stoicism. The great hermetic studies published by Scott and Festugière in the 20th century, with their wealth of philosophical parallels, marked the culmination and the completion of the philological tradition that was inaugurated by Casaubon. These scholars, however, did not share his argument about the Christian inspiration of at least some of the hermetic writings, though this idea has been revived in more recent scholarship, without much success (Büchli). There is no need to doubt that the seemingly Christian elements were current in the spiritual milieu the Hermetica came from, whereas the obvious biblical expressions and ideas are due to a direct or indirect Jewish influence. After Scott and Festugière, scholars have become more sensitive to the possible and actual presence of original Egyptian elements in the Hermetica (Mahé, Fowden). There is a general scholarly consensus that the treatises that abound in biblical expressions and ideas, such as C.H. I and VII, belong to the oldest layers of Hermetic literature, probably dating from the first or the beginning of the 2nd century. There are also good reasons to date the *Asclepius* to the 3rd century, but for the bulk of the hermetic writings it is virtually impossible to go any further than to ascribe them to the first three centuries of our era.

The spiritual climate that pervades the Hermetica points to Alexandria in Egypt as the place of origin of the hermetic world-view. For that reason it is mostly assumed that the hermetic treatises were written in Egypt too. For some of them, for instance the *Poimandres* and the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead*, an Alexandrian origin is indeed very likely, but it is quite possible

that elsewhere in the Roman world adepts of the "way of Hermes" set themselves down to compose hermetic treatises as well. There is no reason to assume that the man in Athens, who according to Cyril of Alexandria composed a work called *Hermaika* in 15 books, was an exception.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

## Hermetic Literature II: Latin Middle Ages

### A. PHILOSOPHICAL-RELIGIOUS HERMETISM

1. THE ASCLEPIUS IN LATIN PATRISTICS
2. THE ASCLEPIUS IN THE 12TH CENTURY
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### B. TECHNICAL AND OPERATIVE HERMETISM

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### A. PHILOSOPHICAL-RELIGIOUS HERMETISM

The Hermetic literature in Latin of the Middle Ages inherited from ancient → Hermetism (known just partially from Greek and Arabic versions) ambiguities and problems which would characterize it for centuries: the unresolved differences between philosophical-religious doctrines and operational techniques (→ magic, → astrology, →

alchemy); the inner tensions of the *Asclepius*, suspended in a cultural *koiné* that combines late Platonism and Stoicism with a ceremonial theurgy of Egyptian origin; and the mythological origin of → Hermes Trismegistus (Mercurius in Latin), seen as a primal source of wisdom, who appears at times as a prophet of monotheism and at times as the founder of idolatry, a source of spiritual truths and inventor of demonic liturgies. But beyond the difficulties inherited from ancient Hermetism, the Middle Ages had to face still others in its attempt to achieve a consistent exegesis: the formation of a Hermetic tradition in the Arab world; the cross-circulation of texts in different linguistic areas (Latin, Hebrew, Arabic) with complicated transitions from one area to another; and the emergence of pseudo-epigraphs and the attribution to Hermes of works by different authors, which credit him with doctrines extraneous to his tradition. And yet the most complex problem for the historian lies in the diachronic character of medieval Hermetism: while in fact the *Asclepius* was already known and commented on in late antiquity, other works were translated only in the 12th and 13th centuries, and eventually they all merged, together with famous pseudo-epigraphs – such as the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* and the *Liber de sex rerum principiis* – and disparate attestations, into an ensemble, the outlines of which are confused and undefinable.

For these reasons we consider it appropriate to describe the evolution of medieval Hermetism and the reactions it produced by following a differentiated route. Up to the 12th century we will examine the entry of the *Asclepius* into Latin culture; thereafter the works that were erroneously ascribed to Hermes and the translations of the technical-operational texts in the 12th and 13th centuries; lastly, the relationships of the *Asclepius* to Hermes' other writings in the interpretations of the great medieval masters up to → Nicholas of Cusa.

#### 1. THE *ASCLEPIUS* IN LATIN PATRISTICS

The historical precedents, that open the way for a Christian interpretation of philosophical Hermetism and condition that interpretation for centuries to come, originate in the 4th and 5th centuries. Lactantius and Quodvultdeus, on the one hand, and → Augustine, on the other, offer two opposing paradigms of response to the *Asclepius* and to the few Hermetic fragments passed down by Christian writers (Tertullian, pseudo-Justin, Arnobius and Philastrius of Brescia). It may safely be said that the long trail of philosophical Hermetism in the Middle Ages begins with Lactantius. In his

*Divinae institutiones* (304-313) he cites numerous fragments, which largely derive from the original Greek of the Latin *Asclepius*, known under the title of *Logos Teleios*. Hermes Trismegistus, writes Lactantius, proclaims the majesty of the supreme and only God, whom he, like the Christians, calls Lord and Father. Unbegotten, God created the universe and rules it with eternal providence; and without a name because of His unity (names are necessary only in the multiple), He is unintelligible to the mind. Man was created *ad imaginem Dei*, and if he raises his intellect up towards a knowledge of the divine he escapes the laws of fate and the power of evil demons. The “baptism” which Lactantius thus bestows on Hermes culminates in an interpretation of the universe – the “second god” of the Hermetic triad (God, world, man) – as a prophetic proclamation of the Word made flesh. The *deus sensibilis* of the *Asclepius* becomes the God made man of the Christian revelation: first-born son of the supreme God, brimming with the greatest power, He has by His wisdom been operative in the creation of the world. And in the famous “Apocalypse” of the *Asclepius*, where Hermes describes the “aging of the world” and the approaching empire of evil, he announces the dispatching of the Son onto the earth for the sake of the world's renewal and the salvation of the righteous.

A century later, in book VIII of *De civitate Dei* (415-417), Augustine proposes to the Christian conscience a different interpretation of the *Asclepius*, which had been translated into Latin toward the end of the 4th century. After having condemned the doctrine of Apuleius – who regarded demons as necessary mediators between gods and men and did not distinguish their cult from true religion – Augustine turns the arrows of his criticism against the theurgy of the *Asclepius*. Hermes the Egyptian distinguishes between the gods created by God, who animate heaven, and the “earthly gods” created by man, that is the spirits who through hymns and incantations are induced to dwell in temple statues so as to grant prayers and work good and evil. But it is ridiculous to believe that the gods, evoked and, by unknown procedures, shut inside the simulacra built by man, have a power greater than that of man, who was created in God's image. And in the Hermetic “Apocalypse”, which foretells the disappearance of religion in Egypt, Hermes bewails the future triumph of Christ and the coming to grief of demons. I do not understand, writes Augustine, by what obfuscation of the heart a sage, who said many truths concerning the only and true God, the creator of the world, could be plunged into distress by the incumbent defeat of the wicked

angels. Hermes, indeed, not only confesses that the art of fashioning the earthly gods was invented by his ancestors because they lived in error and ignorance of God, but despairs in view of the future disappearance of the idolatrous rites and gives voice to the terror-stricken dismay of the demonic spirits.

It is striking how the conflicting readings of Lactantius and Augustine appear to be supported by exegetic misunderstandings (just how “innocent”, we do not know) of a philological and philosophical nature. On the one hand, Augustine attributes to Hermes the confession that the cult of holy statues was born from the religious ignorance of his ancestors; on the other, Lactantius interprets the created world, the second god of the Hermetic hierarchy, as the Word made flesh. The fact remains however that, although the interpretation of the *Asclepius* would continue to produce conflicting judgments in Christian culture, from the very onset these interpretations are marked by a forced and ideological position. Two such differing interpretations of Hermetism came about, in African Christianity toward the end of antiquity, because of opposing needs. Lactantius, an illustrious pagan rhetorician prior to his conversion, wanted to demonstrate the concordance of ancient wisdom with revealed truth; Augustine, a bishop and shepherd of souls, aspired to demolish the persistent forms of idolatry and superstition among the population of the faithful. If the unquestioned authority of Augustine did not prevail in Christian reflection, this did not depend on the force of his arguments, but on a literary event which originated in the preaching of Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage at the time of the Vandalic invasion and later exiled in 439 to Campania, by King Genseric. In his *Tractatus adversus quinque haereses* Quodvultdeus accepts the exegesis of Lactantius, simplifies it, and emphasizes the knowledge of the Son of God evident in the words of a pagan like Hermes. The Greek title *Logos teleios* is translated as *Verbum perfectum*, the divine Word, and Hermes’ comments on the ineffable perfection of the Son and the immense joy of the Father are related to the Gospel of St. John and the Old Testament *Proverbs*. Thus refuting the unbelieving pagan, Quodvultdeus exclaims: ‘I will not expound my authors to you, Mercurius is yours . . . Heed him, let him convince and vanquish you so that in being defeated you may yield to him and so believe me’. The *Tractatus* perhaps would never have had a decisive role in the encounter of Christian theology with Hermetic thought if his homilies had not come to be included in the African collections attributed to Augustine and placed under the high authority

of his name. So it happened that the vehement invective of the *De civitate Dei* against Hermes’ demonic simulacra was countered and neutralized by the enthusiastic plea for a concordance between Hermetism and Christianity found in the *Tractatus* attributed to Augustine.

## 2. THE *ASCLEPIUS* IN THE 12TH CENTURY

In the many centuries that pass between the dissolution of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance of the 12th century, Hermetism seems to disappear from the scene of Latin culture. Its rare occurrences are limited to the erudite citations of Fulgentius in the 5th-6th century, a new translation of Greek fragments (mentioned by Lactantius) by Sedulius Scot in the 9th century, and lastly, in the 11th century, the criticisms by the poet Warnerius of Basel in his *Paraclitus* and above all by Adalbold of Utrecht in his commentary on Boethius: Hermes and Plato, devoid of faith and too ingrained in philosophical thinking, did not know about the generation of Wisdom which governs the universe.

It is only in the 12th century that we witness a revival of the *Asclepius*, in the wake of pseudo-Augustine’s (Quodvultdeus’) concordizing interpretation, and as a result of direct reading of the Hermetic dialogue. With respect to the former aspect, some authors see in the *Tractatus adversus quinque haereses* the authoritative declaration of an agreement between the *Logos Teleios* (*Logos Teleios*) and the Christian revelation of the Son: this is the case with Abelard, John of Salisbury and Robert of Melun, Alan of Lille and the *Liber Alcidi de immortalitate animae*. Abelard in particular, engaged in demonstrating the natural revelation of the trinitarian dogma, in many of his writings examines the words of the *Tractatus* and with linguistic-semantic sapience absolves Hermes regarding his lexical imprecisions: even the Scriptures, the Fathers and Boethius, he writes, sometimes spoke improperly of the eternal generation of the Word.

But it is the authors who themselves read the codices of the *Asclepius* who supply the first responses of medieval thought to the Hermetic text. Theodoric of Chartres, perhaps the subtlest thinker of the 12th century, derives from it the theme of the spirit which governs the universe (identified with the Platonic *anima mundi* and with the Holy Ghost of the Christians), the concept of destiny as causality within created order, and the hope of deification. Still more profound is the dialectical relationship he establishes between the Hermetic idea of an ineffable God and the doctrine of *unus-omnia*, between the solitary transcendence of God and His ordering presence in



creation. Bernardus Silvester in his *Cosmographia* (a philosophical poem in prose and verse, which describes by means of imaginative allegories the birth of the universe and the formation of man) peoples the astral scenario of the cosmogonic myth with the *dei intelligibiles* of the *Asclepius* (Imarmene, Pantomorphos, Usiarchi). The Hermetic glorification of man, *magnum miraculum*, composed of eternal and mortal substance and placed at the center of the world to worship God and govern the earth, inspires Bernard to a bold and unusual vision of man: dweller of the upper and the lower regions, god and earth together, man is destined to love the gods and to perfect creation, to learn the secret reasons of things, and to dominate the universe as sovereign and pontifex. And with a sensitivity akin to the *Asclepius* but altogether rare in medieval consciousness, Bernard places the natural and joyous fecundity of the sexes in the earthly regality of man. Subsequently, in Alan of Lille we find a frequent use of and intimate adhesion to Hermetic theology and cosmology. In his *Summa Quoniam homines* and *Contra haereticos* Alan appeals to the Egyptian sage, mentioned among the great philosophers of the past, with respect to numerous questions: the unity of God, His omnipotent, incomprehensible and ineffable nature, the rejection of Manichaean doctrines, the denial of eternal void, the creation of man, and the immortality of the soul. But his exegesis becomes boldest and most contentious when he ascribes to the *Asclepius* (23: ‘god created the eternal gods’) a prophetic awareness of the trinitarian dogma: “God” designates the Father; “the eternal gods”, the Son and the Holy Ghost. As Abelard had already observed elsewhere, even in the book of *Ecclesiastices* the word “create” is synonymous with “beget”. In this interpretation we encounter the attempt, common in the 12th century, to perceive in the pagan authors traces of revealed truth, in line with the unequivocal message of “Augustine” in the *Tractatus adversus quinque haereses*.

An identical perspective guides the *Glosae super Trismegistum*, a lengthy commentary on the *Asclepius* (which unfortunately has survived only in part) composed around the turn of the 13th century. Considering its style, language, topics and doctrinal conclusions, the work can be attributed, if not to Alan of Lille himself, then to one of his disciples or to a *magister* of his circle. The commentary, which in the surviving manuscript treats the first four chapters, must have been quite long. The picture of Mercurius in the prologue defines the exegetic project: ‘Mercurius precedes all the pagan philosophers. We know that he wrote many

volumes on the supreme creator of things, and since more than the others he reflected on the mysteries of the heavenly realities, not only was he very honored in life by the philosophers, but even after his death it is said that they honored him with a divine cult. Of his published volumes on the heavenly realities, one, as Augustine testifies, is entitled *Logos Tileos*: in this, after having surpassed all in his other volumes, he surpassed even himself, and in his speculations on the Father and the Son seems to come close to our theology. There is also another of his works, now in our possession, which is entitled *Trismegistus* or *Mercurius*’. Describing the text according to the traditional model of the *accessus*, the author illustrates its aim, subject and the reason why he wrote it. Its aim is to treat the three main causes of the world – God, the archetypal world and primordial matter – by demonstrating the harmony of the world and the relationship between creator and creature. The subject is the philosophy of nature and mathematics; but when Hermes expounds his doctrine on created spirits and the uncreated Spirit, he does not abandon the mysteries of theology. He wrote it in order to counter the materialist concepts of his time (eternity of the world, plurality of first principles, fortuitousness of reality) with the affirmation of a single God, the creator of the universe, who in His potency, wisdom and goodness brings all things into being, orders them and preserves them with His love. Therefore, merged together in the prologue and developed in a lengthy commentary are the central motifs which in the 12th century determine the fortune of Hermes, regarded as the pagan perhaps closest to Biblical revelation. And like Alan of Lille, the *Glosae* draws a distinction between *Logos Tileos* and the *Asclepius*: to the former it ascribes the knowledge of the Father and the Son, to the latter the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. In fact, in commenting on the passage ‘genus ergo deorum ex se deorum facit species’ (*Ascl.* 4), the author writes that by “species deorum” Mercurius means the three persons and by “genus deorum” the divine essence.

Toward the end of the 12th century → Daniel de Morley, in his *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum*, likewise refers to the *Asclepius* on theological and philosophical themes: the hierarchy of being, the divine and human origin of man, intellect and deification, time and eternity.

### 3. APOCRYPHA AND TRANSLATIONS IN 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES

The *Glosae super Trismegistum* concludes an epoch in the history of Hermetism which had com-



menced with the Latin Fathers and had witnessed a Renaissance in the 12th century. This intense flowering was manifested by the widespread circulation of the *Asclepius*, in the wake of Lactantius' *Divinae institutiones* and of Quodvultdeus' *Tractatus adversus quinque haereses*, supported by Abelard's criticism of language, nurtured at Chartres and Paris by the faith in reason and by a sort of "perennis theologia" which discovered the light of eternal truth in the sages of antiquity.

But already toward the end of the 12th century the overall physiognomy of Hermetism has profoundly changed: the appearance of theological and cosmological pseudo-epigraphs, attributed to the authoritative name of Trismegistus, and of translations from the Arabic and Greek, mark the appearance of another type of Hermetic literature, characterized by a wealth of operational knowledge (astrology, botany, medicine, magic, divination [→ Divinatory Arts] and alchemy). The new texts stimulate a variety of reflections, now full of admiration, now full of dismay. But with the sole exception of → William of Auvergne, the two "Hermetisms" never enter into conflict: they ignore one another or take separate paths. The research that would make possible a thorough diachronic reconstruction of Hermetism still needs to be done. We can, however, follow a simpler route: trace the history of "philosophical" Hermeticism as represented by its main texts, identify connections, and mention the Hermetism of an "operational" content only where necessary, while treating the latter separately elsewhere. Let us first sketch a general picture of the new documents attributed to the Egyptian sage.

(a) The *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* (Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers). This new writing reinforces the myth of a Hermes inwardly inspired by God or instructed by His prophets; in many codices it is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. As the prologue explains, the book contains a summary of definitions of God, as formulated by twenty-four sages who meet in a holy convocation. Their maxims are accompanied by brief commentaries which seem to belong to the original redaction; some manuscripts, dating perhaps from the beginning of the 14th century, add a second and more extensive commentary, while others present only the maxims. The traditional line of interpretation, from C. Baeumker to M.-T. d'Alverny, saw in the text the work of a Neoplatonic Christian of the second half of the 12th century, who combined themes of late Platonism with doctrinal elements developed by the school of Chartres and by Gilbert Porreta. Recently, however, F. Hudry has suggested

a different reconstruction, which dates the work's speculative content back to the 3th century; it is seen as having appeared in the wake of Aristotelian theology and belonging to the history of the philosophical schools of Harran and Alexandria, its philosophical perspective being characterized by the "rationalistic" pretence of knowing the divine essence. However, the fine and well-documented edition by F. Hudry itself, offering a full and coherent text, nevertheless tends – through its structural, conceptual and lexical analysis of the dicta and the first commentary – to confirm the earlier hypothesis.

The structure of the work reveals strong analogies with the writings which, in the second half of the 12th century, introduced into theology the axiomatic method, which expressed a theological concept formally based upon the enunciation of intuitive truths; these truths were accepted on the basis of their evidence and exposed in an argumental form. In the first place the work repeatedly expounds – using "rational" language in the maxims and "theological" terminology in the commentary – the Christian formulation of the trinitarian dogma. If, in fact, in its definitions the life of God is expressed by triads (for example: mind-word-connection, principle-process-end, power-being-goodness, potency-wisdom-will, unity-truth-goodness) which assign common attributes to the whole divine nature and could have been intuited even by the "philosophers", the commentary resorts openly to the traditional "theological" lexicon: the dynamism of the Divine Being constitutes itself eternally in the relationship between the Progenitor, the Begotten, and the Spirit, and there was also an explicit affirmation of equal dignity among the three Persons. The hypothesis of a Christian origin gains probability by still other elements: references to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, allusions to Scripture and to the dogmatic tradition, and near-verbatim quotations of writers from late antiquity and the Middle Ages. The basic theses bear the tangible mark of Christian → Neoplatonism according to a tradition which goes from Augustine to Boethius, and from → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita to → John Scottus Eriugena: see e.g. the themes of divine infinity, the identity of one and being, God as thought of Himself, the circularity of trinitarian motion, eternal processions and creative processions, the idea of a continuous creation, the illumination of ideal forms, negative theology, and the *vera ignorantia*. If then we consider that certain triads of the maxims are attested only from the 12th century, that the first textual quotations appear in

Alan of Lille in the years 1165-1180, and that throughout this period the axiomatic method takes shape in theology, we are allowed to conclude that the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* is the work of a Christian thinker engaged in demonstrating the agreement of Neoplatonic “reason” with Biblical “revelation”. The Hermetic attribution of the text, subsequent to its original composition, is certainly due to the prestige Trismegistus had gained among Christian theologians because of the *Logos Tileos* and the *Asclepius*.

(b) The *Liber de sex rerum principiis* is a pseudonymous cosmological text composed certainly after 1147, and probably before 1175. Its origin is again uncertain, but its lengthy verbatim quotations of authors such as William of Conches and Bernardus Silvester, as well as the Platonic character of its cosmology, link it with the school of Chartres. The attribution to Hermes derives mainly from the preface, which contains a mythical history known as the “Legend of the Three Hermes”, also present in different versions in other Hermetic texts. In the legend the figure of Hermes is identified with Enoch, Noah, and Mercurius Triplex, the last of whom is credited with the discovery of many occult sciences. While the legend seems to have no clear relation to the contents of the treatise, it is certain that it does not constitute a later addition: its citations of the *Virga aurea*, *Liber longitudinis et latitudinis*, *Liber electionis*, and *Liber Ezich*, which are unique to this version, are also cited periodically within the body of the treatise, as if the author were trying to reestablish his connection with the history behind the legend itself.

In our exposition we follow the clear in-depth analysis and conclusions of Mark Delp. The text begins with a metaphysical exposition of the three most important principles of things: Cause, Reason, and Nature. In subsequent chapters it develops a systematic cosmology based on the three other derivative principles: World, Mechanism of World, and Time. Although Hermes describes the metaphysical principles of the cosmos in terms of an emanative generation, Reason being produced by Cause, and Nature being produced from both – the trinitarian character of their relations constituting the only hint of the text’s “Christianity” –, he does not explain the genesis of the cosmos but, rather, describes the perpetual principles of its motions and forms. The most important element in the systematic cosmology, and the one that has attracted most scholarly attention, is quality. Nature itself, emerging from Cause and Reason, is said to ‘mutably obtain successive general and

specific qualities’. The general quality of nature is described as the form of heaven from which earthly phenomena receive their dynamic elemental characters, whereas the specific quality is called the operational force which constitutes the particular qualitative form and motion of things here below. Thus, considered as the universally active power in the stars and planets, the quality of nature is that of “crafter”, and considered as the immanent life principle of things it is “operational”. The resulting cosmic vision of the text is of a perpetual, dynamic flow of qualities from things above to things below, the whole deriving its being and ordered motion from the law of the stars, which is Reason itself. Although Nature is clearly the most important principle of things in terms of the concrete operations of the cosmos, the metaphysical principles Cause and Reason are integral to the overall system as simultaneously transcendent and immanent powers granting existence, order and motion to the world as a whole. Combining Platonic and Stoic elements, Reason is at once the transcendent Divine Mind of the cosmos, the immanent source of the “same” and “different” motions of the stars and planets respectively, as well as the subtle material spirit penetrating all things. Furthermore, by incorporating the immanent operations of Reason into the descriptions of all the lower principles of things, and by conceiving of every existing form as a variation upon the “vigor” of Nature, itself an emanation from divine Cause and Reason, Hermes effectively envisions all things as essentially qualifications of divinity.

In order to address the question of this text’s place in the greater Hermetic tradition, scholars must look at the Legend of the Three Hermes in the preface. Considered together with the author’s systematic omission of any direct reference to Christian doctrine, his extensive quotations from Arab and Jewish astrologers and Firmicus Maternus, and his focus upon the occult operations of nature in its celestial and earthly forms, the Legend of the Three Hermes can be seen to set the tone for a scientific/occult work appealing to a perennial truth comparable to what is found in the books listed in the legend as composed by Hermes himself. This presentation of the legend in the preface gives the impression of an author perceiving himself as belonging to a tradition at once more ancient and more authoritative than the one into which he has been born. The name of Hermes becomes at once a sign of separation from the theological and political structures of the time, and a sign of union with a secret and more ancient society of philosophers.

(c) A brief Hermetic fragment is quoted in *De septem septenis*, a work attributed to John of Salisbury. Other philosophical fragments of uncertain origin are present in the *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum* of Daniel of Morley, who attributes them to “Magnus Hermes” or “Magnus Mercurius”, author of a *Liber eternorum* and ancestor of Hermes Trismegistus: the former affirms the unity, eternity and immutability of the Principle in itself, as source of universal creation, while the latter expresses a contrast between divine eternity and the temporal transience of the world.

#### 4. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ASCLEPIUS FROM WILLIAM OF AUVERGNE TO NICHOLAS OF CUSA

At the start of the 13th century, then, there emerges a much more complex picture of philosophical and religious Hermetism. To the *Asclepius* – read from the perspective indicated by Lactantius and Quodvultdeus – were added two new texts composed in Christian environments: the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, rooted in Catholic dogma and in the Neoplatonic tradition, and only later attributed to Hermes, and the *Liber de sex rerum principiis*, a systematic work on divine and natural causality, which establishes a concord between the Platonic tradition and Arab sources. Nor must it be forgotten – even if it was ignored in mediaeval discussions of Hermetism – that toward the middle of the century, at the court of Alphonse X the Wise, there was made a translation into Castilian, under the title *Bocados de Oro*, of the *Mokhtār el Hikam* (Selected Thoughts) written in 1050 by the Arab Emir, physician and philosopher, Abu’l Wefa Mubeschschir ben Fatik. The work includes the moral and spiritual maxims of twenty-two sages and ends with an anthology of other sayings; the second and third chapters are dedicated to Hermes and Tac (Thot). In the last decades of the century the Castilian version was translated into Latin, perhaps by Giovanni da Procida, under the title *Liber philosophorum moralium antiquorum* (in turn translated into French as *Livre des philosophes*, by Guillaume de Tignonville toward the end of the 14th century, and from French into English by Stebyn Scrope Squyer in 1450 and by Count Ryvers in 1474–1477).

We will trace the presence of the single Hermetic texts – ancient and modern – in medieval philosophy and theology. But we have to bear in mind the complex and contradictory lineaments taken on by Hermetism after the appearance of the operative writings. Medieval scholars often considered philosophical-religious as well as operative Hermetic

texts as belonging to the same tradition. The encyclopedic works will not be examined here, even though they often contain interesting references to Hermes: Henry de Bate de Malines, for example, in his *Speculum divinorum et quorundam naturalium* (1281–1302) mentions the *Asclepius*, the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* and the *Liber de sex rerum principiis*.

(a) *William of Auvergne*. In the 13th century, one of the most tormented periods of medieval history, the first theologian who confronts Hermetic thought in its new complexity is William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris (1228–1249). A very curious and well-read man, William is familiar with the texts that have flown in from Greece and Islam, and with inexhaustible energy he fights against astrological, magical and divinatory forms of knowledge. It is certainly no accident that the severest condemnation of Hermes since Augustine comes from another bishop, shepherd of souls and strict keeper of tradition. Already in his *Tractatus secundus de bono et malo*, one of his first works, William contrasts the hidden forces of nature with the prodigies of demons and wizards, and associates idolatry with the “dei facticii” of the *Asclepius*. His overall approach derives, with wider-ranging and more closely argued criticisms, from Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*: Mercurius is the primary inspirer of pagan idolatry. The broad discussion undertaken in *De legibus* (1228) begins with a classification of the “sacred” images of ancient paganism. The first type includes the portraits of historical personages, that is, mere images in memory. The second consists of the religious simulacra which demons, seduced by sacrifices and honours, have adopted in order to give responses, and which men have thought could be transformed into sacred abodes of the gods by means of impious rites. The third consists of the “dei facticii”: statues produced in accordance with the astral configurations, animated with a sort of divine power by the heavenly spirits or by the heavens and the stars, and worshipped by idolaters with use of fumigations, invocations and chants ‘ac si veri Dii essent’. This last invention, as William goes on to confirm by several quotations, is the work of Hermes, who erroneously perceives the glory and power of God not only in images made by ceremonial magic and astrological observations, but also in the stars and their symbols. The idolatrous cults listed and described by William thus seem to have their origin in the impious theurgy described in the *Asclepius*. The religion of the stars is nevertheless traced not only to Mercurius, who defines the world as a “deus sensibilis”, but also to the philosophers from

Plato to Aristotle and from Boethius to Avicenna who consider the heavens and the stars as “animalia divina” – nobler and more powerful than mortals, wise keepers and governors of human life, worthy of divine honours and religious sacrifices. William ceaselessly fires confutations against the idols of the *Asclepius* and their progeny in order to show, often taking recourse to Aristotle’s philosophy, the inconsistency and falsity of Hermetic doctrine. The attack leveled against Mercurius, *philosophus et magus*, is all the stronger for its emphasis on the link between philosophical and magical Hermetism. Again in *De universo* (1231–1236), an imposing treatise on natural philosophy, William relates the religious cantos of the *Asclepius* to the “mournful chants” intoned in the consecration of a magical ring of Saturn. It is perhaps true that, for example, the peony puts demons to flight by means of its natural virtues, but there is no analogy with the demoniac use of herbs in fashioning idols, since, as he already proved in *De legibus*, the Egyptian was deceived by evil spirits. Lastly, on another page William attacks the Hermetic doctrine of “imarmene” (fate, *heimarmene*), the ‘concatenated connection of causes’ which seems to refer to an order of necessity that denies the freedom of the creator and of rational spirits. Certainly, scattered throughout *De universo*, *De virtutibus et vitiis* and *De anima* there are some positive references to Hermetism, but they are rare and perfunctory, and cover themes of ancient religious thought widely embraced by Christianity: the resistance of the body which diverts the soul from the sublime and intelligible good, and the shaping of the soul in God’s image.

(b) *Michael Scot, Roger Bacon*. In the same period the circulation of the *Asclepius* is attested to by → Michael Scot in his *Liber introductorius* (1228–1235) and in his commentary on John of Sacrobosco’s *De sphaera*. Toward the middle of the 13th century → Roger Bacon in his *Opus maius* and in his *Metaphysica*, both completed in 1267, gives proof of a careful reading of the *Asclepius*. Bacon refers to the Hermetic text – called *Liber de divinitate* or *Liber de natura divina* or *Liber de divinis* – on themes of metaphysics and theology. In his doctrine of the creation and ideal forms Hermes is associated, as previously in Theodoric of Chartres, with St. John’s Gospel; the soul is immortal and man must reject the seductions of the wicked angels, who lead him to sin and vice, and thus to the sufferings of hell; after the separation from the body, the soul is subject to the supreme judgment which assigns the pious and righteous spirits to the place of beatitude; and Hermes’ prayer, which con-

cludes the *Asclepius*, is the highest example of a solemn prayer also for Christians.

(c) *Thomas of York*. An author who more extensively discusses the *Asclepius* is the English Franciscan Thomas of York in the *Sapientiale*, the first metaphysical “summa” of the 13th century, perhaps composed between the years 1250–1256. The text is still unpublished, but its focus on Hermetism has been examined in a recent contribution (Porreca 2000). Thomas’ attitude is characterised by a deep respect towards Hermes’ pagan wisdom, even if it is often invoked – together with other authorities – regarding problems that Thomas leaves unsolved and suspended. For example, in the discussion about the soul of the world Thomas examines the doctrines of the ancient philosophers, that appear to him obscure and blundering because sometimes they identify the soul of the world with God, while elsewhere they consider it a creature: Hermes too, according to Thomas, advocates the two opposite arguments. In Thomas’ opinion this happens also because of the doctrine of the principles, or causes of the world, a doctrine that Hermes follows when he states that the first principles are two (divine will and matter); Thomas thinks that Hermes sometimes contradicts this theory when he proclaims God as the sole principle of reality. Generally, the *Asclepius* is one of the most authoritative sources of the *Sapientiale*. When it comes to theology, cosmology, morality and eschatology, Hermes’ wisdom converges with Christian doctrine about main issues such as the nature and the characteristics of God, the eternal ideas, providence and fate, the harmony and beauty of creation, matter and evil, the immortality of the soul and life after death. This is not an easy concordism, because the difficulties of interpretation concerning the *Asclepius* are not eluded but confronted and discussed. The Hermetic text is even invoked, in one passage, to solve a seeming obscurity in the Scriptures, where the book of *Wisdom* seems to hint at a movement in God (*Sap.* 8:1 ‘Attingit ergo a fine usque ad finem fortiter’); Thomas writes that it is true that the biblical text seems to contradict divine motionlessness, but Hermes would reply that mobility is not related to God as he exists in itself, but only to his effects. The *Asclepius* is only criticised for the cult of the statues, worshipped by pagans. Thomas (following Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*) considers the cult of the statues consecrated with ceremonies and rituals inside Egyptian temples idolatrous, but seems to see it as an isolated mistake, an internal contradiction within the text that does not express the true Hermetic theology based on a unique and sovereign God. The *Ascle-*

*pius*' final prayer – preceded by Hermes' rejection of the use of incense 'as a sacrilege' – is therefore presented as a testimony of the true divine cult, the inner one, as opposed to the exterior cult of Aristotle's *Ethica*.

(d) *Albertus Magnus*. But it is with → Albertus Magnus that a different and more mature analysis takes shape, with the aim both of delving into the philosophical elements of the *Asclepius* and of bringing them into concord with the image of Hermes the "magus", who has unveiled the secrets of nature and affirmed the astrological correspondence between heaven and earth.

The *Asclepius* – referred to by varied titles, as *De natura deorum*, *De distinctione deorum et causarum*, *De natura dei et veneratione*, *Dehlera ad Asclepium*, *De causis* – offers, firstly, a conception of God which Albert traces in various writings to the tenets of Christian theology and considers to have been transmitted by Hermetic thought to the Platonic tradition: God is omnipotent, the Lord of gods, ineffable and incomprehensible; the paternal Intellect begets the Word, and the Word encompasses the ideal forms of all things, which Socrates and Plato will call "forms" and Dionysius the Areopagite "divine processions". Hermes is therefore credited with the creation of metaphysical idealism, the origin of a speculative tradition that goes from Socrates and Plato to Augustine's exemplarism and to the Christian Neoplatonism of Dionysius the Areopagite. Hermes, writes Albert in his *Summa theologiae* (begun after 1272 and left incomplete), declares that 'God the prince of gods is in everything', and this doctrine – like similar theories of great Greek, Christian and Islamic philosophers – encompasses the Catholic faith. To the accusation of idolatry, leveled at Hermes by 'some' (maybe William of Auvergne is intended) because of his theurgic concept, Albert replies by affirming Hermes' pure monotheism. Hermes and other philosophers who asserted a plurality of "gods and goddesses", in reality believed in a sole God: 'And they considered Him as one, since He alone is God by His essence, and of Him Plato and Trismegistus say that the human mind, when it is freed from the body, is barely able to understand what He is and is infinitely'.

In his *De causis et processu universitatis* (1263-1267) Albert adopts Hermes' opinion on the causative flux: all things overflow with the spirit, which infuses every being with the divine forms and virtues. But right after this, he points out that the first philosophers, 'Trismegistus et Apollo et Hermes Aegyptius et Asclepius' erred in their conception of the "mode" of influx, by maintaining in

fact that the First principle penetrates all things and is the being in itself of all things. Hermes thus upholds that 'God is all that is', and this is a serious error, because it destroys all the ontological gradations between beings. This is the gravest accusation formulated by Albert, worried as he is by a theory which identifies the ontological foundation of beings in a first and universal being: a metaphysical pantheism which sees in God the embodied form of everything and thus obliterates the hierarchical order of the gradations of being. Subsequently, in his *Summa theologiae*, Albert, in order to refute the immanentist doctrine of God as world soul, nevertheless cites a celebrated page of the *Asclepius*, in which God's nature is proclaimed as one, eternal, infinite, perfect, stable and immutable, the center and mainstay of the universe. Even fate or the *heimarmene* of the Hermetic dialogue is the object of a long reflection. In his *Physica* (1250) Albert traces to Hermes the definition of fate as 'connection of causes dependent on the providence of the first cause', while bending the Hermetic text (which actually combines in an ambiguous manner the Platonic concept that fate is the second god with the Stoic concept that fate is the highest god) into the direction of Christian theology: in this doctrine the sayings of Trismegistus and of other philosophers, Albert proceeds, 'concur with us in the same truth'. In his *De caelo* he returns to the Hermetic triad fate-necessity-order; in his *De fato* he analyses the definition of fate as 'form of the order of being and of life in inferior beings caused by the cyclical motion of the celestial spheres'; and in his *De causis et processu universitatis* he proclaims that it is not hard to trace Hermes' words back to Aristotle. Finally, in his *Summa theologiae*, after having distinguished providence and fate as *exemplar et exemplatum*, the influencing cause and the influenced cause, Albert states that Hermes and Plato describe the world as derived from the divine exemplar and as almost a second god shaped by the God of gods: 'And there is nothing erroneous in defining fate in this manner'. The justification of Hermes is thus complete; his teaching is put in concord by Albert with Plato, Aristotle and Christian theology, while being distinguished from the opinions of Egyptians and Chaldaeans, who had an idea of fate characterized by astral determinism. Finally, the *Asclepius* seems not only to sustain but to promote Albert's reflections on the concept of man as microcosm and link between God and the world. In many of his writings Albert borrows from Hermes, for example when he declares that to gain superior sight, prophecy and divination, it is necessary to purify oneself by isolation and asceticism,



and that only in detachment from the body the intellect can achieve certain knowledge of God. In his *Liber de intellectu et intelligibili* (ca. 1260) Albert introduces the theme of man as *nexus dei et mundi*, attributing this formulation to Hermes: man is the nexus between God and the world, in that the assimilative intellect unites him to God, while other intellects result merely in cognition of the sensible and intelligible world. In his *De animalibus* (ca. 1260), still drawing from Hermes, Albert repeats that man unites God and the world because he encloses in himself a divine intellect which in its ascent draws after it the body and the universe, subjugates matter, transforms things and appears to perform miracles; even in his terrestrial nature man dominates the world as “governor”, and performs transmutations, spells, and enchantments. Man is in fact two men, he writes again in his *Ethica* (1262-1263): he is as though suspended, he affirms in his *Metaphysica* (1263-67), between the world and God. Man is above the world thanks to the power of his mathematical and physical knowledge, and he is close to God because he contemplates His inner beauties with the light of pure intellect.

(e) *Thomas Bradwardine*. In the first half of the 14th century, in a profoundly altered cultural milieu, Thomas Bradwardine, great mathematician and theologian of Merton College, Oxford, proves himself to be an assiduous reader of the *Asclepius*. Bradwardine is the author of *De causa Dei* (1335-1344), a theological treatise constructed “more geometrico”, which rejects Aristotelian philosophy and returns to the Augustinian roots of Christian thought. He begins his reflection with a thesis, ‘God is supremely perfect and good’, which he confirms and substantiates in the course of a lengthy “corollary” divided into forty sections. The first authority invoked is the father of philosophers, Hermes, who in his *De verbo aeterno* (the title given to the *Asclepius*) proclaims God to be complete, perfect, holy, incorruptible, eternal. But in the corollary “Against the idolaters” Bradwardine cannot forget the terrible accusations which Augustine in *De civitate Dei* had levelled against Hermetic theurgy and the cult of the “dei facticii”. Bradwardine’s responds curtly: if Hermes attributes the same nature to God and to the gods, it is not hard to refute him; if instead he distinguishes them, then there is nothing to worry about, since ‘it is pointless, once the truth is known, to quibble over names’. Nevertheless, Bradwardine proceeds to frame a skillful statement of accusation. Since Trismegistus affirms in many places that the one God is supremely wise, good, pious, clement,

immense, powerful and present, it makes no sense, he says reproachfully, to imagine ‘other gods or another god’, to confer the honour of divinity on statues, to consecrate idols to demons and evil spirits, and to lavish on creatures the worship due to God, who is the ultimate cause of every being. Arguments and confutations proceed, in this imaginary dialogue, with great dialectical and rhetorical effectiveness, but the conclusion is not, as in Augustine and in William of Auvergne, the accusation of idolatry, but censure for lack of prudence and consistency: evil demons, even if they know the future and perform wonders, must not for that reason be worshipped but must be feared as fatal enemies and shrewd seducers. In Bradwardine’s treatise Hermes is respected as the highest authority of the pagan tradition, and invoked (along with many others) on several themes and issues, always in agreement with true philosophy and true theology. Divine nature is incomprehensible to natural reason; happiness resides in knowledge of God; the resurrection of the flesh is followed by eternal rewards or punishment; true philosophy consists in respect and gratitude for divine works; the world and man were created in time; at the end of time the universe will attain a state of glory; all things flow from God who preserves them in being and is the first shape of reality ‘ex ipso, in ipso, per ipsum’; divine will or goodness (habitually associated with the Holy Spirit) proceeds from God, and even Hermes at times calls it “Spirit” in accordance with the many testimonies of Judaeo-Christian Revelation; the unitary order of the universe is the archetypal and intelligible world; God – efficient cause, *primum mobile* of created being, immutable stability and perfection – has a distinct consciousness of all things, events and human actions, and His will, the origin of everything, is the source of grace granted to men; all things, eternally present in the divine conscience and prescience, come about through fate (*famen divinum*), understood as an immutable, indissoluble, necessitating law which realizes the knowledge and will of God; fate, order and necessity, which govern the world, obey eternal reason, which is immobile and indissoluble. Lastly, in the *Sermo Epinicius* (1346) attributed to Bradwardine, a reference appears to Hermes’ *De verbo aeterno* on the emergence of fate from God. This list certainly fails to do justice to the extent and variety of his references to the *Asclepius*, often combined with the *Liber de sex rerum principiis* and the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, nor does it provide an evaluation of Bradwardine’s complex interpretation, but it does allow us to understand how themes that are central to his sys-

tem are based on the ancient wisdom of the “father of philosophers”.

(f) The first disciples of Albertus Magnus do not seem to take up their master’s reflection on the *Asclepius*; only Ulrich of Strasbourg, in his *Summa de Summo Bono*, takes from Albert some Hermetic references, such as the doctrine of man as “nexus dei et mundi” and the comparison of Hermes with the Stoic school. But in Berthold of Moosburg, the last exponent of Albert’s school and author of the *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli* (an imposing commentary, composed in 1340–1360), the study of the *Asclepius*, often called *De Deo deorum*, energetically fosters the exegesis of Proclus’ theology, presented in the framework of a constant comparison and association between Hermetic thought, the Platonic tradition and Christian theology. Already in the Prologue, dedicated to a famous passage of the *Letter to the Romans* (1:20 ‘The invisible perfections of God, since the creation of the world, are understood through His works’), Berthold, in order to explain the concept of “world”, chooses as his guide the *Asclepius*. After having distinguished the macrocosm and the microcosm, the universe and man, Berthold constructs his exegesis, confirming it with Christian and pagan authorities, on the basis of two Hermetic definitions, taken as paradigms and commented at length, word for word. The first is authentic: ‘the universe is the immutable work of God, a glorious construction, a good made out of a multiform variety of aspects, instrument of the will of God who sustains His work without envy’ (*Ascl.* 25); the second, also attributed to Hermes, is actually taken from a page of Albertus Magnus on man as “nexus dei et mundi”, governor of the world through the power conferred by physical and mathematical research and subject to God because He contemplates His inner beauties with pure intellect (*Metaphysica* I, 1,1). Berthold’s recognition of Hermes’ authority could not be more solemn. In the course of his *Expositio*, many and substantial quotations confirm and deepen, in diverse theoretical contexts, the value of the *Asclepius*. (i) The Hermetic text offers an extraordinary variety of doctrines and formulations which Berthold applies to Proclus’ system, not without strains and at times with subtle shifts from cosmology to metaphysics. God is one, in Himself perfect and transcendent, ineffable and unknowable, the ungenerated cause and supreme end of all things, beginning without beginning and end without end. Brimming with fecundity, He freely produces in an eternal instant the chain of intelligible and sensible beings. The universe, eternally present in the cre-

ative thought, has a causal order subject to divine reason, pervaded with consonance and harmony, and manifests a triadic structure in the macrocosm (destiny, necessity, order) and in the microcosm (sense, reason, intellect). As an instrument of the divine will, begotten in the image of archetypal ideas, it is permeated, vivified and enshrouded by the spirit, the *anima mundi* shaped by God. As repository and place for all species, it returns perennially to the gods who constitute intelligible being and produce sensible being, and to the One who transcends being, by virtue of whom all things constitute a single unity. (ii) In his attempt to trace the trinitarian truth of the One in pagan thought, Berthold does not hesitate to perceive in Hermes’ maxims, with reference to the *Logos Teleios* as well as the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, the ‘plurality of the divine persons’. The begetting of *voluntas* from divine *consilium* (*Ascl.* 26) expresses the eternal birth of the Word from the Father, and the *spiritus* which animates all things and nurtures souls (*Ascl.* 6, 14, 18) is the Holy Spirit. (iii) Concerning the difficult problem of polytheism and Hermetic theurgy, which had already provoked the radical condemnation of William of Auvergne and the reproaches of Thomas Bradwardine, Berthold’s position is at once clearcut and problematic. The many references to one God in the *Asclepius* support Berthold’s certainty of Hermes’ monotheistic authenticity; but the textual evidence of the theory of the “dei facticii” meets with his severe disapproval. The claim of a plurality of gods indeed may or may not be “superstitious”: it is erroneous when, as in Hermes, fashioned idols are considered to be gods due to the infusion of a sacred power; but it is in conformity with truth (and superstitious only in name) when, as in Plato and in the Platonic philosophers, they are considered gods only in so far as they participate in the only true God. In Prop. 115 Berthold’s censure is clearcut: the error of Hermes, this extremely prudent man – he quotes lengthy passages from the *Asclepius* – who was wise in many things but was here deluded beyond all measure, must not be believed. And yet Berthold visibly strives to limit the extent of the ancient Egyptian’s error. A few pages earlier he writes that Hermes and Plato affirm that the “God of gods” is unknowable, and when he condemns Hermes’ error and contrasts it with the theology of Plato (Prop. 114 and 120), he also traces the Platonic concept of “gods by participation” back to the *Asclepius*: ‘Hermes affirms that many are said to be gods by participation with the supreme God, the God of gods. His book in fact is called *De Deo deorum*’.

(g) In the 15th century even the works of Nicholas of Cusa show a direct knowledge of the Hermetic dialogue. His first reference to Hermes is found in his *Sermo I* (1430): his oldest surviving work, in which Cusanus, inspired by Lactantius, credits Hermes with knowledge of the divine Word. His “Christian” interpretation of Hermetism is confirmed by numerous autographic glosses placed in the margins of the *Asclepius* (MS Bruxelles, Bibliothèque Royale 10054-56), which testify to a deeply attentive reading, probably prior to 1140. In his *De docta ignorantia* (1440) Cusanus returns on several occasions to the Hermetic doctrine of God as “one and everything”, nameless (*inominis*), and at the same time expressible by all names (*omninominis*). Since He is One, God is ineffable, as names are instituted by reason to distinguish individual beings, or, since He is All, He can be designated by the names of all things and all things by His name (*Ascl.* 20). The reflection on divine names, which also occurs in subsequent writings, is probably inspired by a page of Theodoric of Chartres, but at the same time it reveals a direct awareness of the Hermetic text, which also reappears in other contexts. Again in his *De docta ignorantia* Cusanus takes from Hermes the concept of *hyle* or universal matter as *nutrix generationum*, the substratum of forms which “nourishes” all material beings; in his *De dato patris luminum* (1445-1446), the definition of the world as “sensible god”; in his *De beryllo* (1458), the idea of man as “second god”, the creative and provident imitator of the divine intellect; in his *De ludo globi* (1463), the theory that the spherical totality of the world is in itself invisible and only the forms molded in matter are perceptible. Lastly, on the question of Hermetic theurgy – an obligate subject after the judgments of William of Auvergne, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Bradwardine and Berthold of Moosburg – Cusanus’ considerations are prudent and moderate. According to his *De pace fidei* (1453) the statues and simulacra that are worshipped, as if ‘something divine’ inhabited their stone and were lodged within the idol, should be destroyed because they distract from the worship of God and the truth: their responses, ambiguous or false, are the work of the evil spirit, the enemy of human salvation. Cusanus clearly has in mind the pages of the *Asclepius* on divine statues and his condemnation of magical practices is radical. But in *De docta ignorantia*, like Albertus Magnus before him, he dissociates magic from Hermetic polytheism, which he interprets as a personification (typical in the pagan world) of divine attributes: Hermes, he writes, sees in God the cause of all

things, the *complicatio* which includes both the male and female gender, the creative force which is manifested (*explicata*) in the divine figures of Amor and Venus. The names given to God by the pagans ‘are expressions of the single ineffable name which implies all names’.

(h) Along with the *Asclepius*, there circulate in the 13th and 14th centuries Hermetic fragments translated by Lactantius and reworked by Quodvultdeus. Almost all are drawn from the *Asclepius* and are gathered under the title of *Logos Teleios*, considered from the 12th century on – precisely because of his distinct Christian bias – to be another and separate work of Hermes, who by divine inspiration had come to know the mystery of the eternal Word. Acclaimed as authentic by “Augustine’s” authority, the declarations of the *Logos Teleios* give credit to the image of a Hermes tending, as is written in the *Glosae super Trismegistum*, ‘ad nostram theologiam’, and help to reinforce the attempt to bring the *Asclepius* in line with Christian doctrine. Just a few examples of these are the quotations in *De septem septenis*, in William of Auvergne, Gilbert of Tournai, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Ulrich of Strasbourg, Thomas Bradwardine, Berthold of Moosburg and Nicholas of Cusa.

##### 5. THE DIFFUSION OF THE *LIBER VIGINTI QUATTUOR PHILOSOPHORUM*

The history of the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* in the philosophical and literary culture of the Middle Ages is like a long road, partly straight, partly meandering and intricate. Undoubtedly the text encountered resistance and incomprehension. Precise textual and documentary data attest to this. In the 13th century the Franciscan Thomas of York in his *Sapientiale* (1250-1256) begins a lengthy commentary which is interrupted at the third maxim. In a manuscript of the first half of the 14th century the *Liber* was violently crossed out, like the writings of the Pseudo-Aristotle, Alfarabi, → Avicenna and Adalard of Bath are also mutilated or effaced. Finally, in another codex the Parisian theologian Etienne Gaudet placed in the margins a series of highly critical notations. These interventions, self-censuring (as perhaps in the case of Thomas of York) or external, are all traceable to individual initiatives, and there is no record of official censure. Of these elements there have developed two radically divergent interpretations: some see in them the rejection of a conception closely related to an intense Neoplatonic inspiration and a radical apophatism, while others, on the contrary, see in them the rejection

of a rationalistic thought which claims to reach the divine essence, the “quid est” of God by mere reason. If we wish to simplify the philosophical trajectory of the *Liber*, we may distinguish – beyond the presence and the peregrinations of the manuscripts in the libraries – two different aspects: the circulation of the text in its entirety and the autonomous circulation of the first two maxims – the most celebrated ones – which state ‘God is a monad which begets a monad and in himself reflects a sole fire of love’ (I) and ‘God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere’ (II).

The text is mentioned for the first time in its original form (maxims and first commentary) by Thomas of York. At the beginning of the 14th century it is commented a second time, perhaps by the Dominican Nicholas Triveth. Subsequently other authors, united by a lively opposition against Christian Aristotelianism, draw from the *Liber* reflections of a philosophical and theological kind; this is the case with Meister Eckhart, Thomas Bradwardine, Berthold of Moosburg. The most intense phase of this development is the speculation of Nicholas of Cusa, who in his *De docta ignorantia* is inspired by the *Liber* to confirm or elaborate on themes of a metaphysical order, to found the method of symbolic knowledge, and to express the ontological reasons for his new cosmology. The first two maxims were more widely circulated in the 12th-15th centuries, and knew a much better fortune. Commented on by the greatest theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages and attributed most of the time to Hermes, the “images” (as they are defined in the first commentary) of the generating monad and the infinite sphere for centuries represented one of the most favored references for discussing and reflecting upon two central themes of theology: the problem of the natural knowledge of revealed mysteries and the concept of divine infinity.

The interpretation of the generating monad seems to pass through three stages, sometimes not following upon one another chronologically. In the first stage (12th and beginning of 13th century), Alan of Lille and Alexander Nequam read the first maxim as an extraordinary testimony of an awareness of the trinitarian God among the ancient pagans. Subsequently, on the basis of the principles affirmed in Pietro Lombardo’s *Sententiae* (1155-1157), the intellect was denied the possibility of such knowledge except through revelation as handed down by the sacred Books or through inner inspiration: this is the position we find, with different premises, forms and outcomes, in William of

Auxerre, Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, John of Ripa and still others. With the advent (second half of 13th century) of a marked reaction to Christian Aristotelianism, in thinkers or mystics who turn to Augustinian and Neoplatonic sources, the image of the generating, generated and reflected monad is once again seen as manifesting a real awareness of the inner life of God, as in the writings of Marghereta Porete, Meister Eckhart, Thomas Bradwardine and Berthold of Moosburg.

In theological and cosmological meditations on the “infinite” or “intelligible” sphere, four phases can be delineated. The first commentators, Alan of Lille and Michael Scot, perceive in the constituent elements of the geometric figure – the point and the circumference – the likeness of God and of the world, but in reversed terms. Alan sees in the circumference the supreme immensity which encompasses and sustains every created point, while Michael sees in the center the immutable source of divine operation and in the circumference the created universe. The Franciscans Alexander of Hales and Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, with a language that anticipates both Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa, unify the center and the circumference in the divine nature: the circumference metaphor expresses simultaneously God’s absolute simplicity and His absolute infinity, Being which is one and all, the transcendent minimum and maximum. Subsequently, Eckhart further develops the idea of the identity of the center and the circumference, projects it (with his theory of the “essential” emanation) into the uncreated “depth of the soul”, while designating it as the symbol and paradigm of religious experience and the moral life, and seems finally to extend it to the totality of creation, as God’s Being is the true being of finite beings. Toward the middle of the 15th century Cusanus explicitly draws from the “infinite sphere” the conceptual structure of his symbolic method: conceiving a geometric figure with its properties (and the sphere is the noblest of all), extending it to infinity, and then applying it to God. At the same time, however, another exegesis of the second maxim is taking shape, which transposes it onto the cosmological plane. So it happens that Thomas Bradwardine adopts it as a symbol of infinite space, neither created nor uncreated, a metaphysical condition of the act of creation, and Nicholas of Cusa uses it as the foundation of a new cosmology, which subverts the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic system and presents the image of a universe in total motion, ‘like a wheel inside a wheel and a sphere inside a sphere’, which has no motionless center, no hierarchies, no finitude.

6. THE *LIBER DE SEX RERUM PRINCIPIIS*  
IN MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

Other than with the *Asclepius* and the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, systematic inquiry into the spread of the *Liber de sex rerum principiis* in medieval philosophy has not yet been carried out. It is possible, however, to give a few indications.

(a) A few years after the publication of the text, its presence is attested in the *De septem septenis* attributed to John of Salisbury. The seventh *septena* attributes to “Hermes Mercurius Triplex” the description of human progress, perfected when the first sages discovered theology for the soul’s salvation and physic for the health of the body; but John omits the conception, elaborated in the *Sex rerum principia*, that the spiritual development of man imitates the generation of the world carried out in the conjunctions of the Moon with the five planets and is subject to the cyclical phases of birth, progress and dissolution. He then summarizes, partly shifting and subverting – not without relevant implications – the system’s original principles and hierarchy, the six “principles of things”. Cause – the substantial principle which, unrelated to necessity, precedes its effect – is identified with the trinitarian God. The primordial causes are four principles: the Law of heavenly bodies or Reason, Nature (which Plato calls the soul of the world, others fate, still others divine order), the World and the Mechanism of the world. In the *De septem septenis*, then, the six principles of things are expanded to seven: three transcendent (Cause which unfolds in the Father, the Son and the Spirit) and four primordial. In this re-elaboration the author resolves the ambiguity of the “Hermetic” text and separates the transcendent triune principle from the primordial principles which mediate between the divine being and worldly being.

(b) In the 13th century the *Sex rerum principia* is quoted by Thomas of York in his *Sapientiale* (1250-1256). Thomas, when he writes about the uniqueness of the first principle of reality, rejects the distinction between the three “superior” principles (*causa-ratio-natura*); in the same way, when he comments on the *Asclepius*, he criticizes the affirmation of the two principles (divine will and matter). Since in the pseudo-Hermetic text the relations between the three principles are presented according to the model of the Christian trinity (‘Ratio ex causa, et ex utraque natura’), Thomas rejects the use of the term “nature” for the Holy Ghost, and accuses the author of contradicting himself. The principle of the creative causality of God, and the theory of the archetypal ideas in the

Word, are accepted, together with other cosmological doctrines: the distinction between operating nature and operated nature (that is, the power of the stars regulated by divine providence and the effects that are produced in the world), the harmony of the elements, the division of creatures in relation to matter, the union of the accidental forms with the beings, and finally, always in agreement with the Christians, the beauty and the order of the world.

The profoundest discussion dates back to Albertus Magnus who in his *Physica* (1250) refutes the thesis – attributed to the Pythagoreans, Plato and Hermes – of a “universal nature” which precedes the particular natures and divides itself into them. Hermes in particular supposedly stated that nature is a force which proceeds from the First cause by way of the movement of the heavens, and then becomes incorporated and diversified in particular beings, nobler and more effective the nearer they are to the First cause, less noble and effective the further they move away from it. But if this were so, says Albert, then it would not be a force, but ‘a substance which divides itself’, its universal nature would have a being constituted ‘before single beings’ and would not be distinct from the being of particular nature: ‘Aristotle does not approve of this’. The accusation, inspired by Aristotelian metaphysics, is therefore aimed against a hypostatic and substantialist conception of nature, against the idea of a substance which precedes and is the foundation of particular substances. Albert does not mention the Hermetic text by name, but the theory contested is couched in terms taken directly from the *Sex rerum principia*. Still in the 13th century, the pseudo-Hermetic text is quoted by some writers and by the author of the *De investigatione creatoris per creaturas* (a Franciscan identified erroneously as Bertram of Ahlen).

(c) At the beginning of the next century, *Le Roman de Fauvel* by Gervais du Bus mentions ‘L’auctour de Sex Principes’, who described the similarity between macrocosm and microcosm, the operations of elementary qualities in the universe, and the workings of Nature in the genesis of the four human temperaments. But only Thomas Bradwardine and Berthold of Moosburg give evidence of a thorough and attentive reading of the *Sex rerum principia*. Thomas Bradwardine, who calls it *De mundo et caelo* (even though he knows the real title), in his *De causa Dei* draws from it numerous motifs, always in line with Christian tradition. All peoples, prophets and theologians, poets and philosophers before Aristotle have always affirmed that the world has had a temporal beginning: like-



wise also Hermes, when he writes that ‘the world began from eternity and will resolve itself into eternity’, that the temporal world is in relation to eternity as a circle to its center, that the motions of heaven are stable and immutable since it was formed by the reason of the divine mind, and that it is not easy to understand or explain the origin of a world which cyclically dies and is reborn. And as everything is produced by an active cause, Hermes proclaims that all things (genera, species and individuals, matter, world and time) originate from the divine Cause and Reason: the three supreme principles – Cause, Reason and Nature – represent the trinitarian life, the origin and eternal model of created being. Later Bradwardine returns several times to these themes of the *Sex rerum principia*, to prove the absolute predestination of man, the unfaltering order of fate, the necessity of contingent futures and divine prescience (which does not contradict but agrees with freedom of action), the motionless infinite of eternity and the mobile flow of time. In his *Sermo Epinicius* (1346) Bradwardine once again cites the *De mundo et caelo* and the *De verbo aeterno* to reaffirm that the series of fate descends from God and that his ‘worthy sons’ Plato and Aristotle also thought so.

In Berthold of Moosburg the *Sex rerum principia* is an important source for his commentary on Proclus: the pages on the three first principles – Cause, Reason, Nature – are widely cited in support of the reflection on the One, the intelligible world and sensible effects. The human intellect, shaped in the image of divine life and ordained to have knowledge of the intelligible world, investigates into the first cause – creator of all things, fullness of thought, foundation of worldly being, place of archetypal ideas – and into the sensible effects of divine causes. The doctrine of the three superior principles, which occurs again and again in Berthold’s work, inspires his analysis of the concept of *nature* referred to in the “triple principle” (Cause, Reason, Nature), and the distinction of Nature in two different cosmological aspects: “operative” nature, which proceeds from Cause and Reason, is incorporated in the forces of heaven and is the immanent principle of life, while “operated” nature consists in worldly qualities produced by the astral constellations. The sensible world, animated by a perennial motion, encompasses the being of all things, and for this reason, Berthold concludes, it is excellent and is governed by a transcendent principle. The ideal form of the universe is “written” in Reason and is of an absolute simplicity, but the single primordial causes, which proceed from the principal form, are in themselves mani-

fold: in this representation Hermes inspires pagan and Christian Platonism, and Berthold can thus confirm Proclus’ thesis on the substantial nature, one and manifold, of intelligible species.

## B. TECHNICAL AND OPERATIVE HERMETISM

In the 12th and 13th centuries, initially in Italy and Spain, generations of translators introduced into libraries and Latin culture most of the philosophical and scientific knowledge of the ancient world and of Arab civilization. Among the works translated (such as Aristotle, Proclus, Euclid, Ptolemy, → al-Kindī, Abū Ma’shar, → Avicenna, Averröes) were also the technical and operative works originally written in Greek under the names of → Hermes Trismegistus and of mythical or historical figures linked to the tale of his revelation, as well as a large stream of Hermetic writings handed down by Islamic scientists and philosophers or passed down to the Arab world from the Sabaeans of Harran. For an understanding of the value and significance of this tradition, the textual extent and content of the technical-operative works attributed to Hermes must first be examined.

### I. ASTROLOGY, MEDICINE AND NATURAL MAGIC, DIVINATION

#### A. TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GREEK

Among the first translations from the Greek were writings on natural magic, believed to operate through the occult properties [→ occult/occultism] of things. It was probably the cleric Paschalis Romanus who, in Constantinople in 1169, translated into Latin the *Kyranides*, an ample treatise on the medicinal and magical virtues of animals, plants and stones. This work, defined by the translator as a ‘liber medicinalis’, is entitled *Liber physicalium virtutum, compassionum et curationum* and is made up of two books: the “Kyranis”, which Hermes revealed to King Kyranus of Persia (rewritten by Harpocraton of Alexandria in the 4th century), and the “Short medicinal book of Hermes to Asclepius”. The Latin translation is based on the complete re-elaboration of these two works compiled by a Byzantine editor between the 5th and the 8th century. The first *Kyranis*, given to mankind by Hermes Trismegistus and carved in Syriac characters on an iron pillar, deals with twenty-four stones, herbs, fish and birds arranged in the order of the Greek alphabet: their powers, united and mixed together for the cure and pleasure of the human body, are a prodigy of nature revealed by the wisdom of almighty God. The “Short medicinal book”

consists of three bestiaries – which describe birds, animals of the land, and fish – and gives instructions on how to prepare products with medical and magical powers. The Byzantine editor arranged the three bestiaries in alphabetical order and entitled them *Kyranides* II-IV.

In the preface to his translation, Paschalis Romanus refers to two Greek books on astrological botany, which he perhaps translated into Latin as well: the Book of Alexander the Great on planetary herbs, *De septem herbis*, and the Book of Thessalos on zodiacal and planetary herbs, *Liber Thessali de virtutibus herbarum*. In the Greek tradition the *De septem herbis*, which deals with the medical-magical virtues of planetary plants, exists in two slightly different editions: the first is anonymous or attributed to Hermes and was not translated into Latin; the second is attributed to Alexander the Great and was translated into Latin. The *Liber Thessali* is the revelation of the god Asclepius to the physician Thessalos, identifiable according to some scholars as the famous Thessalos of Thralles of the 1st century. Disappointed with the teaching of Nechepsos and Petosirides, Thessalos had engaged the help of an Egyptian priest to invoke Asclepius in a temple near Thebes; after purification rituals and prayers, Asclepius indeed made his appearance, and revealed to Thessalos the medical-magical virtues of zodiacal and planetary plants. Of all the technical texts the *Liber Thessali* is the one most marked by a profound religious sentiment. The Greek original had two editions: the first and older one, attributed to Thessalos, was translated twice during the Middle Ages, and once again in 1528; the other one is attributed to Hermes, who instructs Asclepius in the wonderful properties of plants.

The *Compendium aureum* is the Latin translation of a lost Greek original. In his dedicatory letter, the author, ‘Flaccus Africus discipulus Belbenis Claudio Atheniensi epilogistico’, describes his rediscovery – in Troy, among the bones of the first King Kyranus – of the tract, taken from the *Kyranides*. Actually, as to their content there is no relationship between the *Compendium aureum* and the *Kyranides*. Belbenus designates Apollonius of Tyana, called by the Arab equivalent (Balīnūs, in the Latin versions referred to as Balenus, Belenus and other variants). In the manuscripts the title, taken from the text itself, is *Tractatus de septem herbis septem planetis attributis*, but actually the names of the planets are not mentioned. Each herb is linked to a month, proceeding backwards from June to December, to a number and to a metal, but the metals do not have the traditional correspon-

dances with the planets. For the most part prodigious medical-therapeutic properties are described and only in a few cases virtues which are in a proper sense magical.

The lost original of the *Liber de triginta sex decanis*, probably translated between the 12th and the 13th century, is the main text of Hermetic astrology and among the most ancient ones of Greek astrology. It reached the Latin world in a long summary composed in the 8th century. The work, which contains astronomical elements dating from the time of Hypparchus, has some very interesting features: a long account of the *sphaera barbarica*, carefully examined in comparison with other ancient documentation; the two stellar catalogues of the *sphaera graeca*, each independent of the other and edited centuries apart; astronomical observations of successive periods; and different, even contradictory, astrological doctrines and methods juxtaposed together, to which the astrological vulgate in general and the Hermetic vulgate in particular refer. The work constitutes valuable testimony of the extent to which the astronomical and astrological materials were scrutinized, first in the Byzantine period (edition of the original) and then in the Middle Ages (Latin translation), and of the abundant repertoires available.

The *Iatromathematica*, an astrological text on medicine, has come down to us in two slightly different Greek editions and was translated only in the 16th century. The author follows the astrological notion of “melotesia”, according to which each organ is presided over by a planet, and the conditions of the human body derive from the fortunate or unfortunate position of the planet in the zodiacal circle at the moment of conception and birth. The text examines the pathologies that occur when the Moon is in the twelve zodiacal signs in particular relationships with other planets, and proposes appropriate therapies. The medical theory is not homeopathic (as affirmed by Festugière 1944), but allopathic: *refrigerantia* substances heal illnesses originating from heat and *calefacientia* substances heal those originating from cold. Two Latin translations were made from the second Greek edition: one by David Hoeschelius (1555), and the other, anonymous and dating from before 1489, was published by Johannes Stadius as his own (1556).

A few years later the translation of a poem on earthquakes concludes the inflow of Greek *Hermetica* into Latin culture. The original of this text dates from before the Byzantine era and is attributed in the manuscript tradition both to Hermes and to Orpheus. It describes monthly omens and the meaning of earthquakes; the author traces

the position of the Sun in the signs of the zodiac, starting with Aries (April). The work, translated into Latin by J.A. Baius with the title *Orpheus seu Mercurius ter maximus, Prognostica a terrae motibus*, was published in 1586.

#### B. TRANSLATIONS FROM THE ARABIC

Toward the middle of the 12th century Hugo of Santalla translated from the Arabic two texts: the *Liber de spatula* and the *De secretis naturae* by pseudo-Apollonius. In the Arabic literature on scapulimancy (divination by examining the scapula of sacrificed animals), a single fragment, of North African origin, is attributed to Hermes, and seems to be the oldest document. From this fragment and from a work attributed to al-Kindī, who refers to the teachings of ‘Hermes the wise and of other Greek philosophers’, two translations were made: the first, with the title *Liber de spatula*, is dedicated by Hugo of Santalla to Bishop Michael of Tarragon (1119-1151); the second, entitled *Liber alius de eadem*, presents many of the same elements but is different in form and partly in content. The *Liber de secretis naturae* is the translation of an Arab work, *Kitāb sirr al-ḥaliqa* (Book of the secret of creation) attributed to Balīnūs (Apollonius of Tyana), who narrates the discovery of the text and of the *Tabula smaragdina* in Hermes’ crypt. The origin of the *Sirr al-ḥaliqa* is still uncertain – according to some scholars, it is the translation of a Greek text, according to others, it is an apocryphal Arab work –, but there is general agreement concerning the attribution of the Arab edition to the reign of al-Ma’mūn in the 9th century. Several different traditions flow into the work: Greek and Syriac, Islamic and pre-Islamic, philosophical and alchemical. A discussion of the nature and names of God is followed in the treatise by a description of the birth of the cosmos and the formation of minerals and stones, vegetable and animal life, and finally man. The book closes with the *Tabula smaragdina*, the most inspired and famous of alchemical texts.

The 12th and 13th centuries see the appearance of several translations of an astrological treatise, the *Liber de stellis beibeniis*, which through various reworkings and vagaries had traveled from Greek astrology to Arab science and lastly to the Latin world. The term *stella beibenia* means fixed star, and the text describes the qualities of persons born under the influence of certain fixed stars linked to the “temperaments” or “complexions” of the planets when they are in their Ascendant or in Mid-Heaven. The Greek original is a fragment of the lost work of an Egyptian astrologer who wrote it in 379 A.D., but the doctrine of the “Thirty fixed

stars” goes back to older sources. The text was then revived by an anonymous Greek astrologer, in an edition since lost, at the beginning of the 6th century (ca. 505 A.D.). A corrupt copy of it seems to be the inspiration of Rhetorius Alexandrinus in the 7th century and the source of translations into Middle-Persian (Pahlavi) as well as, perhaps, into Neo-Persian and, finally, Arabic. The Arabic version, only partly conserved today, is attributed to Hermes. In the 8th century it is included in an abridged version in a treatise attributed to Māshā’allāh, which was translated into Latin by Hermann of Carinthia in 1141-1151 under the title *Liber Aristotilis de ducentis quinquaginta quinque Indorum voluminibus*. The original Arabic version (or a derivation of it) was translated in Toledo by Salio of Padua toward 1218, under the title *Liber de stellis beibeniis*. A Hebrew version from the Arabic also survives.

In the 12th or 13th century a translation was also made of the *Liber de quindecim stellis et de quindecim lapidibus et de quindecim herbis et de quindecim figuris*, attributed to Hermes Abhaydimon ‘father of philosophers and most antique sage’. The text seems to derive from the Arab version of a Greek original, completed and reworked by the astrologer Māshā’allāh. The treatise has very interesting astronomical and astrological features and is divided, after a brief prologue by Māshā’allāh, into four sections, dedicated to fifteen fixed stars (following the order of the zodiacal signs), fifteen stones, fifteen plants, and fifteen talismans for magical operations; in some manuscripts these sections are followed by a brief appendix entitled *Dicta Messahalla*. At the same time or shortly thereafter appeared an Arabic reworking of the text, shorter than the original and attributed to the prophet Enoch, which contains in fifteen chapters the same data about the single stars, stones, plants and talismans. Lastly, Thābit ibn Qurra (9th century) is the author of yet another compendium, translated into Latin with the title *Tractatus de proprietatibus quarundam stellarum*: according to the last note of a manuscript which dates the “rectification” of the stellar coordinates, the translation is from 1360.

Possibly between the 7th and 8th centuries, a translation is made of the *Liber Antimaquis* (“This is the book of Aristotle’s spiritual works and it is the *Liber Antimaquis* which is the book of the secrets of Hermes”), which derives from an ample body of Hermetic magic, with different titles and contents in the Arab manuscripts, and in which Aristotle reveals to Alexander the Great the secret knowledge of Hermes. Of the complex Arab tradition, the Latin text reproduces only a brief

selection which omits the cosmic and mythological chronology and concentrates on the parts essential to the practice of magic; it conserves the passage which exalts the greatness of man and his power over all things, but its content is mainly of a practical kind. In the second part (devoted to the names of the astral “spirits” and their dominion over earthly substances) the *Liber Antimaquis* corresponds more evidently with the Arab tradition. It is not possible to establish whether the Latin edition is a direct translation or a later adaptation of a preceding version. Another translation of a brief section is conserved under the title *De amicitia vel inimicitia planetarum* and perhaps derives from a Jewish translation.

From the early 13th century (or perhaps even earlier) we have a translation of the *Liber de quattuor confectionibus ad omnia genera animalium capienda*, a short treatise which takes the form of a dialogue between Hermes and Aristoas (Aristotle). Hermes describes four different recipes, *confectiones*, made up of animal and vegetable substances; a suffumigation ritual and a prayer to the “spirit” of animals, intended to capture and dominate various types of wolves, wild beasts, birds and reptiles. The revelation is derived, according to Hermes, from a book ‘with the secrets of the occult sciences’ which Arod (i.e. the archangel Gabriel) taught to Ismenus (i.e. Adam).

The *Centiloquium*, together with the *Asclepius* and the *Tabula smaragdina* the most widespread work of Hermetic literature in the Latin Middle Ages, is an anthology of a hundred astrological aphorisms. The text has the form of an acrostichon, which allows us to identify the author, Stephen of Messina, and the dedicatee, King Manfred of Sicily (1258-1266). According to David Pingree, the collection – which does not follow an orderly plan and covers different areas of astrological science (birth, elections, transitions, iatromathematics, meteorology) – is taken partly or entirely from the unpublished *Liber rememorationum* by Sadan, also known as *Albumasar in Sadan*, who transmits many sayings of Abū Ma’shar gathered by his disciple.

The *Liber de accidentibus* is a collection of astrological sayings, exemplifying in a concrete form the terrestrial effects corresponding to the celestial motions described by Ptolemy in the second book of the *Tetrabiblos*. The text dates from the commentary to the *Tetrabiblos* written by ‘Alī ben Riḍwān (a physician and philosopher of the 11th century), who in his last comment to Book 2 states that it is useful to add ‘the sayings by Hermes in his Book on events that happen, which can help us in

our universal prognostications’. Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*, in the Arab redaction and with a commentary by ‘Alī ben Riḍwān, was translated in 1271-1275 by Aegidius of Parma, with the help of an Arabic-Castilian version (possibly the work of Jehuda ben Moses), and dedicated to Alphonso X the Wise. The *Liber de accidentibus* is simply the literal transcription of the Hermetic anthology taken from a manuscript of Aegidius’ version and transmitted in the form of an autonomous text.

### C. LATIN ORIGINALS

Also part of the Hermetic tradition, along with translations from the Greek and Arabic, are various writings on astrological medicine and geomancy probably originally written in Latin, and placed under the authority of Hermes. A brief text on astrological medicine, the *Liber duodecim formarum*, attributed to Hermes/Enoch, describes twelve therapeutic images linked to signs of the zodiac and, in some cases, to their “decans”. The image that must be carved on metal does not always correspond to the classic zodiacal portrait, nor does the subdivision of the parts of the body always reflect the traditional melotesia. The list of twelve talismans is sometimes preceded by the description of an image of the Leo talisman against kidney stones, which is different from that of the talisman described in the orderly series. This “extravagant” image became extraordinarily popular, and at times appears independently. From ca. 1300 the writing was interpolated under the title of *De ymaginibus ad calculum* in the Latin translation of the *Picatrix*. The existence of a Jewish version of the *Liber duodecim formarum*, its mention of Hermes/Enoch, and its circulation among the Jewish physicians of Montpellier suggest a Jewish origin.

The *De arbore borissa* is a brief chapter dedicated to the amazing alchemical, medical and magical virtues of a plant called “Borissa” or “Lunaria”, placed under the influence of the Moon. Some of the properties described are found in later authors and texts: Joseph Flavius, Elian, the herbarium attributed to Solomon, the Hermetic texts *De septem herbis* and *Liber Thessali de virtutibus herbarum*. The *De arbore borissa*, which has come down to us from manuscripts no earlier than the 14th century, revives these traditions and adds further elements related to alchemical properties. The vagueness of the description does not allow certain and unmistakable botanical identification; but even at the time of its widest circulation (in the last centuries of the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance) numerous plants were

ascribed, often by analogy, to the ever-expanding group of Lunary herbs.

The *Lectura geomantiae* is the only geomantic text attributed to Hermes. According to the brief prologue, Hermes ‘the philosopher and first inventor’, wishing to know whether his son far from home was dead, climbed to the top of a mountain, where an angel revealed to him the divinatory art of geomancy. The *Lectura* is a compilation, and does not enable the beginner to practice geomancy since it illustrates only the first phase of the outline of the “geomantic theme” and the definition of the first figures, without indicating how to arrive at the others and how to arrange them for a complete interpretation. The work has the appearance of a set of notes on the principal notions useful to a geomancer and has neither the structure nor the pretensions of a real treatise.

The *Tractatus de iudicio urinae* (or *Liber de iudiciis urinae sine visione eiusdem urinae*), published in a small number of manuscripts of varying length, is sometimes anonymous and sometimes attributed to Hermes, perhaps because a maxim of Hermes is quoted just at the beginning. Knowledge of the zodiacal configuration and the planetary hour makes it possible to establish the properties of a patient’s urine and to proceed to a diagnosis.

## 2. CEREMONIAL MAGIC

(a) From the end of the 11th century to the first half of the 12th, magical literature begins to enter the West by way of Sicily and Spain. This process can be considered complete by the first half of the 13th century. Among the copious and varied materials in this domain, the most substantial part is the corpus of ceremonial writings of Arab origin attributed to Hermes or to authors linked to him: his pupil Belenus (Apollonius of Tyana), Toz the Greek and Germa the Babylonian, as well as Aristotle himself as circulator of Hermes’ doctrines. Hermetic ceremonial writings present themselves in the form of mere collections of precepts, which state their theoretical basis of reference only in general terms, and conserve but few traces of their presumed dependence on Hermes’ revelation. And yet, despite its shabby literary vestments, this hodge-podge of texts exerted an irresistible attraction upon Latin culture. Evidence of this are the often quite early translations signed by authoritative translators, and in some cases subjected to later revisions, in an attempt to utilize every bit of this “divine” doctrine and its “stupendous” precepts. The magic in question certainly appears stupendous in its claimed capacity to satisfy man’s most disparate wishes: it caters not only to his elemen-

tary needs (nutrition, health, protection of his environment) and promises to fulfil his individual and interpersonal expectations (mastery of science, success in love, in business, or in pursuing political and social ambitions), but also makes even more unusual and extravagant claims (communication at distance, opening of locks, and optical illusions). Like all learned magic, Hermetic magic has its institutional basis in → astrology. The direct relationship between the motion of the stars and sublunary events, the existence of a specific influence of each celestial body on given aspects of worldly life, and hence the possibility of establishing causal links by calculable laws, are the theoretical assumptions borrowed by magic from astrology. Yet magic is not a mere acknowledgement of the natural relationship between heaven and earth but applies it in a practical way and bends it to its own advantage. Magic does not predict events but determines them. Thanks to this ability to transform knowledge into power, the theoretical subordination of magic to astrology does not devalue this art, which ‘exalts man among the mighty’ and enables him materially to get ‘almost a foretaste of heaven’, as written by → Michael Scot.

Nevertheless, the intense activity of translation, which in a short time makes available the entire literature of Hermetic ceremonial magic, immediately brings up the difficulty of integrating within a Christian framework a subject matter that is so radically alien and antithetical to it. The texts in fact include operative rituals such as prayers, suffumigations, and the pronunciation and writing of mysterious names. In most cases we are dealing with a liturgy calling on intelligent spiritual essences linked to the planets, who are different from the angels of Christianity and who are invoked in shapes and for ends quite different from those allowed by the Christian religion. Within the timeframe of one century, this fundamental incompatibility led to the definitive banishment of the Hermetic ceremonial tradition from the official horizon of Latin culture. The texts survived and were handed down by wayward subterranean paths, in manuscripts subjected to manipulations, abbreviations and contaminations according to the specialization and particular interests of whatever scholar was transcribing them.

(b) According to David Pingree, most of the Hermetic ceremonial texts that reached the West from the Moslem world can be traced back to the authorship of one or more Arab writers. He claims that these authors autonomously produced a pseudo-Hermetic magical literature by mixing the Greek heritage with cultural traditions of Indian



and Iranian origin, as well as with local materials. According to Pingree, these falsifications have their origin in the Sabaeen circles of Harran, in the period between the 9th and the 10th centuries A.D., that is to say, from the period immediately following the visit of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn to the city of Harran (around 830 A.D.). The attempt of Harranians at preserving their ancient pagan religion by adapting it to the requirements of the religions tolerated by Islam could also have led them to re-elaborate their astral magic along the lines of the Neoplatonic tradition of late antiquity, and place it under the lofty aegis of Hermes. Pingree's persuasive hypothesis finds ample confirmation in the texts, which refer mainly to the planets, attributing special importance to the Moon and utilizing spiritual essences as intermediaries and executors of magical operations. It is well-known that in the declaration of their religious credo, the Harranians had proclaimed the existence of God as transcendent and inscrutable creator who becomes pluralized in epiphanic figures of a spiritual nature. These essences of pure light, which the philosophers call intelligences and the holy law angels, are the only spiritual beings with whom man can enter into contact. The angels par excellence are those who govern the seven planets, in which they have their visible temples. It is thus necessary to turn to the star, assuming its nature in one's dress and gestures, places, astrological times, rites and requests, in order to address its angel, who in his turn will serve as mediator with God for man's material and spiritual expectations.

This quite blatant syncretism of religious, magical and astrological elements constitutes (with few exceptions) the distinctive feature of the ceremonial magical literature of Arab origin which circulates in Latin under the direct or indirect aegis of Hermes. Nevertheless, despite this basic homogeneity, Pingree suggests a generic classification, distinguishing the texts on the basis of the means used to achieve the effect: thus, there is a division between magic which makes use of amulets, on the one hand, and magic which makes use of talismans, on the other.

An amulet is a stone, usually a gem, naturally endowed with occult virtues, that is capable on its own of producing specific physical or spiritual effects. This special power originates in the planet to which the stone corresponds and can be amplified by operating at the astrological time in which the stellar position provides the greatest output of the influence desired. The principle of classifying sublunary objects (animals, plants, stones) into "sets" is of Neoplatonic derivation. Originally

it was assumed that every being possesses the essential virtue of a divine higher principle, whose imprint is only weakly present in each element but can be activated by appealing to the sympathies among all the links in the chain of beings that share the same virtue. But already in the magic of late antiquity, the stars as such had replaced the classic gods, and the sets had become entirely astrological. In its simplest form, magic which makes use of amulets can be considered strictly "natural" since it is limited to using the extraordinary powers present in sublunary beings only. A unique example of this "zero degree" magic in the corpus of Hermetic literature is the *De lapidibus Veneris*. This text lists ten stones belonging to the domain of Venus, endowed with occult medical properties (in the widest sense of the term). The virtues inherent in stones can be heightened or modified by mixing them with other ingredients, chosen by means of the principle of analogy. The *De lapidibus Veneris* is attributed to Toz the Greek, a mysterious figure whose name appears in different versions in manuscripts and in indirect testimonies. His identification with the Egyptian god Toth has recently been questioned by Pingree, who sees in it a pseudonym (Ta'us, the peacock). It serves as a *nom de plume* for one or more authors who specialized in describing operations connected to the influence of the planet Venus. That Toz belongs to the Hermetic domain is confirmed by other works, in which he appears in company with Germa the Babylonian, that is Hermes the Babylonian of the genealogy of Abū Ma'shar. And it is not improbable that Latin readers spontaneously associated Toz with Tat, the pupil of Hermes in the *Asclepius*. Because of its total absence of astrological, ritual and figurative elements, the *De lapidibus Veneris* is an anomalous text in the Hermetic magical tradition. Usually, amuletic magic also involves the engraving of a picture of the planet on the stone. As the studies of Fritz Saxl and Jean Seznec have shown, these images are connected to the iconography of the ancient stellar gods, whose survival in the West was guaranteed by the magical texts. In the *De imaginibus sive annulis septem planetarum*, attributed to or at any rate associated with Hermes, there is a description of the different planetary images that must be engraved at the suitable astrological time on gems appropriate to each planet, which will then be set in rings made of metal pertaining to the same sympathetic domain. The effectiveness of the ring in traditional activities connected to the planet depends upon the observance of certain prohibitions, which in some cases suggest religious taboos, while in other cases their

intention seems to be simply to prevent mistakes in respecting the boundaries of the sympathetic domain. In the *De duodecim annulis*, which introduces Toz the Greek and Germa the Babylonian as authorities, there is a description of twelve gems to be engraved at precise astrological moments, and then set in rings, which can be worn or used as seals. The first four stones belong to the domain of Venus, confirming that this was the authors' specialization; the remaining ones are linked to the other planets, with the exception of Mars. Writing or invoking the names of God, the angels and the hours is required for all the rings; only in one case does the prescription mention merely the writing down of what is intended. The *De duodecim annulis* also contains dietary, lustral and sexual prohibitions, which are as detailed as they are far-fetched. The presence of religious elements becomes more evident in some texts of amuletic magic which include an actual sacred ceremony. In the *Liber Mercurii Hermetis* the engraving of two different images of Mercury must be preceded by a staged procession, which requires participation of the magus and a young assistant, and by a long peroration whose aim is to invoke the planetary spirit by means of listing his attributes. The fashioning of two rings is accompanied by suffumigations, invocations, songs and chants, a sacrifice and a ritual meal. An analogous ceremony is to be found in the *Liber Saturni* attributed to Hermes, translated perhaps in Chaldaean by Apollonius, "philosopher of Egypt", and from there into Latin by an otherwise unknown Theodosius archbishop "Sardiensis". The presence of planetary prayers is not at all uncommon in the magic of late antiquity; but it is interesting to note the similarity of these orations to the descriptions, known to us from other sources, of the ceremonies of the Harranians, which often coincide in gestural details and in the planet and angel names invoked. A very detailed planetary liturgy is described in the *Liber orationum planetarum septem*. Even if the *Liber* is not attributed to Hermes, its close textual affinities with Arab accounts give evidence of its belonging to the Hermetic Harranian tradition.

In talismanic magic, as distinct from amuletic magic, an image is molded or carved in metal, or in rare cases modelled in wax or clay. The material used does not contribute to the success of the operation, since it has no particular occult property and at most must respect the planet's sympathetic domain. The image, too, is hardly of influence, since it does not stand in relation to the planetary iconography but merely "represents" the pursued aim. The elements which in amuletic magic are

merely added to the natural property of the stones and the planetary depictions, become pre-eminent in talismanic magic, that is to say: the choice of the astrological time and the elaborate ritual which takes place around the image (pronouncement of names, engraving of characters or symbols with appropriate types of ink, recital of a prayer, and use of suffumigations). At the end of this complex ceremony, the image must be either worn or buried with an appropriate exorcism. The words and names to be pronounced can merely be epithets of the star in various languages, or simple statements expressing the magician's wish, or, far more frequently, actual prayers of a persuasive kind which aim at attracting the spiritual force of the planet and obliging it to flow into the talisman and, through it, exert an influence on the place or the person.

An interesting collection of talismanic magic with the title of *Liber septem planetarum ex scientia Abel* spread very rapidly in the Latin world. The Arab original, which remains unidentified, was translated twice, first by Adelard of Bath and then by → Robert of Chester (after 1144). The collection consists of seven books, one for each planet, according to the sequence Moon-Sun-Mercury-Venus-Mars-Jupiter-Saturn; but Adelard's translation has come down to us with the third and fourth books missing. The first treatise, *Liber Lunae*, has an interesting prologue which reproduces, with some meaningful variants, the genealogy of the three Hermes narrated by Abū Ma'shar. The ancient philosophers, who had foreseen the imminent flood, had carved the precepts of the sciences and the arts on marble pillars as a record for posterity. After the flood, Hermes Triplex had gone to Hebron, the city of Adam, of his son Abel, and of most of the antediluvian sages. Here he had retrieved almost all the tablets buried by the ancient philosophers; among these had come to light the stones on which Abel had relied for the survival of his talismanic doctrine, *praestigiorum scientia*, the first and most perfect of all. Hermes had tested one of the talismans, confirmed its effectiveness, and hence had decided to transcribe Abel's precepts. The effectiveness of the talismans, made of different metals, depends on the positions of the planets, on the names or symbols which are engraved on various parts of the image, on the words (specific for each talisman) which are pronounced, on suffumigations, and on the prayers which must be recited, during the various phases of the operation, to God, the zodiacal angels and the planet dominating the talisman. The operative prescriptions are preceded by highly detailed

preparatory recommendations: a period of purification with daily baths, prayers, observance of daily fasting and a nightly meal with bread of wheat crushed by one's own hands and water likewise personally drawn. The physical preparation must contribute to creating a proper psychological attitude in the operator, of whom perfect moral qualities are also required.

This operative procedure is a constant feature in the texts on talismanic magic, even if certain details may vary. In Belenus' *De imaginibus septem planetarum*, the preparation of the images involves all the elements listed in the *Liber planetarum* (writing of the planet's name and seal, suffumigation and prayer to the spirits, burial), but it makes no mention of pronouncing names proper to the specific purpose, whereas it does prescribe the use of a metal appropriate to the planet. The *De imaginibus et horis*, attributed by some manuscripts to Hermes, does not talk of suffumigations and prayers, but of the need to pronounce the name of the interested party, the name of the planet, and the aim to be achieved, while the names of the day, the hour and the planet's characters have to be written on the image. The ritual dedicated to Venus in Toz's *Liber de stationibus ad cultum Veneris* and in Toz-Germa's *Liber Veneris* must have been particularly complex. Only a small fragment of *De stationibus* survives, from which can be conjectured only that the ceremony included at least five stations; but a lost manuscript divided the text into fifty chapters (therefore does this mean that there were fifty stations?). By contrast, the content of the *Liber Veneris* can be reconstructed, although it remains confused, from three manuscripts – all of which are unfortunately incomplete – corresponding to three different translations, one of which is attributed to John of Seville. Despite numerous discrepancies, it seems possible to identify three magical operations: the construction of talismans, the fashioning of rings (some coinciding with those of the *De duodecim annulis*) and the preparation of four magical mirrors (*De quattuor speculis*). All the operations involve preparatory purification rituals, determining the astrological time, choosing the material, writing the names of planets and angels, suffumigations, and invocations. As regards talismans, which predict the future and induce the angels of Venus to appear before the magus, two manuscripts speak of a three-dimensional image which must be dressed in garments of five colors. But the third manuscript refers to the fashioning of a head, *caput*. The mention of a prophetic “caput” is interesting since it seems to confirm the link between the *Liber Veneris* and the Harranian tradition

and, in particular, one of the most macabre legends of human sacrifice practised by the inhabitants of Harran. Arab historical sources report with obsessive regularity the Harranian custom of immersing a man up to his neck in a mixture of oil and spices until his head came off, which was then supposed to pronounce prophecies. In his recent study on the religion of the Harranians, Jan Hjärpe insists on the lack of neutrality of these testimonies and hypothesizes that such charges, apart from being customary in religious polemic, resulted from a malevolent and distorted interpretation of practices which were actually alchemical or magical. The *Liber Veneris* would seem to bear this out, even if the question of where the sources got the other details of the story still needs to be clarified. It should also be noted that in one of the manuscripts the list of the names of the angels of Venus and of the planets is preceded by a warning that ‘these are the names of the Greek Sabaeans of Harran’, that is the Harranian Neoplatonists.

Also linked to talismanic magic is the text which in the West had the greatest fortune of all, the *Liber imaginum Lunae*, available in Latin at least from the first decades of the 13th century and then widely circulated in two different translations. The *Liber imaginum Lunae* attributes the actual composing of the text to Belenus, after the doctrine of his master Hermes, and lists the talismans to be fashioned when the Moon is in one of its twenty-eight mansions (that is to say, in the star or group of stars in which the Moon appears or “makes station” each night of its monthly course). The list of lunar mansions specifies neither what image to write nor what material to use, but limits itself to indicating the name of the mansion, its color (an element referring back to Babylonian tradition), its favorable or unfavorable quality, the name of the planet which dominates it, and lastly, the aims which can be achieved by each talisman. This Hermetic list coincides with an exclusively astrological list contained in other manuscripts, which also marks the Moon's location in the Zodiac and the design of the stars that make up the station, but contains no indication as to what initiatives should be undertaken and as to Hermes' authorship. This would suggest an Arabic adaptation of a more ancient and merely astrological doctrine derived from Indian tradition, which made use of the lunar mansions for divinatory purposes from the middle of the second millennium B.C. In some Latin manuscripts the text on mansions is preceded by a brief prologue, which gathers together all the elements typical of Greek revelation literature as analysed by Festugière. In his tireless research Hermes discov-

ered this wondrous book hidden inside a set of coffers, each more precious than the last; he decided to translate the work into Arabic to make it available to sages, while at the same time cautioning them to keep the content secret since its extraordinary power would make it dangerous in the hands of the ignorant. In a fair number of the Latin manuscripts the list of lunar mansions is followed by two writings by Belenus, the *De viginti quattuor horis* and the *De imaginibus diei et noctis*. The first relies on an Arab reworking of a Greek original attributed to Apollonius of Tyana, which probably dates from the 3rd century and also has a Syrian parallel by the title *Testament of Adam*. The text lists the names of the twenty-four hours and specifies the classes of beings which at that hour turn their prayers to God. These elements are supplemented in the Arab translation and then in the Latin one by the indication of the talismans to fashion at each hour. The *De imaginibus diei et noctis* is an elaboration of Arab origin of Apollonius' doctrine of hours; in fact it contains precepts for fashioning the talismans of the twenty-four hours (time and purpose, material, size, weight, figure, names of hours, God and angels, suffumigations). Some talismans are purported to have been fashioned and used by Apollonius himself; these stories are similar to those found in numerous Greek writings from the 5th century on. Four other talismans, not linked to the hours, are described in a sort of brief appendix, the *De quattuor imaginibus magnis*. In the oldest Latin manuscripts the Hermetic list of lunar mansions and the two texts by Belenus are presented as a single whole. The link probably dates back to the Arab originals and seems to be confirmed by the operative introduction to the *Liber imaginum Lunae*: the consecration ritual of the talisman in fact involves elements which were traceable only in the two texts attributed to Belenus. The Greek original of the *De viginti quattuor horis* also contains the names of the seven days and of the seasons, the names of the sun and the moon, the earth, the heavens and the sea in each of the four seasons. In Latin this section is preserved with the title of *De sigillis Mercurii* or *De discretione operis differentia ex iudiciis Hermetis de intentione huius operis*, attributed to Belenus, and in some manuscripts it is placed after the three texts mentioned above.

### 3. THE FORTUNE OF HERMETIC CEREMONIAL MAGIC IN LATIN: TRANSLATIONS AND DISPUTES

A fascination with knowledge which is also power is evident throughout Adelard of Bath's career as a translator. In his *Quaestiones Naturales*

Adelard (ca. 1080-1155) unhesitatingly acknowledges his interest in magic and tells us how he took lessons from an aged expert in magical operations. He is a true pioneer in exploring works on magic, and has the deliberate cultural objective of introducing this "useful" and "puissant" art into the scientific curriculum and legitimizing it as the operative branch of astrology (which he and other translators strive to establish as a science as well). In addition to his translation of Abū Ma'shar's *Isagoge minor* and of the first thirty-nine aphorisms of the pseudo-Ptolemaic *Centiloquium*, Adelard puts the *Liber planetarum ex scientia Abel* into Latin. Stylistic and terminological affinities suggest he has also had a hand in translating Belenus' *Liber de imaginibus septem planetarum*. Furthermore he translates the *Liber praestigiorum Elbidis secundum Hermetem et Ptolomaeum*, a text attributed to Thābit ibn Qurra, interpolating Hermetic elements into it.

In his *De essentiis* (1143), Herman of Carinthia generically refers to Iorma the Babylonian and Tuz the Ionian as "operators of talismans", *thelematici*. But the references get more and more precise when the texts of the two authors are available in the translation of John of Seville. → Daniel of Morley's *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum* cites Toz's 'great and universal *Liber Veneris*' as a fundamental text of the 'science of images'. The circulation of texts on magic may have aroused some reaction on the part of theologians, since John of Seville's preface to his translation of Thabit's *De Imaginibus Astrologicis* alludes to objections advanced in the name of the faith, *sub praetextu religionis*, concerning the propriety of spreading a morally reprehensible (*infamis*) doctrine. But this does not stop the circulation of Hermetic texts, all of which are probably available by the first decades of the 13th century (given the fact that the authors who discuss them from 1230 on state that they read them 'in their youth', 'long ago').

The Hermetic ceremonial texts were destined, for various reasons, to play a central role in the broad theological and scholarly debate which developed, between 1230 and the end of the century, about astrology and the operative techniques linked to it. First, they constitute a true *corpus*, quantitatively substantial, homogeneous in content and conceptually consistent with the theory of magic as expounded in the *Asclepius*. Second, they are associated with the mythical figure of Hermes Trismegistus: the progenitor of all magicians and father of idolatry according to Augustine, but also, in the interpretation of Lactantius and Quodvultdeus, a philosopher divinely inspired in his

presentiment of the mysteries of the Christian God. Finally, thanks to their “extreme” operative nature, they make it possible to develop very different argumentative strategies in the general discussion of astrological magic. Taken as a prototype of *all* magic, they made it possible for some authors to radicalize their condemnation and to extend it to any kind of magical operation; taken instead as only *one* of its possible modes, they made it possible for other authors to set up a distinction between different kinds of magical operation and to utilize the condemnation of Hermetic magic in the interest of legitimizing other modes.

Pastoral concerns are behind the categorical condemnation by William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris from 1228 to 1249, of all magical material and the very figure of Hermes Trismegistus. His goal is to cut away at its very base, *gladio et igne*, all interest in magical literature, ‘which has been written either by men deceived by demons and having become in turn deceivers of other men, or directly by demons’. The Hermetic citations contained in his *De fide et legibus* (1228-30) and *De universo* (1231-36) testify to William’s updatedness: they refer to Hermes’ *Liber septem planetarum ex scientia Abel*, *De imaginibus et horis* and *Liber Saturni*, Belenus’ *Liber imaginum Lunae* and *De viginti quattuor horis*, Toz’s *De stationibus ad cultum Veneris*, *Liber Veneris* and *De quattuor speculis*. His detailed textual references accord with the works we possess today. Only one quotation remains unidentified; the story of the angels Haroc and Maros is not found in the *Liber Veneris* of the *Liber septem planetarum*; and the distinction of three kinds of magnets attributed to Hermes is in Toz’s *De lapidibus Veneris*. In his *De universo* William makes a sharp distinction between two kinds of magic: on the one hand there is natural magic, which is limited to using the occult properties of physical beings, and which was bestowed by divine Providence so that men might employ it for noble ends; on the other hand, there is necromantic magic, which uses operative techniques such as images, characters and incomprehensible words. The astrological images and the figures that old women carve for evil purposes, *invultuationes vetularum*, do not act from their own intelligence or will, or from their own natural virtue, or from some specific celestial virtue captured in the moment of its making and absorbed inside the talisman. Their effectiveness therefore depends on the action of demons, who seduce men in order to lead them toward astral idolatry. William thus connects Augustine’s picture of Hermes the false prophet and false philosopher with the Hermes mentioned

as author of texts on amulets and talismans: small-scale reproductions of the statues animated by demons as described in the *Asclepius*. William’s overall analysis is important because of his lexical and conceptual specification of the notion of *necromantia*, which in the usage of many Latin translators and thinkers takes on the broad generic sense of “magic”. The distinction between natural magic and necromantic magic, as put forth by William, was to contribute to the slow but progressive development of the latter term towards a notion of “demonic magic” in the full sense of the word.

A contemporary of William, → Michael Scot, court astrologer of Frederick II, confronts the problem of Hermetic magic from a very different stance. His *Liber Introductorius* (1228-1235), an encyclopedic manual in three books written at the request of Frederick, is an introduction into astrology, but opens with discussions of cosmology, meteorology, geography, physics and medicine. According to Scot, astrology is the noblest of the seven liberal arts because of its ‘necessary veracity’; it is inferior only to the science of theology and forms the basis of numerous other branches of knowledge, among which is magic. It goes without saying that given this relationship to astrology, magic can only be judged by Scot as being true (*verax*) and highly useful. Scot repeatedly insists on the validity of its techniques and on the real, non-illusory character of the operations of the astral spirits. The stellar bodies and their ruling angels are instruments of the divine will and signs of the order which governs natural and human actions. The reduction of talismanic science to astrology makes possible a ‘necromantia secundum physicam’, that is an operative non-demonic technique, which is a simple practical application of the knowledge of the relationships between the stars and the events of the sublunary world. Scot writes that he has personally and successfully carried out operations of astrological magic following Hermes’ *Liber imaginum Lunae*, which because of its proven utility is reproduced in its entirety in the *Liber introductorius*, together with Belenus’ *De viginti quattuor horis*. But, apart from the historical value of this testimony, Scot’s knowledge in the area of Hermetic magic does not seem to have been very wide. On the other hand, the ethical problem which these techniques present to the good Christian is quite evident to him. Divinatory science is ‘abominable’ and prohibited by the Church: not because of its content, which is true because it is founded on astrology, but rather because of the ‘malice’ it teaches. Magic is not included in the philosophical curriculum because of its ethi-



cally reprehensible aims, *magistra omnis iniquitatis*. Scot's position, halfway between recognition on the scientific level and condemnation on the religious one, reflects the difficulty of absorbing the new magical material into the traditional cultural framework.

→ Albertus Magnus' judgment of the literature of Hermetic magic is marked by a profound evolution in his thinking. In his *De mineralibus* (datable from 1255-1262 according to some, from before 1250-1252 according to others), his adherence to Hermes' magical and alchemical doctrines is far-reaching and consistent with his acceptance, in other works, of the cosmology and anthropology of the *Asclepius*. The theme of the carving of images and seals is extensively treated, even though the discussion is presented almost as a digression, meant to satisfy the curiosity of 'socii'. Albert in fact specifies that the explanation of the effects of images and seals is not the province of physics but of that 'sort of necromancy which is subordinate to astronomy', since the proof is derived from the principles of astronomy (observation of stellar configurations and movements, that is, astrology), of magic (knowledge of the occult properties inherent in a stone, that is, natural magic as William of Auvergne understands it) and of "necromantic science" (understood generically as a technique for utilizing the astrological correspondances between heaven and earth, or astrological magic). Actually, the discussion of images is not at all marginal for Albert, who is in fact very much interested in legitimizing it 'propter bonitatem doctrinae' in the context of his vision of natural causality. Admitting the relationship of obedience according to which sublunary bodies are subject to the stars, Albert explains the power of artificially carved stones in perfect analogy with the power of stones found already carved in nature, such as a marble he has seen in Venice which bore the image of a crowned king with a long beard. In both cases the figure determines the introduction of a special astral influence, a modification of the form (*forma substantialis*) of the stone, and hence the acquisition of a particular occult virtue. But while in the images carved by nature the imprint of the celestial influence is direct, in the case of artificial images it is the operator who acts as the instrument mediating between the stars and the stone. The *scientia imaginum* is therefore legitimate, since it fits into the context of normal natural causality. Albert cites Toz the Greek, Germa the Babylonian and Hermes the Egyptian as the first 'praeceptores et professores' of this discipline, which was then passed down to Ptolemy and Geber and reached its

perfection in Thabit. Toz and Hermes are most likely intended in his generic reference to the 'two great books of Venus', mentioned without any indication of authorship. But Albert's approbation of Hermetic magic requires some clarifications. The magical procedure described by *De mineralibus* mentions only three elements: the astrological phase, the figure to be engraved, and the material used (mostly gems, although he alludes in passing to the use of metal). What is being dealt with therefore is a type of amuletic and talismanic magic which cannot be strictly defined as Hermetic since there appear in it none of the ritual elements that characterize almost all the texts on Hermetic ceremonial magic. Among the Hermetic writings which have survived, only *De septem annulis septem planetarum* corresponds to the operative type outlined by Albert; but the planetary images described in *De Mineralibus* certainly do not derive from it. On the other hand, Albert explicitly rejects recourse to 'incantationes, impetrationes sive adiurationes, characteres', that is to say, to those elements which are an integral part of Toz's *Liber Veneris*. In short, the references of *De Mineralibus* do not prove with certainty that, at this time, Albert was directly familiar with the works of Hermes, Toz and Germa, but they do suggest generic information mediated from other sources, which Albert fits into his interpretation of Hermetism as an extremely ancient and primal philosophy. By contrast, in his *Summa theologiae* (begun after 1272 and left incomplete) Albert's judgment is very different. *Necromantia*, understood here in its full sense of demonic magic, is traced (at least dubitantly, *secundum quosdam*) directly to the teachings of Achot the Greek, Germa the Babylonian and Hermes the Egyptian. The authors who in *De mineralibus* were cited as initiators of a natural legitimate science are now linked to necromantic texts 'de imaginibus et annulis et speculis Veneris et sigillis daemonum'. It is hard to understand the reasons for this shift in perspective toward the Hermetic texts. Albert's later perspective may have been influenced, at least in part, by the urgency of the contemporary debate on astrology and magic; and perhaps also by the *Speculum astronomiae*, which condemns Hermes' talismanic magic without appeal (see below). But it is possible that this new judgment of Albert also depends on his direct reading of the Hermetic texts, from which he could have concluded that there is a basic incompatibility between the ritual magic contained therein, and the "natural" explanation of astrological images which he sustained in *De mineralibus* and still intended to defend.

In the *Speculum astronomiae* (ca. 1255-1260), the attribution of which is still an object of debate, the bibliographical acquisitions from the Arabic are subjected to a careful adjustment which is of great philosophical and documentary interest. The aim of the *Speculum* is establishing the scientific basis of astrology, demonstrating its agreement with Aristotelian science and with Christian theology, and distinguishing it from doctrines and practices incorrectly confounded with it. After having described the various aspects of the science of the stars (astronomy and astrology, subdivided into theory and practice), in chapter 11 the anonymous author addresses the problem of the science of images, which he subdivides into three categories. The necromantic images described by the Hermetic texts are considered abominable. They adopt generic references to astrology but actually their effectiveness is based upon a religious liturgy that is different from that of Christianity and therefore idolatrous. The necromantic images described in the texts of Solomon and the Hebrew authors are less dangerous but equally detestable. They do not resort to actual ceremonials but present inscriptions of characters that are unknown and therefore suspect, since they may conceal acts contrary to the sanctity of the Christian religion. The third and last category is that of the properly astrological images described in Thābit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus astrologicis*. These images, fashioned at an auspicious astrological time, are fully licit, since they limit themselves to utilizing stellar influxes without resorting to idolatrous rituals. Thus the classification of images rests on the analysis of the role which the single operative elements play in producing their effect. Prayers, the engraving of characters and the pronouncement of unknown words, typical of Hermetic and Solomonic necromantic magic, identify a supernatural agent as object of veneration and are therefore demonic practices. By contrast, the engraving of intelligible words – such as *amor*, *destructio* – and the pronouncement of the name of the thing and of the planet, which Thabit makes use of in his astrological images, refer to a natural agent, that is to say, the stellar influx. The presence of magical formulas (“may this talisman produce this effect”) is not in itself suspect, since it is a mere enunciation of intent, addressed to beings of the sublunary sphere, and does not constitute an act of idolatry. Although it proceeds from William of Auvergne's distinction between natural magic and necromancy, the *Speculum* significantly modifies that distinction, broadening the notion of natural magic to the point of fully including in it astrological influence. This

interpretation of magic is very close to Albertus' in *De mineralibus*, but is based on a profound knowledge of the texts. The Hermetic literature cited by the *Speculum* is nearly the same as William's: Tozgerma's *Liber Veneris*, *De stationibus ad cultum Veneris*, *De quattuor speculis*; Hermes-Belenus' *Liber imaginum Lunae*; Belenus' *De imaginibus diei et noctis* and *De quattuor imaginibus magnis*; Hermes' *De sigillis Mercurii* (described as part of a larger collection, unknown to us, called *Liber imaginum Mercurii*), *Liber Martis*, *Liber Iovis* and *Liber Saturni* (that is, the last three books of the *Liber planetarum ex scientia Abel*), a text unknown to us, which would have followed the Abel series (*Tractatus octavus in magisterio imaginum*), *De imaginibus et horis*, *Liber Veneris* (whose incipit does not correspond to those of the surviving texts), and the *Liber praestigiorum* (actually the translation, altered by Adelard, of Thabit's text on images). The author of the *Speculum* justifies the possible gaps and lack of precision in his bibliographical references by the fact that he read these books a long time ago and by the horror caused in him by that reading, *quoniam eos abhorruui, non extat mihi perfecta memoria*. But as far as the Hermetic texts on amuletic and talismatic magic are concerned, his memory is very exact, in that he cites and condemns almost all of them. Nonetheless, if it is true that the bibliographical updating is from a fairly remote period, it is hard to accept the attribution of the *Speculum* to the Albertus Magnus who, at the time of the *De mineralibus*, i.e. not many years earlier, does not seem to have had direct knowledge of the Hermetic texts.

With the *Speculum*, the project of integrating the magus Hermes into the scientific curriculum can be considered to have failed. In his *Tractatus brevis et utilis* (1268-1270), Roger Bacon denies the authenticity of the texts on magic which circulate under Hermes' name. The whole of magical necromantic literature is written by demons or by men inspired by demons, and it has been attributed to Adam, → Moses, Solomon, Aristotle and Hermes so as to better deceive and seduce ‘not only youths, but even mature adults and authoritative persons, as we unfortunately witness in our day’. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* (1269-73) and his *Summa theologiae* (begun in 1269 and left incomplete) reassert Augustine's condemnation of Hermes, who in the *Asclepius* taught the cult of statues, *imagines*, animated by demons. But in his discussion of astrological images Aquinas does not even mention Hermes. His polemical objection is to the theory of astrological magic found in Albertus' *De mineralibus* and in the *Speculum*. Arti-

ficial images acquire no special virtues by human operation, other than the natural one impressed on them by celestial bodies. Therefore their extraordinary effects do not depend on their respective substantial forms, but must be considered the work of demons. The distinction between “astrological” and “necromantic” images, carefully traced in the *Speculum*, is reduced for Aquinas to a mere distinction of the ways in which demons are invoked. While in the necromantic images the prayers and the pronouncement of names represent ‘*expressa pacta cum daemonibus inita*’, in the astronomical images the pact remains a tacit one, understood through the use of characters and figures.

Paradoxically, a treatise *De essentiis essentialium*, with the full recognition it grants to Hermes’ necromantic images, circulated as a work of Thomas Aquinas himself. The author, a Dominican Thomas who seems to have written it prior to 1309, aims at demonstrating that celestial bodies do not derive their influences from souls but from the Intelligences that govern them. To prove his thesis, he tells of having used the *Liber planetarum ex scientia Abel* to fashion a talisman inscribed with the names of the planet and its Intelligence.

In the first quarter of 14th century at the latest, the *Liber de imaginibus Lunae* was briefly commented upon by an anonymous scholar. The *Glosulae super librum imaginum Lunae*, which are preserved in a unique manuscript, explain why sympathetic rules must be respected and discuss the meaning of characters according to three different interpretations. A broad extract from Adelard’s translation of the *Liber planetarum ex scientia Abel* and some shorter excerpts from Solomonian magical literature are also inserted.

→ Peter of Abano’s fame as magus and necromancer derives from the attribution to him of pseudoepigraphic works close to the Judaeo-Christian magical tradition, *Heptameron seu Elementa magica* and *De annulis secundum viginti octo mansiones Lunae*, but this fame does not find confirmation in the texts of certified authorship. In his *Lucidator dubitabilium astronomiae* (1302-1310) Peter of Abano associates himself with the interpretive line of the *Speculum* and sanctions the scientific validity of astrology by distinguishing it from the vain and superstitious practices of demonic magic. He also seems to have drawn from the *Speculum* the traditional distinction between “strictly” astronomical images and necromantic images, and the customary condemnation of Hermetic literature, rather generically referred to (‘*imagines . . . Hermetis, Belenuz, Thozz greci, Germath Babylonensis, Liber Lune Liberque*

*Veneris et aliorum planetarum . . . libri satis obsceni ac intellectus depravativi*’). On the other hand, Peter also reintroduces the legend of Hermes as inventor of all the sciences and identifies him with the biblical Enoch, thus presenting the figure of Hermes under two profoundly different identities: ‘Hermes Enoch seu Mercurius’, who gave rise to the scientific tradition of observation and representation of celestial images; and Hermes the necromancer, inventor of an “evil and detestable” art, dangerous to religion and rightly condemned. The invocation of spirits is heresy, declares Peter in his *Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum et praecipue medicorum* (1302-1310); but his intent is to explain the physical effectiveness of the *incantationes* as a result of the psychosomatic transitive force of the → imagination. Astronomical images do not address themselves to spiritual entities but reproduce stellar configurations, capturing the eminently physical influence determined by the various clusterings of celestial bodies, median causes, instruments of divine action and principles of motion. Upholding the validity of the astronomical images described by Ptolemy and by Thābit ibn Qurra, Peter describes how, in order to cure a case of kidney stones, he used a lion figure carved in gold under the domain of the zodiacal sign (that is, a seal described at the beginning of the *Liber formarum duodecim signorum*). But Peter does not recall the Hermetic origin of this talisman.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the Leo seal described by the *Liber formarum* is now part of a tradition of disparate attributions (Hermes, John of Seville, Andreas Cordubensis, Arnau de Vilanova) and is a commonly prescribed remedy in the Jewish medical milieu of Montpellier. In effect, in his *Speculum medicinae* Arnau de Vilanova recalls the Leo seal ‘described by Hermes’ and in his *Aphorismi particulares* he describes the virtues of the Pisces seal as a remedy against gout. Perhaps for these reasons the manuscript tradition often associates the *Liber formarum* with Arnau’s name, indicating him as the author of the entire text or at any rate as the one responsible for the additions to the original Hermetic work. The Christian adaptation of the *Liber formarum duodecim signorum*, which was printed among Arnau’s works under the title *De sigillis*, is, however, apparently not his. A *Glosa super imagines duodecim signorum Hermetis* was composed by the doctor of arts and medicine Antonius de Monte Ulmi, who flourished at Bologna between 1384 and 1390. Antonius says that he tested some Hermetic images and that they always fulfilled his expectations. But, according to the *Glosa*, their effectiveness should be increased

by adding a suffumigation, inscribing the name of the zodiacal angel and pronouncing a prayer (more or less Christian in tone) to the spirits. The procedure is identical to the one which Antonius expounds in his *De occultis et manifestis artium et medicinae* or *Liber intelligentiarum*, where he gives evidence of being quite familiar with Solomonic and Hermetic ceremonial literature.

The actual contribution of Hermetism is much more difficult to determine in the case of some authors traditionally interested in demonology. We do not know the reasons for the condemnation of Cecco of Ascoli (Francesco Stabili), burnt at the stake in Florence in 1327. It was influenced possibly by the rash digressions which run throughout his comments on two canonical texts on astrology, the *Sphere* by Sacrobosco and the *Liber introductorius* by Alcabitius. In his *Commentary on the Sphere*, astrology is defined as ‘glory of our mind and divinity of human nature, to be desired more than the glory of divine things, as Hermes states’. But Hermes is in fact remembered only as a writer on astrology, while there are repeated and lengthy quotations of theurgic authors and texts, not always identifiable but linked to Solomonic and Jewish magic. The hodge-podge of news and anecdotes, found in this work, never arranges itself into a systematic and theoretical exposition of necromantic magic; rather, it seems to be a pretext for expounding, while attributing them to others, heretical interpretations of important aspects of the Christian doctrine (the birth of Christ from the union of the Virgin with a demon, the eclipse which occurred during the Passion as the magical effect of the use of the heliotrope, and the horoscope of religions). In his *Commentary* on Alcabitius’s text Cecco confronts the problem of astronomical images by giving them a strictly physical explanation. The astral position, *aspectus modalis*, under which the metal is melted and engraved, enables the material to gain the correct proportion of elements from which the effectiveness of the talisman derives. The example cited by Cecco (a tin talisman fashioned while Venus is in Pisces or in Taurus) recalls Toz-Germa’s *De quattuor speculis*; but Cecco makes no mention of the engraving of angel names or invocations. Instead, ‘Zot graecus et Germa Babilonensis’ are cited, together with Evax, King of the Arabs, only with regard to the natural properties of the carbuncle; the reference is to Toz’s *De lapidibus Veneris*.

As a result of its subterranean and semi-clandestine circulation, Hermetic ceremonial literature lost much of its theoretical specificity, and found itself relegated to the vague and confused realm of

necromantic practice. Further research is necessary in order to provide a complete and clear picture of textual borrowings and the paths of transmission of medieval Hermetic texts as well as of the ways in which they intertwine and overlap with those belonging to other traditions.

The Hermetic texts, their commentaries and the critical bibliography are indicated in section A (Philosophical-religious Hermetism) and in section B (Technical and Operative Hermetism). The sequence of the texts is as a rule the one followed in the essay. It is preceded by a short general bibliography on the manuscripts and the latin editions. The critical editions and, in their absence, the *editio princeps*, are indicated. The following abbreviations are used: CTC = *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1960 (I), 1971 (II), 1976 (III); CCCM = *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis*, Turnhout: Brepols. For a summary presentation of the texts and of the manuscripts, see Paolo Lucentini & Vittoria Perrone Compagni, *I testi e i codici di Ermete nel Medioevo* (Appendice: Paolo Lucentini & Antonella Sannino, *Le stampe ermetiche*), Firenze: Polistampa, 2001 (hereafter: Lucentini & Perrone Compagni).

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New perspectives on philosophical-religious and technical and operative Hermetism are to be found in: Paolo Lucentini, Ilaria Parri, Vittoria Perrone



Compagni (eds.), *Hermetism from Late Antiquity to Humanism, La tradizione ermetica dal mondo tardo-antico all'Umanesimo: Convegno internazionale di studi, Napoli, 20-24 novembre 2001* (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 40), Turnhout: Brepols, 2003.

#### A. PHILOSOPHICAL-RELIGIOUS HERMETISM

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*Lit.*: Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Un témoin muet des luttes doctrinales du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 17 (1949), 223-248 ♦ Mario Bertolini, "Sul lessico filosofico dell'Asclepius", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 15 (1985), 1151-1209 ♦ Roelof van den Broek, "Hermes and Christ: Pagan Witnesses to the Truth of Christianity", in: Roelof van den Broek & Cis van Heertum (eds.), *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme: Gnosis, Hermetism and the Christian Tradition*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2000, 115-144 ♦ Mark Damien Delp, *De sex rerum principiis: A Translation and a Study of a Twelfth-Century Cosmology*, Ph. Diss. University of Notre Dame, Ann Arbor (Mich.): U.M.I., 1995 ♦ Giulio D'Onofrio, "L'età boeziana della teologia", in: *Storia della teologia nel Medioevo*, II. *La grande fioritura*, Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1996, 353-356 (Il Liber XXIV philosophorum) ♦ Peter Dronke, *Hermes and the Sibyls: Continuations and Creations*, Inaugural Lecture Delivered 9 march 1990, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 ♦ Carlos Gilly, "Die Überlieferung des Asclepius im Mittelalter", in: van den Broek & van Heertum, *From*

*Poimandres to Jacob Böhme*, 335-367 ♦ Françoise Hudry, *Le Livre des XXIV Philosophes*, Grenoble: Millon, 1989 ♦ eadem, "Le Liber XXIV philosophorum et le Liber de causis dans les manuscrits", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 59 (1992), 63-88 ♦ Paolo Lucentini, "Il Commento all'Asclepius del Vaticano Ottoboniano lat. 811", in: Michele Ciliberto & Cesare Vasoli (eds.), *Filosofia e cultura: Per Eugenio Garin*, I, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1991, 39-59 ♦ idem, "L'Asclepius ermetico nel secolo XII", in: Haijo J. Westra (ed.), *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Edouard Jaeneau*, Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1992, 397-421 ♦ idem, "Il corpo e l'anima nella tradizione ermetica medievale", in: Luisa Rotondi Secchi Tarugi (ed.), *L'Ermetismo nell'Antichità e nel Rinascimento*, Milano: Nuovi Orizzonti, 1998, 61-72 ♦ idem, *Il Libro dei ventiquattro filosofi*, Milano: Adelphi, 1999 ♦ idem, "Il Liber viginti quatuor philosophorum nei poemi medievali: il Roman de la Rose, il Granum sinapis, la Divina commedia", in: John Marenbon (ed.), *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001, 131-153 ♦ Dietrich Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt: Beiträge zur Genealogie der mathematischen Mystik*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1937 ♦ Claudio Moreschini, *Storia dell'ermetismo cristiano*, Brescia: Morcelliana, 2000 ♦ Ilaria Parri, "Note sul Libro dei ventiquattro filosofi", in: Stefano Caroti & Roberto Pinzani (eds.), *Ob rogatum meorum sociorum: Studi in memoria di Lorenzo Pozzi*, Milano: Angeli, 2000, 155-170 ♦ David Porreca, *The Influence of Hermetic Texts on Western European Philosophers and Theologians (1160-1300)*, Ph. Diss. Warburg Institute, University of London, 2001 ♦ Gilles Quispel, *Asclepius: De volkomen openbaring van Hermes Trismegistus*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1996, 211-250 ♦ Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, III. *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik*, München: Beck, 1996, 33-44 (Liber XXIV philosophorum) ♦ Antonella Sannino, "La tradizione ermetica a Oxford nei secoli XIII e XIV: Ruggero Bacone e Tommaso Bradwardine", *Studi filosofici* 18 (1995), 23-56 ♦ eadem, "The Hermetic Sources in Berthold of Moosburg", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63 (2000), 243-258 ♦ Paolo Siniscalco, "Ermete Trismegisto, profeta pagano della rivelazione cristiana: La fortuna di un passo ermetico (Asclepius 8) nell'interpretazione di scrittori cristiani", *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino. II. Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche* 101 (1966-1967), 83-117 ♦ Loris Sturlese, "Saints et magiciens: Albert le Grand en face d'Hermès Trismégiste", *Archives de Philosophie* 43:4 (1980), 615-634 ♦ idem, "Proclo ed Ermete in Germania da Alberto Magno a Bertoldo di Moosburg", in: Kurt Flasch (ed.), *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhart* (Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi, 2), Hamburg: Meiner, 1984, 22-33 ♦ R.B. Woolsey, "Bernard Silvester and the Hermetic Asclepius", *Traditio* 6 (1948), 340-344.



B. TECHNICAL AND OPERATIVE  
HERMETISMI. ASTROLOGY, MEDICINE AND NATURAL  
MAGIC, DIVINATION

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## II. CEREMONIAL MAGIC

Almost all Hermetic texts on ceremonial magic are as yet unpublished; cf. Lucentini & Perrone Compagni, 59-93 ♦ [Hermes] *De imaginibus sive annulis septem planetarum*, *Liber planetarum (Liber Saturni)*, *Liber Mercurii*, *De imaginibus et horis*, *Liber septem planetarum ex scientia Abel*, *Liber orationum planetarum septem* ♦ [Belenus] *Liber imaginum Lunae*, *De viginti quattuor horis*, *De imaginibus diei et noctis*, *De quattuor imaginibus magnis*, *De discretionem operis differentia ex iudiciis Hermetis (De sigillis Mercurii)*, *De imaginibus septem planetarum* ♦ [Toz Graecus] *De lapidibus Veneris*, *De stationibus ad cultum Veneris* ♦ [Toz Graecus-Germa Babiloniensis] *Liber Veneris*, *De quattuor speculis*, *De duodecim annulis* ♦ The *Liber imaginum Lunae* and the *De viginti quattuor horis* have been published according to Michael Scot’s reworked edition by Paolo Lucentini, “L’ermetismo magico nel secolo XIII”, in: Menso Folkerts & Richard Lorch (eds.), *Sic itur ad astra: Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik und Naturwissenschaften. Festschrift für den Arabisten Paul Kunitzsch zum 70. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000, 409-450 ♦ The *Liber orationum planetarum septem* has been published according to the ms. Darmstadt 1410 by V. Perrone Compagni, “Una fonte ermetica: il Liber orationum planetarum septem”, *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 7 (2001), 189-197.

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74 ♦ idem, “Neues zum Liber Hermetis de stellis beibeniis”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 120 (1970), 126-130 ♦ Paolo Lucentini, “L’ermetismo magico nel secolo XIII”, in: Folkerts & Lorch (eds.), *Sic itur ad astra*, 409-450 ♦ idem, “Il Liber de accidentibus ermetico e il commento di Haly Abenrudianus al Tetrabiblos di Tolomeo”, in: Stefano Caroti & Roberto Pinzani (eds.), *Ob rogatum meorum sociorum: Studi in memoria di Lorenzo Pozzi*, Milano: Angeli, 2000, 93-122 ♦ Vittoria Perrone Compagni, “Studiosus incantationibus: Adelardo di Bath, Ermete e Thabit”, *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 80:1 (2001), 36-61 ♦ David Pingree, “Some of the Sources of the Ghāyat al-Hakīm”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980), 1-15 ♦ idem, “The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe”, in: Bianca Scarcia Amoretti (ed.), *La diffusione delle scienze islamiche nel Medio Evo europeo: Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Roma, 2-4 ottobre 1984)*, Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1987, 57-102 ♦ idem, “al-Tabarī on the Prayers to the Planets”, *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 44 (1993), 105-117 ♦ idem, “Learned Magic in the Time of Frederick II”, *Micrologus: Natura, scienze e società medievali* 2 (1994), 39-56 ♦ Antonella Sannino, “Ermete mago e alchimista nelle biblioteche di Guglielmo d’Alvernia e Ruggero Bacone”, *Studi medievali* 41 (2000), 151-209 ♦ Fritz Saxl, “Beiträge zur einer Geschichte der Planetendarstellung”, *Der Islam* 3 (1912) ♦ idem, *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer Illustrierter Handschriften des lateinischen Mittelalters*, Heidelberg, 1915 ♦ idem, “Rinascimento dell’antichità: Studien zu den Arbeiten A. Warburgs”, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 43 (1922), 220-272 ♦ Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (orig. 1940), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981 ♦ Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, II, New York, London: Columbia University Press, 214-235 ♦ idem, “Traditional Medieval Tracts concerning Engraved Images”, in: *Mélanges Auguste Pelzer*, Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1947, 217-274 ♦ Pinella Travaglia, *Una cosmologia ermetica, il Kitab sirr al-ḥaliqa / De secretis naturae*, Napoli: Liguori, 2001 ♦ Nicholas Weill-Parot, *Les “images astrologiques” au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance: Spéculations intellectuelles et pratiques magiques, XII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Sciences, techniques et civilisations du Moyen Âge à l’aube des lumières, 6), Paris: Champion, 2002.

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## Hermetic Literature III: Arab

After the Arab armies conquered the largest part of the Middle East, including Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, between 634 and 660 A.D., the muslim elites came into contact with a large array of religious and doctrinal trends within Christianity and Judaism, but also with remains of pagan thought and mysticism. They became progressively

interested in several ancient disciplines, in the domains of astronomy and medicine, and also in philosophy and esotericism. Local scholars were invited at the caliph’s and governor’s courts, treatises were translated into Arabic during the 9th and 10th centuries – in some cases even earlier –, and these found a vast readership. Among the huge amount of translated Greek, Coptic or Syriac texts that were put into circulation, it is clear that those concerned with the so-called “occult sciences” aroused the earliest interest. It is not certain that we may trust our data about the Arabic translation of an alchemical treatise of → Zosimos in 658 (Sezgin 1971, 19ff.), or other translations ordered by the omeyyad prince Khâlid ibn Yazîd (d. 704) – the king Calid filius Jazichi appearing in the Latin treatise *Liber de compositione alchemiae*, and to whom the *Liber secretorum alchemiae* and the *Liber triorum verborum* are attributed (Ruska 1924; Ullmann 1978) – but they at least demonstrate the very early curiosity of Arabs towards these kinds of speculation and practice. We know that the hermetic literature composed in Egypt during late Antiquity comprises some doctrinal treatises (“hermétisme savant”, according to Festugière’s terminology), as well as others dealing with occult sciences such as → astrology, → alchemy and → magic (“hermétisme populaire”). The latter form of hermetism apparently aroused much more interest than the former one.

How exactly the hermetic literature in the Arabic language developed remains a puzzling question. The community of the Sabians of Harrân, with their star cult, must have played a key role in this transmission (Green 1997; Tardieu 1986). This pagan community of northern Mesopotamia, which practised a complex religion in which astrology played an important part, considered Hermes as one of their gods and as the inventor of sacred sciences and rituals. They obviously fascinated several muslim scholars who suspected the existence of a real wisdom behind the outward paganism of this community. The muslim philosopher → al-Kindî (d. 866) was supposed to have read ‘a book in which these people believe, being the dialogue between Hermes and his son on theology [lit.: on God’s oneness]. It was theologically so right that a philosopher, if he made an effort, could only adhere to it and profess it’ (Ibn al-Nadîm, 385). The high level of their astronomers and mathematicians led some eminent personalities of their community to settle in Baghdad near to the caliphal court. There, in the political and cultural capital city of the empire, they may have made known the twofold

function of Hermes, part god and part prophet, in which they believed. But the precise roads taken in the spread of hermetic conceptions remain obscure. To clarify them, we will first describe the extant remnants of this literature; and then analyse what the Arab hermetists took from the Greek literature, and how they understood it.

The Arabs never collected something like a *Corpus Hermeticum* in Arabic. The various fragments attributed to Hermes remain scattered among a large amount of treatises devoted to occult sciences, and deprived of unity. But first of all, who was Hermes according to the moslem scholars? Some considered him the inspired inventor of many arts. According to the most common version, first exposed by the astronomer Abû Ma'shar († 886) in his *Books of Thousands*, and then adopted with several changes of detail by bio-bibliographers like Ibn Juljul († 994), Sâ'id al-Andalusî († 1070), Mubashshir ibn Fâtik (11th century), Ibn Abî Usaybî'a († 1270), and others, there had actually existed three Hermeses. The oldest one, living in Egypt before the Flood, was supposed to have developed astronomy and → astrology as well as medicine and poetry. He was considered identical with the biblical Enoch and the koranic Idrîs. Foreseeing the Flood, he built the pyramids (Arabic: *haram*, etymologically associated by some authors with the name "Hermes") after having engraved in them the secrets of the sciences he had discovered. A second – Babylonian – Hermes was supposed to have restored the old sciences and developed medicine, mathematics and philosophy. A third "Hirmis" living in Egypt had practised and fostered the hidden sciences and especially alchemy and related disciplines in his country, and had been the master of Asklepios. Hence the name of "thrice great" (literally: "thrice wise", *al-muthallath bi-al-hikma*, among other titles. See Ullmann 1972 371-373; Plessner 1954). Among these authors, the Christian historian Ibn al-'Ibrî (Barhebraeus, † 1286) mentioned in his *Summary of the History of States* a link between the third Hermes and the inspirer of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Of course, the belief in the existence of several figures called "Hermes" had been mentioned before in Greek literature. But in moslem culture, this myth acquired a new dimension. Since the ante-diluvian Hermes was often identified with the prophet Enoch (Ukhnûkh)/Idrîs, twice mentioned in the Koran (XIX 56-57 and XXI 85), the various teachings attributed to Hermes (concerning alchemy, astrology, magic, but also mathematics, medicine etc.) acquired a more orthodox status, almost of revealed sciences. As Louis Massignon put it, 'it

is thanks to Hermes-Idrîs that the hellenistic tradition reclaimed droit de cité in Islam, whereas the syllogistic method and the metaphysics of Aristotle were not yet accepted' (Massignon 1950, 385). In most hermetic texts in Arabic, the teachings of Hermes appear like a kind of revelations with a transcendent origin. In this respect, they follow the tradition of the Greek texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and we may rightly consider them as "hermetic literature" in the full sense of the word, even if they happen to be moulded into the framework of islamic prophetology. In this respect, Massignon went too far by listing as "hermetic" many philosophical or mystical treatises not referring expressly to Hermes nor presented as revelation (Plessner 1954). But the ancient literary context of a revelation by a Hermes (god or wise man) is often to be found in Arabic texts. In the *Book of the Secrets of Creation*, Apollonius of Tyana (Balînâs) finds the text of the *Tabula Smaragdina* in an underground place, in front of the wise Hermes himself. More dramatically, the *Book of Alexander's Treasure* was supposed to have been hidden by Hermes in an underground place, and then discovered by Apollonius, transmitted to Aristotle and from there passed on to Alexander. The Arab armies conquering the city of Amorium in 838 were believed to have finally discovered it again in a chest.

The hermetic texts in arabic language are dealing with several occult sciences, and generally mix them up. Magic and theurgy as well as alchemy are based on astrological conceptions, on the idea of the general correspondence between things, and on the theory of four elements and four qualities. We can nevertheless distinguish three main strands:

(1) Alchemy. The hermetica in Greek dealing with alchemy are rather scarce. Hence the importance of the texts which have reached us in Arabic. The role of Hermes as initiator into alchemy was known at least during the 3th/9th centuries. Ibn al-Nadîm, the famous librarian of Baghdad, reported in his *Catalogue* (finished in 987; Ibn al-Nadîm, 417-418) that people considered Hermes of Babel the first founder of alchemy, about which he had written on the walls of the pyramids after settling down in Egypt. Apparently, Ibn al-Nadîm believed that there was only one historical Hermes, and did not identify him with Enoch. In this account, quite different therefore from that of Abû Ma'shar mentioned *supra*, we notice the fundamental relationship established between the figure of Hermes and alchemy. Ibn al-Nadîm gives a list of thirteen Arabic texts by Hermes in his chapter on alchemy. But the extant works are far more numerous. Fuat

Sezgin (1971, 39-41) lists 18 known manuscripts. Of paramount importance are the *Great Treatise of the Sphere* and the *Treatise of the Secret*. The first is presented as a text by Hermes of Dendera, taught by the high priest Uwîrûs (Osiris), about the links between spirits and bodies and the transformation of metals; the second as an exchange of letters between Amnûthîsyâ (Theosebia) and the high priest Hermes Bûdashîr on the alchemical “weddings” needed for the preparation of the Stone. Both have been edited, translated into German and commented by Ingolf Vereno. We may also mention the *Book of the Sun and the Moon*, another interesting example: the sage Krates meets Hermes in a vision and discovers the secrets of the alchemical Art in a book placed in his hand. The text has been edited and translated into French by O. Houdas (Berthelot 1893, III). Ruska has suggested that it might have been written in the 9th or 10th century. In all these texts, the environment and background are clearly ancient, Greco-Egyptian, but framed in Islamic formulas and ideas. The most famous of hermetic texts on alchemy is doubtless the *Tabula Smaragdina* (Ruska 1926; Plessner 1927). The question whether this short but fundamental summary of hermetic philosophy was translated from a Greek original or not is still under discussion. In any case, it was quoted by several Arab authors (Ullmann 1972, 171 gives 7 references). But the more complete and perhaps oldest mention of this text is to be found in *The Secrets of Creation* or *Book of Causes* attributed to Apollonius of Tyana (Arabic: Balînâs). As said before, Hermes was supposed to have given it to Balînâs in a secret underground cave (complete edition by U. Weisser 1979). Generally speaking, Hermes plays the role of an inspirer of several other alchemical texts in Arabic, like those by Apollonius-Balînâs, Agathodaimon, “Artefius”, and al-Habîb (Sezgin 1971; Ullmann 1972 index), and he is quoted by the most famous alchemical works of the time such as those ascribed to Jâbir ibn Hayyân (see Kraus 1942 chapters I, 4 and V, 5), Khâlid ibn Yazîd, Ibn Umayl, the *Turba Philosophorum*, and the great works of Aydamor Jaldakî (14th century; see Corbin 1983, 71f.).

(2) Astrology. Hermes plays a decisive role in the Arabic astrological tradition as well. As in the case of alchemy, he is often considered the founder of this science. The Jewish astrologer Mâshâ’ Allâh († after 809) supposedly knew 24 treatises by Hermes on several astrological topics (Ullmann, 289). Ibn al-Nadîm (1988, 327) quotes five titles. Fuat Sezgin has recorded 23 titles of extant hermetic manuscripts on astrology (Sezgin 1971, 41-43).

Hermes’ mastery of astrology is probably to be understood against the background of the Koranic verses XIX, 56-57 where God says of Idrîs ‘And mention in the Book Idrîs; he was a true man, a Prophet. We raised him up to a high place’; hence several legends circulated that described Hermes / Idrîs’ travels through the heavens, where he stayed for several long years and could get acquainted with all the secrets of the influences of the planets and stars on the lower bodies. As the philosophical and scientific encyclopaedia *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (10th century) puts it: ‘It is said that Hermes Trismegistus – who is Idrîs the prophet, peace be upon him – ascended to the sphere of Saturn where he turned during thirty years, until he had observed all the positions of the sphere. Afterwards he came down to earth and taught astrology to mankind. God the Exalted said: We raised him up to a high place’.

(3) Magic. Ibn al-Nadîm (373) records four treatises devoted specifically to magic. The books called *al-Istamâkhîs*, *al-Istamâtîs*, *al-Ustûtâs* or the important *Alexander’s Treasure* for example are all dealing with the secret properties and influences of minerals, vegetals or animals upon other things, and with the manufacture of talismans. Other treatises are devoted to magic squares and the mystical science of letters (see Ullmann 1972, 374f.). With the exception of a few fragments, they remain unpublished, and their precise content and relation to hermetism therefore still needs to be analyzed. Hermetic themes are also present in the encyclopaedia of magic *The Purpose of the wise* (Arabic: *Ghâyat al-hakîm*, Latin: *Picatrix*), based on astrology and on the theory of → correspondences. In one passage, an interesting ritual for meeting one’s “Perfect Nature”, giving him guidance about the role of wisdom, and teaching him the truth of the secret sciences, is attributed to Hermes (*Ghâyat al-hakîm* 187f.; Corbin 1983, 51f.). But it must be noticed that the practice of magic in Islam distanced itself more and more from ancient pagan principles – found in the *Purpose of the wise*, for instance – and gradually came to focus more on literary aspects (such as words, letters, verses from the Koran).

Treatises similar in content to the Greek texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* are scarce in Arabic. This may be explained by the strong anti-pagan context of Islamic spirituality. Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism], stoic or hermetic ideas were actually studied by numerous Muslim philosophers and theologians, and many of them were adopted, but within the framework of Koranic monotheism and everything that this entailed. In Islamic mysticism



(Sufism) we find ideas like the correspondences between microcosmos and macrocosmos, or the contact with the inner master. But no explicit relationship is made with ancient hermetism. The case of the “illuminative philosophy” of Suhrawardî (executed in 1191), who claimed an initiatic inspiration going back to Hermes, → Zoroaster, and Plato (Corbin 1972, II and 1983, 49f.) is rather exceptional. Similarly, the andalusian mystic Ibn Sabʿîn (m. 1270) presented his spiritual teaching as related to that of several hellenistic sages, with Hermes as the greatest among them; his disciple Shushtarî (d. 1269) describes his own initiatic chain as starting with Hermes and ending with Suhrawardî and Ibn Sabʿîn. The *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (10th century) likewise mention Hermes as one of the great figures of ancient science and spirituality; and so do several other thinkers, notably the shʿite philosophers of Iran like Mulla Sadra (17th century), studied by H. Corbin. But generally speaking, the hermetic influence remained implicit (sometimes linked with stories about the prophet Idris in sufi literature). Still, there remain some hermetic texts, the most famous of them being the treatise on the *Punishment of the Soul*, which circulated in Arabic and was even translated into Persian by Afzal al-dîn Kâshânî (13th century). It also came to be translated into Latin (*De castigatione animae*) and evoked renewed interest by Western scholars since the 18th century. This long exhortation to the human soul to take its leave from earthly desires and illusions and turn towards her own heavenly nature could have a hermetic origin; but some manuscripts attribute it to Plato or Aristotle, and its content could be acceptable to readers belonging to different philosophical trends. It must be noted that apart from these different treatises, numerous fragments attributed to Hermes, in all domains of human thought and science, are scattered through various texts of Arabic literature. See for the fragments related to alchemy Ullmann 1972, 169-170; for astrology *ibid.*, 292-293, for magic *ibid.*, 377; and for mysticism and philosophy *ibid.*, 378.

Now, all the above points towards a difficult and much-debated question: are all these texts attributed to Hermes translations of older Greek treatises – or must we see them as belonging to a huge corpus of pseudepigraphical literature? J. Ruska was among the defenders of the former interpretation. The almost complete absence of Greek parallels to the Arabic texts was, for him, proof that the latter had been written during the

islamic era after the occult sciences had become popular among Muslims. But other research could lead one to the conclusion that the name of Hermes as an author on occult science was known much earlier. The hermetic treatises on *The Breadth of the Key of the Secrets of Stars* and *The Length of the Key of the Secrets of Stars* for instance were translated in 743, according to one manuscript. Besides, the discovery of the Nag Hammadi collection has adduced new material: some ideas of the Greek hermetic tradition were found in Coptic manuscripts belonging to this ancient library (→ Hermetic Literature I), and may later have passed through an Arabic translation (Plessner 1954). Fuat Sezgin has tried to sum up these several points in a dense synthesis (1971, 31-38). Particularly interesting for our concerns are the first two alchemical texts ascribed to Hermes and written in Arabic, *The Great Treatise on the Sphere* (dated 832, year of the visit of caliph al-Ma'mûn to Egypt) and the *Treatise of the Secret* (beginning of the 10th century or earlier) studied by Ingolf Vereno and mentioned *supra*. They present an obviously ancient kind of material (maybe from the 3th century): they contain details of pagan rituals, images and concepts – the date of an eclipse even refers to hellenistic Egypt. The spiritual dimension of the alchemical *opus* therefore corresponds to hellenistic alchemy (Vereno 1992, 337-339). But all these alchemical teachings are surely not translations (Vereno 1992, 332-333) but re-writings (‘Bearbeitungen’) by Arab authors aiming at an Arabic readership. They provide good illustrations of the transformation of the Greek hermetica during the ca. six centuries of islamic transition preceding their translation into Latin.

The conclusion of all this is that the relationship between Arabic culture and the hermetic tradition is a very strange one. It can hardly be seen as similar to the interest the Arab scholars displayed for medicine, astronomy, or philosophy. While “officially recognized” philosophers like al-Kindî, Fârâbî, or → Avicenna discussed, for instance, the ideas of Plato by comparing them to the aristotelian corpus, and tried to work out a synthesis of both, nothing like this happened in the case of hermetism. The role played by Hermes was and remained that of a source of inspiration, giver of an authoritative speech, if not a revelation; the reader is placed in the position of an (ignorant but clever) disciple trying to grasp the mysteries taught to him. The very fact of Hermes’ presence in a moslem milieu, where these books were read and commented – in spite of the fact that Muhammad’s



words were considered the final authoritative teaching in history, abrogating earlier doctrines –, seems quite revolutionary in and for itself.

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PIERRE LORY

## Hermetic Literature IV: Renaissance – Present

1. THE GOLDEN AGE (CA. 1471-1614)
2. REAPPRAISALS AND EXTENSIONS (1614-1706)
3. TESTIMONIES AT THE TIME OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND IN THE PRE-ROMANTIC PERIOD
4. THE OCCULTIST CONTEXT
5. SURVIVALS AND DEBATES (SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY) & GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. THE GOLDEN AGE (CA. 1471-1614)

Around the year 1450, in Florence, Cosimo de' Medici the Elder entrusted → Marsilio Ficino with the creation of a Platonic Academy. One of their intentions was to have the available writings of Plato translated into Latin. Then, ca. 1460, a collection of Greek manuscripts was brought to Florence by Leonardo da Pistoia, a monk returning from Macedonia. These texts or treatises, on which the title *Corpus Hermeticum* (now dated 2nd-3rd century A.D., henceforth referred to as C.H.) was later bestowed, belong to the genre of the so-called *Hermetica* [→ Hermetic Literature I] attributed to or related to → Hermes Trismegistus, and had been lost since Late Antiquity. Cosimo insisted that Ficino temporarily set aside his Latin translation of Platonic texts. Ficino's translation of the fourteen treatises (C.H. I-XIV) was finished in 1463 and printed at Treviso in 1471 under the title *Mercurii Trismegisti Pimander Liber de potestate et sapientia Dei*, or *Pimander*, together with a prefatory argument (*Argumentum*) by Ficino himself.

In his *Argumentum*, Ficino also called attention to another, related text: the *Asclepius*, considered by him as 'the most divine' in this kind of literature (an edition had just been printed in Rome in 1469, inserted into Apuleius's *Opera*). Unlike the C.H. proper, the *Asclepius* (originally known in Greek as *Logos Teleios*), had survived in an ancient Latin

translation only (the original Greek version has never been found; a large part of it in Coptic translation surfaced only as late as the 20th century, in the Nag Hammadi Library). As of 1505 (see below), the C.H. and the *Asclepius* were combined in a great number of editions. Later, a series of other hermetic texts, from the so-called *Stobaei Anthologium* (compiled ca. 500 A.D. by Johannes Stobaeus of Macedonia) was added to that corpus (the *Anthologium* was published partly in Venice [1536], another part in Zurich [1543], the rest in Antwerp [1575]). The C.H. (often published under the title of the first treatise, *Poimandres*, rendered as *Pimander* since Ficino's 1471 translation) and the *Asclepius* enjoyed a considerable success. Up to 1641, no fewer than twenty-four editions of the C.H. appeared, not counting partial ones or translations into other European languages. They became a central element in Renaissance culture (on the presence of Hermetism in Renaissance art, see → Hermes Trismegistus III) and were most popular among the learned and prominent members of society. Throughout the Renaissance and in the following centuries they have been the subject of a great many commentaries.

Furthermore, as had already been the case prior to that period, the Hermetic treatises were considered the expression of a philosophy that had supposedly been transmitted over the sweep of centuries. Ficino called it *prisca theologia*. Later, it was also to be called, albeit in a slightly different sense, *philosophia perennis*. The latter term was introduced by an Italian Augustinian and Vatican librarian, Agostino Steuco (*De perenni philosophia*, Lyon 1540, new ed. 1590). Although staunchly attached to the Church's magisterium, he too tried to reconstruct the ancient philosophy as a foundation for restoring Christian unity (see → Tradition). The C.H., the *Asclepius*, and Hermes Trismegistus, were thus thought to belong to a far distant past: to the age of → Moses, or even earlier (on some variations in chronology, see → Tradition). Although they were of a pagan nature, they were considered to foreshadow Christian truths and be of a nature to give new depth to the Christian revelation. In his *Argumentum*, Ficino describes a "genealogy of wisdom" – explicitly referred to as *prisca theologia* – consisting of six main figures: Mercurius (Hermes) Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus (an Orphic teacher of Pythagoras), Pythagoras, Philolaus, Plato. That list was later to undergo various changes depending on the various authors who presented it.

At the time of Ficino, → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, whose *Oratio de hominis dignitate*

(1486) begins with a reference to the "Magnum, O Asclepi, miraculum" passage of the *Asclepius* (*Ascl.* 6), made a compound that included not only the traditions to which Ficino held, but also the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], which Pico believed had been entrusted to Moses on Mount Sinai. The same quest for origins prevailed in other esoteric currents. Indeed, the corpus of writings directly inspired by the C.H. and the *Asclepius* from the Renaissance until the present time itself constitutes one of these currents; it may be called Neo-alexandrian Hermetism, or Alexandrian Neo-Hermetism, but for convenience it will here be abbreviated as Hermetism (*stricto sensu*, i.e. as a term to be distinguished from "Hermeticism" [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies], a much vaguer term whose connotations may refer to → alchemy, or even to esotericism in general). During these centuries, Hermetism was present in several countries, especially Italy, France, Germany and England.

Anthony Woodville's English translation of a few hermetic texts in the anthology *The dyctes or sayengis of the philosophers* (Westminster 1477, the first dated book in the history of English printing), published by William Caxton, bears witness to an early, albeit discreet presence of the C.H. in England. Woodville's anthology was later incorporated into other ones. In Italy, more than ten years before Giovanni Nesi's *Oraculum de novo saeculo* (Florence 1497), which belongs to the genre of hermetic literature, → Giovanni da Correggio had fiercely and loudly promoted a Hermetic Reformation of Christianity. He had caused sensation by appearing clad in symbolic garments in the streets of Rome in 1484, attended by servants similarly accoutered and claiming to be 'Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio, the Angel of Wisdom Pimander'.

→ Lodovico Lazzarelli, who saw in Correggio a new and divine prophet and considered him his mentor, has left us a vivid description of this event in a manifesto entitled *Epistola Enoch*, published probably in Milan ca. 1490. Another text of Lazzarelli, *Crater Hermetis* (complete title: "A Dialogue on the Supreme Dignity of Man, entitled the Way of Christ and the Mixing-Bowl of Hermes"), which he wrote probably between 1492 and 1494 (it remained unpublished until → Lefèvre d'Étaples edited it in 1505) is a fictitious conversation (very much in the form of the dialogues contained in the C.H.) between Lazzarelli himself, who plays the role of the initiator, and two other historical personalities, Ferdinand I of Aragon, king of Naples and Sicily, and his prime minister Giovanni Pontano, who are cast in the role of pupils. The *Crater*

*Hermetis* may be among the most interesting examples of Hermetic-Christian syncretism written during the Renaissance. It is certainly one of the most important hermetic texts of its time, if not for its direct influence, then at least with regard to the depth and originality of its contents. Furthermore, convinced of the equality of the Bible and the hermetic writings, in 1482 Lazzarelli dedicated to Correggio a manuscript in his own hand, which he had just completed. It consisted in three parts, each one opening with a dedicatory preface. The first contained Marsilio Ficino's translation of the *Pimander* (1471, i.e., *Corpus Hermeticum* I-XIV). The second contained the *Asclepius*. And the third contained the first Latin translation, by himself, of C.H. XVI-XVIII, i.e., three extra treatises which he had apparently discovered in a separate manuscript (unfortunately not preserved). He entitled this text *Diffinitiones Asclepii ad regem Ammonem*. In sum, far more even than Ficino and Pico, Lazzarelli appears to be a pure example of a "Christian hermetist" in the Renaissance (in addition to being one of the first noteworthy authors instrumental in the early development of a Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III]). Strangely enough, he was almost completely passed over in silence by Frances A. Yates in her ground-breaking books since 1964, and not until recently has justice been done to him (in particular by Claudio Moreschini and Wouter J. Hanegraaff).

Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples' first edition of the *Pimander* (Paris 1494) contains, besides Ficino's translation, a series of commentaries (*Argumenta*) of his own (long attributed to Ficino). The second edition (Paris 1505) was augmented with both the *Asclepius* and Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis* (but in an abridged version). Interestingly, it was the first time that the *Asclepius* had been published together with the C.H. As for → Symphorien Champier's *Liber de quadruplici vita: Theologia Asclepii Hermetis Trismegisti discipuli cum commentariis* . . . (Lyon, 1507), it contains Lazzarelli's translation of the *Diffinitiones Asclepii*, among other texts, but Champier substituted a commentary of his own for Lazzarelli's prefaces. He also goes as far as to include into the tradition of *prisca theologia* the doctrines of the Druids and elements drawn from the kabbalah.

As exemplified by Lefèvre and Champier, the French were generally much more cautious than their Italian or German counterparts regarding the "magical" elements of the C.H. All adherents of *prisca theologia* dealt with Hermetism from a perspective of Christian apologetics. This is reflected, for instance, in Gabriel du Préau's *Mercurio Tris-*

*mégiste ancien Theologien & excellent Philosophe, de la puissance & sapience de Dieu . . . Auecq' un Dialogue de Loys Lazarel poëte chrestien intitulé le Bassin d'Hermès* (Paris 1549; new ed. 1557), the first edition in French of C.H. I-XIV, of the *Asclepius* and (as the title indicates) of Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis*. Du Préau's book also contains abundant commentaries of his own, some of which were designed to establish parallels between the narrative of creation according to Moses and that of C.H. I.

In the wake of new scholarly publications, like the first edition of the original Greek C.H. by the French Catholic scholar Adrien Turnèbe (Paris 1554, with a preface by Angelos Vegerius), → François Foix-Candale, Bishop of Aire, near Bordeaux, published another in 1574 (C.H. I-XIV, accompanied by some other hermetic texts), and five years later produced very extensive commentaries of his own in French, in his *Le Pimandre de Mercure Trismégiste: de la Philosophie Chrestienne, Cognition du Verbe Divin* . . . (Bordeaux 1579, new ed. Paris 1587). In the latter book, the hermetic texts serve as supports of meditation on a great variety of questions, like those pertaining to the Soul of the World, the spirits of the elements, celestial bodies, etc. Among various sources, Foix drew on the *philosophia occulta* [→ occult/occultism] of the Renaissance, and his book foreshadows some of the themes which → Christian Theosophy was to develop from the 17th century onward. The Huguenot Protestant Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, surnamed "the Pope of the Huguenots", who contrary to Foix gave chronological precedence to the Books of Moses over the C.H., did not proffer any passages of the latter, but wrote a number of laudatory, albeit not uncritical commentaries in his *De la vérité de la religion chrestienne* . . . (Antwerp 1581; English translation by Sir Philip Sidney, 1587). This work was published several times in a Latin translation and proved to be influential in the development of Protestantism in France.

Along with Foix, some 16th-century authors of importance, like → Giorgio, → Bruno and → Agrippa, must be counted amongst the most influential ones in later Hermetism in particular, and esoteric literature in general. → Francesco Giorgio (or Zorzi), who belonged to the Order of Friars Minor, was the author of *De Harmonia Mundi totius Cantica tria* (Venice 1525; Paris 1545, 1546; French translation by Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie, Paris 1578), and *In Sacram Scripturam Problemata* (Venice 1536; Paris 1622). These two works represent an original construction aimed at

making the Ficininan hermetic *prisca theologia* coincide with → neoplatonism, kabbalah, and not least astrological [→ Astrology] and even alchemical elements. *De Harmonia mundi* was to enjoy a lasting success in several milieus, in particular among the representatives of most esoteric currents (see below). Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and → Guillaume Postel were later to be among his enthusiastic followers. → Giordano Bruno makes frequent use of the Hermetic texts (notably in *Spaccio della bestia triomphante*, 1584). Not a Christian, unlike most other hermeticists of his time, he was all the less prone to share the hope nursed by others that a religious reconciliation might be effected by a general acceptance of Hermetism. He did not desire a reformed Christendom, but rather a return to the cults or beliefs of ancient Egypt as described in the *Hermetica*, and particularly in the *Asclepius*.

In Germany, some of Sebastian Frank's works attest to an interest in Hermetism. His *Die Guldin Arch* (Augsburg 1538) presents itself as a collection of biblical sayings and paraphrases, together with extracts from 'illuminated pagans and philosophers' like Hermes Trismegistus. In Basel (1542), Frank also made a German translation of both the *Asclepius* and C.H. I-XIV, completed by long commentaries dealing mostly with commonalities between the Bible and Nature (it remains unpublished; the manuscript is preserved in the Stadtbibliothek Augsburg). Much more esoterically oriented was another German, Cornelius Agrippa. Several writings of his are devoted to a hermeneutics of the C.H., particularly its third treatise: *Oratio in praelectionem Hermetis Trismegisti de Potestate et Sapientia Dei* (Cologne, 1535; an "oratio" given at the University of Pavia in 1515); *Liber de triplici ratione cognoscendi Dei* (1516); and *Dehortatio gentiles theologiae* (ca. 1526, a text in which, contrarily to the other two, Agrippa distances himself from Hermetism).

Not until the last two decades of the 16th century do we find two other authors of importance. First, the Italian Capuchin Hannibal Rossel, whose *Pymander Mercurii Trismegisti*, swollen to six volumes (Cracovia 1585-1590), is not so much a commentary on the C.H. as an encyclopaedic roll-call of a variety of philosophical themes, along with a presentation of C.H. I-VII and the *Asclepius*. This work was popular enough to require a second issue (in one vol., Cologne 1630). Second, → Francesco Patrizi, whose collection of hermetic texts is most extensive. His *Nova de universis philosophia* (Ferrara 1591) contains C.H. I-XIV, the *Asclepius*, and C.H. XVI-XVIII (*Diffinitiones Asclepii*), along

with the medieval so-called *Theologia Aristotelis*. Extracts were reissued under the title *Magia Philosophica* (Hamburg 1593). In the dedicatory preface, Patrizi asks Pope Gregorius XIV to place the C.H. on the academic curriculum as an alternative philosophy. Indeed, he subjected the Aristotelian philosophy to sharp criticism and wanted it to be ousted from Jesuit-run colleges. In 1592 he was appointed to the chair of Platonic philosophy at the University La Sapienza in Rom, but his attempts met with dire failure and his book was placed on the Index. Alongside such reforming plans as Patrizi's, other works continued to appear, like Mutius Pansa's *De Osculo, seu consensus ethnicae et Christianae philosophiae tractatus* (Marburg, 1605) – the "kiss" mentioned in the title being that which Hermetism and Christianity are supposed to exchange.

Any overview of modern Hermetism must also give attention to a very short text which, along with the foundational Greek texts mentioned above, pertains to the *Hermetica* and has been the object of innumerable discussions and esoteric commentaries until the present time. This is the famous *Tabula Smaragdina* (*The Emerald Tablet*, or *The Smaragdine Table of Hermes*, henceforth referred to as T.S.) Originally written in Greek (the original version is lost), its earliest known version (934 A.D.) is in Arabic, set within a small alchemical and philosophical treatise entitled *The Book of the Secrets of Creation*. A Latin translation circulated as early as the 12th century. The first printed edition, also in Latin, appeared in a compilation of alchemical texts, *De Alchemia* (Nurnberg 1541). Its brevity permits us to quote it here in full: 'True it is, without falsehood, certain and most true. That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of one thing. /And as all things were by contemplation of one, so all things arose from this one thing by a single act of adaptation. /The father thereof is the Sun, the mother the Moon, /The wind carried it in its womb, the earth is the nurse thereof. /It is he father of all works of wonder throughout the whole world. /The power thereof is perfect. /If it be cast on to the earth, it will separate the element of earth from that of fire, the subtle from the gross. /With great sagacity it doth ascend gently from earth to heaven. /Again it doth descent to earth, and uniteth in itself the force from things superior and things inferior. /Thus thou wilt possess the glory of the brightness of the whole word, and all obscurity will fly far from thee. /This thing is the strong fortitude of all strength, for it overcometh every subtle thing and doth penetrate



every solid substance./Thus was this world created./Hence will there be marvellous adaptations achieved, of which the manner is this./For this reason I am called Hermes Trismegistus, because I hold three parts of the wisdom of the whole world. That which I had to say about the operation of Sol is completed' (transl. According to Linden 2003, 27-28).

In the 16th century, fostered by the edition of 1541 (but earlier than that already), this rather enigmatic prose poem has caused torrents of hermetic, alchemical, and theosophical ink to flow (see Faivre, *Annuaire* . . ., 1985-1997). To mention only a few remarkable commentaries in the esoteric literature of that time, what might be called the "T.S. tradition" was illustrated and enriched by such authors as → Johannes Trithemius (see his correspondence with Germain de Ganay in 1505); Gérard Dorn (*Artificii chymistici*, 1569; often reedited as *Physica Trismegisti*, it is one of the works of that time which foreshadows the advent of the theosophical current); Jacques Nuysement (*Traictez . . . du Vray Sel*, 1621), and not least → Athanasius Kircher (in his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 1653, see vol. II; see also *Mundus Subterraneus*, 1664-1665). What is known as the first German translation (by Johan Schaubert) of the T.S. had appeared in 1600.

## 2. REAPPRAISALS AND EXTENSIONS (1614-1706)

Isaac Casaubon, a Protestant minister in Geneva, set out to prove (in a chapter of his *De rebus sacris ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI*, London 1614) that the C.H. had not been written prior to the 2nd or 3rd centuries A.D., and was therefore a forgery of the early Christian Era. Although Casaubon's name has long been attached to that new dating, recent research (see especially Purnell 1976; Mulsow 2002) has shown that similar "discoveries" had already been made by other philologists as early as the 1560s. Nonetheless, the claim that the C.H. had been erroneously dated could only deal a heavy blow to its authority, since the authority of a text, even at that time, was highly dependent upon its age. But hermetism did not disappear for all that; indeed, from then until now, many esoterically-oriented authors and readers have preferred to ignore or to downplay the significance of the new dating of the Hermetic writings.

One of the first highly sympathetic exegetes of the C.H. in early 17th-century Germany was Heinrich Noll (*Theoria Philosophiae Hermeticae, septem tractatibus*, Hanover 1617; *Theoria Philosophiae Hermeticae*, Copenhagen 1617; and *Pan-*

*ergii Philosophici Speculum*, 1623, an initiatic novel). Noteworthy too is, in Italy, Livius Galante, who authored *Christianae theologiae cum platonica comparatio* (Bologna 1627). Furthermore, a number of translations of the C.H. into European languages appeared. A few extracts were presented in German in "Verba Hermetis in Pimandro" (a section set within the anonymous *Occulta Philosophia*, vol. II, Frankfurt 1613). More importantly, Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland gave under the title *Sestien boecken* . . . (Amsterdam 1643; new ed. 1652) a Dutch version of sixteen treatises of the C.H., based on Patrizi's text. Van Beyerland, who was also a translator of → Jacob Boehme and himself a theosopher, added long, strongly theosophically oriented commentaries of his own. His translation was used by the first translator into German (1706, cf. below).

The first version of the C.H. in English (*The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, in XVII Books. Translated formerly out of the Arabick into Greek* . . ., London 1650; new ed. 1657) was made by John Everard. This Anglican minister, a preacher at Kensington, had already produced in 1640 a detailed commentary (preserved at the Bodleian Library in Oxford) of the T.S. He also authored short translations from similar texts and some works of his own (see his *Some Golden Treasures*, London 1653). The title, and the preface signed J.F., attest to the ignorance of the publishers, not least because they claim that these books were originally in Arabic. The preface deals mostly with the legendary figure of Hermes Trismegistus. Everard's book has proved to be very influential in the development of Hermetism in England (see below).

Along with → Paracelsianism, Hermetism became part of a medical debate principally illustrated by one of its proponents, the Dane Olaus Borrichius (Olaf Borch), who composed a vibrant apology for Hermetism and → alchemy (*Hermetis Aegyptiorum, et chemicorum sapientia* . . ., Copenhagen 1674; see also his *De Ortu et progressio chemiae* Copenhagen 1688, which contains a detailed history of alchemical literature). This was meant as a counter-attack against the German Hermann Conring, in whose *De Hermetica Aegyptiorum vetere et paracelsicorum nova medicina* (Helmstedt 1648, new ed. 1699) Hermetism and Paracelsianism had come in for their share of harsh criticism. In Conring's line, Johann Heinrich Ursinus also tried (in *De Zoroastre bactriano, Hermete Trismegisto, Sanchoniatone Phoenicio, eorumque scriptis, et aliis, contra Mosaicae scripturae antiquitatem*, Nürnberg 1661) to demonstrate that the



C.H. was merely a collection of texts plagiarized from Christian sources. Both Conring's and Borrichius's works are of a particular interest here because they do not depend only on Paracelsianism and Hermetism, but also on alchemical literature. Nevertheless, the C.H. is rarely the object of commentaries in the alchemical discourses of the 17th century, although Hermes Trismegistus often appears therein as the tutelary figure of that science, for instance in → Michael Maier's *Symbola Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum* (Frankfurt 1617). Notwithstanding, the T.S. continued to trigger a lot of alchemical commentaries, for example those by → Isaac Newton are much developed. They are extant in the great quantity of alchemical manuscripts he had left to posterity (King's College, Cambridge), and which have recently been the object of a number of scholarly studies. Besides, Wilhelm Christoph Kriegsmann produced a most original, albeit fantastic "philological" commentary (*Hermetis Trismegisti . . . Tabula Smaragdina*, 1657).

Indeed, throughout the period, and ever after, the tendency was strong in Hermetic literature to blend Hermetism not only with alchemy, but also with Jewish or Christian Kabbalah, → Rosicrucianism, and generally with the *philosophia occulta* inherited from the Renaissance. Among Rosicrucian productions this tendency is instanced by Stellatus's (i.e. Christoph Hirsch's) *Pegasus Firmamenti, sive introductio brevis in Veterum Sapientiam . . .* (n.p., 1618), which associates Rosicrucianism with Hermetism, Paracelsianism, pansophy and alchemy. Opponents of Hermetism also often grouped these currents together. Two examples may serve to illustrate this. First, one year after the publication of Zorzi's (Giorgio's, see above) *Problemata*, the famous Catholic Priest Marin Mersenne, very much bent on orthodoxy and a famous opponent of such orientations, published his *Observationes et emendationes ad Francisci Giorgii Veneti Problemata* (Paris 1623), directed against Giorgio's work, but also Hermetism, Rosicrucianism, Robert Fludd (see below), etc. The other characteristic example is the Lutheran minister Ehregott Daniel Colberg. In his voluminous *Das Platonisch-Hermetisches [sic] Christenthum . . .* (Leipzig, 2 vols., 1690 and 1691, new ed. 1710), he settles scores with the C.H. as well as with Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, → mysticism, etc., reproaching them mainly for fostering a self-divinization of Man.

Within the pale of esotericism proper, → Robert Fludd, particularly in *Utriusque cosmi . . . historia* (Oppenheim 1617-1621), was instrumental in

propagating the "magical" tradition which had been represented by such people as → Paracelsus, Agrippa, → John Dee, or the Rosicrucian manifestoes. He drew heavily on the hermetic writings: nearly every page of his works contains a quotation from Ficino's translation. Fludd also makes use of the *Asclepius* and of other hermetic writings, for instance in presenting his views on the creation of the world, of which he gives a "chemical" description that draws on the *Pimander* (C.H. I) as much as on the Bible and the first verses of the Gospel of John. Later on, among the so-called Cambridge platonists, → Ralph Cudworth was the one who dealt most extensively with the C.H. (even more so than → Henry More). His *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London 1678) contains a lengthy commentary on its treatises, with a particular emphasis on cosmogony. As against Casaubon, Cudworth stressed the presence of Egyptian elements. He also considered that treating the C.H. as one single text (whereas it is actually a collection) entails that the arguments liable to discredit the great age of some treatises do not need to discredit the rest of them (and least of all the *Asclepius*). Moreover, Hermetism had already made its way into English culture in general, with Woodville (see above), Edmund Spenser (many relevant passages in *The Fairie Queene*, London 1590-1596), and others. This process continued well into the English 17th century, as documented by works of celebrated authors who do not belong to this orientation but give it a place, albeit a modest one, like Richard Burton (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Oxford 1621), Sir Thomas Browne (*Religio Medici*, 1643), Sir Walter Raleigh (*History of the World*, 1614), John Milton (*Il Penseroso*, London 1645), etc. (see Shumaker, 1972, 236-247; and 1988).

As was already the case in the preceding century, but even more so now, the *Hermetica* had become part and parcel of many discourses marked by → Egyptomania. Typical of that trend are works of the Jesuit → Athanasius Kircher, notably *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome 1652-1654; but see also *Prodromus coptus*, Rome 1636), which uses the C.H., among other ingredients, to make Catholicism palatable, with a view to deterring his readers from Protestantism and/or incredulity. Kircher, however, was not a great admirer of the hermetic literature and regarded e.g. Paracelsus, the Rosicrucians, or Robert Fludd with great suspicion.

Interestingly, the French Jesuits and theologians involved in missionary activities in the Far East, particularly in China, shared a project similar to Kircher's, though hardly at all from an Egyptophile

perspective. Apart from Rapine (see below), these Catholic priests were not interested in Hermeticism itself, but used it as a tool for converting people to Catholicism. It was a matter of demonstrating that Confucius's teachings, for example, as well as those of Western pagan philosophers – primarily Plato and Hermes Trismegistus – were compatible with monotheism. This missionary program, often strongly hermetically tinged, is exemplified by Paschal Rapine's *Le Christianisme naissant dans la gentilité* (Paris 1655-1659), Paul Beurrier's *Perpetuitas fidei, ab origine mundi . . .* (Paris 1666; French ed. 1680); Daniel Huet's *Demonstratio evangelica* (Paris 1678; several re-eds.); Philippe Couplet's *Confucius Sinarum philosophus* (1687), and several writings by Joachim Bouvet around 1700, notably his correspondence with Leibniz.

### 3. TESTIMONIES AT THE TIME OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND IN THE PRE-ROMANTIC PERIOD

Like Everard's English version, the first complete German translation of the seventeen treatises of the C.H. became influential on later esoteric literature. Its author, who had had at his disposal the editions of Patrizi and van Beyerland, signed himself Aletophilus (perhaps a pen name for Wolf Metternich) and entitled it *Hermetis Trismegisti Erkenntnüssz der Natur und des darin sich offenbahrenden Grossen Gottes . . .* (Hamburg 1706; reed. 1855, see below). His long introduction to the book, in which he shows himself to be a Paracelsian, is noteworthy. He endorses the main legends surrounding the C.H. and tries to marry Hermeticism with alchemy, extolling the Egyptian elements of the text over the Greek ones. The T.S. is very present in Aletophilus' book and, not surprisingly, in numerous other alchemical treatises of the period. Three works in German stand out in that context, namely Ehrd de Naxagoras' *Aureum Vellus* (Frankfurt 1731-1733, 2 vols.); the anonymous *Vernünftige Erklärung der Smaragdenen Tafel . . .* (s.l. 1760); and above all → Hermann Fictuld's *Turba Philosophorum* (s.l. 1763), one of the most important works in the history of the T.S. tradition, and in which alchemy and theosophical outlooks are blended together.

The period of the Enlightenment saw new German translations of the C.H. First, Dietrich Tiedeman's (C.H. I-XVIII), entitled *Poemander, oder von der göttlichen Macht und Weisheit* (Berlin & Stettin 1781). It was published three years after the first German translation of the *Asclepius*, at the Press of Friedrich Nicolai, one of the most celebrated representatives of the *Aufklärung*. Indeed,

Tiedeman's commentaries are reflective of the intellectual orientation of the Enlightenment. They are also replete with comparisons between the C.H., Plato, → Gnosticism and Jewish Kabbalah.

Alongside these translations there appeared further erudite studies. Some were of a more or less hermetic orientation, like Hermann van der Hardt's "Poemander" (inserted in his book *Antiquitatis Gloria*, Helmstedt 1737), a long paraphrase of C.H. I, in which, for example, Jacob's dream (Gen. 28) is compared to Hermes's vision in C.H. I, 1. Other studies were definitely more scholarly oriented. Two of them stand out. First, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, by Johann Albrecht Fabricius (Hamburg 1705-1728, see vol. I, 1708, lib 1, chapters VII-XII; new, enlarged ed. 1790). Second, Jacob Brucker's *Kurze Fragen aus der philosophischen Historie* (Ulm 1730-1736) and *Historia critica philosophiae* (Leipzig 1743; see vol. I, chapters I-IV), which provided a wealth of information on theosophical, alchemical and Rosicrucian literature, not least on the C.H. and whatever Brucker knew about the *Hermetica* in general (see notably *ibid.*, vol. I, liber 3). Brucker goes as far as to deal with works appearing as late as the beginning of the 18th century. Certainly, he was not a proponent of any of these currents, but his very detailed – albeit not always unprejudiced – presentation would ensure a knowledge about them for a long time, all the more so since the book of 1743 quickly became essential to most good libraries all over Europe.

Toward the end of the 18th century, Hermeticism started at the top rung of the literary ladder in Germany with two texts written by Johann Gottfried Herder. First, *Über die älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* (Riga 1774), in which he claimed to have found in ancient traditions, notably in Hermes Trismegistus, keys capable of unlocking a number of mysteries and retrieving a long lost knowledge. Second, "Hermes und Pymander" (in the journal *Adrastea*, 1801), a dialogue (inspired by C.H. I) between Pymander and his disciple, which deals with the new scientific discoveries (not least those by Isaac Newton) as well as with spiritual and material light, the Soul of the World, etc.

In Italy, although Hermeticism as an esoteric current had all but ceased to manifest its presence, it was still occasionally the object of publications; see for instance a reprint in Bologna (1820) of an edition of the C.H. which C. Lenzoni had published in 1584. In the United States, Ralph Waldo Emerson's *The Dial* (see in particular the issues published from 1842 to 1844), a journal expressing the views of the Transcendentalist movement in the United

States, published (in vol. IV) a number of “ethnic Scriptures” – as it called them –, including extracts from Everard’s translation of the C.H. Hermetism also seems to have left its imprint, albeit a mostly indirect one, on a number of authors of pre-Romantic and Romantic literature in England and the United States (see E.L. Tuveson 1982). The middle of the 19th century was also the time of new studies in pure scholarship (like B.J. Hilgers’ *De Hermetis Trismegisti Poimandro commentario*, Bonn 1855, and particularly Gustav Parthey’s *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander* [the Greek text], Berlin 1854). Noteworthy too is the importance of the T.S. almost throughout → Franz von Baader’s theosophical works (notably from 1809 to 1839). Not very interested in alchemy, nor in Hermetism for that matter, he nonetheless made a frequent use of some verses of the T.S., commenting on them and merging them with his theosophical outlooks.

#### 4. THE OCCULTIST CONTEXT

The so-called occultist current [→ Occult/occultism] flourished from ca. 1850 to ca. 1920, and drew upon a great variety of elements pertaining to the esoteric literature of earlier centuries. Certainly, Hermetism is part of the referential corpus of the so-called occultists, for example in fringe-masonic literature. Thus → Marie Ragon de Bettignies’s widely disseminated *Maçonnerie occulte, suivie de l’Initiation hermétique* (1853) is a blend of masonic symbolism, alchemy, mythology and Hermetism. But the presence of Hermetism within the occultist current appears to be very limited, except in England (see below). In France, for instance, such important representatives of occultism as → Stanislas de Guaita or → Papus hardly referred to Hermetism. They did, however, devote many pages to their understanding of the T.S., which they, like so many other representatives of the current, took to be one of the most essential referential documents in Western esotericism (see for example → Stanislas de Guaita’s *Le Serpent de la Genèse*, Book II, Paris 1897). And in Italy, for example, the occultist → Giuliano Kremmerz authored a long series of commentaries entitled “Commento alla Tvola di Smeraldo” (in *Commentarium per le Academia Ermetice . . .*, Bari 1910).

With regard to esotericism in Germany, the new edition of Aletophilus’s translation of the C.H. (1706, see above) is noteworthy, along with its introduction. It appeared as *Hermetis Trismegisti Einleitung ins höchste Wissen* (Stuttgart 1855) in the semi-popular series “Das Kloster” directed by J. Scheible, which from 1849 to 1860 offered new German editions of texts by Agrippa, →

Trithemius, Paracelsus, → J.B. Van Helmont, → Eliphaz Lévi, Catherine Crowe, Nostradamus et al. As for Louis Ménard’s *Hermès Trismégiste: Traduction complète précédée d’une étude sur l’origine des livres hermétiques* (Paris 1866, several re-eds.), its influence should not be underestimated. It is a new French translation of C.H. I-XIV (relying on Parthey’s Greek edition, see above), *Asclepius*, *Korè Kosmou* (“The Virgin of the World”, part of Stobaeus’ *Anthologium*), and the *Diffinitiones Asclepii* (C.H. XVI-XVIII) after Patrizi’s text. The book also contains a long but sober introduction of 112 pages, in which Ménard places these texts in the perspective of a comparative approach of religions which shows him to be slightly inspired by the idea of a perennial philosophy. Triggered in part by Ménard’s book, a flurry of new English editions of hermetic treatises appeared, mostly in England and in the United States, accompanied by esoterically oriented presentations and/or commentaries. Most of them have little scholarly value, but in various ways they are representative of occultism, especially since many were produced by people with a reputation in that current.

The first on this list is a reprinting of Everard’s translation at the Rosicrucian Publishing Co. in Boston (*Hermes Trismegistus: His Divine Pyman-der. Also, the Asiatic Mystery. The Smaragdine Tablet, and the Song of Brahm*, repr. Toledo [Ohio] 1889). Its editor was the famous Rosicrucian → Paschal Beverly Randolph. The strongly Rosicrucian-oriented “Prefatory Note” is signed by Alfred E. Giles and Flora Russell (who also gives there a reprinted version of the *Asiatic Mystery*; one of Randolph’s Rosicrucian manifestoes). The “Song of Brahm” is a poem by R.W. Emerson.

There followed a new reprint of Everard’s translation by the Rosicrucian → Hargrave Jennings (Madras 1884, “Secret Doctrine Reference series”), who devoted his own prefatory text mostly to the personage Hermes Trismegistus and alchemical literature. Prompted by the former one, this book turns out to contain the first public mention of the esoteric Society called → The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. Almost at the same time, there appeared in the same series one of the most influential books of that publishing enterprise, namely *The Virgin of the World of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (London [and Madras] 1885), edited by → Anna Bonus Kingsford and Edward Maitland, which contains an English version of *Korè Kosmou*, “A treatise on initiations” (in fact, a new translation of the *Asclepius*), “The Definitions of Asclepius” (i.e., C.H. XVI-XVIII), plus further

extracts from Stobaeus's *Anthologium*. In their translation and long introductions, Kingsford and Maitland drew heavily on Ménard's book. They saw in the Hermetic texts a survival of ancient Egypt and believed in a coincidence between them and Christianity, it being understood that Christianity itself represents, as they say, 'a development from or reformulation of a doctrine long pre-existent'. Along these lines, they considered their edition to be part of 'the revival of Occult Science and Mystical, or Esoteric, philosophy'. A new edition of Kingsford and Maitland's anthology soon followed (Bath 1886), with an appendix pertaining to alchemy and taken from Mary Anne Atwood's *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850). The appendix was introduced by the famous John Yarker, author of many works in such domains, particularly esoteric → Freemasonry.

Given the number of such books, it is hardly surprising that Hermetism also entered esoteric periodicals. For example, we find *Koré Kosmou* again (presented anonymously and in a different translation) in *The Occult Magazine* (Glasgow, see issues of 1885-1886). In 1894, → William Wynn Westcott, who along with → MacGregor Mathers had created the fringe-masonic → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1887, inserted into the second volume of his series *Collectanea Hermetica* (1893-1896) the Everard version of the C.H., here titled *The Pymander of Hermes, with a Preface by the editor* (London, Theosophical Publishing Society). Westcott's preface, more enthusiastic than critical, emphasizes the commonalities between Hermetism, Freemasonry and Christianity.

On the scholarly side, *The Theological and Philological Work of Hermes Trismegistus, Christian Neoplatonist, Divine Pymander and other writings of Hermes Trismegistus* (Edinburgh 1882), edited by John D. Chambers, reflects a new scientific approach. But it was mostly → George R.S. Mead's enterprise that paved the way for deeper and more extensive scholarly researches. Three years before breaking with the Theosophical Society, of which he was a prominent member, he published his *Thrice Greatest Hermes: Studies in Hellenistic Theosophy and Gnosis* (London & Benares, Theosophical Publishing Society, 3 vols. 1906; German version Leipzig 1909). Never before, indeed, had such a virtually complete ensemble of *Hermetica* been gathered together, accompanied by copious notes, excerpts from *testimonia* of the Fathers, serious historical studies, etc. Mead distanced himself markedly from the aforementioned English-speaking occultists by displaying a great deal of objectivity in dealing with his material. That said, he did not

disguise the fact that he was an esotericist too ('to translate "Hermes" in Greek', he writes in the introduction, 'requires not only a good knowledge of Greek, but also a Knowledge of . . . gnosis'). Indeed, not unlike → Arthur E. Waite in the same period, Mead was both a scholar and a fully-fledged esotericist. Nevertheless, his work, even more than Chambers's, heralds the development of 20th century critical research as represented by such distinguished historians and philologists as Richard Reitzenstein, Walter Scott, A.D. Nock, A.J. Festugière, Gilles Quispel, Roelof van den Broek, Jean-Pierre Mahé, Brian P. Copenhaver et al.

The last decades of occultism saw further hermetically oriented publications, of which a few examples follow. *The Shepherd of Men: An Official Commentary on the Sermon of Hermes Trismegistos* (San Francisco, Hermetic Publishing Company 1916) is by A.D. Raleigh, who called himself "Hierophant of the Mysteries of Isis". Although the title of his book implicitly refers to the famous text of Late Antiquity, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Raleigh's discourse is pervaded by the idea of a perennial tradition and is blended with a fantastic history of human races, echoing some of the Theosophical Society's teachings. More situated within "classical" Hermetism is the thin volume *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus* (n.p. [London?] 1923, no publisher's name), which presents a short selection drawn from the Everard, Chambers and Mead editions, along with some commentaries. It is in fact one of the "Manuals" published by The Shrine of Wisdom, which was a ritual Order, a publishing house and a journal. The Shrine of Wisdom was largely inspired by the works of the Platonist Thomas Taylor.

In closing, we should mention → Manly Palmer Hall's oversized folio *An Encyclopaedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Philosophy* (Los Angeles, Philosophical Research Society 1928), another product of late occultism and one of the most popular *summae* of Western esoteric traditions. Hermetism is almost ubiquitous in that strange encyclopaedia.

##### 5. SURVIVALS AND DEBATES (SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY) & GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most of the above editions and commentaries of the C.H. which saw the light in the period of the occultist current were reprinted in the second half of the 20th century. The latter has not been lacking in original publications, although they seem to have been decreasing in number. Among them are



*The Gospel of Hermes, edited and translated from the Greek and Latin Hermetica*, introduced by Duncan Greenless and published in 1949 by the Theosophical Publishing Company. More famous is → Jan van Rijckenborgh's *De Egyptische oer- gnosıs en haar roep in het Eeuwige Nū . . .* (Haarlem 1960-1965), an interpretation of the C.H. in the light of the teachings of an initiatory Order (the Lectorium Rosicrucianum) of which he was the founder. Here, ancient Gnosticism, → Neo-Catharism, Paracelsianism and Boehmism are blended together in an original way. Since its first publication, van Rijckenborgh's book has gone through countless reprints and translations, fostered worldwide by the Lectorium Rosicrucianum. Noteworthy therein is the long development he devotes to the T.S. He uses the text to support the tenets of his own teachings and does not hesitate to claim that it was written ten thousand years ago.

One of the prominent members of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum in the Netherlands, Joost R. Ritman, has founded a library in Amsterdam, the *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica* (open to the public since 1984), which is the richest in the world in terms of esoteric literature, including manuscripts and incunables, from the early Renaissance to the present, not to mention a wealth of more ancient materials. This remarkable institution is especially noteworthy here because Hermetic literature in the proper sense represents its most fundamental core, as demonstrated not only by its holdings, but also by the exhibitions it organizes and by its publications. Its Editorial board includes such reputable scholars as Frans A. Janssen and Carlos Gilly.

Hermetism as a specific esoteric current all but became extinct after the 17th century, having merged with so many other currents. It cannot be said to have merged with the perennialist current [→ Tradition], whose representatives are not prone to extol the interest it may present (or of that of other Western esoteric currents, for that matter). But interestingly enough, the T.S. occasionally finds entrance into the perennialist current, most likely because this short text can be read without any reference to Hermetism proper, and easily lends itself to multiple exploitations. Titus Burckhardt, an author of the perennialist persuasion, has produced one of the best known contemporary commentaries of the T.S. (in his *Alchemie – Sinn und Weltbild*, Olten/Freiburg 1960).

That said, even outside the pale of esotericism proper, Hermetism has never entirely ceased to trigger the interest of people from various orientations. Occasionally it has been revived by philoso-

phers who see in the C.H. the paradigm of an alternative philosophy able to enrich the mainstream with new insights, or to replace it. For example, Ralph Liedtke's book *Die Hermetik: Traditionelle Philosophie der Differenz* (Paderborn 1996), purports to foster a return to other modes of thinking, among which the author considers the contents of the C.H. to be one of the best possible introductions to a desirable and drastic reappraisal with regard to mainstream contemporary trends in philosophy. Just as Renaissance Hermetism served to bring about reforms within the Churches, so now it has occasionally become a means of "reforming" philosophy. Similarly, efforts have been and are still made to extol it as a method for the fruitful completion or enrichment of psychology. For example, Lietaert Pierbolte (*Poimandres . . . vertaald met een transpersonalistische beschouwing*, Deventer 1974) presents C.H. I in Dutch and comments on it by explaining why it should be used as a method for practising the kind of transpersonal psychology that he advocates. Similarly, and along perspectives not very far from those of the → New Age movement, the T.S. is occasionally interpreted and commented as a practical guide to spiritual growth. For instance, Dennis William Hauck's *The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation* (Harmondsworth [UK] 1999) throughout expresses such a tendency.

In the post-war period, more particularly since the 1960s, most discourses on Hermetism have been of a scholarly character. Frances A. Yates' *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, published in 1964, has been highly instrumental in calling attention to its importance and significance in the history of the Renaissance. Although not without forbears, Yates's work was a watershed. Many scholars whose work is dedicated to Renaissance Hermetism in general, or to one particular author, stand in its wake; even if they do not necessarily endorse Yates's views, they are directly or indirectly indebted to her writings. By the same token, Yates's work has paved the way for an ongoing academic recognition, even institutionalization, of modern Western esoteric currents as a specialty in its own right. In addition to that, it has caused a flurry of debates, first over what Robert S. Westman (1977) called the "Yates Thesis" (concerning the relation between Hermetism and the scientific revolution), and more recently over what Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2001) has referred to as "the Yates paradigm". As pointed out by the latter, Yates's works have created a "grand narrative", as it were, based on two main assumptions. First, the existence of what she calls "the Hermetic Tradition" understood as a



more or less autonomous tradition based upon a covert reaction against both Christianity and the rise of scientific world-views. Secondly, and however paradoxical it may seem, the claim that the essential tradition of “magic” – which she sees as essentially non-progressive – has been an important factor in the development of the scientific revolution (i.e., the “Yates thesis”, see above). Even if neither of these two tenets has proved resistant to close scrutiny, the opinions implicit in the “Yates paradigm” still causes ink to flow.

Be that as it may, such debates around Yates’s work concern the early modern period. Their relevance to the later periods is of secondary importance. Indeed, Neo-Alexandrian Hermetism taken as a whole, i.e. over the sweep of a little over five centuries, is of great interest to the historian of ideas (and of literature) not least because it reflects the various contexts in which it has taken on ever-changing aspects. This is all the more so since it would not be possible to define Hermetism as a set of fixed, unchangeable beliefs. Rather, its manifold manifestations evince a spiritual attitude which contains in itself a principle of constant readjustment. Not surprisingly, it has flourished mostly in times and countries hospitable to religious tolerance. Although its representatives have been people desiring to “reform” religious systems, the reforms they had in mind were not dogmatic in character, and very rarely designed to overthrow established Churches. They rather tended to enrich the latter by prompting them to return *ad fontes*, i.e., both to ancient foundational texts and to specific forms of meditation. Indeed, far from stressing a war between Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, as is often the case in Christian thought, their discourses have expressed a generally optimistic conception of the inborn powers of Man, understood as a being able to liberate and expand his consciousness and develop his inborn powers.

As one of the several esoteric currents in modernity (i.e., from the Renaissance until the present time), Hermetism has naturally found itself historically intertwined with the others. In this respect, it is interesting to see how far and in which directions these relationships have been operating. We note, for example, that despite their commonalities, Hermetism and Christian Theosophy (which appeared later, at the beginning of the 17th century) have had few contacts and have hardly influenced each other. One of the reasons is that Hermetism, originally a branch of Humanism, always remained dependent upon ancient sources, notably Greek, whereas Theosophy is rooted,

rather, in Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme, who represent a German, “barbaric” trend all but devoid of erudite leanings. It is therefore hardly surprising that even long after the Renaissance, the foremost representatives of Theosophy, like → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin or → Franz von Baader, practically never drew on the Hermetic writings.

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

## Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The foremost esoteric, and later magical, initiatic Order of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was founded in March 1888 but its roots lie in the plethora of fringe masonic Orders and quasi-masonic societies that flourished from the 1860s onwards. Both the administrative structure of the Order and the form of its ceremonies were masonic, but the symbolism and doctrinal content of the rituals were drawn almost exclusively from Western esoteric sources, and in its essentials the Golden Dawn conformed to the definition of an esoteric Order given by → Dion Fortune: a fraternity ‘wherein a secret wisdom, unknown to the generality of mankind might be learnt, and to which admission was obtained by means of an initiation in which tests and ritual played their part’ (*The Esoteric Orders and their Work*, 1928, ix).

The immediate inspiration for the Golden Dawn was a masonic Rosicrucian body, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, that had been established in 1867. This society worked simple rituals of initiation through its system of Grades and encouraged its members to study ‘the Kabbalah and the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus’. Each member also chose a motto, usually a Latin tag, which would – in theory – become his official name within the society. Such a combination of quasi-masonic ritual, ostensible secrecy and academic discussion was more than adequate for most of the society’s members, but for some it was not enough. They wanted prescribed courses of study in various forms of occultism [→ occult/occultism] and, above all, they wished to practise → magic. They also realised that none of this could take place within the S.R.I.A. and that a new and practical body must be founded – but it was not until 1883 that the first attempt at such a foundation was made.

It was the brainchild of Frederick Holland, an industrial chemist who joined the S.R.I.A. in April 1882. Within a year he had set up his “Society of Eight” and drawn in a number of prominent masonic Rosicrucians, including Kenneth Mackenzie who described the new society as ‘practical and not visionary’ and as standing for ‘work and not play’. But the Society of Eight was only a stepping-stone. It had no ritual structure and no systematic teaching; for these Mackenzie and his fellows had to look elsewhere – to a minuscule, fringe masonic body, the Royal Oriental Order of Sikha and the Sat B’hai. Mackenzie had joined the Sat B’hai in 1875 and had helped to develop its rituals. It was not, in any sense, a magical Order, but it did have a curriculum of ‘subjects for investigation’ that covered virtually every aspect of both eastern and western occultism, and it admitted women as members. This factor was clearly very important for Mackenzie who, having completed the Sat B’hai rituals, began to construct a new series of ritual texts for a wholly new initiatic Order: androgynous, disciplined and designed to inculcate the essence of Western esotericism. This new Order was, however, only one among Mackenzie’s many esoteric activities, and at the time of his death, on 3 July 1886, the ritual texts existed only in outline form in manuscript – and in cipher. Shortly afterwards these outline texts were discovered by another member of the S.R.I.A., provided with a false pedigree and transformed into the rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The discovery was made by chance. Upon Mackenzie’s death → William Wynn Westcott, a London coroner and prominent member of the S.R.I.A., took over the post of Grand Secretary of yet another small masonic body, the Swedenborgian Rite, together with his predecessor’s papers. Among them he found the incomplete rituals, identified the source of the cipher (the *Polygraphiae* of → Trithemius), and translated the text. He also recognised their enormous potential and began to develop them into a complete, working system. At what point Westcott determined to launch this new Order upon the world is unknown, but his decision was probably precipitated by the closure of the Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies]. This was a lecture society, founded in 1884 by → Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland with the intention of propagating the Western esoteric tradition, which they perceived as being deliberately ignored and rejected within the → Theosophical Society. Both Westcott and → Samuel Liddell Mathers, one of his closest colleagues in the S.R.I.A., were frequent lecturers at the Hermetic

Society, and when its activities ceased after Anna Kingsford’s death in 1887 they felt keenly the loss of a public platform.

In October 1887 Westcott wrote to Mathers asking for his help in writing up the rituals ‘with all your erudition’ from the now completed translation of the cipher manuscripts. He did not, however, reveal their source to Mathers; rather, he claimed to have received them from a masonic historian, the Rev. A.F.A. Woodford who, conveniently for Westcott, had died two months later. Westcott also inserted his own note, in the Trithemius cipher, among Mackenzie’s manuscripts. This confirmed the contents of a letter from Woodford to Westcott (but known only from a copy in Westcott’s hand), and directed the reader to a Fräulein Sprengel, otherwise Soror Sapiens dominabitur astris – ‘a chief among the members of die goldene dammerung’, at an accommodation address in Stuttgart. Having created his continental adept Westcott next began a correspondence with her, producing a series of five letters that provided a spurious history of the Golden Dawn; gave him authority to found a new Temple; and authorised him to sign her motto on her behalf. Later, in August 1890, he would kill her off, but for the present he needed her alive – and invisible. It is probable that Westcott based her on Anna Kingsford, for he would have found the motto, Sapiens dominabitur astris, on the title-page of one of her last works (an edition, 1886, of → Valentin Weigel’s *Astrology Theologized*) and he later gave Fräulein Sprengel the name Anna.

Westcott also created a spurious history for his Order, claiming descent from a hybrid body that conflated a genuine masonic lodge at Frankfurt with a fictitious Rosicrucian Society, and listing a number of prominent, but deceased, occultists as members. Whether or not Mathers believed, at this time, in either Anna Sprengel or the spurious history is unknown, but he acted as if he did so and willingly became a co-creator with Westcott of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. With the all-important “history” in place (Westcott was a member of the → Theosophical Society and thus was fully aware of the value to an esoteric Order of an august pedigree), and the rituals complete, all that was needed was a third Chief for the projected Temple. This was necessary not only because Soror S.D.A. required it, but because the S.R.I.A. – on which the structure of the Golden Dawn was closely modelled – also had three Chiefs.

The obvious, and willing, candidate was Dr. William Robert Woodman, Supreme Magus of the S.R.I.A., an excellent Hebraist and a learned

kabbalist. Possessed between them of ritual genius, a wealth of esoteric knowledge, and a breathtaking creative imagination the three Chiefs were ready to launch their Order. On 1 March 1888, at Mark Masons' Hall in London, the *Fratres Magna est Veritas* (Woodman), *Sapere Aude* (Westcott), and 'S Rioghail Mo Dhream (Mathers) constituted and consecrated 'the Isis-Urania Temple No. 3, of the Order of the G.D. in the Outer'. By the end of the month seven members, four men and three women, had been initiated as Neophytes of the Order.

The Order was constructed in a graduated form, the Neophyte ceremony being the first in a progressive series based upon a symbolic entry into and ascent of the kabbalistic Tree of Life. It was impressive, as were the rest of the series, and followed the standard pattern of ceremonies of initiation, albeit utilising an eclectic mix of symbols drawn from both Eastern and Western esotericism. Much of this was called for in the cipher manuscripts, but the language employed and the ceremonial embellishments are evidence of Mathers's flair for the dramatic. Each stage, or Grade, of the initiate's ceremonial progress was related to one of the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life, the nature, qualities and correspondences of which were symbolically presented and explained. Each Grade was also given a specific name and number, derived, for the most part, from the structure of an 18th Century German quasi-masonic Order, the *Gold- und Rosenkreuz*. The Grade of Neophyte, in the course of which the candidate took an Obligation to maintain strict secrecy as to the affairs of the Order, stood below the Sephiroth and was thus numbered 0=0. The succeeding Grades were as follows: Zelator, 1=10 (Malkuth); Theoricus, 2=9 (Yesod); Practicus, 3=8 (Hod), and Philosophus, 4=7 (Netzach). At this point the Outer Order ended and the initiate – who might have taken several years to reach the Grade of Philosophus, as advancement through the Grades demanded proficiency in the prescribed courses of study – came to a stop. Beyond it lay the Second, or Inner Order of the Adepts, although the ceremonies for this were not constructed in detail until 1891.

Westcott and his co-chiefs were fully aware that such a complex system required sound administration and they had established an effective hierarchical structure at the outset. Ultimate authority in the Golden Dawn, at least in the material world, rested in the hands of the three founding Chiefs, while each Temple had its own Chiefs who acted as senior administrative officers. These were the Imperator, who 'compell[ed] the obedience of the Temple to the *commands* issued by the Second

Order'; the Praemonstrator, who instructed the members and superintended the working of the Temple; and the Cancellarius, the Recorder, Secretary and Archivist of the Temple.

The direction of the Order ceremonies was in the hands of seven officers, who took their titles from those of functionaries of the Eleusinian Mysteries, although their roles were clearly modelled on those of the officers of a masonic Lodge. They, and their masonic parallels, were as follows: Hierophant (Worshipful Master); Hiereus (Senior Warden); Hegemon (Junior Warden); Kerux (Inner Guard); Stolistes (Senior Deacon); Dadouchos (Junior Deacon); and Sentinel (Tyler). Each officer wore distinctive robes and insignia, but the Order differed from → Freemasonry in that every office was open to both men and women.

Within twelve months of its foundation the Golden Dawn had attained a membership of sixty persons: fifty-one men and nine women. Almost two-thirds of this total were members of the Isis-Urania Temple in London, the remainder being almost equally divided between two additional Temples that had been founded in October 1888: Osiris Temple No. 4, at Weston-Super-Mare, in Somerset; and Horus Temple No. 5, at Bradford in Yorkshire. The siting of these Temples reflects the sources from which members were drawn. Weston-super-Mare was the home of the former Bristol College of the S.R.I.A., of which all of the Osiris initiates had been members, while Bradford had a thriving lodge of the Theosophical Society and was close to the headquarters of the York College of the S.R.I.A. Throughout its history very few members of the Golden Dawn would be other than theosophists or masonic Rosicrucians.

Not all theosophists approved of the Order, however, and early in 1889 → Madame Blavatsky forbade members of the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society from belonging to other occult orders. Westcott was soon able to allay her suspicions of the Golden Dawn, but growth was temporarily slowed – by May 1890 only another twelve men and seven women entered the Order. Thereafter expansion was steady and after ten years of active existence two further Temples of the Golden Dawn had been established – the Amen Ra Temple No. 6 at Edinburgh, in 1893, and the Ahathoor Temple No. 7, at Paris, in 1894 – and 331 men and women had entered the Order, in a ratio of approximately three to two. Not all, however, remained active: death, resignation and exclusion accounted for almost 25% of those initiated.

For those who remained there were, in addition



to the ceremonial activities of the Order, extensive, if eclectic, courses of study. The subjects to be studied were presented to the initiate in the form of “Knowledge Lectures” that became progressively more complex as he or she advanced from the Grade of Neophyte to that of Philosophus. As initiates progressed, so they were expected to become increasingly familiar with the Hebrew alphabet, the meaning of kabbalistic [→ Jewish Influences], alchemical [→ Alchemy] and → tarot symbolism, the technicalities of → astrology and other forms of divination [→ Divinatory Arts], and the names and natures of the Elemental Beings – in all of which areas of study they were duly examined. In addition, they were required to meditate and to become proficient in the Rituals of the Pentagram, but this was the sole activity that could possibly be construed as magical, everything else provided for members of the Golden Dawn in the Outer being a part of traditional Western esotericism. The study and practice of magic was the exclusive preserve of the Adepts: members of the Second, or Inner Order, the “Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis”.

In theory a Second Order had always existed, although its membership was confined at first to the three Chiefs, who issued the Charters (under different mottoes: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* for Woodman; *Non Omnis Moriar* for Westcott; and *Deo Duce Comite Ferro* for Mathers) and permitted the Temples of the Golden Dawn to function. This Order comprised the three Adept Grades that corresponded to the three sephiroth in the kabbalistic World of Briah. These were the 5=6 Grade of Adeptus Minor, corresponding to the sephira Tiphereth; the 6=5 Grade of Adeptus Major, corresponding to Geburah; and the 7=4 Grade of Adeptus Exemptus, corresponding to Chesed. Philosophi who pursued their studies successfully, proved to be able ritualists, and who showed an aptitude for teaching both the theory and practice of occultism, were encouraged to progress to the Second Order.

Technically, entrance to the Second Order began with admission to the Portal Grade that preceded the Grade of Adeptus Minor. It corresponded to the lower aspect of the sephira Tiphereth, and attaining it symbolised the initiate’s parting of the veil of Paroketh (which, on the kabbalistic Tree of Life, separates the worlds of Yetzirah and Briah). In the early years of the Order, however, attainment of both the Portal and Adeptus Minor Grades was solely by way of examinations to establish the initiate’s competence as an occultist. Between 1888 and 1891 sixteen prominent members of the Golden Dawn entered the Second Order in this

way: ceremonial admission to the Adept Grades did not begin until December, 1891.

Neither Westcott nor Woodman had shown any great enthusiasm for a working Second Order, but Mathers was eager to develop rituals for the Adept Grades and to construct a “Vault of the Adepts” around and within which the ceremonies could be worked. The rituals, and indeed the whole ethos, of the effectively separate *Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis* were based upon the legend of the discovery of the tomb of Christian Rosencreutz and the symbolism associated with the tomb. The ceremonies were loosely derived from those of the Adept Grades of the S.R.I.A., but Mathers was a ritualist of genius and in the Golden Dawn system they were transformed into spectacular dramas of death and resurrection, worked within a Vault that he designed and constructed.

As its name indicates, the Portal ceremony, which followed logically from those of the First Order, took place outside the Vault, and the candidate was not aware of its existence. The working of the next Grade – of Adeptus Minor – was far more dramatic and of a very different nature. It consisted of three “Points” or stages, in the first of which the candidate took a second Obligation to the Order while bound symbolically upon the “Cross of Suffering”, subsequently being made aware of the Vault while the legend of Christian Rosencreutz was related. During the Second Point the candidate entered the Vault and discovered its symbolism, while being addressed by the entombed Chief Adept. For the Third Point the Vault was re-entered and the candidate found the now resurrected Chief Adept, in full regalia, who completed the explanation of the symbolism and received him (or her) as a true Adeptus Minor.

The ceremony of initiation into the Adeptus Minor Grade of the R.R. et A.C. inevitably had a powerful and often transformative effect upon the candidate – a necessary condition for his or her self-perception as a magician – but it marked only the beginning of the Adept’s magical progress. The 5=6 Grade of Adeptus Minor consisted of two sub-Grades: Zelator Adeptus Minor and Theoricus Adeptus Minor, and to progress from the first to the second required two years of intensive application to the theory and practice of magic. In addition to learning and practising the various prescribed rituals, the Adept was required to study the thirty-six instructional texts known as “Flying Rolls”; to make and consecrate a personal Rose Cross lamen (the badge of the R.R. et A.C.), a magical sword, a lotus wand, and the four elemental implements; and to pass a series of examinations that would



demonstrate proficiency in all of these activities. Comparatively few Adepts succeeded in attaining the second sub-Grade, but all of those who entered the Second Order considered themselves to be magicians in a meaningful sense.

By 1898 the Golden Dawn had a notional active membership of almost 250 persons, of whom about one hundred had progressed to the Second Order. But whereas the ratio of men to women in the Outer Order was two to one, the sexes were evenly divided in the R.R. et A.C. Almost all of the women had been ceremonially admitted as Adepts Minores, many of them within a comparatively short time after their initiation as Neophytes. Their success within the Golden Dawn was a reflection of both their status in society, and the social structure of the Order itself.

The founders and the earliest members had come to the Order as experienced occultists, but as public awareness of the Golden Dawn grew – carefully orchestrated by Westcott, who placed cryptic comments and letters in appropriate journals – so an increasing number of initiates proved to be enthusiastic novices. Some were drawn from aristocratic circles, although few of these remained for long, but the majority were either from the professional class or from the literary and artistic *avant garde* of the 1890s.

The first of these, chronologically, was Mina Bergson, a young art student and sister of the philosopher Henri Bergson, who was initiated in the Isis-Urania Temple in March 1888 and who became, eighteen months later, the first member of that Temple (other than the three Chiefs) to enter the Second Order. In June 1890 she further consolidated her position in the Golden Dawn by marrying Mathers. By this time there were some eighty members of the Order, but only three others who would play any significant role in its affairs: Annie Horniman, the daughter of a tea magnate; the actress Florence Farr; and the poet → W.B. Yeats. Most of the other members who entered the Order during the 1890s and who were destined to determine its history were drawn from the professional classes: lawyers (J.W. Brodie Innes, and Percy Bullock); scientists (W.F. Kirby, the entomologist, and William Peck, City Astronomer for Edinburgh); and a number of medical doctors (E.W. Berridge, George Dickson, R.W. Felkin, Henry Pullen Bury, and R.M. Theobald). Others who played decisive roles were → A.E. Waite; the Egyptologist M.W. Blackden; and the magician and *farceur* → Aleister Crowley.

At the end of 1891 Dr. Woodman died, and control of the Order was jointly maintained by his

co-Chiefs, with the Outer Order effectively in Westcott's hands and Mathers in charge of the R.R. et A.C. For the most part matters progressed smoothly for some years, although there were disputes within the Horus Temple and the Osiris Temple was virtually moribund (it closed down in 1895), and new Temples were founded. Mathers and his wife had moved to Paris in 1892 and set up a sub-branch of Isis Urania, which was elevated to the status of an independent Temple, Ahathoor No. 7, in January 1894 – just over two weeks after the consecration of the Amen-Ra Temple No. 6 at Edinburgh.

By this time it was clear to the members that the real work of the Golden Dawn lay in the R.R. et A.C. Technically, those in the Outer Order were supposed to be ignorant of even the existence of an Inner Order, and the Adepts were assiduous in keeping secret its rituals and magical activities. In practice, however, all members knew that the Grade of Philosophus was not their final goal and increasing numbers sought and attained admission to the Adept Grades. Once within the Second Order they had access to the vault for their ritual work, and to an excellent library to aid them in their studies. Inevitably, their increasing knowledge and magical proficiency led them not only into the senior offices of their Temples, but also to question both the authority and wisdom of their nominal Chiefs. To Mathers, who was rigidly authoritarian, such independence was anathema and he reacted strongly against it.

In 1893 he had suspended, and later expelled, Theresa O'Connell, one of the earliest initiates of the Order, over a minor dispute, while Westcott attempted (probably at Mathers's instigation and ultimately without success) to limit the activities of female adepts in the Isis-Urania Vault. These attempts to impose discipline were followed by a more serious affair that brought to light signs of real discontent among the adepts.

Annie Horniman, who had been providing regular funds for Mathers and his wife, expressed increasing unease at both the unorthodox sexual doctrines of a fellow adept, Dr. Berridge, and his behaviour towards the lady adepts. But when, in 1896, she complained of this to Mathers he reproved her and accused her of mental imbalance, later adding accusations of insubordination and incompetence. Miss Horniman then resigned as Sub-Praemonstrator of Isis-Urania, and also ceased her funding of Mathers. He promptly expelled her from the Order and justified his action in a long and bizarre letter to the Adepts that sought their submission to his authority – which he obtained,

but at the price of increasing dissension. This was further inflamed in 1897 by the sudden withdrawal of Westcott from any active role in the Golden Dawn in response to pressure from the civil authorities, who objected to a Crown official (Westcott was a coroner) being involved in a magical Order.

During the next two years resentments within the Order grew. There was increased opposition to Mathers's autocracy in both the Isis-Urania and Amen-Ra Temples, while the Horus Temple resented 'dogmatic control' from London. By 1900 some members of Isis-Urania had grown so disenchanting with the confusion that resulted from Mathers's eccentric direction of affairs that they wished to close down the Temple. Mathers's response, in a letter of March 1900 to Florence Farr, was to deny their request and to make an extraordinary claim about Westcott that undermined the integrity of the Golden Dawn and threatened to destroy the Order. Mathers claimed that he alone had ever been in communication with the Secret Chiefs and that Westcott had forged the original correspondence with Anna Sprengel. What he seems to have failed to recognise is that if the members of the Order believed him then they would realise that the Golden Dawn was an utter sham, based upon forgery and deceit.

Their immediate reaction was to demand proof from Mathers and to confront Westcott with the charges made against him. Mathers refused to offer any evidence and Westcott was evasive in the extreme. Later documents – which members of the Order never saw – give strong support to Mathers's claim about Westcott, but his own actions at the time led the Adepts from simple mistrust to an outright rejection of his authority. He had made the mistake of trusting Aleister Crowley and of admitting him to the Second Order in Paris, even though Crowley had been denied such advancement in London. In April 1900, Crowley arrived in London as Mathers's representative, charged with reclaiming the Order for its erstwhile Chief. His mission failed, partly because of his bizarre behaviour, and the Adepts in London promptly expelled Mathers and advised members of the Golden Dawn that 'a Revolution has taken place.'

Government of the Order reverted to the old system of three Chiefs, supported by a Council of ten, but the Golden Dawn faced further problems that would prove to be highly damaging. The immediate cause of Mathers's disastrous letter to Florence Farr was his conviction that he had finally met the real Anna Sprengel in the guise of one Madame Horos. He soon discovered, however, that she was a charlatan and criminal who stole copies of the

Golden Dawn rituals and decamped to London, where she set up a spurious version of the Order and aided her husband in criminal fraud and rape. Eventually, in December 1901, both husband and wife were arrested, tried, found guilty and gaoled for their crimes. But the trial was disastrous for the Golden Dawn: the Obligation and the Neophyte ritual were made public and derided by the press. With their reputations under threat many members of the Order left it in haste and those who remained were divided by long-standing factional quarrels. The most significant of these involved both the structure of the Golden Dawn and the working of the Second Order. Some, notably Florence Farr, wished to work unofficial magical ceremonies within small groups of adepts, while others – Yeats and the now reinstated Annie Horniman especially – were vehemently opposed to such groups and wished to maintain also the rigid examination structure for advancement in the Order. No compromise was achieved and in 1903 the Golden Dawn finally disintegrated.

By the beginning of that year Westcott and Yeats were inactive, and both Florence Farr and Annie Horniman had resigned. The major protagonists were now A.E. Waite, J.W. Brodie-Innes, and R.W. Felkin. After a failed attempt by Brodie-Innes to be accepted as Chief of the Order, Waite gained the support of those who looked upon the Golden Dawn as mystical rather than magical, took control of the Isis Urania Temple, and on 8 July 1903 instituted the "Independent and Rectified Rite" of the Golden Dawn (in public the name Golden Dawn was no longer used, having been altered to the German "Morgen Röthe" in the aftermath of the Horos affair). The new Rite was also avowedly Christian and, as a consequence, it was able to draw in those, such as Evelyn Underhill, who would have utterly rejected magic.

The magical faction continued under R.W. Felkin and Brodie-Innes, renaming their branch of the Order the → Stella Matutina, and establishing a new Temple, named Amoun, in London. Both men produced new rituals and new teaching which they believed to be derived from supernatural beings known as the Sun Masters. In addition Felkin had convinced himself that he was in contact with the true Anna Sprengel and that he would be able to find the real Secret Chiefs. On a more practical level they recognised the need for harmony and arrived at a concordat with Waite's Order. It did not last.

Mathers had continued to work the Golden Dawn at Paris in his Ahathoor Temple, and maintained a presence in London with the aid of Dr. Berridge and a few others who sided with him.

Their branch of the old Order took the name of Alpha et Omega, with a new Temple, named Isis. Eventually Mathers obtained further support from Brodie-Innes who had distanced himself from Felkin and, by 1910, re-founded the Amen-Ra Temple at Edinburgh. It is probable that Brodie-Innes saw himself as a potential successor, but when Mathers died, in 1918, Mina Mathers took charge of the Alpha et Omega and Brodie-Innes remained loyal to her until his own death in 1923. Her management of the Order was no less idiosyncratic and authoritarian and she alienated the most able members, among them most of her American followers and the young → Dion Fortune, who left to found the Fraternity of the Inner Light.

Felkin was rather more successful. In 1916 he emigrated to New Zealand and settled at Havelock North, Hawkes Bay, where he had founded the Smaragdum Thalasses Temple during a visit four years earlier. The Temple had a custom built vault (which still exists) in the basement of Felkin's house, Whare Ra, and this became the focal point for the work of the Stella Matutina for the next fifty years. In England the Order remained active through the Amoun Temple in London and the Hermes Temple at Bristol, despite the vitriolic attacks in print of Miss C.M. Stoddart, a former Chief of Amoun Temple who had become convinced that the Order was simply a vehicle for forces of supernatural evil.

At the other end of the esoteric spectrum Waite's Independent and Rectified Rite also had problems. The Concordat with the Stella Matutina had resulted in an uneasy harmony (in 1910 a Neophyte ritual was printed for the use of both Orders) but disputes over the interpretation of its terms brought the Concordat to an end in 1912. Waite was also becoming increasingly sceptical about the contents of the cipher manuscripts, and when Blackden, Waite's co-Chief, supported by a majority of the members, insisted that the cipher rituals were of ancient Egyptian origin, he found himself in an impossible position. Waite withdrew his own rituals and, in 1914, dissolved the Rite. Within twelve months he had created a new Order, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, but it was in no sense a continuation of the Golden Dawn.

The traditional Golden Dawn did survive, and still does, as a result of the actions of an errant member of the Stella Matutina: Francis Israel Regardie, who had entered the Hermes Temple in 1933 following an earlier initiation into the Societas Rosicruciana in America (a quasi-masonic body that had borrowed the Outer Order rituals of the Golden Dawn). Regardie firmly believed that the teaching and rituals of the Order should be

available to all and over a four year period, from 1937 to 1940, he published the greater part of them. There was little immediate reaction, but following the reprinting of Regardie's texts in 1969, new Temples appeared claiming descent from the original body. Many of these were short-lived but a few that were authorised by Regardie himself are working at the present time. Having survived for more than a century the Golden Dawn seems destined to continue indefinitely.

But what did the Order achieve? It undoubtedly influenced the work of W.B. Yeats and it gave rise to a new, if minor, genre of fiction – that of the psychic detective. Whether it exercised any significant artistic or literary influence beyond this is doubtful, but in one area of culture it has been of great importance. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn has been responsible, more than any other esoteric body, for ensuring the survival of much of Western esotericism into the 21st Century.

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## Hermetic Society → Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies

### Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies

1. HERMETICISM 2. THE KINGSFORD-MAITLAND HERMETIC SOCIETY (1884-1887) 3. THE DUBLIN HERMETIC SOCIETIES (1885-1939)

#### 1. HERMETICISM

By the 18th century, Hermeticism had expanded well beyond its Renaissance focus on → Hermes Trismegistus and his revelation of a *prisca theologia* [→ Tradition]. Contemporary interest in ency-

clopaedias, universal histories, and comparative mythology created an eclectic current in which “Hermetic” denoted a wider field including → Egyptomany, Orphic mysteries, Pythagoreanism, Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → Paracelsianism, → alchemy, and → Rosicrucianism. Several Enlightenment historians included an account of Hermes Trismegistus or Thoth and Hermeticism in their accounts of ancient history and religion, including Johann Jakob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae* (1742-67), Johann Gottfried Herder, *Die älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechtes* (1774) and Antoine Court de Gébelin, *Le Monde Primitif* (1773-82). This Enlightenment eclecticism, alongside the development of → Pietism, led to Hermetic imports in philosophy, medicine, and → Freemasonry. In Britain, the heritage of → Robert Fludd (1574-1637), → Elias Ashmole (1617-1692), and → Thomas Vaughan (1622-1666) chiefly passed into Freemasonry, regulated after 1717 by the English Grand Lodge. But in Germany, Pietism created a religious subculture favourable to sectarian developments, with later ramifications in a subculture of lodges, secret societies, and irregular Masonic lodges, especially among court officials and the non-commercial middle class. As early as 1690, the Lutheran theologian Ehregott Daniel Colberg had written *Das Platonisch-Hermetisches* [sic] *Christenthum* as a polemic against the pietist-enthusiastic sects mushrooming among Paracelsians, Weigelians, Behmenists, Quakers, Labadists and Quietists. From 1700 onwards a handful of philosophers and theologians emerged from sectarian isolation to articulate Hermetic ideas within the syncretic Enlightenment. Samuel Richter’s *Theo-Philosophia Theoretico-Practica* (1711) exemplifies a systematic Hermeticism of theosophical provenance. Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1734) progressed from radical Pietism to Hermetic and alchemical speculations and scientific experiment. Hermetic elements appear in the thought of Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1738), the Dutch scientist, and Friedrich Joseph Wilhelm Schröder (1733-1778), professor of medicine at Marburg and a Rosicrucian. Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791), professor of theology at Halle and → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) both embraced Hermeticism. Alchemico-hermetic writers such as Anton Joseph Kirchweger, → Georg von Welling (1652-1727), and the physician Johann Friedrich Metz (1720-1782) influenced the young Johann Wolfgang Goethe, further evidence of this widespread Hermetic subculture in Germany during the late Enlightenment.

Lodge discourse rapidly assimilated these ideas. Baron Tschoudy’s *Hermetic Catechism* (1766) and

the Hermetic Rite of Montpellier (c. 1770), traceable to → Antoine-Joseph Pernety and Boileau, likewise the → *Illuminées d’Avignon* founded in 1785, are examples of an “Hermetic” Freemasonry. The alchemico-Hermetic culture of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* found its ultimate expression in the beautiful and complex coloured illustrations of the *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer* printed at Altona in 1785-1788.

The use of the adjective “Hermetic” to describe a society dates only from the modern period. The first Hermetic Society was founded in 1796 at Dortmund for the purpose of practical alchemy by Carl Arnold Kortum (1745-1824) and Friedrich Bährens (1765-1831). Kortum was born into a family of apothecaries, qualified as a physician, authored the famous comic epic poem *Jobsiade* (1786), and wrote regularly for the *Westphälischer Anzeiger*, the leading journal of Westphalia and the Rhineland. He was also associated with the radical pietistic movement of Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769). Bährens was the Lutheran pastor at nearby Schwerte and also a physician. The Hermetic Society continued its work on practical alchemy until 1819, attracting controversy among the new generation of post-Lavoisier chemists as the era of German Romantic → Naturphilosophie drew to a close.

In the first half of the 19th century, esoteric subjects and societies favoured the label “Rosicrucian” rather than “Hermetic” for several reasons. Rosicrucianism had connoted alchemy among 18th-century *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*. However, once linked with Templarism [→ Neo-Templar Traditions], as in many high-degree Masonic rites, Rosicrucianism also signified a Christian, medieval, and chivalrous world, whose Orient was Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Rosicrucianism was linked with mediaevalism in Gothic literature, e.g. Percy Shelley, *St Irvyne or The Rosicrucian* (1801), Sir → Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni: A Rosicrucian Tale* (1842). By contrast, Hermetic references signified a *philosophia perennis*, where Christianity was a single strand in a universal pansophy sometimes aligned with neo-pagan, anti-clerical Enlightenment interests. “Hermeticism” still pointed to an Orient represented by ancient Egypt, polytheism and mystery-religions. Hermeticism even combined with the cosmopolitan, Enlightenment critique of the *ancien regime* and Church before the advent of Napoleon, but its irenic vision was unsuited to German nationalism. In any case, the age of reaction or *Vormärz* period (1815-1848/67) with its conservative suppression of nationalist and democratic currents on the Continent witnessed a general decline in the

numbers of initiatory high-degree rites and secret societies with some notable exceptions, e.g. Rites of Memphis and Misraim, the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

A “Rosicrucian” heritage, based on the memorials of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* and Gothic references, characterised the para-masonic societies in England, which fostered esotericism from the 1850s onwards, e.g. Knights of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine, est. 1865; Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (Soc. Ros.), est. 1866; the Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis (Second Order of the Golden Dawn), est. 1892. It is also notable that → Paschal Beverly Randolph and → Hargrave Jennings (1817-1890), major publicists of Rosicrucian mysteries in the United States and England during the 1850-1870 period, used Rosicrucianism as a portfolio term for esotericism. They both had a powerful influence on → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

Hermeticism subsequently entered 19th-century Masonic discourse in England with reference to Egypt, just as it had a century earlier in 18th-century France and Germany. Kenneth Robert Henderson Mackenzie (1833-1886) became the English expert on high-degree Freemasonry and para-masonic societies, documented in his *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (1875-77). Largely educated on the Continent, familiar with Austria and France, Mackenzie published a translation of the *Discoveries in Egypt, Ethiopia and the Peninsula of Sinai* (1852) by K.R. Lepsius, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Berlin. After visiting → Eliphas Lévi at Paris in 1861, Mackenzie helped establish the Soc. Ros. He referred to a Hermetic Order of Egypt as early as 1874, linking it with Lévi. Mackenzie’s inspiration for such paramasonic orders associated with an “Egyptian” Orient was again evident in his Order of Ishmael (est. 1872). Given his access to old *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* sources, Mackenzie may have posthumously supplied the grade-system for the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (earliest documents, 1886).

The 1870s thus witnessed a certain revival in the use of Hermeticism as a collective term for the Western esoteric traditions with regard to their Egyptian (Hellenistic) origins. In her articles of 1874-1875, Blavatsky had discussed Kabbalah and Rosicrucianism to distinguish occultism from → spiritualism. By September 1875, however, when writing her first book *Isis Unveiled* (1877), she gave much greater prominence to Hermeticism, → Neoplatonism, and Kabbalah than Rosicrucianism in her presentation of the Western esoteric tradi-

tion. Her early travels and inspiration in Egypt and the Middle East during the 1850s led to an “Egyptian” theme in the early → Theosophical Society (TS). Her first masters, Serapis Bey and Tuitit Bey, were members of a Brotherhood of Luxor. “Hermetic”, “Egyptological” and “Rosicrucian” were among the names proposed for the new Theosophical Society in September 1875. Its actual adopted name was proposed by Charles Sotheran (1847-1902), an English Freemason, U.S. representative of the Swedenborgian Rite (est. 1859), and author of a biography of → Cagliostro, the founder of Egyptian Freemasonry. Blavatsky responded to Sotheran’s “Egyptian” references as more suited to her new revelation than the Christian overtones of Rosicrucianism.

## 2. THE KINGSFORD-MAITLAND

### HERMETIC SOCIETY (1884-1887)

The term “Hermetic” later served as a means of emphasising Western esoteric traditions in the vicinity of the Theosophical Society with its later, post-1880 interest in India and a revelation by Masters (*Mahatmas*) of an ancient wisdom-religion descended through Tibetan Buddhism. The first such Hermetic Society was founded in 1884 under the presidency of → Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-1888). The origins of this Hermetic Society in Anna Kingsford’s own vocation throw much light on its representation of Greek and Christian esoteric traditions.

Dr Anna Kingsford, the young wife of an Anglican clergyman, had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1870, become an outspoken advocate of vegetarianism and anti-vivisection, and went in 1874 to study medicine in Paris, as the Sorbonne had recently opened its doors to women students. Anna Kingsford was an extraordinarily beautiful woman, highly intelligent and a fluent public speaker. While residing in Paris together with her colleague, Edward Maitland (1824-1897), she had begun to have prophetic dreams in 1875-1876, later progressing in 1877 to inner illuminations and celestial visions. These illuminations, published posthumously as “*Clothed with the Sun*” (1889) involved the Graeco-Egyptian and Christian mysteries, hymns to Hermes, the Adonai, and elemental divinities, revelations regarding the meaning of sin, death, and redemption, the esoteric significance of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, and an ecstatic cosmological vision. Kingsford learned from her illuminators that Christianity had existed among the ancients as a hidden, esoteric doctrine and thus complemented rather than supplanted pagan religions. It is noteworthy that Eliphas Lévi’s



literary revival of → magic (after 1856) had created in Paris a new interest in the Hermetic tradition based on Judaeo-Christian traditions, and also made French esotericists possibly less receptive later on to the Eastern wisdom of Anglo-Indian Theosophy. Marie, Countess of Caithness (1830-1895), an aristocratic supporter of spiritualism, befriended Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland in Paris and encouraged them to read books by → Jacob Boehme and Eliphas Lévi.

Back in London, Kingsford and Maitland gave a series of private lectures in May-June 1881 on Esoteric Christianity, published anonymously as *The Perfect Way, or the Finding of Christ* (1882). Their purpose was “the restoration of the esoteric philosophy or Theosophy of the West, and the interpretation thereby of the Christian and kindred religions”. Kabbalah began to feature in Kingsford’s revelation: in July 1881 she had a vision of kabbalistic doctrine, soon authenticated by subsequent study of → Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbala Denudata*. Another friend in France, Baron Guisepppe Spedalieri, the literary heir of Lévi, also confirmed the kabbalistic nature of *The Perfect Way*.

Among their audiences were some members of the British Theosophical Society, founded in London on 27 June 1878 as a branch of the New York society. These included its chief organizer and first president, Charles Carleton Massey (1838-1905), also among the founders of the New York society; Dr George Wyld (1821-1906), an eminent medical homeopath with an interest in phrenology and → Mesmerism; the Hon. Roden Noel (1834-1894), and Isabel de Steiger (1836-1927), who had studied the Hermetic tradition with Mrs Mary Anne Atwood, *née* South (1817-1910), an elderly lady long immersed in → Christian Theosophy and author of *A Suggestive Enquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850).

Friction soon developed between Kingsford and Maitland, and the (Adyar) Theosophists. In March 1881 Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840-1921) was back from India to publish his account of the Theosophists, Blavatsky’s phenomena, and the mysterious Masters, as *The Occult World* (1881). Maitland thought Sinnett’s initiation into (Eastern) Theosophy rather rudimentary, noting that he dilated more on mediumship than spiritual vision, and even denied → reincarnation (on the basis of *Isis Unveiled*). Kingsford and Maitland upheld the doctrine of reincarnation and thereby unleashed some confusion among the London Theosophists in the course of their 1882 lectures. Divergences of interest between their views and those of the

Theosophists in India were apparent in an ambiguous review of *The Perfect Way* in *The Theosophist* (May 1882), written either by Sinnett or Subba Row. Meanwhile, Anna Kingsford’s charismatic lectures and inspired letters were winning her more friends among the English and French Theosophists. In August 1882 Maitland received a letter from Gerard Finch, a member of the British Theosophical Society, suggesting he and Kingsford play a more prominent role in the Society, as it was now languishing. After some correspondence with Massey, now president, Anna Kingsford was elected president, and Maitland vice-president, of the British Theosophical Society on 7 January 1883, which, on her suggestion, was afterwards designated the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

Her first public appearance as president at a reception on 17 July 1883 was attended by Sinnett, who was again over from India, this time to publish his new book, *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883), on (Eastern) Theosophical doctrine. Sinnett adhered to his exclusive revelation through a secret lodge of Himalayan adepts, an attractive marvel to many Theosophists, while Maitland and Kingsford emphasised universal access to theosophy offered by visionary experience, and were offended by the evident hostility of the Indian Theosophists towards Christianity. By November 1883, Kingsford wrote to Madame de Steiger that Sinnett sought to silence ‘every other voice but that of the “Mahatmas”’. A outright schism soon developed in the London Lodge between members interested in the Kingsford-Maitland revelation of Western mysteries and those impressed by Sinnett’s dogmatic insistence on the sole authority of the Himalayan Masters. At a meeting of the London Lodge on 7 April 1884, chaired by Olcott, Kingsford and Maitland were initially deposed, with Finch and Sinnett taking their respective offices. In an atmosphere charged with conflict, Blavatsky unexpectedly arrived from Paris to settle matters and took charge of the disorderly meeting. Blavatsky’s Masters had already, in letters of December 1883 and January 1884, welcomed Anna Kingsford’s presidency, approving of her views on animal vivisection and vegetarianism, and recognising the additional appeal of her Western mysteries to English audiences. With Blavatsky’s timely intervention, it was thus agreed that Kingsford should form a new group called the Hermetic Lodge, Theosophical Society to accommodate her numerous supporters, while the London Lodge should continue. However, many members of the two lodges still wished to attend each other’s meetings. As dual

lodge membership had been ruled out by Olcott, the Hermetic Lodge charter was returned and Kingsford and Maitland founded an independent, extramural Hermetic Society on 9 May 1884, which any TS members were entitled to attend. Others cultivating the Western esoteric tradition also joined, including → Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), a young Freemason, member of the Soc. Ros. since 1882, and a student of the Kabbalah. Both he and → William W. Westcott (1848-1925), subsequent co-founders of the Golden Dawn, gave lectures and became honorary members of the Hermetic Society. Its secretary, W.F. Kirby, also later joined the Golden Dawn.

The name was chosen with regard to Hermes [Trismegistus] as ‘the supreme initiator into the Sacred Mysteries of existence . . .’. Its chief aim was ‘to promote the comparative study of the philosophical and religious systems of the East and the West; especially of the Greek Mysteries and the Hermetic Gnosis, and its allied schools, the Kabalistic, Pythagorean, Platonic, and Alexandrian, – these being inclusive of Christianity, – with a view to the elucidation of their original esoteric and real doctrine, and the adaption of its expression to modern requirements’. Kingsford and Maitland’s lecture programme focused on Hermeticism, Kabbalah, and Christian mysteries. The summer session of June and July 1884 comprised weekly lectures on the correspondence of the Christian Creed to the ancient sacred mysteries. Around this time, she expanded her commentary on the Kabbalah with complex glyphs representing the body and soul, male and female, and spiritual regeneration, based on the Seal of Solomon and the Tree of Life. In September 1884 she received a further illumination of ‘The Mysteries of the Kingdoms of the Seven Spheres’, which matched the verses of the Creed to correspondences with seven archangels, planets, rays, colours and Graeco-Egyptian gods. In 1885 the weekly meetings of the Hermetic Society resumed from April to July with lectures from Kingsford and Maitland on the Hermetic fragment *Kore Kosmou*, the symbology of the Old Testament, interpretations of the Gospels and the Communion of Saints. The third session ran from April to July 1886 with Kingsford lecturing on Bible Hermeneutics and Maitland on the “Higher Alchemy”, their Hermetic view of regeneration and resurrection. In June 1886 Mathers lectured on the Kabbalah. Many lectures of the Hermetic Society were later published as *The Credo of Christendom* (1916). The lectures were read by the elderly Mrs Atwood, the mentor of Isabelle de Steiger, whose opinion as a Christian Hermeticist was

especially valued by Maitland and Kingsford. Kingsford and Maitland pursued further Hermetic researches, publishing a translation of some Trismegistic treatises known as *The Virgin of the World* (1885) and a new edition of *Astrology Theologized* (1886) originally written by → Valentin Weigel. Both works carried lengthy introductions by their editors, placing them in the Hermetic-Christian tradition. Anna Kingsford fell ill in September 1886 and sought recovery and convalescence abroad. Her health continued to deteriorate and the session was abandoned for 1887. Following her death in February 1888, the Hermetic Society fell into abeyance. Edward Maitland devoted the rest of his life to writing *The Life of Anna Kingsford* (1896) and otherwise seeking to proclaim their ‘new gospel of interpretation’.

Despite its brief life, the Hermetic Society highlighted the Theosophical Society’s need to accommodate Hellenistic, kabbalistic, and Christian theosophy together with Oriental religions, in order to appeal to Europeans. Interest in Kabbalah had already revived among esotericists, once Blavatsky herself had drawn attention to the Kabbalah in *Isis Unveiled*. Mathers discussed Kabbalah with Blavatsky and was already using her book in 1883 to compile his own translation of the *Sephir Zohar*, published as *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887), tellingly dedicated to Kingsford and Maitland. Blavatsky and her Masters evidently recognised a risk of sectarian isolation if the Theosophical Society was identified exclusively with Oriental religion by Sinnett and other enthusiastic converts.

After the demise of the Hermetic Society, the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (est. 1884) and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (est. 1888) became the chief vehicles for Western esoteric traditions in Britain, America, and France, concentrating on practical ceremonial magic, Kabbalah, and the Hermetic sciences of → astrology and alchemy. Blavatsky founded her Esoteric Section and Inner Group to pursue studies in Eastern metaphysics and macro-microcosmic correspondences until her death in May 1891. Under the presidency of → Annie Besant, Indian (Adyar and London) Theosophy became more identified with Oriental religion, especially after its discovery of Krishnamurti as the coming messiah. Secessions by leading Theosophists from Adyar such as → George Robert Stow Mead (1909), → Rudolf Steiner (1912) and → Dion Fortune (1928) all reflect the resurgent interest in Western esoteric traditions in the Theosophical Society, thus echoing the earlier schism of the Hermetic Society.

By 1890 the word “Hermetic” was well relaunched into esoteric discourse, frequently appearing in the titles of books, editions, and articles by Westcott, Mead, and → Arthur Edward Waite, the leading author and editor of the modern occult revival. Between the two World Wars, Hermeticism continued to feature as a cognate term for alchemy, astrology, Kabbalah, and magic among Golden Dawn derivative groups and in the works of → Manley Palmer Hall. In the 1960s its usage expanded in the scholarly community following the seminal researches into Renaissance culture by Frances Yates and her students at the Warburg Institute, London. Besides its scholarly currency, “Hermeticism” presently serves to distinguish magico-esoteric traditions of Graeco-Egyptian (Hellenistic) origin from neo-pagan, nativist traditions derived from the ancient Celts, Teutons, and extra-European peoples, more current among “New Age” groups.

### 3. THE DUBLIN HERMETIC SOCIETIES (1885-1939)

Two further foundations also took the name Hermetic Society, both associated with Blavatskyan Theosophy in Ireland in the period 1885-1935. Their principal figures played a leading role as poets, scholars, and artists in the Irish Renaissance of the 1890s, namely the literary revival, the founding of the Irish National Theatre and Abbey Theatre, and a quickening interest in early Irish history, the great Celtic myths, folklore and the supernatural. The first (Dublin) Hermetic Society arose from the interests of the budding poet → William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) and his friend Charles Johnston (1867-1931). Johnston had been first introduced to Theosophy by reading A.P. Sinnett’s *The Occult World* in November 1884 and *Esoteric Buddhism* the following spring. Another account relates that shortly after Yeats had left Erasmus Smith High School, Dublin in December 1883, he loaned his friend a copy of *Esoteric Buddhism*, which both Professor Edward Dowson of Trinity College and then his London aunt Isabella Pollexfen Varley had drawn to his attention in 1884. The son of a distinguished Irish MP, Johnston was a brilliant classical scholar. His headmaster was dismayed at this enthusiasm for Theosophy and asked Yeats to discourage this interest. However, Johnston had been completely convinced of the truth of Blavatsky’s message, of the reality of the Masters, and of her position as Messenger of the Great Lodge. Yeats and Johnston now read ever more widely on esoteric subjects, including Baron von Reichenbach’s Odic force and Theosophical litera-

ture. On 15 June 1885 they founded the Hermetic Society in Dublin ‘to discover the wonders of Eastern Philosophy’. Other members included the 18-year old Claude Falls Wright, Charles Weekes, Hamilton Malcolm Magee, and Alaud Alihad. They conducted experiments and read papers at their York Street premises on the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Neoplatonists, and modern mystics and spiritualists. A professor of Oriental Languages at Trinity College lectured on “magicians of the East”. In the spring 1885 Johnston visited the Theosophists in London, meeting both Sinnett and Mohini Chatterji (1858-1936), a personal pupil of Master Koot Hoomi and one of the most brilliant Hindu members of the early Theosophical Society. Johnson made a vigorous public defense of Blavatsky following the defamatory SPR Report on her activities in India, which had only increased his zeal for Theosophy.

In April 1886 he and several friends founded an official Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society, which effectively succeeded his and Yeats’ Hermetic Society. Charter members included Charles Johnston, his brother L.A.M. Johnston, F.J. Gregg, Hamilton Malcolm Magee, E.A. Seale, W.F. Smeeth, and R.A. Potterton. They invited Mohini Chatterji to stay in Dublin and address the Society. Abandoning earlier plans to become a missionary, Johnston studied Sanskrit at Trinity College Dublin and took the examinations for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in London, where he first visited Blavatsky in early 1887. Yeats left Dublin in May 1887 to live in London, and was introduced by Johnston to Blavatsky. Yeats soon joined the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society in London, then became her personal student in the Esoteric Section, where he proposed empirical experiments involving her *Esoteric Instructions*, based on correspondences of sound, number and color. However, Yeats’ interest in applied esotericism alienated the more metaphysically-minded members of the Esoteric Section, though not Blavatsky. He subsequently found more scope for his interests in the magical ceremonies of the Golden Dawn, which he joined in March 1890.

Already in 1885 Johnston had met the young painter and poet George William Russell (1867-1935), later known as → AE (derived from “Æon”, a Gnostic term for the spiritual offspring of the Deity), another leading member of the Irish Renaissance. Russell had already been attracted to the sacred literature of India before meeting Johnston. Less scholarly than either Yeats or Johnston, Russell did not immediately join the Dublin Lodge on its formation, but he and Johnston shared an

exploration of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita over three years before Johnston passed his final ICS examinations and left for India in October 1888, after marrying Blavatsky's niece. Johnston crowned his short career in the Bengali Civil Service with literary accolades. He became president of the Irish Literary Society with several works, including translations of *The Upanishads* (1896) and *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (1912). Russell had met Mohini Chatterji on his Dublin visit and was greatly impressed, but he also pondered Gnostic revelations and the inner illumination of Hellenistic theosophy in the formation of his own myth of mystical and artistic creation. By 1887 he had read *Light on the Path* and *The Idyll of the White Lotus*, both by Mabel Collins, a leading Theosophist in London, and then proceeded to study Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, Mohini Chatterji and Laura C. Holloway, *Man: Fragments of a Forgotten History* and Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, which he considered only partly authentic. Only in December 1890 did he finally join the Dublin Lodge.

In April 1891 the Scottish engineer, Frederick J. Dick and his wife Annie rented a row of Georgian terrace houses on Upper Ely Place which they put at the disposal of the Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society and a residential community of young disciples, which became known as the "Household". Members of this community included Russell, who lived there happily for the next six years, Edmund King, Daniel Nicol Dunlop, Hamilton Malcolm Magee, Arthur Dwyer, James Nolan, and Charles Johnston's sister Georgie. Though Yeats was no longer involved with the reorganized Hermetic Society, nor even with the Theosophical Society in London, he and Russell painted several symbolic murals in summer 1892 upon the walls of the new Lodge, which were signed "GWR, WBY". Irish-born William Quan Judge, President of the American Section of the Theosophical Society, was visiting Dublin at the time and wrote in his American Section journal, *The Path*: 'Bro. Russell has begun to illuminate the walls of the place with wonderful paintings symbolizing the journey of the pilgrim soul'. Russell's and Yeats' paths gradually diverged with his pursuit of → mysticism and Theosophy, and the latter's focus on magic, myth, and artistic power. Violet North, a young English Theosophist with literary and psychic gifts, and James Pryse, an American Theosophist who had run Blavatsky's printing press in London, joined the Household in early 1895. Russell and Pryse collaborated in producing the *Irish Theosophist* (1892-97), until the latter's return to the United States in December to con-

duct the affairs of the American Theosophical Society as Judge was seriously ill. Violet subsequently took over Pryse's work on the journal, romance blossomed and she and Russell married in June 1898. In 1896 the Dublin Theosophists expected the Celtic Avatar, based on prophecies of divine incarnations of a Ray of the Logos, another instance of the mutual influence of literary, esoteric and political ideas in the Irish Renaissance.

Meanwhile Annie Besant's and Olcott's dispute with William Quan Judge, running since December 1893 over allegations that the latter had forged Mahatma letters to himself, climaxed with the secession of the American Theosophists and their election of Judge as their permanent president in April 1895. At the 4 July 1895 meeting of the European Section in London, the majority of the English Theosophists supported Mrs Besant, while the Irish delegates withdrew, proclaimed themselves the Theosophical Society in Europe and also elected Judge as their president. The Irish contingent then elected its own national officers with Dunlop as president, Russell vice-president, and Dick secretary. After Judge's death, the Dublin Lodge affiliated with the American Theosophists under Katherine Tingley, but in March 1898 Russell fell out with her after she disapproved of one of his articles and he resigned from her Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society.

Russell then founded the (second) Hermetic Society for members of the old Dublin Lodge, a group which met weekly first at his home, after May 1900 at its own premises in Dawson Chambers, to discuss Blavatsky's teachings and certain mystical classics. While still living in the Household, Russell had read much esoteric literature besides Theosophy, including Plato, the Hermetic writings, the Chaldaean Oracles, Lao Tzu, Sufi poetry, and modern texts of psychical research such as Carl Du Prel's *Philosophy of Mysticism*. His Theosophy left plenty of room for admiration of the Psalms and Prophets, and he venerated St John, St Paul and Origen. The Hermetic Society reflected this breadth of vision and attracted budding and some later renowned poets, including James Joyce, Padraic Colum, James Starkey (pseud. Seumas O'Sullivan) (1879-1958), and an overlapping membership with George Moore's literary circle. The second Hermetic Society fulfilled the promise of the first Dublin foundation, demonstrating the important imaginal contribution Hermeticism and Theosophy made to the Irish Renaissance. A copy of *The Secret Doctrine* was kept in the room, where Russell regularly spoke on the common wellsprings of literature and mysticism. The Hermetic Society came to an end in



late 1904, when Russell and many of his disciples joined the Adyar Theosophical Society. On 20 October 1904, Olcott issued a charter for the revived Dublin Lodge, whose members included George and Violet Russell, James Starkey (Seumas O'Sullivan), and H.F. Norman. In 1909 Russell left the Theosophical Society again, dismayed at the leadership of Annie Besant and → Charles Leadbeater, and refounded the Hermetic Society. Its Thursday evening meetings resumed in the Leinster School of Music on Harcourt Street. The room was unadorned save for one of Russell's visionary paintings and Blavatsky's book. Russell's teachings were in fact closely based on those of *The Secret Doctrine*, illustrated with a rich fund of literary and esoteric commentaries. His political work and American lecture tours brought him an international public but he was still running the Hermetic Society until he sold his Dublin home and left for London in July 1933.

Russell entrusted the leadership of the Hermetic Society to Captain P.G. Bowen (1882-1940), whom he had first met after the latter's return to Ireland after First World War. At Russell's request, Bowen published a remarkable book on the inner life, *The Occult Way* (1933), later followed by *The Sayings of the Ancient One* (1935), based on initiation into a source of the wisdom-tradition he had discovered while working in South Africa. Bowen also published a "Back-to-Blavatsky" piece *Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy* (1932), attributed to his father Robert Bowen, allegedly a member of her circle in London. Bowen dissolved the Society at the outbreak of war.

[1a. Hermeticism:] Ehregott Daniel Colberg, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisches Christenthum, 2 Teile*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1690-1691 ♦ Johann Konrad Dippel, *Eröffneter Weg zum Frieden mit Gott und allen Creaturen*, Amsterdam, 1709 ♦ Anton Joseph Kirchweger, *Aurea Catena Homeri*, Franckfurt & Leipzig, 1723 ♦ Samuel Richter, *Theo-Philosophia Theoretico-Practica*, Breslau, 1711 ♦ idem, *Sinceri Renati sämtliche Philosophisch- und Chymische Schriften*, 1741 ♦ Georg von Welling, *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*, Homburg vor der Hohe, 1735 ♦ Johann Jakob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, 6 vols., Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1742-1767, vols. 1 & 4 ♦ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Die älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechtes*, 1744 ♦ Friedrich Joseph Wilhelm Schröder, *Neue alchymische Bibliothek für den Naturkundiger unsers Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt & Leipzig: Bronner, 1772-1774 ♦ Antoine Court de Gébelin, *Le Monde Primitif, analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne*, 9 vols., Paris, 1773-1782 ♦ *Hermetisches A.B.C., deren ächten Weisen alter und neuen Zeiten von Stein der Weisen*, 4 Teile, Berlin: Christian Ulrich Ringmacher, 1778-79

[1b. Hermetic Society, Bochum (1796-1819):] Die Hermetische Gesellschaft, "Höhere Chemie", *Der Reichsanzeiger oder Allgemeines Intelligenzblatt zum Behuf der Justiz, der Polizey und der bürgerlichen Gewerbe im Teutschen Reiche wie auch zur öffentlichen Unterhaltung der Leser über gemeinnützige Gegenstände aller Art* (Gotha) (1796), Sp. 6034 ♦ C.H. Wendelin and Die Hermetische Gesellschaft, "Naturkunde", idem, (1797), Sp. 948-95 ♦ "Erste Erklärung der Hermetischen Gesellschaft fürs Publicum, nebst Antworten auf die an sie eingegangenen Briefe", idem (1797), Sp. 1032-1038 ♦ "Naturkunde. Über die Geschwindigkeit aufeinander folgender Vorstellungen in der Seele", idem (1797), Sp. 1093-1102 ♦ "Gemeinnützige Schriften: Antwort der Hermetischen Gesellschaft auf verschiedenste an sie eingegangene Briefe und Aufsätze", idem (1797), Sp. 2117-2125 ♦ "Naturkunde. Die hermetische Gesellschaft an ihre Freunde", idem (1798), Sp. 805-813, subsequent articles in idem, (1798), Sp. 841-843; (1798), Sp. 869-877; (1798), Sp. 879-881; (1798), Sp. 893-898; (1798), Sp. 3111-3117; (1799), Sp. 621-623; (1802), Sp. 3521-3525 ♦ Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, "Menschenkunde: Ueber die Hermetische Gesellschaft", *Westfälischer Anzeiger* (1802), Sp. 1121-1131 ♦ idem, "Über die Hermetische Gesellschaft", *Gilberts Annalen der Physik* 12 (1802), 493-496 ♦ "Antwort an Hrn. Benzenberg wegen seines Aufsatzes im 71. ten Stücke des W. Anzeigers die hermetische Gesellschaft betreffend", *Westfälischer Anzeiger* (1802), Sp. 1213-1215

[2. Kingsford-Maitland Hermetic Society (1884-1887):] Anna Bonus Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Perfect Way; or, The Finding of Christ*, fifth ed., edited and a biographical preface by S.H. Hart, London: John Watkins, 1923 (first ed. 1881) ♦ *The Hermetic Works: The Virgin of the World of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*, edited by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, London: George Redway, 1885 ♦ "Astrology Theologized": *The Spiritual Hermeneutics of Astrology and Holy Writ* by Valentin Weigel, reprint of 1649 ed. and with prefatory essay by Anna Kingsford, London: George Redway, 1886 ♦ "Clothed with the Sun" being the Book of the Illuminations of Anna (Bonus) Kingsford, edited by Edward Maitland, third ed., edited by S.H. Hart, London: John Watkins, 1937 (first ed. 1889) ♦ Edward Maitland, *The Story of Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland and of the New Gospel of Interpretation*, third and enlarged ed., edited by S.H. Hart, Birmingham: Ruskin Press, 1905 (first ed. 1893) ♦ Anna Bonus Kingsford, *The Credo of Christendom and Other Addresses and Essays on Esoteric Christianity*, biographical preface and edited by S.H. Hart, London: John Watkins, 1916 ♦ Edward Maitland (ed.), *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*, 2 vols., third ed., edited by Samuel Hopgood Hart, London: John Watkins, 1913 (first ed. 1896) ♦ *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, ed. A.T. Barker, third ed., Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972 (first ed. 1923)

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## Hermetism

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## I. THE UNITY OF THE UNIVERSE

The term “Hermetism” is used here to indicate the specific religious worldview of the so-called philosophical Hermetica [→ Hermetic literature I]. Its most characteristic feature is the idea of an indissoluble interrelationship between God, the cosmos and man, which implies the unity of the universe. Its final aim is to lead its adepts to the worship of the supreme God as the source of being and eventually to union with him. However, the hermetic writings show a great divergence with respect to the philosophical and religious ideas that were used to argue in favour of these fundamental tenets. Hermetism never knew a coherent doctrinal system, as will become abundantly clear from the following exposition.

It was a firm hermetic conviction that everything that exists, both in the material and the spiritual world, is fundamentally one, because it derives from *the One*, God. Hermes says in the first chapters of the *Asclepius* that ‘all things are part of the One, or the One is all things’; before the creation everything existed in the creator, who alone is everything. The same idea is expressed in the hymn that concludes C.H. V: ‘You are everything, and there is nothing else; what is not, you are as well. You are all that has come to be; you are what has not come to be’ (V, 11). And, to give one more example, Asclepius writes in his letter to king Ammon, in C.H. XVI, 19: ‘If all things are parts of God, then everything is God. Therefore, in making all things, he makes himself’.

The view that all things have their unity in God was based on the fundamental idea of a close interrelationship between God, the cosmos and man. According to the Armenian *Definitions* 7, 5: ‘God is within himself, the world is in God, and man in the world’. And Hermes says in *Asclepius* 10: ‘God, the Lord of eternity, is the first, the world is second, man is third’ (also in Stobaeus, *Fragm.* XI, 6; cf. Armenian *Definitions* 1, 1). God is the father of the cosmos; and the cosmos is the father of everything it contains (C.H. IX, 8), and is, therefore, called the second god (C.H. VIII, 2, 5). Man is called ‘the third living being’ but he is not explicitly said to be the third God. According to C.H. X, 14, man is the son of the son of God: ‘So there are three levels of being: God the father and the good, the cosmos, and man. God holds the cosmos and the cosmos the human being. And in this way the cosmos becomes the son of God and man the son of the cosmos – a grandson of God, as it were’. A similar figure of speech occurs in the Middleplatonist and Neopythagorean philosopher Numenius (Dillon, 367). Through the intermediary of these

two all things exist, but the One is their final cause (C.H. X, 25). The cosmos and man are also called images of God: ‘the second god is made by the first god in his image’, and ‘man, the third living being, came to be in the image of the cosmos’ (C.H. VIII, 2 and 5). But as such he is himself also the image of God: the human being reveres the first image, the cosmos, ‘but he is not unaware that he is himself in the image of God too, for there are two images of God, the world and man’ (*Asclepius* 10). In a passage that was to have a long-lasting influence (see below, section 8), the author of the *Asclepius* says that the human being was primarily created in order to contemplate the beautiful cosmos, which the Lord of the universe loved as his own child (8).

This idea of the indissoluble interrelationship between God, cosmos and man dominates the hermetic worldview and its piety. But within this general structure of the universe the hermetists sometimes introduced subordinate divisions of the divine and the material world that were borrowed from Greek philosophy or Judaism. The idea that the world is an image of God presupposes the Middle Platonist view that the ideas, i.e. the forms after which Plato’s Demiurge created the world, are enclosed in the mind (*nous*) of the supreme God, as his thoughts. All earthly things are images, reflections, of their eternal forms within God, and in this sense the world as a whole is an image of God, just as the species man is an image of the idea of mankind (*Asclepius* 4). The Middle Platonists usually made a distinction between the supreme God, called the Good and One, who was considered the (first) Mind (*Nous*), and his active mind, which contains the ideas, called the second god or second *Nous* or the *Logos* and identified with Plato’s Demiurge (Dillon). This distinction is also made in the *Poimandres* (C.H. I), 9: ‘The Mind who is God . . . gave birth to a second Mind, a craftsman’. In the *Asclepius* this second god is called *Aiōn*, i.e. living and life-giving Eternity, which always stands still along with the supreme God, ‘holding within it a world that had not come to be’ (30-32). According to C.H. XI, 15, Eternity (*Aiōn*) is the image of God, and the cosmos that of Eternity (and the sun is the image of the cosmos, and man of the sun). The hermetists could obviously adhere to different views concerning the structure of being. The *Asclepius* attributes the creative activity to a third mind, that of the cosmos, which leads the author, in 32, to distinguish between four kinds of minds: (1) God, (2) the absolute mind, *Aiōn*, resembling divinity and containing the archetypes of the visible world, (3) the

mind of the cosmos, the receptacle of all visible forms, and (4) the human mind. This fourfold hierarchical structure of mind in the universe stands alone in hermetic literature, but it was also propagated by the *virii novi* ("modernists"), a group of hermetic Platonists with gnostic inclinations that was criticized by Arnobius of Sicca (ca. 300). They said that the rational human soul 'holds the fourth place after God, the source of everything, and after the two minds (*mentes geminas*)' (*Adversus nationes*, II, 25; cf. Festugière 1967, 260-312). The idea that there are three divine hypostases is not uncommon in Middle- and Neoplatonism (Festugière 1967, 123-125), but that they are all called "mind" is exceptional. The *virii novi* need not have been dependent on the Latin *Asclepius*, which expresses itself not very clearly on this point. Most probably both the *virii novi* and the author of the *Asclepius* borrowed this idea from an existing hermetic or platonist source. The *Asclepius* is a composite work, which explains that it also contains ideas that do not concur with those just mentioned. In chapter 14, the author repeats a common Stoic doctrine, though combined with platonist ideas, about the two principles of the universe, God and matter, of which the latter is pervaded by the divine spirit (*pneuma*). But in his wording the influence of the first verses of Genesis 1, about the spirit of God moving above the primeval chaos, is unmistakable. He says that in the beginning 'there was God and there was matter. And the spirit was with matter, or rather it was in matter, but not in the way it was in God or the principles from which the world derives were in God'. Here and also in his view, mentioned above, that man is created 'in the image of God' (Gen. 1:26), the author shows himself to be directly or indirectly influenced by a Jewish source. Scott considered the mention of the spirit a later interpolation, but that assumption is not necessary, for we know from Cyril of Alexandria that there were hermetic writings that contained speculations about the divine *pneuma* (see below).

## 2. GOD

The hermetists could not and would not avoid expressing their ideas about God in the philosophical language of their time, but at the same time this rather abstract language proved insufficient for giving voice to their religious feelings. A good example of this insufficiency is C.H. V, entitled *God is invisible and entirely visible*, in which the author impressively argues that the visible world reveals the greatness of the invisible God. At first sight this seems no more than the common Stoic argument

for the existence of God based on the perfection of the created world. But the author explicitly states that one cannot know this God of one's own accord. On the contrary, one has to implore him for the grace of enlightenment, 'if only by one of his rays' (V, 2). It was a profound hermetic conviction that true Gnosis was only possible through divine illumination (C.H. VI, 4; *Asclepius* 32). Adopting a term coined by Plato, the hermetist of C.H. V calls God 'the Father of All', and he adds that the creator alone fully deserves this title, because his essence exists in eternally creating everything, without which he even would not be eternal himself (cf. also C.H. II, 14-17: the only appropriate names for God are 'the Good One' and 'Father'). 'If forced to say something still more daring', the author is prepared to declare that 'God's essence is to be pregnant of all things and to produce them', which is a veiled reference to his androgyny (V, 9). That God is androgynous is repeatedly stated in the *Poimandres* (C.H. I, 9 and 15). According to the *Asclepius*, 20, God is 'completely filled with the fecundity of both sexes' (*utraque sexus fecunditate plenissimus*), which then, however, is explained in a more philosophical way: since he is 'ever pregnant with his own will, he always begets whatever he wishes to procreate'. But in the final hymn of the *Asclepius*, in its original version as preserved in the Coptic *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI, 7), the bisexual language of procreation comes to the surface in plain terms: 'We know you, O Womb of every creature, We know you, O Womb that is pregnant by the member (*physis* = phallus) of the Father. We know you, O begetting Father who eternally exists' (VI, 25-29). In Greece, the idea of divine androgyny played a role in the Orphic theogony, according to which Phanes/Erikepaios came forth from the primordial egg as an androgynous being, but outside Orphism the idea of an androgynous deity was unknown in Greek religion. Lactantius correctly observed that Hermes and Orpheus were in agreement with respect to the bisexuality of God (*Divinae Institutiones*, IV, 8, 3ff.). He could have added that this idea also played an important role in → Gnosticism. It seems certain that we have to look to Egypt for the origin of the hermetic idea of God's androgyny, for this idea, and its expression in bold sexual terms as well, was very common in Egyptian religion. At this point and also with respect to the idea of divine self-generation, the hermetists apparently continued an ancient Egyptian tradition (Daumas, 17-20; Zandee, 120-125; Scott III, 135-138). The notion of the supreme God's androgyny led to the idea of his being born out of himself. The *Asclepius*

says that God's nature has been wholly born out of itself (*Asclepius* 14: *ex se tota*), and that he is 'in himself, by himself and wholly enclosing himself' (30: *in se est et a se est et circum se totus est*). The idea of divine self-generation is also expressed in C.H. IV, 10; VIII, 2 ('if he came to be, it was by himself') and in *Korē Kosmou* 58 (Stobaeus, *Fragm.* XXIII; NF, IV, 19). That the supreme principle, or God, was "unoriginated" (*agenētos*) or "unbegotten/unborn" (*agemētos*) was a philosophical commonplace, shared by Greek philosophers and Christian theologians alike. It was a way to express the transcendence of the first principle of the universe, as was also, for instance, the assertion that God has no name or all names (C.H. V, 10; *Asclepius* 20). The terms for "self-generated/self-begotten" (*autogenēs*, *autogen(n)ētos*, *autogonos*, *autogenethlos*, et al.) were less common for the supreme God, but they were often applied to the second level of divine being, not only in Hermetism and Gnosticism, but in → Neoplatonism as well. In the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (NHC VI, 57, 13-18 and 63, 21-23), the author distinguishes between three levels of being: the Unbegotten (*agenētos*) God, the Self-begotten (*autogenētos*) One, and the Begotten (*ge[n]nēton*), of which the second most probably is identical with the heavenly Anthropos of the *Poimandres* and several Gnostic systems. Lactantius repeatedly says that → Hermes Trismegistus called God 'without father' (*apatōr*) and 'without mother' (*amētōr*), 'since he was out of himself and by himself' (*Divinae Institutiones* I, 7, 2; IV, 13, 2; *Epitome* 4, 4, NF IV, 106-107; Augustine explicitly denied this, *De Trinitate* I, 1). The hermetic idea of the self-generation of the supreme God most probably derives from the Egyptian view on the origin of the primeval gods (Daumas, 18-20; Zandee, 123-124). A hieroglyphic text from the Persian period says of Amon-Re: 'There was no father who begot him, no mother who was pregnant by his seed', and a hymn from a Theban tomb of the 19th dynasty says of the same god that he is the one who 'spontaneously came into being, who brought forth his mother and begot his father'. Another Theban hymn to the sun-god uses the same bold language as found in the hermetic *Prayer of Thanksgiving* quoted above, but now in a negative sense: 'no vulva has brought him forth, no phallus begot him'. Also Thot, as primeval god, is called the one 'who brought himself forth'.

Of course, the hermetists did not completely reject the traditional gods and demons of Greek and Egyptian religion, but these divine beings did not play a part of any importance in hermetic piety,

which was wholly directed at the mystic union with the supreme God. The role of the heavenly and earthly gods and demons will be discussed in the subsequent sections on the cosmos and mankind.

### 3. THE COSMOS

According to the general hermetic view, the cosmos is the second living being or the second god, who incessantly produces everything that exists. But within this general scheme, the hermetic writings show a great variety with respect to the manner in which the creation actually takes place. A few of these ideas may be mentioned here. The creation story could be told in the form of a myth, as in the *Poimandres* (C.H. I), which in its turn, together with the creation story of Genesis, apparently strongly influenced the description in C.H. III (cf. Dodd, 210-234). But at the same time, the latter treatise combined this with the view that it was the gods of the planets and the fixed stars that created plants, animals and human beings. The human soul was created 'through the course of the cycling gods', i.e. the planets (III, 3; cf. I, 19). But according to C.H. XVI it is the sun that through its energies creates and transforms all existing things. It drives the chariot of the cosmos and in order to prevent the cosmos going out of control it holds fast the reins, 'which are life and soul and spirit and immortality and becoming'. The *Asclepius*, 2-3, gives a more philosophical explanation through the introduction of the World-soul and Nature: soul and matter, embraced by Nature, reproduce the images, i.e. the ideas, into an infinite number of sensible forms. Nature imprints these forms on matter by means of the four elements and leads the whole series of beings up to the vault of heaven, 'so that they will be pleasing in the sight of God' (cf. Genesis 1:31). Borrowing from another source, the *Asclepius*, in chapter 19, presents a hierarchy of beings that control everything that exists. A distinction is made between hypercosmic, intelligible gods (*theoi noētoi*), who are called *ousiarchai*, and cosmic, sensible gods (*theoi aisthētoi*), i.e. the celestial bodies. The *ousiarchs* are gods who rule over divine entities of a secondary order (Festugière 1967, 121-130). Zeus/Jupiter is the *ousiarch* of the heaven of the fixed stars, through which he gives life to all beings; Light is the *ousiarch* of the sun, through which we receive the good gift of light; the *ousiarch* of the 36 decans of the zodiac is called Pantomorphus or Omniform, because he gives the various classes of being their own form; Fate (*heimarmenē*) is the *ousiarch* of the seven spheres of the planets, through which all changes occur by the immutable law of nature, etc. In this way, all



things are connected and comply with the Master of the universe, God, in whom they are in fact one. The gods have lost any religious meaning here; they are mere forces that steer the creation and course of the world.

This variety of ideas shows that there was not one specific hermetic doctrine on these points. As a matter of fact, the hermetists' primary concern was the ultimate cause of the universe, God, and therefore the aim of all their discussions of cosmology and creation was to bring the reader or listener through admiration of the cosmos to the adoration of and mystical union with the supreme God. In the *Asclepius*, 12-13, Hermes even goes so far as to attach merely a relative value to the traditional sciences: they are useful only in so far as they lead us to contemplation and adoration of the godhead. In his view the sophistic scholars have corrupted true philosophy by the 'unashamed curiosity of their mind', and, therefore, he prophesizes that 'after us there will no longer be any sincere love for philosophy, which solely consists in the desire to know the deity by frequent contemplation and holy piety'.

In the first half of the 20th century it became an established scholarly opinion that in ancient Hermetism there had been two quite different currents, which adhered to two irreconcilable hermetic doctrines. According to one of them, represented by C.H. V, VIII, and IX, the world is good and beautiful, enclosed in and permeated by God, who can be attained and experienced through the contemplation of the cosmos. According to the other view, represented by C.H. I, IV, VI, VII, and XIII, the world is fundamentally bad, and for that reason cannot be the product of the completely transcendent God but must have been created by a second god. The only way to attain the supreme God and become united with him is by renouncing the world in which the enlightened man knows himself to be a stranger. Accordingly, Festugière distinguished between two kinds of Hermetism. The first, represented by C.H. I, IV, VII and XIII, knew a more or less coherent doctrine of salvation, dominated by the pessimistic world-view. The other, represented by most of the other hermetic treatises, was characterized by a general pious attitude, which tended to bring the participants in a hermetic discussion to spiritual and moral elevation and to worship of the Creator of this beautiful world (1967, 39). There is no doubt that these observations are correct in so far as the C.H. does contain quite different statements about the status of evil in the world and man. However, reading the hermetic treatises more closely, it becomes evident that the problem of evil was a serious concern for

the more "optimistic" writers too (see below). Hermetism presents itself not as a coherent set of doctrines that should be believed in, but as a way of moral and spiritual progress that leads to an ever better understanding of the world we live in and to knowledge of, and even union with, the transcendent God who is its final cause. Admiration of the beauty of the cosmos is an indispensable first step on the way of Hermes, but the more one advances on this way the more it becomes clear that the world and worldly things tend to lead the human being astray, so that he no longer strives to attain knowledge of God. This experience may lead to such strong expressions as the one found in C.H. VI, 4: 'The cosmos is the plenitude of evil, as God is the plenitude of the good'. Moreover, because Hermetism was not a coherent doctrinal system and human beings are simply not all equally optimistic or pessimistic, it is only to be expected that the force of evil in the world was variously appreciated.

#### 4. MANKIND

The glory and tragedy of the human condition is that, of all living beings, man alone has a twofold nature, earthly and mortal on the one hand and divine and immortal on the other. This basic idea of hermetic anthropology underlies all discussions of the position of the human being in the created world. The explanation of this singular status of man could be given in the form of a myth or more philosophically. The mythological explanation is to be found in the *Poimandres*, though even there philosophical and "scientific" explanations are clearly discernible. According to the myth, the heavenly Man (*Anthrōpos*) and unreasoning lower Nature fell in love with each other and as a result of their union brought forth the human being: 'For this reason, of all living beings on earth, man alone is twofold, mortal because of the body, immortal because of the real Man' (15; also e.g. *Asclepius* 7 and 20; Armenian *Definitions* 6, 1). This human being is called (16) 'a wonder most wondrous' (*thauma thaumasiōtaton*), which means that man is an extremely amazing being, not 'a great miracle'. This expression must be the background of that most famous statement in the *Asclepius*, 6: 'For that reason, Asclepius, man is a great wonder (*magnum miraculum est homo*), a living being to be worshipped and honoured'. The apposition to *homo* shows that, here too, *magnum miraculum* does not mean 'great miracle' but 'something extremely amazing' (also Armenian *Definitions* 9, 6: 'God is worthy of worship, man is worthy of admiration'). In the *Poimandres*, this most wondrous wonder of the human being is presented as



‘a mystery that has been kept hidden to the present day’, which seems to be that from the union of Man and Nature sprang seven androgynous and upright-going beings, made by Nature after the form (*eidōs*) of Man. Here, the later platonist view that man is an image of the idea of Man is obviously in the background: the life and light of the divine Anthropos respectively became the soul and mind in the human body, which was made out of the four material elements. The seven human beings most probably derive from another source. The author says that they and all other living beings remained in their primal androgynous state ‘until the end of a cycle and the beginning of ages’ (17). A new era began when they were sundered into two parts, one male and one female, and were ordered: ‘Increase in increasing and multiply in multitude’ (cf. Genesis 1:28). The author has apparently made use of a Jewish source, which has also left its traces in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, I, 29. This text says that the first seven generations of the human race lived the sinless and sexless life of the angels and that the eighth generation, seduced by the beauty of the women, introduced intercourse and procreation, which led to the birth of giants and, finally, to the Flood (cf. Genesis 6). Similarly, the *Poimandres* emphasizes that the focus on sexuality and procreation, though necessary for the continuation of the human race, contains the danger of forgetting one’s divine descent. Therefore the injunction to increase and multiply is accompanied by the following warning: ‘Let him who is endowed with mind (*nous*) recognize that he himself is immortal and that sexual desire is the cause of death, let him thus know all that exists’ (18). That the corporeal component of man can be a danger to its spiritual counterpart is stated explicitly: ‘he who loves the body, which is born from the error of desire, remains wandering in the dark and sensibly suffers the effects of death’ (19).

The author of the *Asclepius* subscribed to a more optimistic view of the human condition, but for him evil was a great problem too. According to him, the human being occupies a middle position between the gods and earthly things: he combines divinity and corporeality (6). He is so shaped that he can answer to his twofold vocation, ‘wondering at heavenly beings and worshipping them, tending earthly beings and governing them’ (*Asclepius* 8). Though he cares for and cherishes those who are beneath him, he ‘despises the part of him that is human nature, having put his trust in the divinity of his other part’ (6). Man and all living beings live through the spirit that pervades the universe, but in addition, only the human being has received a reasoning mind (*sensus* = *logos* and *nous*). Accord-

ing to C.H. IV, 2, man surpasses even the cosmos and the gods by his reason and mind (cf. also VIII, 5; XII, 12; *Asclepius* 22). Therefore, he may be called an ornament (*kosmos*) of the universe (*kosmos*), a well-ordered world in itself, a microcosm (*Asclepius* 10).

However, it is a fact of experience that many people evince unreasonable and impious behaviour. That observation led the hermetists to the view that not everybody has *nous*: rather, it is a divine grace bestowed on only a few people (e.g. *Asclepius* 7 and 18; C.H. I, 22; IV, 3). It should be realized that *nous*, mostly translated as “mind”, is not the discursive, analytical human faculty of reason (*logos*), but the intuitive, all-embracing vision by which one understands the sense and coherence of the whole of reality. The question why apparently not all human beings have *nous*, i.e. the problem of evil, was a point of much concern for the hermetists. There was a general consensus that the cause of evil was to be sought in the lower material component of the world and man. According to the *Asclepius*, 22 (= *NHC* VI, 67, 12ff.), there is an important difference between the star gods and human beings: the former ‘have been made from the purest part of nature (fire) and, therefore, they need not have understanding (*epistēmē*) or knowledge (*gnōsis*), for the immortality of the gods is for them understanding and knowledge’. Man, on the other hand, who was made from the lower material elements and, therefore, became subject to the passions and evil inclinations that are inherent in them, has been given the possibility of overcoming these vices through the gifts of understanding and gnosis. From this perspective, one might say that God created man as good and immortal! But that statement is based on man’s ultimate potentiality, which proves to be unrealizable for most people. It can only be effectuated if man is led by his divine *nous*, lives a pious life and despises his corporeality. The hatred of the body is not only recommended in such “pessimistic” treatises as *CHI*, IV (6), VI and VII, but also in more optimistic writings like the *Asclepius*, which says that ‘the malice that begrudges immortality prevents the soul from acknowledging its divine part’ (12). That immortality can only be reached if the soul, led by the divine *nous*, devotes itself to an ascetic way of life, found a succinct expression in the Armenian *Definitions* 9, 5 (of which the Greek text has been preserved in the Oxford fragments): ‘Whoever behaves well towards his body, behaves badly towards himself. Just as the body, without a soul, is a corpse, likewise soul, without *Nous*, is inert’. It was this gloomy view of the dangers to which the soul is exposed that led some hermetists to very

negative descriptions of mankind and the world in general. Strictly speaking, nothing in our world can be called good; even what is called good by ordinary speech is in fact not good at all; God is the only one who is actually good (CH VI). According to the *Asclepius*, 16, however, it is an impious question to ask 'Was God not able to put an end to evil and banish it from nature?' As a matter of fact, we read here, the Creator has endowed man with mind (*sensus = nous*), knowledge (*disciplina = gnosis*) and understanding (*intellegentia = epistēmē*), which enable him 'to avoid the tricks, snares and vices of evil' (cf. C.H. XII, 12: the gifts of *nous* and *logos* are of equal value as immortality). The same idea is expressed in the final hymn of the *Asclepius*, 41 (= the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* in NHC, VI, 64, 8-14), in which the hermetic believers say that God's goodness has 'graciously given us *nous*, *logos* and *gnosis*: *nous* to understand you, *logos* to interpret you, and *gnosis* to know you. We rejoice that we have been illuminated by your *gnosis*'. However, there were also hermetists who preferred another, more mythical explanation of the origin of good or evil in man. According to C.H. IX, 3-4, the cosmos is full of *daimones*, i.e. good or bad spiritual, → intermediary beings, who sow the seeds of virtue or malice in the human mind (here used in a neutral sense, not as a divine gift of grace). A similar idea is found in C.H. XIII, 8-10, where Tat at his spiritual rebirth is cleansed from twelve tormenting spirits of the material world and filled by ten good spirits.

The good and bad *daimones* played an important role in the hermetic view of the world. The *Asclepius* contains some notorious passages about the presence of demons in the statues of the gods (23 and 37-38). The greatness of man is demonstrated by his capacity of making the gods that are worshipped in the temples (23). Originally the human beings did not even know that there were gods. They realised their existence when they discovered the art of making images, and added a magic power from the cosmos to the material from which they made the statues. Then they conjured the souls of *daimones* into the statues, which in that way received the power to be beneficent or harmful (37-38). Another important aspect of the *daimones* is that they punish the sinners and help the pious after the separation of soul and body at death. In C.H. X, it is connected with the idea of a telescopic construction of the human person: the carnal body encloses the astral body (*pneuma*, which makes it alive and moving), the soul (*psychē*) is enclosed within the astral body, reason (*logos*) within the soul, and mind (*nous*) within reason (X, 13). This

view is determined by the conviction that the divine *nous* cannot be in direct contact with the body (X, 17). At death the *nous* puts on its original garment of fire and also the pious soul becomes wholly *nous* (X, 18-19), which means that they become demons. At death the bad souls are sent back to another existence in a human body. There they are punished by the demons, who, on the other hand, lead the good ones to the 'light of knowledge' (X, 21). The Latin *Asclepius*, 28, speaks about one chief demon in the air who weighs and judges the soul's merits, allowing those of the righteous to go to places that suit them while severely punishing those of evil people. But since the Latin and Coptic translations show considerable differences concerning these punishments, especially in chapter 29, the original Greek version cannot be established with certainty. John Lydus († ca. 555), *De mensibus* IV, 32 and 149, reports that 'the Egyptian Hermes in his *Perfect Discourse*' mentioned three classes of demons: (1) 'avenging demons', who are present in matter and already punish criminals on earth, (2) 'cleansing demons', who live in the air and purify the bad souls that after death try to ascend, and (3) 'saving demons', who live on the moon and save the souls of the righteous. We may assume that concerning this point as well, there was not one single hermetic doctrine about the fate of the soul after death but, rather, that the hermetists could adhere to quite different ideas. However, they all shared the conviction that only the soul of the pious, who had come to knowledge of himself and of God, could escape the bonds of matter and return to its previous divine status (*Asclepius* 11).

##### 5. INITIATION

Whether the hermetic writers subscribed to a more positive or negative evaluation of the world and man, their unanimous aim was to bring the reader to the praise and worship of the supreme God, who is 'not visible [i.e. knowable], but evident within the visible' (Armenian *Definitions* 1, 2). The authors of C.H. I (*Poimandres*), XI and XIII and NHC VI, 6 (*Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead*) go even further and describe ecstatic experiences in which the hermetist leaves his earthly state behind and feels himself united with the supreme God or the universe. In C.H. XIII and NHC VI the experience is connected with a direct initiation into the hermetic mysteries. This has raised the much-debated question of whether there existed actual hermetic communities in the late antique world, in which such initiations and other religious rites were practised. This question will

receive due attention in the next section; here we confine ourselves to the descriptions as given in the texts mentioned. The authors apparently wanted to bring the reader to a re-enactment of the mystic experience they described. In this sense, the hermetic mystery indeed was a 'reading mystery' (*Lese-Mysterium*), as Reitzenstein has characterized it (1927, 52; also, 64: 'literarische Mysterien').

In the *Poimandres*, 25-26, the union with God is described as a *post mortem* event: the soul of the deceased ascends through the seven planetary spheres and in each sphere leaves behind the bad qualities which it has received from that planet during its descent to earth. Then, stripped of the astral influences, the soul enters the eighth sphere 'with its own power', i.e. with its proper self. Singing hymns to the Father, he becomes like the blessed in the eighth sphere and hears the hymns that the powers above the eighth sphere sing to the praise of God. Then they all ascend to the Father and, becoming powers themselves, they are merged in God: 'This is the final good for those who have received knowledge (*gnosis*): to be made god'. Though the *Poimandres* describes this as occurring after death, later hermetists interpreted it as an ecstatic experience of Hermes himself, which could happen to every hermetist. In C.H. XIII, 15, Tat asks his father Hermes to reveal the hymn that the powers sang when he was in the Ogdoad (C.H. I, 26). Hermes agrees, 'just as *Poimandres* revealed the eighth sphere to me', and recites the fourth song of the Secret Hymn Book (17-20).

However, apart from this reference to the Ogdoad in the *Poimandres*, the mystic experience described in C.H. XIII is quite different from that in C.H. I (see below). The *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* actually presents the ascent to the eighth and the ninth heavens as an ecstatic event that can be experienced during one's lifetime. The *Discourse* suggest that the initiation proper was preceded by a preparatory initiation consisting of seven grades, apparently corresponding to the seven planetary spheres, which included the study of hermetic books and required a pious way of life. After a prayer to 'the One who rules over the kingdom of Power' (NHC VI, 55, 24-26), who is addressed by magical names, Hermes and the pupil embrace each other and then experience the descent of the divine Light-power. They both get into an ecstatic state of mind and the pupil exclaims: 'I see the one that moves me through an ecstasy. You give me power. I see myself. I want to speak. Fear restrains me. I have found the origin of power that is above all powers and does not have an origin itself. I see a fountain bubbling with

life . . . I have seen! Language is not able to reveal this' (58, 6-17). After some instruction by Hermes about the Ogdoad and the hymns that the angels sing there in silence, the initiate also sings a silent hymn and then exclaims again: 'Father Trismegistus! What shall I say? We have received this light. And I myself see this same vision in you. And I see the Ogdoad and the souls that are in it and the angels singing a hymn to the Ennead and its powers. And I see him who has the power of them all, creating spiritually' (59, 24-60,1). The initiate sees himself and the Ogdoad in Hermes, which means that during the initiation Hermes changes from mystagogue into a manifestation of the divine Mind (*Nous*) itself. In the mixture of didactic instruction and ecstatic experience characteristic of this tractate and C.H. XIII, Hermes repeatedly says to the initiate: 'I am Mind' (58, 4; 14-15; 21-22; 27). He becomes the mirror, as it were, in which the initiate sees the godhead and the divine world. An exclamation similar to expressions found in the *Discourse* ('I see myself' and 'I see this vision in you'), but without the identification of Hermes with the divine Mind, is made by Tat in C.H. XIII, 13: 'Father, I see the universe and myself in *nous*', i.e. in my own mind, which participates in the divine Mind.

C.H. XIII presents another kind of initiation. At the beginning of this treatise, Hermes describes the effects of his own rebirth: he has come out of his former self into an immortal body, and in that state he is no longer what he was before, because he has been born again in the divine *Nous*. He is now without colour and cannot be touched or measured. Tat can see him, but what he really is cannot be seen with corporeal eyes. It may be assumed that it was in a form like this that the initiate of the Coptic *Discourse* saw Hermes during his ecstasy. Hermes explains that the actual rebirth is effectuated when Tat is cleansed from the twelve evil powers and is filled with the ten good powers: 'Whoever, then, by God's mercy attains a divine birth is freed from the bodily senses and knows himself, namely that he has been made whole by these powers, and he rejoices' (10). Thereupon, without any transition, Tat exclaims: 'I have been made steadfast by God; I no longer picture things with the sight of my eyes but with the mental energy that comes through the powers. I am in heaven, in earth, in water, in air; I am in animals and plants, in the womb, before the womb, after the womb; everywhere' (11). What is described here is the experience of falling together with the whole creation, a cosmic omnipresence. It was a philosophical commonplace to say that man through his mind (*nous*) was able to be present

everywhere, but in the hermetic adaptation of this idea the original mental activity became a mystic experience. This is clearly demonstrated in C.H. XI, 19-20, where the divine Nous instructs Hermes about the unlimited reach of the human mind. The first part of this instruction remains within the boundaries of Greek philosophy, but then Hermes is exhorted to make himself equal to God, for like is only understood by like. Then nothing will be impossible for him: 'Conceive yourself to be in all places at the same time: in earth, in the sea, in heaven; that you are not yet born, within the womb, young, old, dead, beyond death. And when you have understood all these things at the same time – times, places, things, qualities and quantities – then you can understand God.' What started as a mental exercise becomes the revelation of the true essence of God. The same idea is expressed in the secret hymn of C.H. XIII, 20: 'O spirit-bearer, O craftsman, you are God! Your man shouts this through fire, through air, through earth, through water, through spirit, through your creatures'. Also in C.H. XIII, Tat comes to know the universe, himself and God. He exclaims that he sees the All and himself in *nous* (13, see above). His mind has been illuminated (21), so that Hermes can conclude at the end of the treatise (22): 'Now you know both yourself and our Father in a spiritual way'.

The articulations of hermetic mysticism show considerable differences, but they all have in common that the hermetist comes to an intuitive knowledge of himself, the universe and God – a knowledge that transcends the ordinary human mental faculties and is experienced as a unification with the ground of being, God.

#### 6. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN HERMETIC COMMUNITIES?

There is no scholarly consensus about the existence of hermetic communities in the Graeco-Roman world. Festugière, for example, totally rejected the idea of a 'confraternity of initiates'. Because of his great influence on hermetic scholarship, it is worthwhile to quote him literally: 'In hermetic literature, there is no trace of particular ceremonies for the alleged faithful of Hermes, nothing resembling the sacraments of gnostic sects: neither baptism nor communion nor confession of sins nor laying-on of hands to ordain cult officials. There is no clergy: no evidence whatsoever of hierarchical organization or degrees of initiation' (1967, 38; 1950-1954, I, 83). This characterization is so strongly determined by the Christian view of what religious practices are that it is no wonder that Festugière did not find them in the *Hermetica*.

The strongest argument that can be adduced against the existence of religious rituals in Hermetism is found in chapter 41 of the *Asclepius*, where Hermes and his pupils are about to say a prayer and Asclepius suggests that they should also burn frankincense and spices. Hermes is disturbed by this suggestion and calls burning incense at prayer a kind of sacrilege. God wants nothing, because he is himself all things or all things are in him: 'rather let us worship him by giving thanks, for God finds mortal gratitude to be the best incense'. This testifies to a purely spiritual concept of God; but we saw already that elsewhere in the *Asclepius*, the author, who uses a variety of hermetic sources, defends the idea that through theurgic rites man is able to conjure divine powers into the images of the earthly gods. This at least shows that, on this point too, the hermetists could adhere to opposed views. If there were hermetic communities, their members certainly also participated in other civil and religious associations, in which rituals that involved the burning of incense were quite common. 'A religious community had to have at least a minimal set of common ideas, even if it were only the fact of honouring some god or of following the teaching of some teacher' (Belayche, 18). It seems possible that there did exist hermetic communities that answered to this minimal definition of a religious association, just as there were philosophical schools that practised religious rites to honour their founder and studied and further developed his teachings.

The hymns and prayers found in the hermetic texts, such as the final hymns of the *Poimandres* and the *Asclepius* and the fourth song of the Secret Hymn Book in C.H. XIII, 17-20, may have played a role in the gatherings of such communities. In the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* and also in the Coptic *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, mention is made of an embrace or kiss after prayer (NHC VI, 57, 26-28 and 65, 3-7, respectively). The only parallel to this usage is the embrace or kiss (*aspasmos*) that the early Christians also gave each other after prayer (e.g. Justin Martyr, *Apology* I, 65, 1; Tertullian, *On Prayer*, 18, 1 and 3). Since the rest of the *Discourse* does not show any Christian influence, there is no reason to assume that this particular feature reflects a Christian practice.

Another religiously inspired practice among the hermetists may have been the vegetarian meal, which is mentioned in *Asclepius* 41 ('Wishing these things, we turn to a pure meal without flesh of animals') and the corresponding passage in NHC VI, 65, 3-7 ('When they had said these things in prayer, they embraced each other and they went to eat their

holy food, which had no blood in it'). Of course, this can be taken as being no more than a literary motif. On the other hand, we know that sacred meals were quite usual in all kinds of religious communities and even in secular associations, so that it would have been very strange if such a meal had been unknown among like-minded people such as the hermetists. A much-discussed text in this connection is that of C.H. IV, 4 about the mixing-bowl (*krater*) filled with *nous*, i.e. intuitive knowledge. The 'human hearts' are exhorted to immerse themselves in it, if they believe to rise up again to the One who gives *nous* and if they realise why they have come into being. Those who have merged with *nous* partake of higher knowledge and become perfect, but the others only have reason, not *nous*. This passage does not point to some kind of hermetic baptism, since it is impossible to be baptized in a mixing-bowl (for an attempt to explain it, see Festugière 1967, 100-112). It has to be read in the light of the Greek translation of Proverbs 9:1-6, about Lady Wisdom who has mixed her wine in a *krater* and invites the fools to taste it and to grow in understanding. The participation in spiritual knowledge and wisdom was often compared to drinking wine or water. It is possible that C.H. IV, 4 refers to a hermetic ritual of drinking from a mixing-bowl as an image of the imparting of knowledge and the initiation into the hermetic mystery – a ritual that is also known from the Hellenistic mystery religions. But it is also possible that the whole passage is no more than an awkwardly constructed figure of speech, which intended to emphasize that spiritual insight (*nous*) is not a common human capacity but a divine gift.

The discovery of the *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* has given a new impetus to the debate on the existence of hermetic communities and rituals. It contains hymns and prayers, speaks about a hermetic confraternity, knows of at least eight grades of initiation and describes an initiation into the Ogdoad, which because of its stammering language of ecstasy gives the impression of authenticity (see above). As it now stands, the text is indeed a "Lese-Mysterium", a literary mystery, but there are no compelling reasons to assume that such initiations did not exist in reality. In view of the general tendency in the ancient world of forming associations of people with the same interests, it would be strange if the hermetists had not come together in meetings to discuss the way of Hermes, collectively celebrate the individual experience of initiation, send up hymns and prayers, and share a vegetarian meal. Of course, we should not assume the existence of a fixed hermetic

liturgy, comparable to that of the great cultic religions of the time, including Christianity. There may even have been hermetic groups in which the initiation did not play a role of any importance, but as a whole there is no reason to assume that it did not exist in real life.

#### 7. THE CRUCIBLE OF ALEXANDRIA: GREEK PHILOSOPHY, EGYPTIAN RELIGION, JUDAISM

There is a general scholarly consensus that Hermetism originated in Alexandria. The combination of Egyptian, Jewish and Greek religious and philosophical elements that characterizes the hermetic writings can best be explained from an Alexandrian background. Founded by Alexander the Great in 332/31 B.C., in the 3rd and 2nd centuries Alexandria became the economic and cultural centre of the Greek world. Ptolemy I Soter (323-283) founded the Mouseion, which attracted the greatest scholars of the period and contained an enormous, continually expanding library. Another great library was founded in the temple of Sarapis: the Sarapeion, which was built under Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222). In the Mouseion, not only all Greek literature was collected and studied but in addition translations were made of important works of Egyptian, Hebrew and Mesopotamian origin. The Alexandrian scholars devoted themselves primarily to philology and the mathematical, medical and natural sciences. They were less interested in philosophy and the disputes between the philosophical schools, and if they turned to philosophy they showed a preference for an eclectic approach. This also holds for the first Alexandrian philosopher whose work became of lasting importance, Eudorus. He was a Platonist who combined ideas of Plato with Aristotelian and Stoic elements and gave the whole a strong Neopythagorean colouring (Dillon, 114-135). He exerted a great influence on the Jewish religious philosopher Philo of Alexandria (born about 20 B.C.) and undoubtedly also on the equally eclectic religious philosophy of Hermetism.

Alexandria was a Greek city – only a small minority of its citizens was Egyptian – but the Ptolemies sought to combine the Egyptian and Greek religious traditions, which, *inter alia*, resulted in the cult of Sarapis. Scholars of Egyptian descent like Manetho (3rd century B.C.) and Charemon (1st century A.D.) did much to make the history and religious culture of Egypt known to the Greek-speaking world (Fowden, 52-57). Together with material goods from all parts of the world, there also arrived in Alexandria reliable



information about the *spiritual* goods of remote peoples, for instance about Buddhism in India (Buddha was first mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I, 71, 6).

Hermetism was one of the interesting religious phenomena that took shape in the crucible of Alexandria. The presence of Greek philosophy in the Hermetica needs no demonstration; their contents are for the greater part a mixture of Platonism and Stoicism, of the Eudorian type. The Jewish influence is undisputed, though scholars have different opinions about how far it went. Until A.D. 117, there was a very large Jewish community in Alexandria, which was mainly concentrated in two of the five districts of the city and numbered in the hundreds of thousands (Pearson, 145-151). The writings of Philo show that there were (1) Jews who strictly adhered to the religious convictions and lifestyle of their forefathers, (2) those who stuck to the observance of the Jewish law but gave an allegorical Greek interpretation to their traditional religion, and (3) others who abandoned both the observance of the Law and the Jewish religion as a whole or combined this religion so strongly with Greek or Oriental elements that the essence of Judaism was lost. Philo himself belonged to the second category, and it seems that Jews from the third group were involved in the origin and development of Hermetism (and Gnosticism as well). Hermetic writings like C.H. I and III can only have been written in a milieu that was strongly influenced by Jewish ideas and traditions (Dodd). If there ever existed some kind of a hermetic lodge in Alexandria – which is quite possible –, it must have counted some Jews among its most influential members.

The Egyptian component of Hermetism has long been a controversial topic of scholarly research. Classicists with a vast knowledge of Greek philosophy always tended to minimize the Egyptian influence. Thus, according to Festugière, Hermetism simply represents a set of popularized Greek philosophical notions with strong religious overtones, whereas the “Egyptian” elements are widespread commonplaces about Egypt: no more than a literary device, intended to suggest that Hermetism had ancient and foreign origins. Egyptologists, on the other hand, have always argued that under the Greek surface a great number of Egyptian religious ideas can be observed. A major difficulty, mostly neglected by classicists, is that the Egyptians never developed an abstract philosophical language but expressed comparable ideas in religious myths and images. In recent research, Egyptologists have presented a great number of

Egyptian religious ideas that have their counterpart in Hermetism (Derchain, Daumas, Iversen, Zandee). The fact alone that the names Trismegistus and Poimandres have their etymological origins in the Egyptian language and that some typical hermetic ideas, such as the androgyny of the supreme God, have their closest parallels in Egyptian religion, shows that Festugière’s position has to be abandoned or at least qualified. The Egyptian influence must be ascribed to Hellenized Egyptians who knew their own religious traditions quite well. Perhaps there is some truth, after all, in Iamblichus’ contention (*De mysteriis*, VIII, 4) that the Egyptians who, according to him, ‘translated’ the hermetic writings from Egyptian into Greek were skilled in Greek philosophy. What is urgently needed is an interdisciplinary study by classicists and Egyptologists of all the Egyptian parallels that have been suggested in recent research. Less problematic is the relationship between hermetic and gnostic ideas (→ Gnosticism).

#### 8. HERMETISM AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The Christian doctrine of God, as developed by Christian theologians from the 2nd century onward, owed much to Platonism and, for that reason, also had much in common with Hermetism. This agreement did not escape the attention of early Christian writers who wanted to show that Christianity was not a recent religion – something that the outside world generally considered a negative point – but, rather, that its essential doctrines had already been taught in remote antiquity by the ancient Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus, as well as by the Sibyls, Orpheus and others (van den Broek). The authors that have to be discussed in this connection are Lactantius, Didymus the Blind and Cyril of Alexandria. → Augustine is much more critical, although even he is able to make a positive remark on Hermes.

Lactantius says of Trismegistus that he ‘has investigated virtually the entire truth, I do not know how’ (*Divinae Institutiones* IV, 9, 3). He is a witness of Christianity, ‘who agrees with us, that is to say with the prophets whom we follow, both as to substance and verbatim’ (*Div. Inst.* VI, 25, 10). Hermes has ‘said about God the Father everything and about the Son much which is contained in the divine secrets (i.e. the Holy Scriptures)’ (*Div. Inst.* IV, 27, 20). For Lactantius, the view that Hermes had taught the Christian doctrine of God was more than an apologetic device: it was his sincere conviction. The hermetically coloured Platonism in which he was steeped before his conversion

to Christianity apparently kept its validity after that event.

If there was some justification in Lactantius' claim that Hermes and the Christians taught the same doctrine of the supreme God, his idea that Hermes had also already spoken of the Son of God, Christ, was certainly mistaken. From the *Logos Teleios*, the Greek original of the Latin *Asclepius*, he quotes in Greek the passage to be found in *Asclepius* 8: 'When the Lord and Maker of all things, whom we are used to call God, had made the second God who is visible and sensible . . . ; when he, then, had made this God as the first and only and sole one, he seemed beautiful to him and entirely full of all good things, and he rejoiced and loved him very much as his own son' (*Div. Inst.* IV, 6, 4). Through the intermediary of Quodvultdeus' *Adversus quinque haereses*, III, 4, a somewhat abbreviated and occasionally more Christianized form of this text was to have a great history in the Middle Ages (→ Hermetic Literature II). However, as was already pointed out above, the passage speaks in fact about the creation of the cosmos as the first son of God. In defence of Lactantius, it might be said that his "exegesis" of this hermetic text is in no way different from the Christological reading of the Old Testament that was usual in the 4th century.

Didymus the Blind and Cyril of Alexandria found the entire doctrine of the Trinity in the works of Hermes Trismegistus. Cyril was partly dependent on Didymus, but he also had access to hermetic sources that were not used by the latter. Cyril had a low esteem of Greek philosophy and Greek culture in general, but for apologetic reasons quoted Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato and Hermes with approval. In his view, Hermes, Pythagoras and Plato owed their doctrine of God to → Moses, who had always remained in great esteem in Egypt. Pythagoras and Plato had become acquainted with Moses' teachings when they studied with Egyptian sages. Hermes was a native Egyptian who always lived in the temples of the idols, Cyril says, but nevertheless he knew the Mosaic doctrine of God – not wholly correctly and impeccably, but at least partly.

According to Didymus and Cyril, the hermetic writings also contained clear references to the Christian doctrine of the Son and even to that of the Holy Spirit. Independent of Didymus, Cyril quotes some texts discussing the 'creative Logos of the Lord of the All', who is *inter alia* 'the first-born of the All-Perfect, his perfect, fertile Son' (*Contra Julianum* I, 46; NF IV, 132-136). The nature of this 'spiritual Logos' is called 'generating and creating', which makes it probable that for the hermetist it was the creative force in the universe,

which according to the *Poimandres* (10-11) was of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the divine Nous. Didymus (*De trinitate* II, 27) and Cyril (*Contra Julianum* I, 47), who in this case depends on the former, also quote and discuss a hermetic text that in their view proved that Hermes had already spoken about the Holy Spirit. In a rather obscure language this text says that there is 'one single, eternal spiritual light, existing before the spiritual light, the light-mind (*nous*) of the mind (*nous*). And nothing else existed but the unity of this mind. It is always contained within itself and always comprises all things with its own mind (*nous*) and light and spirit (*pneuma*)'. Didymus and Cyril interpreted the 'light-mind of the mind' as 'mind from mind', i.e. the Son, who also was 'light from light', as the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds of 325 and 381 put it. In their view, Hermes' remark on the spirit that comprises all things referred to the Holy Spirit. In the same connection, but in reversed order, Didymus and Cyril also quote another hermetic text, which reads *inter alia*: 'All things are in need of this spirit (*pneuma*), of which I have already often spoken. It carries everything and makes everything as much as is needed and feeds it. It is dependent on the holy source and is the helper of the spirits and the generator of life to all, even though he is still one'. There is little doubt that the hermetist conceived of this spirit as the divine creative force in the cosmos, but according to Cyril the text showed that Hermes already knew the Spirit 'as an independent hypostasis', who comes forth from God the Father by nature and takes care of creation through the mediation of the Son' (*Contra Julianum* I, 49).

Augustine did not have much to say in favour of Hermes Trismegistus; he quotes him almost exclusively in order to refute him. In *De civitate dei*, VIII, 23-26, he presents a vigorous attack on the notorious passages in the *Asclepius* (23 and 37-38) about man as the creator of the gods who are worshipped in the temples (see above). But in the same context, he also states that Hermes had much to say 'about the one true God, the creator of the world, which corresponds to the teaching of the truth' (VIII, 23). In his polemics with Faustus the Manichee, Augustine also admitted that pagan prophets such as the Sibyls, Hermes and Orpheus 'had made truthful predictions – or are said to have done so – about the Son of God and God the Father', but he warned against investing these pagans with authority (*Contra Faustum*, XIII, 15). Augustine rejected the appeal to pagan prophets as pre-Christian witnesses to the truth of Christianity, but even his great authority was unable to erase this idea from the minds of later theologians.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

**Heydon, John (Eugenius Theodidactus),**  
\* 1626 England, † ca. 1665 London?

Under this name, some of the most luminous prose of late Renaissance Hermeticism was published. Passages worthy of English writers like → Elias Ashmole, → Francis Bacon, → Henry More, Walter Raleigh, and → Thomas Vaughan and of Continental masters like → Agrippa, → Ficino, → Paracelsus, and even → Hermes Trismegistus appeared under Heydon’s name or his pseudonym Eugenius Theodidactus (i.e., a gentleman taught by God) between 1655 and 1665. Indeed, the passages were first published in England under those other names, and were only then gathered into the series of “guides” that Heydon issued under the general rubric of “Rosicrucian” [→ Rosicrucianism]. Heydon’s motives are hard to guess. His personal comments are usually efforts to conceal his plagiarism; he claims to have kept his works in manuscript for years and condemns his often indignant sources as plagiarists themselves. He does seek publicity, though, and encourages readers to consult him as an astrologer and as a “physician” dispensing herbal and other remedies. He also does everything possible to make a profit; he takes the same manuscripts to different publishers, under different titles, and recycles unsold sheets of an old book under a new title (all told, his books exceed six thousand pages). He is a forerunner of today’s gurus and popularizers, and his ethics bode ill for the lot. The prolific occultist → A.E. Waite (1857-1942), who suffered repeated piracy in the United States, once described Heydon as ‘the prototypical thief of English occult literature’.

By his own account, Heydon was born in 1629, was educated in Oxford, and became a London barrister by the age of twenty-five. A lifelong student, he added medicine to law and theology to medicine, writing on all of them. He was jailed under two governments, the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell and the restored monarchy of Charles I, for having published subversive comments. Though he often denied it, Heydon married Alice Culpeper, the widow of the upstart physician and medical translator Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654). His books began to appear in 1655. His first prose tract was, ironically, a book of moral instruction for Culpeper’s daughter. His first specifically Rosicrucian tract was later exposed as his fantasia on a manuscript from Culpeper’s library. In the exposé, Elias Ashmole described Heydon as ‘an ignoramus and a cheat’. The term stuck, and Heydon was later portrayed on the stage as the main

character in John Wilson's comedy *The Cheats*. His main speech in the play is plagiarized from Hermes Trismegistus. Heydon swore off writing when he experienced a religious conversion, after the death of a sister, and then he insisted that he was only an editor. The excuse seems feeble, even in the days before copyright law. Nevertheless, Heydon did a great deal to popularize the term "Rosicrucian" and to suggest in what ways Bacon's *New Atlantis* or Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* is "Rosicrucian". Frances Yates found Heydon's reworking of Bacon, with interpolations from the Rosicrucian manifestos of 1614 and 1615, an essential text for Bacon's subsequent reputation and for her own theme of a "Rosicrucian Enlightenment".

John Heydon, *The English Physicians Tutor*, London, 1665 ♦ *The Harmony of the World*, London, 1662 ♦ *The Holy Guide*, London, 1662 ♦ *A New Method of Rosie Crucian Physick*, London, 1658 ♦ *The Rosie Crucian Infallible Axiomata*, London, 1660 ♦ *Theomagia; or, the Temple of Wisdom, Spiritual, Coelestial, and Elemental*, London, 1662 ♦ *The Wise-Mans Crown; or, The Glory of the Rosie-Cross*, London, 1664.

Lit.: F. Leigh Gardner, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works on the Occult Sciences*, Vol. 2: Rosicrucian Books, Privately published, 1911 ♦ A.E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, London: Kegan Paul, 1924, 388 ♦ Thomas Spaulding Willard, "John Heydon's satire of hermetic medicine", in: Marie Mulvey Roberts & Roy Porter (eds.), *Literature and Medicine During the Eighteenth Century*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993, 136-150 ♦ Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, rev. ed. Frogmore: Paladin, 1975, 165-167.

THOMAS WILLARD

## Hildegard of Bingen, \* 1098 Bermersheim bei Alzey, † 17.9.1179 Rupertsberg, Bingen-am-Rhein

German Benedictine nun, founder and head of two monasteries for women, the Rupertsberg (destroyed in the Thirty Years' War) and the present-day Abbey of St. Hildegard, Eibingen. Visionary, prophet, composer, and prolific author of theological and scientific books. The tenth child of a noble family, Hildegard made her profession of virginity at 14 under the tutelage of Jutta of Sponheim, a recluse at the monastery of Disibodenberg, and in 1136 was elected mistress of the nuns there. In 1141 she received a prophetic call to 'cry out and write' what God revealed to her in the visions she had experienced from childhood, and in 1151 pub-

lished her first book, *Scivias* (Know the Ways of the Lord). Structured around a cycle of illustrated visions, the work includes extensive allegories, biblical exegesis, and liturgical lyrics. Meanwhile Hildegard felt called to leave the Disibodenberg and found her own nunnery at Mount St. Rupert (1148-1150). Other books followed: the *Liber vite meritorum* (Book of Life's Merits, 1158-1163), *Liber divinorum operum* (Book of Divine Works, 1163-1174), *Liber epistolarum* (Book of Letters), two saints' lives, a medical and scientific encyclopedia (*Physica*), and a handbook of practical and theoretical medicine (*Causae et curae* or *Causes and Cures*). Her musical compositions include 70 liturgical chants with original texts, assembled in the collection *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (Symphony of the Harmony of Heavenly Revelations), and a music drama, the *Ordo virtutum* (Play of the Virtues). Known as a healer, exorcist, and apocalyptic prophet, Hildegard had a wide circle of correspondents that included powerful bishops and nobles. In her later years she travelled extensively on preaching tours, speaking at monasteries and sometimes in cathedral squares – the only medieval woman to have done so.

Orthodox in her dogmatic and sacramental theology, Hildegard developed a complex cosmology based on ideas that were current among 12th-century Platonists, but soon afterwards fell from general favor and remained central only within esoteric systems of thought. Her visionary worldview is built around a series of feminine theophanies, the *Virtutes*, who represent creative energies active in the natural world and especially in souls that willingly cooperate with God. Chief among these are Caritas (Divine Love) and Sapientia (Divine Wisdom), who function almost interchangeably as manifestations of God. Hildegard teaches the absolute predestination of Christ, i.e. the doctrine that the incarnation of the Word in human form was the original purpose of God's creation, not just a remedy for original sin. In the *Liber divinorum operum* she develops an elaborate system of → correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, correlating celestial bodies and elemental forces with parts of the human body as well as spiritual and moral states. Speculations on the unfallen Adam and Eve underlie Hildegard's medicine, which is based on an unconventional version of humoral theory and aims to restore the physical and spiritual equilibrium lost in the Fall. Hildegard also developed an esoteric theology of → music, comparing the melody of chant to the divinity of Christ and the words to his humanity. Musical instruments, she asserts, were invented by



the prophets to compensate for the lost resonance that Adam's voice had possessed in paradise.

Hildegard's style was notably obscure, in part because she lacked formal training in Latin grammar and rhetoric, but also because she was imitating the manner of the biblical prophets. Her apocalyptic prophecies, which appear in the final visions of the *Scivias* and *Liber divinatorum operum* and in her letters and sermons, were couched in a deliberately vague and grandiloquent style to mask their potentially dangerous political content. These prophecies, widely studied and anthologized, kept Hildegard's reputation alive in later medieval centuries, when she was remembered as "Sibyl of the Rhine" for her speculations on the Antichrist and events of the eschaton. Her most strictly esoteric work is the *Lingua ignota* (Unknown Language), composed of about 900 words, which she may have devised to create the aura of an initiated sisterhood among her elite nuns. The *Lingua* is accompanied by an 'unknown alphabet' (*Litterae ignotae*) of 23 characters. Because of their cryptic style, Hildegard's prophecies have been diversely interpreted: she has been credited with predicting phenomena as disparate as the 13th-century fraternal orders, the Protestant Reformation, and the French Revolution. Her other works were not widely read after her lifetime, but several Renaissance esotericists took an interest in her, including → Trithemius of Sponheim and → Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who published the *editio princeps* of her *Scivias*.

In the late 20th century Hildegard enjoyed a sudden surge in popularity. Most of her works were critically edited and translated into German and English, and her music has been recorded by numerous vocalists. Popularized by Matthew Fox and his movement for "creation-centered spirituality", Hildegard is now revered by adherents of → New Age spiritualities as well as traditional and feminist Catholics. Her medicine has undergone a revival among holistic health practitioners, and "Hildegard practices" have opened in a number of European and North American cities.

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*Lit.*: Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1984 ♦ Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987 ♦ Sylvain Gouguenheim, *La Sibylle du Rhin: Hildegarde de Bingen, abbesse et prophétesse rhénane*, Paris: Sorbonne, 1996 ♦ Heinrich Schipperges, *Hildegard of Bingen: Healing and the Nature of the Cosmos*, Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1997 ♦ Edeltraud Forster (ed.), *Hildegard von Bingen, Prophetin durch die Zeiten*, Freiburg: Herder, 1997 ♦ Charles Burnett & Peter Dronke (eds.), *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art*, London: Warburg Institute, 1998 ♦ Barbara Newman (ed.), *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

BARBARA NEWMAN

## Hohenheim, Theophrastus Bombast von → Paracelsus

### Human Potential Movement

1. INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS AND FOUNDERS
2. THERAPEUTIC PREDECESSORS
3. SOCIAL SETTING
4. PRACTICES
5. AT THE FRINGES
6. THE FATE OF THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT

The term Human Potential Movement (HPM) arose in the 1960s as referring to a highly eclectic mix of therapies, many of which were poised on the border between a psychological and a religious framework. They must be regarded as belonging to the history of gnosis and Western esotericism both for historical reasons and because of doctrinal similarities: historically, since by mediation of the mind cure or → New Thought movements, the



intellectual foundations of the HPM may be found in the psychologization of → Mesmerism during the 19th century; doctrinally, since the religious aspects of the HPM to a considerable extent can be characterized as the search for an existential experience of the “real self” and its essential divinity – a search for what traditionally is known as “gnosis”. This search finds expression, however, in a quintessentially modern framework that emphasizes individualism to an extent unknown in traditional esoteric contexts.

#### 1. INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS AND FOUNDERS

The Human Potential Movement comprises a variety of methods centered on a shared vision of the human condition. Mainstream therapies up to and including the 1950s typically saw the human predicament in pessimistic and largely deterministic terms. Thus, orthodox psychoanalysis builds on the idea that humans are forced to sublimate their basic drives in order to be able to live in organized societies. The result is said to be the widespread occurrence of neuroses. Psychoanalytic practice therefore saw the aim of therapy as enabling the patient to function once more in society, especially in the family and at work. Humanistic psychology arose as an alternative view both of personhood and of the goals of therapy. It presented a view of human beings as constrained and alienated by negative social forces, living far below their natural capacities. Humanistic psychology also carried the seeds of a psychological utopia. If individual people were to find the ability to truly love, create and fulfil their potentials, society would be transformed almost beyond recognition. Social change basically required a consciousness revolution.

The fundamental idea that we in our normal mode of existence remain unaware of vast inner potentials can be traced back to the period of → Romanticism (see e.g. the somnambulant patients investigated by → Justinus Kerner). The specific perspectives of the HPM, however, have their more immediate roots in the “mind cure” or → New Thought philosophies of the 19th century. Inspired by the gulf between our everyday existence and the apparently supernatural abilities evinced by people in mesmeric trance, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866) and his successors suggested that we were normally constrained by our false beliefs.

In a more academic mode, somewhat similar ideas were being developed around the turn of the 20th century by a number of American psychologists of religion. Edwin Starbuck (1866-1947), James Leuba (1868-1946) and others emphasized the inner potentialities of the individual, his or her

capacity for growth and development, and the importance of spiritual elements in that process. However, none of these writers had an enduring popularity to match that of William James (1842-1910). James firmly joined religion and psychology by understanding the subconscious mind as a link to a spiritual realm. Exploring one’s own mind was ultimately the pathway to the divine. While optimistic, humanistic and spiritually-oriented psychologies continued to be formulated throughout the first half of the 20th century, James’ vast influence on the American cultural landscape provided the principal link of continuity between the optimistic post-mesmerist esotericism of the mid-to late 19th century and the development of the humanistic psychologies proper, beginning in the late 1950s.

Rollo May (1909-1994) is one of the most important figures in the development of humanistic psychology. May, who studied theology and philosophy as well as psychology, was critical of Freudian thought and preferred to draw inspiration from psychologists such as Alfred Adler (1870-1937) and → Carl Gustav Jung. His background in theology, particularly the influence of the existential theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), was a major impetus for his desire to pursue a study of the human condition informed by existentialist philosophy. Carl Rogers (1902-1987) contributed to the movement by formulating client-centered therapy. Rogers suggested that clients in therapy strive of their own accord towards self-actualization, and that the therapist’s primary role is to facilitate this process by accepting clients as they are. Perhaps the most overtly Jamesian of the founding fathers of humanistic psychology was Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). He believed that each individual possesses a true, inner nature, and that psychological health came through a quest for this core self. Maslow, like James before him, used case studies to support his theory of personality. By studying exceptionally creative, “self-actualizing” individuals, he concluded that these people had gone through a number of peak experiences, i.e. moments of full awareness and bliss.

Whereas the HPM was rooted in specific psychotherapeutic doctrines and methods, a considerable sector of the movement from the late 1960s and onwards gradually shifted focus towards a more distinctly religious point of view. Abraham Maslow was a central figure in the emergence of this new direction. Maslow described peak experiences in overtly religionist terms, understanding mystical experience to be the highest form. He came to believe that a psychology rooted in such experiences could provide a spiritual value system

and a philosophy that was essentially identical to the core of the major world religions. Maslow and Stanislav Grof (b. 1931) jointly coined the term transpersonal psychology for this new view.

Transpersonal psychology became an established concept with the foundation in 1969 of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. The editor of this journal, Anthony Sutich, programmatically positioned the new school as a fourth force beside the three forces of classical psychoanalytic theory, behaviorism and humanistic psychology. In a frequently quoted formulation, he presented the aim of the new psychological schools as the empirically scientific study of, among other things, 'transpersonal process, values and states, unitive consciousness, meta-needs, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experience, being, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, transcendence of the self, spirit, sacralization of everyday life, oneness, cosmic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, the theories and practices of meditation, spiritual paths, compassion, transpersonal cooperation, transpersonal realization and actualization; and related concepts, experiences and activities'. This list is surely at least as imbued with modern religious values as with psychology. That mystical experience was presented in the singular is also symptomatic of the apologetic and essentialist tenor of much transpersonal psychology.

The most influential contemporary spokesperson of transpersonal psychology, Ken Wilber (b. 1948), has further accentuated this spiritualizing trend. Different modes of consciousness are placed within an overarching hierarchical and evolutionary scheme, in which mystical states represent the highest levels. Wilber presents a vision of the human predicament as the gradual evolution of Spirit, in which individuals as well as entire cultures can gradually come to access transpersonal reaches of consciousness that go far beyond self-actualization as described by Maslow.

Humanistic and transpersonal psychology as developed by these and other psychologists largely emerged as intellectual movements. The Human Potential Movement *sensu stricto* developed a variety of practical methods devised to bring out the full capacities of the human being: not in order to elevate pathologically malfunctioning individuals to normality, but to raise normal individuals to realize their full human potential. This ambition gave the Human Potential Movement its name.

## 2. THERAPEUTIC PREDECESSORS

Mainstream therapies, with psychoanalysis as a paradigmatic example, typically employ conversa-

tion as the privileged therapeutic tool. Commonly, the verbal interchange between psychotherapist and patient is carried out in numerous sessions spread over a long period of time, involves relatively low levels of intervention from the therapist and is aimed, through the process of transference, at making patients increasingly aware of the structural similarities between situations and emotions experienced in their everyday lives and the interchange in the therapeutic setting. The Human Potential Movement would form a radically different view of praxis, and found inspiration in several unorthodox therapies developed from the 1920s and onward. These alternative practices often privileged bodily expression over verbalization, were emotionally powerful and required the therapist to play a considerably more active role in the therapeutic process. Two schools that particularly contributed to the development of HPM therapies were psychodrama and Reichian bodywork.

Psychodrama was developed by Jacob L. Moreno (1890-1974). Moreno was born in Bucharest, Romania, and moved to Vienna to study medicine. The beginnings of psychodrama were developed during his last years there, before his emigration to America in 1925. Moreno opened a psychodrama school in 1925, but worked in relative obscurity until the emerging HPM – in search for methodologies and historical roots – found inspiration in his work. The fundamental idea of psychodrama is to choose an emotionally intense episode from one's life and act it out together with a group of people. The role of the leader of the psychodrama group is to guide the process by suggesting ways to act out the dramatic aspects of the situation: the scene, the roles to play, ways of enhancing the emotional tenor of the interaction. The director can also suggest that members of the group switch roles with each other, or intervene to interpret the lines and actions of a protagonist.

A perhaps even more important influence on the HPM was the work of Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). Reich's point of departure was the idea that there existed a form of vital force, orgone energy, which in a neurosis-free individual flows unhindered through the body. However, forbidden impulses or painful traumas create blocks both in the person's psyche (in Reichian terminology, the character armor) and in the body (the muscular armor). Character structure and such somatic symptoms as muscular rigidity, posture and bodily movements are thus intimately linked. By working on the physical manifestations of blocked energy, character structure could be changed and the patient would be made more capable of experienc-

ing pleasure, especially in the form of sexuality. Among the techniques used by Reich and his followers were manipulation of the body through touch and pressure as well as controlled breathing.

### 3. SOCIAL SETTING

The 1960s were a period of social experimentation. This innovative mood influenced sectors of the psychotherapeutic community, and led to the development and spread of an eclectic set of new therapies, based on the generally shared vision of bringing out the hidden potential of the individual. A vital element in transforming a number of historically distinct ideas and therapies into a consolidated movement was the creation of a social setting in which practitioners of various persuasions could join forces. The paradigmatic location for the various alternative therapies was the growth center, typically a place where clients could board and lodge for a relatively short period of time while sampling a number of different methods.

One of the very first, and arguably the most influential, was Esalen Institute, at Big Sur, California. Esalen Institute (which for its first three years was known as Big Sur Hot Springs) was founded by Michael Murphy and Richard Price in 1962, as a seminar center for lectures on a variety of ideas that might appeal to the budding California counterculture. The topics discussed included mysticism, philosophy, religion, the occult [→ occult / occultism], humanistic psychology, psychedelics and Oriental cultures. Through active networking, a large number of luminaries of the 1960s spiritual counterculture agreed to appear at Esalen. Thus, famous writers and thinkers such as Gregory Bateson, Kenneth Rexroth, Abraham Maslow and Aldous Huxley endorsed the project or became actively involved in it. To sum up the vast variety of subjects addressed at the meetings, the term Human Potentiality was created. Out of the mix of elements, some were soon given a privileged place. The interest in the paranormal, in Eastern philosophies, in altered states of consciousness and in other elements of the 1960s cultic milieu gave Esalen a distinct touch of alternative religiosity. Thus, one of the first and most prominent speakers at Esalen was Alan Watts (1915-1973), a onetime clergyman, flamboyant popularizer of Zen Buddhism, philosophical entertainer and advocate of the psychedelic experience.

Esalen Institute remained a site dedicated to intellectual discussion for a year or two. By then, a gradual but profound change in direction had taken place. Rather than merely talking about the development of human potential, Esalen would

now be devoted to experiential sessions designed to actively bringing out the hidden capacities of its visitors. Since Esalen was privately run, therapists were free to experiment with a variety of unorthodox methods. The most prevalent practices developed at Esalen can be roughly divided into three groups: gestalt therapy, encounter groups and body therapies.

### 4. PRACTICES

*Gestalt therapy* is primarily associated with the work of the German-American psychologist Frederick ("Fritz") Perls (1893-1970). Rather than going back to e.g. childhood memories, as would be done in many other methods, gestalt therapy emphasizes the here and now of the therapeutic setting. In particular, Perls would interpret the quality of voice, the gestures and body language of his clients, and draw their attention to any discrepancies between these cues and the overt message of what they were saying. Awareness of such subtle discrepancies was one key to a psychological breakthrough. Among the material Perls would take up in such sessions were clients' dreams and the emotionally intense issues of their everyday lives. These would be drawn into the therapeutic setting by being reenacted in the here and now. Thus, clients would not only talk about their dreams, but also act the various characters appearing in them.

Gestalt therapy shared with many other HPM therapies the insistence on the responsibility of the individual for every aspect of their lives. This method is thus based on an existential philosophy that focuses on our own active role in shaping our lives. Part of Perls' credo was that we inflict symptoms on ourselves; progress in therapy involves understanding that nobody but ourselves burdens us with our neuroses.

Perls, who became part of Esalen's resident staff, had the curious role of practicing one of the most publicized methods of Human Potential Movement, yet in a sense also one of the least representative of the direction in which the HPM was headed. Whereas other therapists were increasingly prone to invoke religious motifs in their theories and practices, Perls remained intensely skeptical of anything that was labeled "spiritual". His basic attitude was that spirituality was a refuge for people who were unwilling to take responsibility for the real issues of their lives.

The history of *encounter groups* has been traced to the philosophy of dialogue of Martin Buber (1878-1965), as well as the research on the effects of self-disclosure carried out by Sidney Jourard

(1926-1974). There have been several different versions of the encounter group. An immediate precursor of the HPM encounter group is derived from the work of Carl Rogers. Here people would sit in a circle, usually on chairs, and interact almost entirely at a verbal level. The role of the leader was simply to facilitate whatever process was taking place, and to encourage people to be more honest and more self-disclosing.

The form of encounter which would become emblematic of much of the HPM, however, was a considerably more intense form developed by William Schutz. In this version, a group of perhaps six to fifteen people would sit in a circle, usually on cushions because furniture might hamper physical action. There was much more emphasis on the body and on the emotions than on any intellectual or verbal expression. As in Gestalt, the here-and-now was considered paramount. The injunction was not to talk about one's emotions but show them. And as in so many HPM therapies, participants were strongly encouraged to accept responsibility for their own actions and feelings. Among the basic rules of the encounter group were to speak only for oneself, to speak and act directly to whatever other participant elicits an emotion, and to be specific in doing so. The basic role of the leader was to choose among an eclectic set of methods to move the group in the direction where the emotional intensity was greatest. Thus, if the group leader sensed that a technique from gestalt therapy, psychodrama, breath control, guided imagery or bodywork might enable a person to go deeper into an emotionally intense experience, he or she would initiate such an action. Encounter groups could range from a few hours to marathon sessions of several days, which would significantly lower the defenses of the participants and, it was hoped, facilitate growth through direct and uninhibited communication.

Although originally aimed at producing emotional and social rather than spiritual transformation, the encounter group would later be adopted for religious purposes. One of the most successful of these attempts was made by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931-1990), founder of a new religious movement that is today known as the Osho Movement (q.v. below).

Although *body therapies* generally build on Reich's general approach, his praxis was to be modified in a number of ways by later practitioners. One of the main schools where this has been done is bioenergetics, developed in the 1950s and 1960s by one of Reich's students, Alexander Lowen (b. 1910). Lowen believed that different

character types manifest in various forms of muscle tone, breathing, posture, and so forth. Each character type can be diagnosed by paying close attention to such somatic manifestations. Bioenergetics could, in turn, help to redress the various problems typically associated with each character type. Thus, bioenergetics lays particular emphasis on the concept of grounding, with various methods concerned with making better contact with our legs and feet. Such bodily processes were often interpreted metaphorically: being physically more aware of the lower half of our body was interpreted as making one more "grounded" also in a psychological sense.

Another visible component of the HPM scene was Rolfing, a technique named after founder Ida Rolf (1896-1979). Rolfing involves a forceful and at times painful manipulation of deep-lying muscles. The theory behind the method states that memories of physical as well as emotional traumas can be activated in the process.

Although not all body therapists saw their work in spiritual terms, several assumptions contributed to giving at least some of these practices a religious tinge. Firstly, there was a widespread understanding that some form of life force was released as therapeutic effects could be observed. Secondly, the holistic emphasis on body/mind interconnections led a number of therapists and their clients to assume that some form of spiritual attunement was also possible through manipulation of the body. Thirdly, the common interest in various forms of Eastern philosophy made it tempting to find similarities between yogic techniques and body therapies.

##### 5. AT THE FRINGES

Many of the spokespersons of the HPM and the leaders of various growth centers were highly eclectic in their approaches. Several independent methods were in time incorporated under the general Human Potential umbrella. The success and high profile of places such as the Esalen Institute inspired others to develop new practices, some of which received considerable publicity.

Among these one could include psychosynthesis, developed by Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974). Assagioli was one of the first psychologists to introduce Freud's theories in Italy, but he was also a disciple of → Alice Bailey. He combined the two influences by attempting to devise a set of therapeutic methods to bring his clients in touch with what he understood to be their higher selves. Another parallel development was that of the Arica Method, a set of exercises inspired by the teach-

ings of → Gurdjieff and created by Oscar Ichazo (b. 1931). Ichazo's contention was that the true self was hidden behind the false ego, which manifested in one of nine overriding drives that in his and Gurdjieff's view constitute our personalities. The attraction of these two methods for the mainstream of the 1960s HPM may have been the fact that both combined the idea that humanity lived well below its full abilities, with the conviction that the necessary awakening included a strong spiritual component with discernible roots in esoteric thought.

If the HPM generally built on the intellectual and philosophical underpinnings of humanistic psychology, a number of other therapies with similar aims of raising the individual to new levels of awareness were constructed on more speculative bases. Such therapies could, at least from a sociological point of view, be characterized as the fringe of the HPM. Some remained at the fringe because they managed to transgress even the very liberal mores of the 1960s; among these one might count nude encounter groups. Some, e.g. large group programs such as *est*, became controversial due to their strictly regimented and authoritarian ethos. Others, such as primal therapy, did so because they built on theories that were perceived by many as highly speculative.

Nude encounter groups were a short-lived radical extension of the then prevalent (clothed) encounter sessions. By stripping, it was assumed that one's defenses would come down quicker. Nude encounter groups remained marginal to the Human Potential Movement, but did cause considerable negative publicity for the entire movement by being prominently depicted in a 1968 issue of *Life* magazine.

Equally controversial, but of considerably more lasting impact, were large group programs, personal development training programs in which dozens to hundreds of people would participate in a few hours to several days of intense experiential sessions. These were aimed at helping participants begin to discover what was hindering them from achieving their full potential and living more satisfied lives. Werner Erhard's *est* – an abbreviation of Erhard Seminar Training as well as Latin for "it is" – was the most widely publicized of these programs.

Although not overtly spiritual in aim, *est* resonated with some of the mind cure-inspired tenets that would also enter the → New Age movement. Taking responsibility for your life, in the *est* world view, included assuming responsibility for every event that one is part of. Even poverty, illness and personal tragedies were thus included in the sphere

of personal responsibility. As do many New Age texts, *est* claimed that each of us creates our own reality. The path to accepting the *est* philosophy – of "getting it", to use the jargon of the movement – was to submit to a strictly scripted event that included considerable verbal abuse from the leaders as well as physical hardship.

Primal therapy rests on the belief that problems in the present can be traced back to the intense, traumatic sensory stimulation supposedly occurring at birth. This belief can be traced back to the theories of Freud's pupil Otto Rank (1884-1939), who developed the concept of the birth trauma in the 1920s. Generally speaking, psychoanalysts never accorded Rank's theory any greater credibility. It was, however, revived by the founding father of primal therapy, Arthur Janov (b. 1924). The concept of the birth trauma was in Janov's book *The Primal Scream* (1970) linked to a therapeutic method based on abreaction.

## 6. THE FATE OF THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT

The HPM proper lost much of its credibility with mainstream society after a period of almost faddish general interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Part of this disaffection with the HPM had to do with the growing critique against the movement. To judge whether this critique was justified or not is a normative exercise that will not be attempted here. It may suffice to note that the criticism typically followed a few lines of attack.

(1) One common objection to the aims of the HPM was that it fostered a narcissistic attitude. HPM therapies were accused of privileging short-term experience over long-term goals, individual indulgence over social concerns, and so forth. To counter such negative assessments, spokespersons for the HPM pointed e.g. at the attempts to create interracial encounter groups. (2) Another perceived problem had to do with the clients attracted by the often emotionally highly intense methods. Although aimed at improving the healthy rather than curing the ill, some of those who attended sessions at growth centers were too psychologically fragile to go through emotionally intense encounter groups or Gestalt therapy. Thus, several suicides took place at Esalen and other growth centers, generating serious doubts about the methods employed. (3) Related to this last theme were the misgivings concerning forms of bodywork, voiced by more traditional therapists. The emphasis on touch and emotionality thus raised concerns regarding the risk of creating overly strong bonds of transference and countertransference. It was



suggested that these bonds could be psychologically harmful. (4) The eclectic and academically unaffiliated nature of much of the HPM led to the proliferation of methods, some of which were highly unorthodox. Part of the critique of the HPM concerned this "anything goes" atmosphere, which was said to attract unqualified people to take on the role of therapist. A related criticism targeted the lack of clinical and experimental validation of many of the therapies on offer. (5) The perhaps most common criticism was that HPM therapies resulted in cathartic experiences and feelings of emotional breakthrough, the effects of which largely vanished once clients returned to their everyday lives.

Despite the massive critique against the perceived ills of the HPM, some of its manifestations have survived well. Certain aspects of the HPM have approached the norms of more traditional psychotherapeutic work. Modern gestalt therapy tends to focus on individual rather than group sessions, and has adopted methods that are less emotionally challenging to clients and therefore less focused on catharsis. Encounter groups are rarer, while their ideological ancestor, psychodrama, has fragmented into several different forms. Body therapies have proliferated, and have partly become more professionally established.

Arguably, however, the very fact that much of the HPM came under such heavy attack from the media and from academic psychologists led to its affiliation with countercultural and/or spiritual concerns rather than with more traditional forms of psychotherapy. The transpersonal elements of the movement were increasingly emphasized in the mid-1970s and beyond. Furthermore, certain facets of the HPM, especially in this radicalized and spiritualized form, came to share goals and ideas with the emerging New Age movement. Health was defined by the HPM in ways that prefigure a number of contemporary systems of complementary medicine. Rather than implying freedom from disease, as standard biomedical conceptions would do, health involves a broad spectrum of positive values such as creativity, vitality and spirituality. The focus of much of the New Age on radical personal transformation also has its precursor in the ideology of the HPM. The belief in the integration of mind and body, as well as the primacy of non-intellectual means of achieving this holistic vision, also unite the HPM and the New Age.

The specific methods of the HPM have also had their successors with appeal to the New Age milieu. The body therapy techniques developed by Reich and Lowen and their followers, and

described above, could involve emotionally and physically intense activities, including hitting, kicking, screaming, hyperventilation and painful manipulation of the muscles. In contrast to this approach are the considerably gentler methods of bodywork popular among New Agers, such as body harmony. Similar aims of contacting buried traumas through memories supposedly encoded in the muscular tissue are achieved through much milder forms of bodily manipulation.

Perhaps most visible in the New Age milieu are offshoots of the radical fringe of the HPM. Although largely discredited, primal therapy inspired a popular component of the New Age scene, rebirthing, a method of controlled breathing that is claimed by its practitioners to resolve physical and mental traumas, and even prevent aging. The manipulation of the physical body prevalent in the HPM has its radicalized counterparts in New Age theories that attempt to manipulate non-physical aspects of the body, be it the chakras or the aura. The regression therapies of the HPM are radicalized in New Age techniques that attempt to go back beyond birth to purported past lives.

Many later developments of various HPM methods have increasingly embraced religious themes. There have even been attempts to integrate the decidedly anti-spiritual Gestalt therapy of Fritz Perls with religious concerns. It is, perhaps, only fitting that one of the most direct heirs of the 1960s HPM is a religious organization, the Osho movement mentioned above. The movement's main center in Koregaon Park, an affluent suburb of Pune, India, resembles a 1960s and 1970s growth center. Visitors can combine their own palette of experiential workshops, including neo-Reichian therapies and sessions that are replicas of 1960s encounter groups.

Finally, it can be noted that some of the ideas of the HPM have managed to enter the cultural mainstream. A number of facets of contemporary culture, ranging from best-selling self-help books to business management training seminars, are at times based on ideals drawn from the positive view of our hidden potential and the practices typical of the HPM.

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OLAV HAMMER

**Huysmans, Joris-Karl**  
(Charles-Marie-Georges),  
\* 5.2.1848 Paris, † 12.5.1904 Paris

One of the most celebrated novelists of the 19th century, Huysmans was baptized with the names Charles-Marie-Georges, but later in life adopted "Joris-Karl" as his christian name in acknowledgement of his father's Dutch origins. A civil servant, in the 1870s he publishes his first novels, abandons his family's Roman Catholicism and becomes a protégé of Emile Zola (1840-1902), the patriarch of French literary positivism. In 1884, Huysmans publishes his most famous novel, *À rebours*, and breaks with Zola. Regarded as the master of "decadentism", a neo-romantic, anti-positivistic literary school of the time, Huysmans is also interested in → spiritualism, → occultism, and the apocalyptic Roman Catholicism of his friend and fellow novelist Léon Bloy (1846-1917).

Another friend and novelist, Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915), has a lover called Berthe Courrière (1852-1917), who becomes Huysmans's guide into Paris' occult underground. Berthe tells Huysmans of her contacts with Father Louis Van Haecke (1864-1912), a Belgian priest whom she accuses of being the leader of an international Satanist ring. Huysmans decides to write a novel about → Satanism, and interviews among others journalist Jules Bois (1868-1943) and defrocked Lyon priest Joseph-Antoine Boullan (1824-1893). The latter was the leader of one among several rival branches of the Œuvre de la Miséricorde, a new religious movement founded by Bayeux visionary Eugène Vintras (1807-1875). Boullan's controversial rituals were a curious blend of Catholicism, sex magic and occultism; Huysmans regarded him as reliable, however, and echoes of Boullan's worldview are evident in Huysmans's best-selling novel *Là-bas*, a vivid portrait of French-speaking Satanism published in 1891.

*Là-bas* includes what was to become the standard literary depiction of a Black Mass, based on combined material Huysmans had received from Berthe Courrière, Bois, and Boullan. Paradoxically, this section of *Là-bas* (a novel intended to expose Satanism as evil) would be read as an how-to manual by later Satanists. It would also be used by Léo Taxil (pseudonym used by Marie-Joseph-Antoine-Gabriel Jogand-Pagès, 1854-1907), an imposter who would falsely claim to have evidence that Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] actually worship Satan in their lodges. Taxil would enjoy a certain popularity among Roman Catholics and other critics of Freemasonry until confessing his fraud in 1897.

It is *Là-bas* and his correspondence with Boullan and other characters of the occult fringe, that ensures Huysmans a place in the history of esotericism. This period of his life ends, however, in 1891, when Boullan dies and Berthe Courrière introduces Huysmans to Father Arthur Mugnier (1879-1939), who completes the novelist's subsequent conversion to mainstream Roman Catholicism. In later years, Huysmans would rarely speak about occult issues, and his subsequent itinerary would ultimately bring him into the field of French Catholic literature.

Huysmans defended *Là-bas*, however, as a novel that, although written by a non-Christian, could also be read both as a reliable documentary account of Satanism, and as a moral meditation on the power of evil. The assessment of the first claim depends on whether Huysmans's sources are regarded as reliable. Whether Father Van Haecke was in fact a Satanist, or a victim of libelous accusations by local enemies, or whether Berthe Courrière actually gave Huysmans real accounts of Satanic rituals or merely figments or her own imagination, are questions widely debated among Huysmans's biographers, and unlikely ever to be finally resolved. As for the second claim, there were those in the Catholic camp (including Léon Bloy) who finally accused Huysmans of exploiting spiritual themes for the sole purpose of producing best-selling novels. Others, however, including right-wing English author Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914), claimed that they owed their conversion to Catholicism to *Là-bas*.

Be that as it may, the scarcity of sources about both 19th century Satanism in continental Europe and the Boullan movement makes Huysmans' novels and correspondence important references on these topics, although he was clearly writing as a novelist rather than as an historian.

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MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Hymns and Prayers (Gnostic and Hermetic)

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In Gnostic [→ Gnosticism] and Hermetic [→ Hermetism; → Hermetic Literature] documents there are passages which can be classified as hymns and prayers, either directly (that is, quoted as such within the documents) or indirectly (that is through allusions to celestial and earthly beings praying or singing hymns). The tendency, both Gnostic and Hermetic, to appropriate and re-use traditional material of this type, is well documented. It can also be noted that, generally speaking, even the Gnostic and Hermetic "production" of hymns and prayers, when not actually drawn from earlier sources, seems in any case to be strongly influenced by other contexts. If, then, there is a tendency to depend on forms and sometimes even on content taken from other traditions, it is characteristic of Gnostics and Hermetists to be absolutely original in re-elaborating the borrowed material. They inserted it into their own religious perspectives, with meanings and functions that are completely idiosyncratic. This process is especially evident in cases where prayers or formulae of Gnostic and Hermetic literature are also attested unequivocally in other religious traditions: their re-use involves a radical re-reading and change of function within the typically Gnostic and Hermetic concepts of the relationships between the human and super-human realms.

It must be considered highly likely that an extensive and organised repertoire of prayers, hymns, invocations, litany formulae or specific expressions circulated to some extent in late antiquity. From time to time, this repertoire was appealed to in various religious contexts, which were undeniably similar in a series of aspects but still presented their specific ideological and traditional frameworks as well: from Gnosticism to Hermetism, from the complex ideology underlying magical papyri to Jewish and Christian circles. We are dealing here with a dynamic and fluid process in which adoption of common liturgical formulae did not necessarily imply the acquisition or acceptance of the same doctrinal horizons. Adapting these elements to a new context was in fact an effective means for Gnostics and Hermetists of distancing themselves from others and affirming their own originality.

In the light of all this, it will be clear that also in Gnostic and Hermetic studies, any attempt at an accurate identification and classification of prayers and hymns meets with many difficulties, since from the perspectives of terminology and form, sources of varying provenance were used; this is true for the formulation of the hymns and prayers and for the reflections on them. On the other hand, a specific aspect of the milieu discussed here can be noted: these prayers seem in fact to form a functional part of the experience of knowledge of gnosis which, in different forms, marks both the Gnostic and the Hermetic system.

### 2. GNOSTICISM

Both the direct Gnostic documentation provided by the Nag Hammadi Library and the documentation which has reached us through Christian heresiologists, are rich in expressions and images with respect to doxology, eulogy and hymns. These elements are sometimes so closely intertwined with the rest of the respective documents that it is difficult to determine whether they really are hymns or simply passages of "poetic prose". Serious research is hampered by the very nature of the documents, which are not conditioned by the need to set out a doctrine in a systematic way and, in particular, almost never provide explicit ritual elements and religious practices. In most cases, when prayers or hymns can be identified, we find them partially or completely without an adequate context. One is therefore forced to reconstruct the picture as a whole indirectly (and even this is possible only in a few privileged cases), and with results which, for that very reason, cannot claim to be either certain or unambiguous.

Historians of religions have thoroughly studied the phenomenon of prayer, for which they have

proposed various formal classifications. These are based, for example, on the dynamics of the relationship between speakers, or on the structure and nature of the communication (who is praying, what is being prayed for, how does one pray, where does one pray, why does one pray, etc.). Due to the nature and limitations of our evidence, it is difficult to apply such a classification to Gnostic and Hermetic material. Sometimes it is possible, however, to perceive well-known formal and functional distinctions, which we will attempt to document here. This is true, for example, in the case of some texts in which prayer is closely linked with the dimension of “repentance”: in such cases one can speak of prayers of petition.

#### A. PRAYERS OF PETITION

In the case of Gnosticism, this type of prayer is closely linked to the existential condition of the “pneumatic seed”, that is of that divine spark imprisoned in man which longs to return to the divine plane from which it fell and therefore invokes the supreme god to come and save it. In our documentation, the prayer of petition of the Gnostic (that is, of the one who is aware of living in this world but of belonging ontologically, in respect of his true “self”, to the divine plane) is projected into a mythological dimension which is its foundation and at the same time its prototype. This is the case in the *Exegesis of the Soul* (NHC II, 6) which relates the events of the prototypical soul that has moved away from the Father and, after experiencing every kind of abuse and sexual violence in the material world, repents and invokes him to set it free from that slavery. This document belongs to a “primeval” Gnosticism which reflects the passage from a Platonizing psychology to a full Gnostic religiosity. The prayer of petition comprises three parts: the invocation of the Father, the recalling and confession of the fall, and the final entreaty for salvation. To the same category (although inevitably with some disparities) belongs the prayer of Sophia, who also repents of her rebellion against the Father, to whom she turns to be set free from the material world and its evil demiurges (cf. *Apocryphon of John*, II, 13, 32-14, 6 and parallels; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I, 2, 3-4; Hippolytus, *Ref.* VI, 30-32; *Pistis Sophia* I, 32-67). Moving from myth to anthropology, the Gnostic prayer of petition seems to be very closely connected to the moment of consciousness, that is to say, the moment when the Gnostic becomes fully aware of his own real essence. This becoming conscious is also marked by the rejection of material reality and the entrance into the “current” of salvation (cf. *The Book of Thomas*, NHC II, 138, 1; 145, 19). It should be

observed that the same prayer, even if formulated and recited in the dimension of reality, does not really belong there: it is inner prayer, completely spiritual and recited by the spirit which, in the view of the Gnostics, is ontologically the same as the divine plane. Thus, for the person praying, the prayer of petition is the expression of his break with the material world and of his own aspiration for salvation.

#### B. PRAYERS/HYMNS OF THANKSGIVING

Besides the prayer of petition there is another type which can be defined as prayer or hymn of thanksgiving: an expression of joy about the gnosis obtained and the salvation reached as a result (cf. *Exegesis of the Soul*, NHC II, 134, 15-25; *Gospel of the Egyptians*, NHC III, 66, 22-67, 22 = NHC IV, 79, 3-80, 8; *Pistis Sophia* II, 68-76). This type of prayer occurs in various ways in our documentation. In the enthusiastic situation of praise, even heavenly beings can sing hymns and prayers: in the *Apocryphon of James* (NHCI, 15, 5-23), in the context of an ascension, James and Peter hear the prayers of praise and the hymns of rejoicing of the angels; in *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II, 105, 20-106, 3) there is a reference to an angelic church in perpetual prayer of praise; the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII, 136, 1-7) mentions the cosmic powers which, by mistake since they do not know the supreme god, send their prayer to the Autohades; in the *Trimorphic protennoia* (NHC XIII, 38, 22-30) the prayer of praise of the celestial Aeons is quoted. It is very likely that in all these references to a heavenly liturgy there is a projection to the extra-human level of the actual community of Gnostics who, just like the angels and superior powers, send prayers to the heavenly beings and to the supreme god.

#### C. HYMNS OF SELF-PROCLAMATION

In the Gnostic hymns the celebration of a particular character can occur in the form of self-proclamation, according to a model which to a high degree concurs with that of the “pagan” aretologies, in which the god introduced himself enumerating his different attributes and numerous functions. The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 30, 11-31, 27 and the parallel version NHC IV, 46, 23-49, 9) presents a self-proclamation by Pronoia who describes her repeated interventions to bring gnosis into the material world. A hymn on Eve, recited in the first person, is documented in *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II, 114, 7-15), whereas a hymn of Jesus is found in the *Second Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 4-49, 5-15). The treatise *Thunder, Perfect Mind* (NHC VI, 2) is a complete self-

proclamation of a female being; in the *Trimorphic protennoia* (NHC XIII, 1) the three different forms in which the heavenly redeemer descends are introduced by the same number of self-proclamations. The *Psalm of the Soul* ascribed to the Naassenes by Hippolytus (Hipp., *Ref.* V, 10, 2), certainly belongs to this context. In it the divine intermediary principle, here represented in his saving function and identified with Jesus, implores the Father to send him to earth and set free the soul which has become lost and so is unable to find the way back to the divine. By going down into the material world he will bring to the soul 'the mysteries of the holy way', gnosis in particular, so that it can set itself free. But the hymns can also be used to express through their poetic language visions otherwise ineffable, such as the cosmological picture described in the psalm of Valentinus (Hipp., *Ref.* VI, 37, 6-7).

#### D. BAPTISMAL AND EUCHARISTIC HYMNS AND PRAYERS

In some cases there is some evidence that prayers and hymns of praise and petition are connected to community-type practices, of which the heavenly liturgy is a projection. More specifically, they seem to be connected with the practice of baptism. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* the two final hymns refer to this praxis. The first of the two hymns (NHC III, 66, 8-22 // NHC IV, 78, 10-79, 3) is addressed to a pleromatic deity and comprises six invocations alternating with an acclamation, in which there is a large number of vowel sequences interspersed with names and formulae in Greek. The addressee of the hymn is connected with the five seals, which are fundamental to the baptismal praxis. The liturgical nature of the text is emphasised by the fact that it is spoken by a collective "we", indicating that the hymn was recited or sung by a soloist whose acclamations were repeated by the whole assembly. The second hymn (NHC III, 66, 22-68, 1 // NHC IV, 79, 3-80, 15) is recited by an "I" to a "you" (sing.). It seems clear that the person who is praying praises the deity for the state he has attained: it is a praise expressed by an individual who has acquired gnosis and so has attained salvation. The hymn probably had to be recited during a ritual act that marked the individual's entry into the Gnostic community. This ritual act must have been accompanied by certain gestures. Probably the first hymn was sung during or immediately after the baptism, whereas the second was recited by the initiate. In the treatise *Trimorphic protennoia* there is a list of beings recited by Protennoia (NHC XIII, 48, 11-35); although not a hymn in the strict sense, it is close to it in structure. It has five

strophes, with an introduction that connects it with the rest of the document. In each strophe three heavenly functionaries are mentioned by name, followed by a description of the saving act performed by them.

In the treatise known as *Melchizedek* (NHC IX, 1) two hymnal sections can be identified. In the first (14, 15-18, 7) the mythical priest raises a prayer of joy, giving thanks for the salvation obtained through gnosis. The utterance of his name seems to be connected with a baptismal context. It is obviously a litany hymn, but it cannot be determined whether it was recited by the community or by a single initiate. In the second section (5, 24-6, 14) there is, on the other hand, an invocation pronounced by an angel. The hypothesis has been put forward that whereas the one being baptised is identified with Melchizedek, the mystagogue can be identified with the angel. The hymn of praise contained in 16, 16-18, 7 follows a pattern marked by the *trishagion*, followed by the title of the being invoked and its name; this structure is also found in 5, 24-6, 14, but then without the *trishagion*. There is also a *trishagion* in the *Untitled Text* of Codex Brucianus, ch. 7. *Zostrianus* (NHC VIII, 6, 5-30) recites a hymn of praise which the protagonist sends to the powers after the baptism in the name of Autogenes: in this case also there is the pattern of a title followed by a name or a name followed by a title.

In the Sethian Gnostic treatises marked by baptismal praxis the prayer of praise thus assumes peculiar characteristics: it is addressed to pleromatic and non-pleromatic beings all of whom are connected with baptism, it is uttered in the form of a litany, and accompanied by titles and names. At the same time, the content of this litany is firmly connected with the mythology underlying the document or the tradition with which the hymn itself is connected. In fact there is not always a perfect match between the religious system to which the hymn belongs and the system of which the hymn is an expression. The actual structure of the hymns is liable to vary: sometimes they are an expression of praise, sometimes a request, and sometimes a profession of faith. Also, the beings involved are not always the same: only some of them recur with a certain regularity and suggest a specific liturgical tradition, whereas the unsystematic presence of others raises important questions about their origin and role. It is likely that there were lists of them.

The doxological prayers recorded in NHC XI, 2 *On Anointing* and *On the Eucharist* (40, 1-29 and 43, 20-38) derive from a sacramental context of a Valentinian type, whereas the three prayers which



comprise the treatise *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII, 5) must be considered as hymns which accompany the three different levels of mystical ascension. In the *Oration of Paul* (NHCI, A, 1-B, 10) the aim of the prayer of invocation is the mystical elevation of the Gnostic, here represented by Paul, who in this way succeeds in penetrating the divine mystery.

#### E. INVOCATIONS OF HEAVENLY BEINGS

The *epiclesis*, that is, the invocation of the beings by name, has some interesting parallels in primitive Christianity, which also attests the request for help in a baptismal context, in order to place the initiates under the protection of the beings invoked. Also *nomina barbara* and various sequences of vocals belong to this context. The multiplication of the intracosmic and pleromatic heavens in Gnostic cosmology allows the number of beings living in them to be expanded almost to infinity. Whereas the beings of the intracosmic realms, such as the heavenly Archons, are totally aggressive and negative, the pleromatic beings are beneficial, able to assist the Gnostic who starts on the path of faith and to support him during the whole journey of salvation he has to complete. In the *Pistis Sophia* IV, 136, the ritual prayer spoken by Jesus after his resurrection is marked by vocalizations and mysterious names, and occurs in a context in which the spatial orientation of Jesus and his disciples seems to play an important role. On the other hand, the presence of *vores mysticae* and of vocalic sequences in hymns and prayers reveals the interest the Gnostic had in invocations of a “magical” kind. Many of the names invoked, in fact, as well as the series of vowels, are common to the repertoire of the magical papyri. There, access to the deity is permitted only through knowing his “names”: they represent the deity itself and should not be revealed to anyone. Originally only the gods knew these names, and actually they do not belong to human but to divine language. The secret language also uses secret formulae, vocalic sequences, palindromes, combinations of letters and numbers, “foreign” languages, or animal language. Thus in Gnostic circles these elements are evidently appropriated but they are given a new function within a different religious system. Gnosticism undoubtedly shared with the world of religious magic the need for contact with the divine through a “different” language (mysterious words) and a knowledge – to some extent “secret” – of the names of the beings invoked (*nomina mystica*) and of the system of interrelationships between the various cosmic levels (vocalic sequences understood as symbols of the planets).

#### F. SUMMARY

From this mass of evidence it emerges that Gnostics made wide use of prayers and hymns which were strongly influenced by (if not indeed adopted from) both the Jewish and the Christian world, as well as the “pagan” tradition in the widest sense. The Odes and Psalms of the Old Testament are widely used, as is also the model of the *trishagion*, and the use of a terminology comes very close to Jewish and Christian usage. But equally, prayers and hymns occur which are strongly influenced by magic literature. There are also two syncretistic “pagan” hymns to Attis that in the context of the Naassenes form the starting point for doctrinal speculation (Hipp., *Ref.* V, 9, 8-9). The use of mystery language is not in itself evidence of a doctrines shared with the mystery cults, since this terminology was in fairly common use in the religious languages of late antiquity.

#### 3. HERMETISM

Hermetic prayer shows the same tendency to make use of various sources, and the presence of elements taken from different religious contexts is also evident. As with Gnostic prayer, here too one should consider a special process of reinterpretation of the material used.

As is well known, enlightenment and the resulting rebirth form the centre of Hermetic experience. The acquisition of that state by an individual entails, on the one hand, a complete vision of the divine world and, on the other, a transformation of the initiate, also in ethical and intellectual respects. He is said to attain a state of repose where he dedicates himself to perpetual praise of God. One of the privileged tools to attain Gnosis consists precisely in prayer, through which the *mystes* succeeds in establishing a relationship and communication with God.

#### A. THE CLOSING PRAYER OF THE POIMANDRES

At the end of the Hermetic treatise known as *Poimandres* (CH I, 30-32) a prayer is recorded which undoubtedly refers to themes presented in the treatise. In terms of structure it comprises a sequence of sayings preceded by the adjective “Holy”, which in turn can be subdivided into three groups of each three praises: in the first, God is addressed in the third person, in the others, in the second. This hymn is followed by the offering of a spiritual sacrifice, a petition, a profession of faith, a blessing and a conclusion. The Jewish inspiration of this prayer is evident in the use of sayings preceded by “holy”, the oldest antecedent of which is the *Sanctus* of Isaiah (*Is.* 6, 3), re-written in an

apocalyptic context, which is attested both in Jewish and early Christian liturgy. In the introduction to the prayer and in the petition there are allusions to the *Shema'* (*Deuteronomy* 6, 4-5). Moreover, certain expressions of the Hermetic *Sanctus* have equivalents in the eighteen *berakoth* (blessings that have to be said three times a day), especially the *Yotser* (the morning prayer) of the Jewish liturgy and at the same time form part of the blessings which precede the *Shema'*. Other parallels can be identified in the prayers said at morning and evening by the Therapeutae, as attested by Philo (*Vita cont.* 27. 89). In addition, attention has also correctly been drawn to parallels with the "instruction" genre of Egyptian tradition, with Greek philosophical sayings as well as with a series of possible contributions from the Christian liturgy. The invocations stress the generative role of the deity and his connection with man. God carries out his will through the powers whereas gnosis is the qualifying element of the link between God and "his own". The offer consists of "pure rational (= spiritual) sacrifices" and marks the process of spiritualization of sacrifice, also documented in literary texts and "pagan" philosophers and in Jewish and Christian sources. The petition made is for remaining in the state of gnosis, followed by a profession of faith and finally the blessing and statement of the wish to share with God in the work of sanctification. In CH V 10-11, there is also a prayer at the end of the treatise, which is a celebration of the absolute essence of God.

#### B. HYMNS OF REBIRTH

The prayer contained in CH XIII 17-19 rehearses the experience of rebirth previously undergone by Tat. In the hymnal section are invoked the various powers which are within the *mystes*, followed by an offering of spiritual sacrifices (a speech offering) and a conclusion. The reference in the document to eulogy as an already codified formula which the *mystes* wishes to know, and the information on the ways in which it has to be recited (orientation, gestures), speak in favour of a ritual defined as and forming part of a type of initiation. Of special interest is the comparison with the morning and evening prayers in Greek religion. The hymn that is spoken at the end of the rebirth is in fact sung by the powers that have penetrated the *mystes*, defined as the instrument through which the *logos* sings. The spiritual sacrifice referred to is the prayer itself which results in the *mystes* finding "repose", peace.

Other interesting evidence on Hermetic prayer comes from the library of Nag Hammadi. In the *Discourse on the Eight and Ninth* (NHC VI, 52, 1-63, 32), the disciple, who by now is ready to reach

the Ogdoad and the Ennead, is requested by Hermes to pray: they will pray with mind, heart and soul (53, 12). The following prayer by Hermes is characterised by the glorification of God's power, by vocalic sequences and by the request for vision (55, 4-57, 25). Then the disciple also receives the vision through silent prayer. His vision has to be kept secret, while the *mystes* continues to praise god incessantly for the rest of his days. It is a prayer requesting divine intervention, which has the structure of an invocation to god through his functions, a series of voces mysticae and of vocalic sequences, a petition and finally an offering, which in this case also consists of spiritual sacrifices. Here too there is an allusion to the *Shema'*, while mysterious names and sequences of vocals connect the document with the world of the magical papyri. The idea that the life of the enlightened takes the shape of a continual hymn of praise goes back to Stoicism and Judaism (cf. Epict., *Diss.* 1, 16, 15-21; Philo, *Heres.* 200).

In the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI, 63, 33-65, 7), the persons who are praying thank the deity who has granted them his love and given them some gifts (*nous, logos, gnosis*). It is a prayer of praise for the gnosis obtained, to which those who are praying ask to remain faithful. An intervention by the redactor at the close of the prayer portrays those who are praying as now turned towards pure nourishment without blood. It is interesting to stress that the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* is also found at the end of the *Asclepius* and in the Papyrus Mimaut. Probably this is the result of independent circulation.

#### C. BACKGROUNDS

The structural similarities that can be discovered between the various prayers (the sequence: offering, petition, profession of faith, conclusion in CH I and CH XIII, or the same sequence of formulae in CH, I 31 and the *Eight and Ninth*, NHC VI, 6 56, 15-17) pose the problem of whether the Hermetists used common sources, not necessarily Hermetic, or whether these similarities derive from making use of the same liturgical model.

As for the parallels with other religious traditions, there is the reference to heavenly hymn singing in the *Eight and Ninth* and CH I. The idea of human singing based on the singing of the heavenly powers is present in Jewish apocalyptic literature and is common in Christian liturgical texts. The theme of "spiritual sacrifice" goes back to Jewish and Christian milieus, an expression that in pagan contexts has an equivalent only in Hermetic texts, in some of which it simply means prayer. Of interest for comparative purposes is

the Egyptian Christian anaphora attested in *P. Strasb. Gr.* 254, one of the oldest occurrences of an anaphora, where spiritual sacrifice does not mean the sacrifice of Christ but the offering of prayers of thanksgiving. When Jewish liturgical material was transferred to the Christian liturgy, it remains difficult to determine from which of the two traditions elements of Hermetic prayers were taken. The life of the enlightened as a continual hymn of praise to the deity is a Jewish and Stoic motif. Hermetism shares with Platonic theurgy the idea that certain cultic acts, including prayer, allow the soul to complete its ascent towards the divine realm. As for the use of formulae, expressions and “mysterious” names widely attested in magical papyrological literature, the same comments apply as for Gnosticism: this material is only used after being reshaped to make it suitable for new religious meanings.

#### D. HERMETIC COMMUNITIES?

The role of prayer in Hermetism can be understood only in close connection with the problem of whether or not there was a Hermetic community in the strict sense. In other words, whether Hermetic practices actually existed or whether the documentary material is to be considered as a purely literary phenomenon without any ritual background (see also → Hermetism). The question still remains open, and in the past the opinions of scholars have oscillated between two extremes: on the one hand the hypothesis that a Hermetic community did exist, and on the other the hypothesis which denied the existence of Hermetic communities in the strict sense. Recent studies, while accepting that the treatises do not describe a specific historical and sociological reality, are inclined to consider them as a phenomenon which is not exclusively literary. In particular, there emerges from them the picture of one or very few disciples gathering closely around a master who transmits to them his teaching by word of mouth. The transcripts of these lessons have enabled the teachings to pass beyond the confines of these restricted circles. These written documents, which comprise a tradition parallel to the oral tradition of teacher to disciple, were considered “sacred” and therefore were kept secret. Study, instruction, dialogue, prayers, and hymns, all ultimately create a deep bond between master and disciples, who feel themselves to be part of a tradition and in a wide sense of a community. But a situation like this is extremely fluid and tied to the charisma of a single master. On the other hand, the existence of “communities” linked in some way to prayer emerges in allusive form from the documents: in the *Eight and Ninth*, initiation seems to

take on a communal dimension through the reference to “brothers” who welcome the *mystes*. In the *Asclepius* spiritual prayer develops in a temple context and according to specific times and positions; it follows a structure and is recited by several persons, and thus appears to be a complex liturgical act. There is also evidence for cultic practices in CH XIII, where Hermes supplies Tat with certain instructions about the position and orientation regulating recitation of the prayer.

Gnostics and Hermetists connect prayer with enlightenment, either conceived of as a sign of conversion, understood both as “repentance” and as initiation, or considered instead as an expression of joy for the salvation which has now been acquired. However, for neither Gnostics nor Hermetists can one speak of organised churches, and the liturgical practices attested in some documents cannot be applied to all the “communities”, not even to those which seem to be close to each other (among the Gnostics, for example, the Valentinian [→ Valentinus and Valentinians] or Sethian [→ Sethians] circles) since the differences at the doctrinal and liturgical levels make such generalisations difficult. In particular, the link between prayer and baptism, which emerges more or less allusively and only in a few Gnostic documents, has almost no equivalent in Hermetic literature. An exception is CH IV, 4 where, according to Hermes, god says to the human hearts to immerse themselves “in the mixing bowl”. There also exists a letter (4th cent. C.E.) written by a devotee of → Hermes Trismegistus in which he speaks about ‘the inexorable water of the god Hermes who protects’.

It is precisely this lack of specific information concerning the existence and operation of Hermetic circles, due to the very nature of the documents which have reached us, which makes it difficult to reach conclusions about the contexts in which the prayers and hymns were recited. In some cases they seem to be the result of personal devotion, in others they appear to have liturgical functions within circles of devotees. In Hermetism, at the highest levels of the initiation process, oration becomes internal and silent prayer, whereas in Gnosticism in some cases we find the paradox that the devotee, once he has reached the dimension of “perfect”, no longer needs to pray.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

If prayers and hymns seem to be widely documented both in Gnostic and Hermetic sources, a salient fact that is immediately obvious is the extreme variety of documentation. The common elements, which are also present, do not however allow a “typically” original Gnostic or Hermetic

structure to be identified. Rather they seem to be the result of the recovery and reinterpretation of earlier or contemporary models, in terms of both language and theological content and perhaps also with respect to certain cultic acts. These processes of reinterpretation occur in milieus – and this applies to both Gnosticism and Hermetism – which in themselves exhibit extremely fluid outlines. The result of all this is that it is not possible to speak of Gnostic and Hermetic prayers or hymns except in rather general terms. A more correct and fruitful approach is to study, one by one, the references to hymns and prayers documented within each of the texts, with particular attention to the ideology – in form and substance, “original” or received – which they express.

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## "I AM" Activity

The "I AM" movement was launched by an American couple, Guy Warren Ballard (1878-1939) and Edna Anne Wheeler Ballard (1886-1971). They had both shown a long-time interest toward occult literature. Guy Ballard had become a medium himself even before his marriage in 1916 and apparently 'practiced spiritualism in Chicago for a number of years' (Braden). According to some sources, the Ballards were familiar not only with Theosophical literature, but also with Christian Science, Unity, the Rosicrucian Order A.M.O.R.C. [→ Rosicrucianism III] and some other teachings. While their message reflected the likely influence of some of those teachings, they worked them into a unique synthesis, which in its turn would influence the beliefs and practices of younger movements.

Guy Ballard claimed to have met a representative of the Great White Lodge, the Ascended Master → Saint Germain, in 1930, on the slopes of Mount Shasta in Northern California. Ballard reported his experiences in his first book, *Unveiled Mysteries*, written under the pen name of Godfré Ray King. He presented this meeting as the beginning of a number of extraordinary experiences inside and outside of Ballard's physical body, allowing him to gain knowledge of past incarnations and learn to master "Projected Consciousness". It was explained to Ballard that a group of Highly Evolved Beings 'work ceaselessly helping the humanity of our earth to become Perfected men and women, and enable them to manifest in their outer lives the same great Perfection and Dominion as did Jesus Christ'. Humanity had 'manifested Perfection in every way' in ages past, but subsequently 'man became sense-conscious, instead of God-conscious'. Now is the time of entering a New Dispensation, which will allow more rapid progress. America will be the heart center of the approaching "Golden Age". The movement has a decidedly patriotic orientation, and the special place given to America is reflected by the presence of the American flag in "I AM" places of worship even outside of the United States.

"I AM" is God's Presence within each human being – that component of the human being which was created in the likeness of God. Jesus came upon this earth in order to show the way, and his miracles were nothing more than God's law put into action. Through the power of the "I AM" inside man, humanity is able to find the way. "Ascension" is the goal of every human incarnation. The spread-

ing of the "I AM" teachings is said to allow many more people to make their Ascension than in times past, and these teachings will remain authoritative for the next 10,000 years. The Ballards were chosen as the only "Accredited Messengers", until the time when Jesus and other Masters will visibly manifest themselves. The Ballards, too, became great Cosmic Beings after their own Ascension, once they left their bodies; and already during their lifetime they were presented as reincarnations of such famous figures as George Washington (Guy) and Joan of Arc (Edna).

The Ballards apparently organized their first classes as early as 1930, the messages began to be released in 1932, and the Saint Germain Foundation (the corporate expression of the movement) was created the same year; but the real launching of the movement took place in 1934, when the book *Unveiled Mysteries* was published. The Ballards rapidly awakened a strong interest, and as early as 1935 they were teaching classes in auditoriums seating six thousand people. But they met with opposition as well, and in 1939 this led to the adoption of a system of closed classes instead of public meetings. After World War II, the movement began to spread beyond America; except for a small group already established in Glasgow, it first set foot on the European continent in Switzerland in 1946, and from there spread to other places.

The members of "I AM" do not only study the sacred books of the movement and the numerous dictations from the Masters received by the Ballards. They also have characteristic practices like the repetition of "affirmations" and "decrees". Affirmations are 'sentences that affirm the individual's attunement to God and the blessing due to the person as a result of that attunement' (Melton). Decrees have been described as a 'counterpart of prayer – but its spirit is not that of prayer in its Christian sense. It is not supplication; it is demand – or command' (Braden). According to Melton, the practice of decreeing can be traced at least in part to some practices of → New Thought. There are decrees for all kinds of occasions; they could be seen as involving the members in a kind of spiritual army in the cosmic fight against the black forces. Decreeing is supposed to have power to influence secular developments as well: for instance, it was claimed that the Munich peace agreements in September 1938 had been a result of the collective efforts of "I AM" students, and that the latter were able through their spiritual activity to protect America from war.



Beside Saint Germain and Jesus, there are dozens of other Masters known to “I AM” members, such as Lord Maitreya, Hercules, Archangel Michael, Arcturus, Astrea, Quan Yin, Helios, and Diana. These names reflect the eclecticism typical of “I AM”. The role attributed to the Masters is reminiscent of modern Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society](the names of some of the Theosophical Masters also appear in “I AM”) as well as of the books written by Baird T. Spalding (1872-1953), who had published the first volume of his *Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East* in 1924. Masters Morya and Kuthumi, of Theosophical fame, were familiar to the Ballards, but through them, these masters made statements allegedly confirming that “I AM” offered a much more developed message than → H.P. Blavatsky’s. Thus in the 1930s, Morya and Kuthumi explained (according to the Ballards) that ‘Our Beloved Saint Germain has accomplished more in three years than We did in the many years of Our humble efforts’. “I AM” has been quite adequately described as ‘a thorough [American] indigenization of the Theosophical experience’: ‘The Masters are found not in faraway Egypt or Tibet, but also in the then romantic American West’ (Ellwood).

While the “I AM” Activity was quite careful to keep control over its teachings and maintain orthodoxy, refusing any mixture with other teachings or messages from other sources, its pretensions to exclusivity and purity could not prevent some followers from longing for more “dictations”. Other people eventually claimed contact with the Masters, and launched their own movements, such as the Bridge to Freedom (and its several subsequent offshoots) or the Church Universal and Triumphant (→ Summit Lighthouse). Thus, today there exist a number of movements or informal circles derived from the “I AM” lineage. Traces of “I AM” influences can also be found in many contemporary occult publications, often revealed by an emphasis upon the “Violet Flame” or other typical “I AM” themes. In addition, Ballard’s reports on his encounters with visitors from Venus have obviously exerted influence on some subsequent UFO groups [→ UFO Traditions], especially those allegedly in touch with the Commander of the fleet of spaceships of the “Galactic Federation”, Ashtar Sheran. Despite its lesser impact as an organization compared with what it used to be earlier, the influence of “I AM” should not be underestimated. It appears that several teachings of the movement have become incorporated into the common

mythology of the alternative religious milieu. This means that, even if the movement would continue to decrease, its doctrinal influence would still survive and spread.

The literature of “I AM”, such as *Unveiled Mysteries*, *The Magic Presence* and *The “I AM” Discourses*, is published by Saint Germain Press (Chicago).

*Lit.:* Joel Bjorling, *Channeling: A Bibliographic Exploration*, New York & London: Garland, 1992, 99-141 ♦ Charles Samuel Braden, *These Also Believe: A Study of Modern American Cults and Minority Religious Movements*, New York: MacMillan, 1950, 257-307 ♦ Gerald B. Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, Los Angeles: Truth Research Publications, 1940 ♦ Robert S. Ellwood, *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*, Englewood Cliffs (New Jersey): Prentice Hall, 1973, 121-125 ♦ idem, “Making New Religions: The Story of the Mighty ‘I AM’”, *History Today* 38 (June 1988), 18-31 ♦ J. Gordon Melton *et al.*, *New Age Encyclopedia*, Detroit, New York & London: Gale, 1990, *passim* ♦ J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America* (revised and updated edition), New York & London: Garland, 1992, 58-67 ♦ Kenneth & Talita Paolini, *400 Years of Imaginary Friends: A Journey Into the World of Adepts, Masters, Ascended Masters, and their Messengers*, Livingston (Montana): Paolini International, 2000.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MAYER

## Iatromathematica

The term Iatromathematica was derived from the title of a Greek Hermetic treatise, well known in medieval latin translations; in a broader sense it refers to “astrological medicine” (i.e. the medical science which subordinates clinic observation and therapeutic praxis to the scrutiny of the stars). The theory of Iatromathematica is founded on several philosophical assumptions. The most obvious one is the so-called “material causalistic” assumption, which is already apparent from the opening words of the *Iatromathematica*: ‘The rays of the seven stars are interwoven in the human limbs’. The stellar rays are thought to carry the four Aristotelian qualities of hot, cold, dry and moist, as well as some other quintessential qualities, thereby affecting the human body, either directly or, more rarely, through the air. A much more emblematic assumption is the Platonic one according to which the universe is a “Living Creature” (as in Plato’s *Timaeus*) whose limbs move in co-ordination, so that a single movement reflects all the others. According to this assumption, the stars are not to be considered the

cause of sublunar occurrences, but rather a sign of them, as well as a sign of physiopathological processes.

This branch of → astrology makes it possible to approach the unobservable processes that take place inside the human body. A merciful God gave humanity a key to the understanding of these phenomena, i.e. scrutiny of the material world and, in particular, of its noblest part: the heavens. In this way, Christian thought offered a justification to the prelogical intuition which established a correspondence between heavenly movements and phenomena and earthly occurrences, with particular reference to the structure of the human body. On the basis of this conception, postulating the existence of a relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, stars and heaven represent a pattern for the formation of the human body: they are a text of which our body is somehow a translation. In addition to the idea of the stars being either the material cause or the representation of physiological events, “astrological medicine” was founded on yet a third conception, which may seem highly elusive from a metaphysical point of view, but which is indeed crucial for the topic in question. This conception, based both on hermetic works of a religious nature (*Poimandres* and *Asclepius* are the most obvious examples) and on astrological works, states the existence of a so-called “control relation” between the stars and the earth, i.e. the dependence of earthly events on heavenly events, in the same way as in the sphere of politics the subjects’ actions depend on the monarch’s. The events in question are considered to be of a sympathetic nature, in the sense of a subordination to the authority of superior entities.

The language of astrology indeed makes extensive use of political metaphors (such as *ducatus*, *imperium*, *regimen* and the hermetic διοικητής) in order to refer to a relationship of dependence which is neither material causality nor semiologic co-ordination; the latter assumption plays a fundamental role in stating the dependence of various entities (e.g. towns, territories, plants, animals, body organs) on the stars. All the above-mentioned natural-philosophical conceptions result in a confusing medley which may be defined as the “medico-astrological” tradition. While in the Hippocratic collection the (rare) references to astronomical observations concern solely the concomitant rising of stars and pestilential winds, the early medico-astrological treatises (some of which were ascribed to Hermes) already deal with the most typical fea-

tures of this scientific-literary genre. An illuminating example is found in *De decubitu*, a treatise ascribed to Galen and going back to late Antiquity: ‘If someone gets ill while the Moon is in Aries and in configuration with Mars or the Sun, the illness, caused by the heat of the Sun, will start from the head: the patient’s meninges will begin to ache and he will suffer from persistent insomnia and fever. In this case, it will be useful to cool the patient’s body and to draw blood out of it; otherwise he will suffer from delirium and phrenitis’. In this example there is a clear concomitance of analogical factors of symbolical nature linked to the “control relation” theory (such as the connection between Aries and the head), and of causalistic factors (such as the heat of the Sun). The properties of any single season (e.g. spring is hot and humid, summer is hot and dry) were considered to be related to and caused by the stars of the zodiac. Zodiacal signs were therefore thought to influence the environment and consequently the health, as well as control the humours qualitatively related to them: for instance, the blood, humid and hot, was supposed to “explode” (a process called “exaltation” in the language of astrology) in spring. Again, zodiacal signs were also thought to exert a continuous control over the body organs and parts, in conformity with a manifest analogical schema: Aries controls the head, Taurus the back, and so on.

As a consequence, a great number of pathological events typical of springtime were ascribed to a blood-surplus in the head and to the consequent difficulty of refining it – according to the physiology of the time – into a crystal-clear nerval fluid; hence the phenomena of torpor, sopor, and episodes of psychomotoric difficulty. The entire medico-astrological corpus lends itself to an interpretation based on the above-mentioned theory. Some treatises were devoted mainly to diagnosis, others either to therapeutics or to prognosis. As for the latter, any causalistic interpretation was hardly plausible, since the connection between the critical phase of the illness and the heavenly movements (in particular lunar movements) had a statistical basis at best, and a numerological one at its worst. Diagnosis was a more intricate matter, as it was closely related to the scrutiny of the patient’s constitution, which was in turn to be traced mainly from the horoscope: the stars rising at the moment of a child’s birth were thought to “impress” their qualities on the newborn’s body – hence the prevailing temperament, e.g. phlegmatic if cold and moist

were the dominant qualities, melancholic if hot and dry were prevailing. The link between individuals and stars was an continuous one, and as such it did not vanish after the child's birth: the limbs and the organs were to be influenced throughout a person's life by a given zodiacal sign, and this was the case with any person subjected to the influence of the same sign. Even the effectiveness of therapeutical drugs was based upon the atemporal linkage between their botanical components, the stars and the zodiacal constellations: the right moment for the drug-intake was established on the basis of scrutiny of the stars. As for surgery (especially phlebotomy), it could be performed only under favourable astrological conditions, which took into special consideration the influence of the moon on the blood and the other humours.

Iatromathematical treatises of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were of a technical and practical nature, as they lacked any speculative foundation. On the whole, important medical writers imbued with astrology as → Peter of Abano or → Roger Bacon offer little, if any, scientific elaboration of astrological medicine as such. The only notable exceptions are → Ficino's *De vita libri tres* (1489) – a highly speculative neoplatonic work, the influence of which can hardly be overestimated – and some treatises by → Paracelsus, whose astrological conceptions fit in only partially with the above-mentioned schema. The complex metaphysics of the hermetic movement inspired by Paracelsus (the so-called “chemical philosophy”) overshadowed and sometimes completely dismissed the astrological features of Paracelsian medicine; therefore, astrological medicine has not been affected by this last bulwark of the magic-based idea of nature, which continued to exist even in the age of the scientific revolution. Still, there have been significant attempts to bring Newtonian elements into physiopathology, the most important of which is Richard Mead's, eloquently entitled *De imperio Solis et Lunae in corpora humana* (1704). Mead's estimate of the attraction of human fluids (blood, humours) by the sun and the moon, and its possible pathologic effects, is a conspicuous example (not the last!) of what can be called “neo-astrological” medicine.

The only extant edition is unfortunately highly uncritical and full of errors in Greek: Ἱατρομαθηματικὰ Ἐρμῶ τοῦ Τρισημέριστου πρὸς Ἄμμωνα Αἰγύπτιον, in: J.L. Ideler (ed.), *Physici et medici Graeci minores*, Leipzig, 1841, vol. 1, 367-396.

*Lit.*: P. Kibre, “Astronomia or Astrologia Ypocratis”, in: *Science and History: Essays in Honor of Edward*

*Rosen* (Studia Copernicana, 16), Krakow: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1977 ♦ C. O'Boyle, *Medieval Prognosis and Astrology: A Working Edition of the Aggregationes de crisi et creticis diebus with Introduction and English Summary*, Cambridge: Welcome Unit for the History of Medicine, 1991 ♦ Nicolaus de Paganica, *Compendium medicinalis astrologiae* (G. dell'Anna, ed.), Galatina: Congedo, 1990 ♦ G. Zanier, *La medicina astrologica e la sua teoria: Marsilio Ficino e i suoi critici contemporanei*, Roma: Ateneo & Bizzarri, 1977.

G. ZANIER

## Ibn Sina, Abu 'Ali al-Husayn ibn 'Abd Allah → Avicenna

### Illuminaten

1. SURVEY OF THE ORDER'S HISTORY
2. THE ESOTERIC CONTEXT
3. HISTORY OF THE TRADITION

#### 1. SURVEY OF THE ORDER'S HISTORY

The foundation of the secret society of the Illuminaten is related to the conflict between the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the Enlightenment in Bavaria. Although the suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773 had destroyed the external organisation of the Society of Jesus, the advocates of Enlightenment, above all Adam von Ickstatt (1706-1776), rector of Ingolstadt University, feared the influence of “ex-Jesuits”, who still held important offices in education. In 1773 Ickstatt procured the Chair of Ecclesiastical Law and Practical Philosophy for his student Adam Weishaupt (1748-1830) in pursuance of an anti-Jesuit staffing policy. Here on 1 May 1776 Weishaupt founded a student league, which he first called the Order of the “Most Perfectibles”, later of the “Illuminaten”, to serve as an organisation to defend the reading of Enlightenment literature and related academic doctrine. The members, who assumed cover-names, were bound by oath to keep the existence of the society as well as its activities totally secret.

The Illuminaten outgrew its character as a student circle with few participants, once Weishaupt had admitted his former pupil Franz Xaver Zwackh (1756-1843) as a member in February 1778. Zwackh, a Bavarian privy councillor, won for the first time older and influential men in Munich, Eichstätt and Freising for the Order, among them Hofkammerrat Marchese di Constanzo (1738-after 1800), who undertook a recruiting trip to northern and western Germany in 1779-1780. In Frankfurt am Main he was able to

win Adolph Freiherr Knigge (1752-1796) as a member, who was ultimately responsible for the spread of the Order throughout the whole of Germany. In total, about 2000 persons are said to have belonged to the Illuminaten, including members from elsewhere in Europe; 1510 of these have been identified up to the present time, among them many of the most famous names of the period such as → Goethe, Herder (1744-1803), or Pestalozzi (1746-1827).

As a result of the first internal conflicts, the “Order General” Weishaupt was joined in 1779 by a collective governing council (“Areopagus”). This leading group developed an inner system of direction, which aimed at the education of a “new man” in the Order. It was expected that younger members particularly would be sufficiently impressed, and that they would influence state and society on the basis of the Order’s superior morality. The strategy of this education was a comprehensive observation of oneself and others within the membership. Every single member was to be minutely investigated in terms of character and educational qualities and made susceptible to direction. The concrete means of achieving this was the obligation to send in monthly reports (“*quibuslicet*”), whose information reached from the bottom of the Order through the hierarchy right up to the top and which were answered in the form of reply slips. The basis of this structure were the “minerval churches”, small reading societies of the Order, in which younger and new members were gathered for training at the respective location of an Illuminaten branch. The individual branches were subject to a regional prefecture; several prefectures formed provinces, two to three provinces an inspectorate. Prefects, provincials and inspectors wrote reports preparing basic information for the Order leadership and made suggestions about how to influence individual members. The grand conception of this educational system of surveillance and direction within the Order aimed at creating a “legion of noble ones”, whose moral qualification would be fundamentally higher than the condition of contemporary bourgeois society.

The education of the “new man” was not an end in itself, but was supposed to train staff for a “moral regime”, which was to be secretly introduced within existing states. The political goal of the Illuminaten was thus not open revolution, but rather the hidden infiltration of the various forms of authority and institutions of the Ancien Régime in the age of the late Enlightenment. With a philosophy of history of human perfectibility taken from Rousseau’s triadic model, it was believed that over

generations, indeed centuries, the Order could generate a process of political and social transformation leading to a society of rational citizens, still patriarchal in structure, but free from all other external authority. Any social structure exceeding the authority of the head of the family was regarded as dispensable in the future society of free and enlightened men. The social ideal of the leadership of the Illuminaten Order thus matched concepts of the anarchical utopia of the 18th century.

First steps towards the realisation of this utopia were made in the most diverse fields. As the Order was internally focused on education, it was obvious that the latter would be emphasised in the outside world. The Illuminaten thus played an impressive role in the pedagogic movement of the Enlightenment for establishing model schools, the so-called *Philanthropin*. The Illuminatus Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746-1818) led the *Philanthropin* in Hamburg, for a time together with Ernst Christian Trapp (1745-1818), another member of the Order. Johann Friedrich Simon (1747-1829), also an Illuminatus, was director of the *Philanthropin* in Neuwied; the history of the foundation of the *Philanthropin* in Schnepfenthal near Gotha carries the stamp of the Illuminaten. At a scholarly level, the academies were the focus of Order activity, especially the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in Munich. In 1783 its vice-president as well as two of three class directors were members of the Order. The Illuminatus Carl Theodor von Dalberg (1744-1817), the patron of the Mainz Academy in Erfurt, tried to strengthen the grip of the Order through a targeted policy of appointments. Influence on the literary discourse of the period was achieved by reviewing and publishing. In 1783 the Illuminatus Leopold Friedrich Goeckingk (1748-1828) was a co-founder of the influential *Journal von und für Deutschland*. The enlistment of Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811), the Berlin publisher and editor of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, had a multiplier-effect.

However, the strategy of infiltrating the governing colleges and councils of the princes was the centrepiece of Order policy. A textbook success was achieved in the Rhineland Grafschaft of Wied-Neuwied. In the Electorate of Bavaria some ten percent of senior officials belonged to the secret society, among them almost the entire board of censors. Important individual personalities should be named here, the above-mentioned Dalberg, later the last High Chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire, or Johann Philipp Graf Cobenzl (1741-1810), the Austrian vice-chancellor, who in June 1782 became a member. With the recruitment of

Imperial Supreme Court assessor Franz Dietrich von Ditfurth (1738-1813) in 1780, the Illuminaten began the infiltration of the highest court in the land at Wetzlar, whose second senate was finally dominated by Illuminaten. A bitter dispute arose over whether it was advisable to draw even ruling princes into the Order at the beginning of 1783, when Duke Karl August of Saxe-Weimar and Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Coburg were admitted.

The betrayal of the secret society by its own membership was related to the so-called Bavarian-Belgian barter project. Important protagonists of the Order had conspiratorially encouraged the plan of Emperor Joseph II, to win Bavaria for Austria and to compensate the Elector Karl Theodor with territories of the Habsburg Netherlands. The Munich “patriotic party” opposed to the plan withdrew from the Order in December 1783; from the middle of 1784 they began with targeted attacks and publications to accuse the entire order of dangerous dealings against the fatherland. The result was the electoral Illuminaten mandate of 1785 and the start of persecutory measures, especially the dismissal of Illuminaten office-holders. Already in February 1785 Adam Weishaupt had fled from Ingolstadt to the free imperial city of Regensburg, whence he retreated to Gotha in August 1786. In April 1785 the “national superior”, Johann Martin Graf zu Stolberg-Roßla (1728-1795), officially suspended the Order’s activities in Germany.

The persecution of the Illuminaten in Bavaria and the ostentatious measures to end the Order’s activities suggest that the year 1785 marks its end. This is however not the case. The centre of the society shifted rather from Munich, Ingolstadt and Neuwied to Weimar and Gotha, which lay in the protective realm of the two Illuminaten princes. Under the protection of Ernst von Gotha, it was above all Johann Joachim Christoph Bode (1730-1793) who took over the affairs of the Order and, in its final phase, assumed the position previously held by Weishaupt. A reform of the Order system was undertaken, while its activities and contacts were concentrated in northern and western Germany. For the first time, several foreign branches were now founded in Italy, France and Russia. The Order branches in Copenhagen and Jena were still functioning until the beginning of 1788; in general, however, the delivery of prefecture reports and protocols breaks off around the end of 1787. At the turn of the year 1787-1788 the secret society of the Illuminaten expired, without any formal decree of dissolution being documented.

## 2. THE ESOTERIC CONTEXT

Until now, scholarly research has oscillated in its understanding of the concept “esotericism” between two basic models. One model is narrowly defined and formal, the other model is more extensive in seeking to link the understanding of “esotericism” with specific contents. The narrow concept of esotericism – significantly more widespread – means a school or group, which consciously secludes itself from mainstream society and develops a “higher knowledge”, according to a self-understanding accessible only to its members, who are progressively initiated over a period of time into established degrees of increasing understanding. There can be no doubt that the Order of the Illuminaten is an esoteric society in this formal sense.

It is quite another question, whether the Illuminaten Order belongs to the history of early modern esotericism in the sense of its content, i.e. whether its “higher knowledge” can be ascribed to the esoteric corpus (Antoine Faivre), as it developed from the reception of antiquity in the Renaissance and was especially influenced by theosophical-Rosicrucian currents in the course of the 18th century. Research into the Illuminaten has traditionally denied this, without however discussing this question in any depth. The Order of the Illuminaten passes for “rationalist”, a position that Helmut Reinalter represents as a paradigm. The contrast between the secret league of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* [→ Rosicrucianism II] is often cited – the Illuminaten represent the Enlightenment, the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* the Counter-Enlightenment, or else the older thinking of “enthusiasts”. In comparison, the Illuminaten Order is already a manifestation of modernity.

In 1984 Manfred Agethen opposed this traditional interpretation with a highly fruitful counter-argument. Agethen sees the Illuminaten Order not as the beginning of modernity, but as a late offshoot of the chiliastic and utopian sectarian tradition. This interesting new position is open to attack, since Agethen – almost involuntarily given the prevailing state of religious studies – misunderstood this tradition as medieval and “theologically Christian” and went so far as to discern Catholic ecclesiastical patterns in the Order. In a long review essay of 1988 Ernst-Otto Fehn vehemently rejected this – interestingly enough no longer by referring to the purely “rationalist” character of the secret society, but with the demand that the Illuminaten be examined in the context of masonic [→ Freemasonry] and Rosicrucian utopias. The Order was



thereby located, even in terms of its content, in the history of early modern esotericism – without the concept of “esotericism” actually being mentioned. Historical research of a scholarly nature into esotericism did not yet exist during the 1980s (in German-speaking countries).

By 1990 the scholarly controversy could only be resolved by asking different questions, and interpreting sources anew and more precisely. This course was pursued in a historical and philosophical manner. It was evident that the relevant statements and observations required exact dates, that the chronology of the Order was of paramount importance, and that distinctions had to be made between the various groups and individuals in the overall organisation. It is also important to understand Illuminaten viewpoints in the context of the development of Freemasonry and esotericism in the late Enlightenment.

From the outset, the Illuminaten Order evidently regarded itself as a competitor in an esoteric emporium. When Adam Weishaupt conceived of creating an anti-Jesuit student circle at the University of Ingolstadt, he was working under pressure since a rumour was circulating that a representative of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* was already recruiting among the students. In an age of secret societies, a new league required a form and content, capable of attracting and keeping new recruits. Between 1777 and 1779, Weishaupt developed the foundations of a grade-system, initiatory rites, and a language using geographical and historical terminology, which drew abundantly on esoteric traditions while adapted to the goals of his Order.

For this purpose, two texts on the history of religion by the Göttingen professor of philosophy Christoph Meiners (1747-1810) were fundamental, namely *Ueber die Mysterien der Alten, besonders über die Eleusinischen Geheimnisse* (1776) and *De Zoroastris vita, institutis, doctrina et libris Commentatio prior* (1778). Meiners portrayed the ancient mysteries as a double initiation of believers. Superstitious notions were conveyed in the “Lesser Mysteries”, while in the “Greater Mysteries” the veil of superstition was torn away and those few deemed worthy were initiated into the truths of rational understanding of God. Weishaupt accordingly drafted first texts for the Lesser and Greater Mysteries of the Illuminaten – “The religion of reason” as a mystery of an esoteric league –, and this idea was the starting-point of the Illuminaten “order-system”. The presentation of the mystery grades, above all the form of the initiations and the temple, was conceived as an adaptation of the

“fire-worship” of Zarathustra. The worldly struggle of the Illuminaten was related to the dualistic struggle between good and evil as cosmic principles. In June 1778, Weishaupt first dated an Order letter from “Eleusis” rather than “Ingolstadt”; simultaneously he began to use an ancient Persian calendar for dates. In this early phase, when Weishaupt was solely in charge, the secret society of the Illuminaten was conceived as a mystery league on the basis of the Enlightenment’s understanding of the history and criticism of religion.

However, the actual performance of initiations and an internally consistent and structured grade-system remained a piecemeal affair during the first four years of the Order’s existence. This was still the case, when Freiherr Knigge was won to the order in the summer of 1780. Knigge soon noticed that the grade-system existed more in Weishaupt’s mind than in detailed practice. His offer to collaborate in shaping it was gratefully accepted by Weishaupt, because he knew that Knigge – unlike himself – was an experienced Freemason familiar with the masonic systems of the time, especially the higher grades of the Rite of Strict Observance. At the same time, Knigge was disappointed by masonic mysteries and was delighted to have the opportunity of constructing an esoteric society according to his own notions. By 1781 the first mandatory form of the grade-structure (*Rezeß unter den Areopagiten*) arose under Knigge’s management. In this process, the Order of the Illuminaten developed from Weishaupt’s loose-knit mystery society into a high-grade masonic system. At the Wilhelmsbad Convent of the Strict Observance in summer 1782 Knigge recruited disaffected Freemasons, who knew as little what to make of the old Templar legends [→ Neo-Templar Traditions] as of the newly created Martinist system [→ Martinism: First Period] of the → Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte. Plans now followed for an Illuminaten version of the three basic grades of craft masonry, and the system of the “Eclectic Alliance” introduced by Freiherr von Ditfurth in spring 1783, finally prevailed.

In the history of literature Knigge is regarded as an Enlightenment figure, to some extent a radical one. That he was simultaneously a high-grade esotericist was already noted by Ernst-Otto Fehn in 1984. In Knigge’s view, Hermetic philosophy possessed a rational, scientific character. This combination of a basic Enlightenment attitude with esoteric speculation and the quest for “higher knowledge”, so frequent in the 18th century, was first characterised by Rolf Christian Zimmermann

as “enlightened Hermeticism”. However, there are no definite boundaries between Baroque esotericism on the one hand and the purely rational Enlightenment on the other. There are rather graduated differences and a crucial benchmark was the attitude towards 17th-century theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy]. Knigge publicly polemicised against the rival order of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, but regarded the original Rosicrucian manifestos as the basis of many reforming ideas and precursors of the Enlightenment (*Ueber Jesuiten, Freymaurer und deutsche Rosenkreutzer*, Leipzig 1781). By contrast, Christoph Meiners, who had been interested in the esoteric garb of rational truths, and on whose understanding of ancient mystery-schools Weishaupt had first constructed the Illuminaten, rejected all theosophy as irrational enthusiasm. When the Areopagus circulated within the Order the text that Knigge had composed for the Scottish Knight grade, the initiation of the “Directing Illuminatus”, there was an open dispute about the character and status of esoteric ideas in the Order.

In this grade-text Knigge had attributed to the Order’s system of observances a theosophical progression from the early Christian-Gnostic communities into a future when man could regain his former divine status. This notion and its mystical language created a scandal, especially in the Göttingen circle of Illuminaten, to which belonged Meiners as a recent recruit, Johann Benjamin Koppe (1750-1791), professor of theology, and Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821), professor of philosophy. When Feder complained to Weishaupt about “religious play-acting”, the latter intervened effectively for the first time in the construction of the order-system. He instructed Zwackh to suspend the circulation of the grade-text of the Directing Illuminatus and personally wrote an *Anrede an die neu aufzunehmenden Illuminatos dirigentes*, which was intended to supplant Knigge’s draft and restore Weishaupt’s standing with the Göttingen members. It was vitally important for the professor at the half-Jesuit Bavarian state University of Ingolstadt, that the professors of the famous University of Göttingen remained in the Order and accepted his intellectual leadership.

At the same time it became increasingly obvious that Knigge was by no means the only member of the Illuminaten Order to adopt a theosophical position. His solicitations among the Knights of the Strict Observance had introduced numerous members into the Order, who thought along similar lines, including Ernst Friedrich Hektor Falcke (1751-1809), a Göttingen court councillor, who was also a member of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, and

Johann Friedrich Kleuker (1749-1827), a teacher in Osnabrück, who later translated and popularised the doctrines of → Saint-Martin in Germany. Weishaupt now wanted to halt this tendency and undertake the task of Enlightenment among existing members of the Order. On the basis of a new publication by Christoph Meiners (*Beytrag zur Geschichte der Denkart der ersten Jahrhunderte nach Christi Geburt*, 1780/82), he composed a new text, *Unterricht für alle Mitglieder, welche zu theosophischen Schwärmereyen geneigt sind*. Weishaupt wanted to dissuade and also to build anew. From the second half of 1782 onwards, he worked on developing Knigge’s Illuminaten system of Freemasonry – now on a higher level than initially – into a secret Enlightenment society.

In the years 1782-1783 Weishaupt finally developed four grades for his new mystery-school. The *Anrede* to the Directing Illuminaten became the first grade of the Lesser Mysteries, the grade of Priest; next came the grade of Regent. The Greater Mysteries completed the whole structure, firstly the grade of Magus or Philosophus, and as the supreme and last revelation of the Order, the grade of Docetist. With this explicit reference to Docetism, the founder of the Illuminaten placed his Order in the tradition of Gnostic heresy [→ Gnosticism]. The text of the supreme mystery-grade shows Weishaupt to be the agent of a rigorously abstract, enlightened form of esotericism. In 1999 Martin Mulso analysed the Docetist grade in terms of the history of philosophy for the first time, placing it in the tradition of Hermetic “left-wing Wolffianism” from an 18th-century vantage-point. Here, on a Sensualist basis, Weishaupt developed the prospect of a higher knowledge after death. The centrepiece was the doctrine of metempsychosis, the notion of the transmigration of souls [→ Reincarnation] as the Pythagorean journey of the dead.

Supported by the founder, the opponents of theosophy won the upper hand in the course of the years 1783-1784. Ditfurth denounced Falcke as a *Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* to the Order leadership; he was thereupon removed as Inspector of the Order provinces of Upper and Lower Saxony. Meiners demanded that the purging of all “magical-hermetic sciences” be made a priority of Order policy. In July 1784 Knigge was driven out of the Order. When Bode travelled to the convention of the Philalethes at Paris in 1787, he handed in a memorandum claiming all secret sciences were only snares the Jesuits had laid for the Freemasons. Hermann Schüttler, in a first investigation of these contacts, has been able to demonstrate that, on the eve of the French Revolution, several Paris lodge

brothers shared with Bode the view that esoteric ideas were no longer valid.

The question concerning the esoteric character of the Illuminaten Order can therefore be answered with some discrimination. There was a strong anti-esoteric potential, but traditional contexts and continuities were still effective in the age of Enlightenment. Even the presence of utopian features in the educational system and goals of the Order suggests that early modern contexts cannot be simply excluded. However, within this Order there was a broad platform for discussion: here theosophists encountered deists, and enthusiastic Freemasons those who regarded masonic rituals as mere child's play. An essential part of the internal conflict was rooted in the dispute concerning the relevance and meaning of esoteric traditions.

### 3. HISTORY OF THE TRADITION

Secret societies possess and pursue an identity, which is diametrically opposed to the normal generation of source material. The existence of the society itself is supposed to remain hidden, together with its membership and above all its plans and goals. Cover-names for persons and places are intended to prevent the identification of the actors. Given such provisions, it is astonishing how much material has survived and is available to scholarly research.

This transmission of sources has three major causes. Firstly, the written evidence of daily Order life – correspondence, reports, drafts – was by no means destroyed but collected in the private files of leading Illuminaten to whom they were addressed. Secondly, a high percentage of the individual Order branches were located within masonic lodges, so that some material is also found in lodge archives. Thirdly, the betrayal of the Order in the mid-1780s led to a wave of anti- and pro-Illuminaten publications. Adam Weishaupt himself participated especially in this late and involuntary publicity. Naturally, this group of sources may be used only with care – but it also offers authentic material.

In July 1785 the Bavarian priest and Illuminatus Johann Jakob Lanz (1735-1785) was struck by lightning. In his literary estate were Order documents and the first membership list to fall into the hands of the Bavarian government. The hearings of the Illuminatus and Munich court councillor Johann Franz von Mandl a year later finally unleashed the persecutions of the years 1786 and 1787, initially directed against two members of the Areopagus. Franz Xaver Zwackh had just managed to reach the safety of the free imperial city of Augsburg, before his house in Landshut, where he

had left his Order papers, was searched on 11/12th October 1786. In May 1787 a second raid was made at Schloß Sandersdorf near Ingolstadt, the property of Thomas Franz Maria Freiherr von Basus (1742-1815), who had likewise flown. A selection of the abundant Order documentation found in both searches was published in 1787 by the electoral government (*Einige Originalschriften des Illuminatenordens* and *Nachtrag von weitem Originalschriften*). The entire collection was brought to the Munich Geheimes Hausarchiv and has been lost since the Second World War. The French historian of Freemasonry, René Le Forestier, was still able to work with this material. The same applies to Leopold Engel, an esoteric writer and member of a “new” Illuminaten Order founded in the late 19th century. The latter was a purely theosophical society, which had no actual link with the 18th-century original, but claimed to be following in its tradition.

The publication of Illuminaten grade texts had already begun in 1786 with Weishaupt's decision to make the purely philosophical and esoteric supreme mystery-grade available to the public. This tactic of distracting attention from the more strongly political contents of other grades did not wholly succeed, because a year later the *Originalschriften* contained his *Anrede an die neu aufzunehmenden Illuminatos dirigentes*, that is the text of the Priest grade from the Lesser Mysteries. This was the situation until the definitive cessation of Order activities even outside Bavaria. Not until 1788 did the Illuminatus and Mainzer Hofgerichtsrat Johann Heinrich Faber (1722-1791) publish all lower grade-texts up to that of “Grand Illuminatus”. The conclusion of this publishing process followed in the context of the anti-masonic literature fostered by the French Revolution. In 1794 the former Illuminaten prefect and Gießen privy councillor Ludwig Adolph Christian von Grolman (1741-1809) printed the complete Lesser Mysteries as a study of conspiracy theory; in the same year the theosophical grade of the Directing Illuminatus in Knigge's version appeared. At that time only the first grade of the Greater Mysteries, Philosophus, remained unprinted. W. Daniel Wilson edited it in 1994 coincidentally with Hermann Schüttler.

The most important archival collection available today for research is the literary estate of Johann Joachim Christoph Bode. Bode's papers had remained completely untouched by official investigations thanks to the protection of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Bode had died in December 1793 and his literary executor, the Illuminatus and

Weimar minister Christian Gottlieb von Voigt (1743-1819), transferred the voluminous masonic-Illuminaten documents in January 1794 to Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Gotha, who had bought the papers for 1500 Thalers while Bode was still alive.

Duke Ernst had Bode's papers sealed and determined in his will that his own masonic estate should be sent after his death to the archive of the Grand National Lodge in Stockholm, where the duke knew the material would be secure against publication. This transfer was effected after his decease in April 1804 through confidential Illuminaten offices. His legal executor was the Altenburg chancellor and Illuminatus Johann Georg Geißler (1760-after 1831). Three large boxes went to Stockholm, one of them containing Bode's papers. Thus arose the term "Swedish Box" for the most significant Illuminaten archive. In 1880, following a request from Gotha, the Swedish Box returned to Germany and was incorporated in the lodge archive. Including the papers of Duke Ernst, the material was collected in twenty uniform volumes. In 1935 it was confiscated in the context of a nationwide suppression of Freemasonry by the National Socialist regime in Germany. After an "Abteilung für Grundlagenforschung" was established in 1939 in the Reich Security Main Office, the Gotha documents were also evaluated from a National Socialist ideological standpoint in the 1941 habilitation thesis of Alfred Roßberg (1904-1943), supervised by Günther Franz (1902-1992), professor of history at Jena, SS historian, and scholarly adviser of the Berlin Forschungsstelle. As the war progressed, the Swedish Box was stored in Silesia, where it was confiscated by the Red Army and transferred to the Soviet Union. In the 1950s the estate of Bode with the masonic materials returned from Moscow to Germany and thus arrived at the Zentrales Staatsarchiv of the German Democratic Republic (This collection comprised volumes 1-9, 11-20 of the Swedish Box; the tenth volume remained in Moscow). In 1975 a start was made in cataloguing the archive in Merseburg, but access to its contents was too restricted for scholarly study.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the partial opening of Russian archives to international research, the tenth volume of the Swedish Box was rediscovered by the Merseburg archivist Renate Endler in the Moscow special archive. As a consequence of German reunification, the Freemasonry archives were transferred in 1994 from Merseburg to the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin. Here the estate of Bode is available for scholarly use with permission of the

Grand National Mother-Lodge "Zu den drei Weltkugeln".

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MONIKA NEUGEBAUER-WÖLK

## Illuminés d'Avignon

This group of esotericists has its origins not in Avignon but in Berlin, probably in 1778. Its first members were Prince Henry of Prussia (the brother of king Frederick the Great), Jacques Pernety (older brother of → Dom Antoine-Joseph Pernety), and Claude Etienne le Baud de Nans (an actor). Possi-

bly, they met at Prince Henry's small court of Rheinsberg near Berlin, where Jacques Pernety was a tax inspector, and which was also frequented by Le Baud de Nans. They were soon joined by three more people, who later came to play a dominant role in the group: Louis Joseph Bernard Philibert Guyton de Morveau, called Brumore (1738-1786, librarian of Prince Henry, and a colleague of Jacques Pernety), Dom Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716-1796), and the Polish count Thaddeus Leszczyc Grabianka (1740-1807), Starost of Liva. They all shared an interest in → alchemy, and it is likely that they first gathered to discuss some alchemical manuscripts by → Nicolas Flamel and Mardochée (a poet at the court of → Rudolf II of Prague, who had been charged by the Emperor with putting alchemical texts into rhyme), which were in the possession of Le Baud de Nans.

Alchemical experiments indeed were, and would remain, one of the Illuminés' major preoccupations. A second one consisted in regular consultation of a mysterious oracle, referred to as “la Sainte Parole” (The Sacred Word). If a member of the group wished to consult this supposed source of supernatural wisdom, he would enter a certain room, write his question on a piece of paper, and leave; on returning to the room later, he would find a written response. The real author of the responses has long remained a mystery, but due to the researches of Reinhard Breymayer (1984; 1995) he can now be identified as Johann Daniel Müller (1716-after 1786): a violin virtuoso, radical pietist, Swedenborgian, alchemist, kabbalist, and millenarian prophet who saw himself as “Elias Artista”, the “messiah of Nature” whose advent had first been predicted by → Paracelsus (Faivre 2002/2003). The connection between Müller and (what would later be known as) the Illuminés d'Avignon was made by Brumore, who shared Müller's Swedenborgian interests and had made his acquaintance in Hamburg in 1784. The Illuminés venerated “Elias Artista” as their “hidden master”, but never got to meet him in person and did not know who hid behind the pseudonym.

If Brumore was the link between the Illuminés and their hidden sources of spiritual authority (“Elias Artista” and La Sainte Parole), Grabianka provided them with their financial resources and acted as ritual leader in the consecrations that came to be prescribed by La Sainte Parole. As for → Dom Pernety, by now 63 years of age, he seems to have acted as a kind of father figure for the others. Extremely well acquainted with all kinds of esoteric literature, especially alchemical, he also



played the role of an expert. He consulted La Sainte Parole more than anyone else: in the manuscript transcript (preserved in the Musée Calvet in Avignon, and published by Meillassoux-Le Cerf in 1992) of the questions and answers posed to and received from La Sainte Parole, 69 pages are needed for Pernety, followed by 21 for Grabianka. Although most of these questions deal with alchemy, all kinds of other questions regarding the functioning of the group are posed by Pernety as well. While modern scholars have often regarded him as the leader of the Illuminés, it is more accurate to assume that he shared leadership with Grabianka and Brumore. In fact, La Sainte Parole referred to Grabianka as the “King of the New Israel”, and to Pernety as its “Pontiff”.

The group's size has often been exaggerated. Although it has been claimed that hundreds of people were members, for the entire period of its existence only twenty-one consecrated devotees have been identified with certainty (Meillassoux-Le Cerf 1992, 113). This number may be expanded, however, if one includes all people who in one way or another associated themselves with the Illuminés without having been officially consecrated. We then come to a number of circa thirty people during the group's Berlin stage, circa one hundred during its later existence in Avignon. It is significant that many of them belonged to the higher strata of society: wealthy and cultivated people, many of them intellectuals.

It seems to have been as a result of instructions by La Sainte Parole that the Illuminés evolved from a more or less informal group of likeminded people to a more formal initiatic society. Admission had to take place by a ceremony, called the consecration. It should be performed on the top of a hill near Berlin, referred to as “the desert”, at the rising of the sun, during nine consecutive days. On the hill-top, each candidate had to prepare an altar of turf, called his “Altar of power”, in the centre of a circle of stones; incense had to be burnt on it, and he had to swear to consecrate himself to the service of God, by an alliance with the Eternal One. In return, he could obtain the favour of seeing his angel (e.g. Assadaï for Antoine Pernety, Ajadoth for La Richardière) or receiving a special grace. This alliance was called: “to make a Jehovah” (fair un Jéhovah). It fell to Grabianka to first execute the ceremony, and thereby consecrate himself. He was then commissioned to consecrate Pernety, Brumore and Miss Bruchié (the consort of Brumore). These four were also the ones who most frequently consulted La Sainte Parole and were clearly the most important members of the group.

Among the various people who were subsequently consecrated were Grabianka's wife and his six-years old daughter Annette. They were in Poland when La Sainte Parole ordered them to be consecrated, so Grabianka went there for the occasion, on May 9th 1779. But as soon as he had consecrated his daughter, La Sainte Parole ordered him to “sacrifice” her: Grabianka had to separate from her, and hand her education over to Brumore and Miss Bruchié. Initially unwilling to comply, he and his wife eventually brought Annette to Berlin; and on March 10th, 1780, on the top of the “desert” hill, he handed her over to her new parents, who had never seen her before. In the wake of this event, Grabianka's wife left him and the group. Although La Sainte Parole had ordered a separation of seven years, precisely three years later (on March 10th, 1783) it ordered Annette to be returned to her real parents, whom she had not seen in the meantime.

During the first few years of their existence, the Illuminés concentrated on their alchemical work. We know that, at least according to Antoine Pernety, the aim was to cure mankind of its diseases rather than to make gold. However, the Great Work did not produce the expected results. As early as 1780, La Sainte Parole began to utter mysterious millenarian statements about the advent of ‘the new heaven and the new earth’, and by 1781 it had become clear that the Illuminés would have to leave Berlin and go to a new but as yet unspecified place where they should establish ‘the foundations of the city of his [God's] new people’ (Meillassoux-Le Cerf, 365-366). But it took long before the answers from La Sainte Parole became sufficiently clear to act on them. For a long time, the Illuminés did not know more than that the city of the new Sion had to rise up in the south, at the banks of a big river, at four days walking from Berlin.

The Illuminés' early years in Berlin were followed by a period during which the leading figures left the city. In June 1783, Brumore, Grabianka, Ronikier and Miss Bruchié moved to Poland, where they continued their alchemical work. And some months later, on November 10, having obtained permission from king Frederick to quit his job, Antoine Pernety left Berlin on orders of La Sainte Parole. He ended up with his brother Jacques, who had already left Berlin and was now living in Valence. In April 1784, Brumore and miss Bruchié traveled from Poland to Hamburg, where they received from “Elias Artista” two bottles of “prime matter” and the recipe for completing the Work; they traveled on to Strasbourg, where Brumore separated from his consort and left her with her parents. He traveled on to Basel, where, on

october 3, 1784, La Sainte Parole finally revealed to him the name of the place where the group must reunite: Avignon, at that time a very special place because it did not formally belong to France but to the Roman Catholic Church.

Brumore arrived in Avignon the same month, while one of the group's members, the doctor François-Louis la Richardière, went to Valence to inform Pernety. The latter decided to remain in Valence for the time being, but began to visit Avignon frequently. In March 1785 he did move to Avignon, where he consecrated La Richardière as well as Antoine Bouge, and kindled a fire for the new alchemical Work, which was now being pursued under La Richardière's supervision. Grabianka arrived in Avignon in 1785 as well, bringing with him the alchemical materials that had been made by Ronikier and Brumore in Berlin. The entire experiment on which they were working would take no less than 1200 days, i.e. until July 1788.

Most of those who had belonged to the Illuminés in Berlin now came to Avignon as well, and new members joined. Most of them were Freemasons (Esprit Calvet, De Serrière, Blainville, Chaix de Sourcesol, Gasqui, the count of Pasquini-Montreson, Gombault du Vignan, the baron Tardy de Beaufort, the marquis of Montpezat, and the marquis Vernetti-Vaucroze). Very soon, however, the new group began to disintegrate again, as founding members left Avignon. One month after the final recorded communication by La Sainte Parole (April 1785), Brumore left for Rome, where he died not much later, in February 1786. Shortly after, September 1786, the marquis Vernetti-Vaucroze offered Pernety a house close to his castle, in Bédarides, 17 kilometres from Avignon. Pernety called it "Mount Tabor", and turned one room into a temple, one into a meeting-room, and one into a laboratory. Grabianka left for London in 1786, where he visited a Swedenborgian group founded by Hindmarsh. Without much success he tried here to recruit members for his own group in Avignon. To a few, he revealed that the Illuminés d'Avignon's great secret was that God is not a trinity but contains a fourth person: Mary, the Mother of God.

Not long after Brumore's death in 1786, for reasons which have remained unclear but may well have had to do with Grabianka's quaternarian theology, the Illuminés split into several fractions. One group – the "société des Illuminés d'Avignon" – continued under Pernety, while another – "the New Israel" – was led by Grabianka. Moreover, a third group – "the Filial Piety" – emerged, under the leadership of the marquis of Montpezat. Pernety's

group seems to have continued practicing the original ritual and alchemical practices and can be regarded as the most direct continuation of the Illuminés, whereas the two other groups developed into new directions. Confusingly, however, all of them together have frequently been referred to by later authors not by their new names but as the Illuminés d'Avignon.

If one trusts the sources, which are not always reliable, one is led to conclude that Grabianka in fact developed a completely new ritual. It supposedly took place in a temple in the form of a cross, with four altars in its four arms: one for God the Father, one for Jesus Christ, one for the Holy Spirit, and one for the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. His "New Israel" was guided by a council of seven members, including the functions of Pontiff (Alier), Great Mother (Miss Dottini), Prophet (Ottavio Cappelli), Chancellor, and Interpreter of Dreams. Grabianka himself was referred to as the "Infallible King of the New Israel" and all members used to throw themselves to the ground before him. There were four degrees in his system, the last one being presided over by the Great Mother.

A strange visionary, Ottavio Cappelli, joined the "New Israel" in 1786 or 1787. Grabianka was highly impressed by his visionary gifts (his questions were answered by the archangel Raphael), and gave him one of the most exalted positions within his group. But early in 1790, Cappelli was arrested by the Inquisition, charged with being an heretic and a swindler, and threatened with a seven-year prison sentence if he did not revoke his errors. He did so at once, and was released in November 1791, but the reputation of the "Illuminés d'Avignon" (whether this referred to Grabianka's or Pernety's group) had been severely damaged, and one member after the other began to leave.

The medium Brumore was dead, Pernety and Grabianka had become separated, the Prophet Cappelli had been condemned by the Inquisition, the alchemical Work had not brought the hoped-for cure for the diseases of mankind, and the Revolution of 1789 had not brought the expected New Jerusalem: in the wake of all these disappointments, the Illuminés d'Avignon dispersed around 1792, and were completely abolished the year after. They had existed for thirteen years, of which seven in Avignon. Pernety died in 1796. Grabianka had been forced to leave Avignon four years before, in 1792, because of his debts. He fled first to Paris, then in 1799 to London, and finally to Russia. Arrested and imprisoned in St. Petersburg in April 1807, on accusation of espionage, he died on October the 6th before the end of his trial. Cappelli was

hanged in Rome in 1800, probably for political reasons.

“Manuscrit de la Sainte Parole des Illuminés d’Avignon [integral text of MS 3090, Musée Calvet, Avignon]”, in: M. Meillassoux-le Cerf, *Dom Pernety et les Illuminés d’Avignon, suivi de la transcription intégrale de la Sainte Parole*, Milano: Archè Edidit, 1992, 333-448.

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## Illuminism

1. “CHRISTIANITY OF THE HEART” AND THE LIGHT OF REASON 2. SECRET HISTORY, PROFANE HISTORY 3. THE VEILED TRUTH 4. FORMS OF SOCIABILITY 5. FROM THE MYTH TO THE OPERATIVE PATH 6. THE ORACULAR PATH 7. COMMUNICATION WITH THE BEYOND 8. A UNIVERSAL SCIENCE

The complex intellectual and spiritual movement known as “Illuminism” is an integral part of modern Western esotericism in Europe. Chronologically it covers the last third (or even the second half) of the 18th century and the first third of the 19th. In the history of ideas and of literature, it has

profound affinities with pre-Romanticism and → Romanticism.

The emergence of Illuminism shows that the century of the philosophers of the Enlightenment was in fact a century of contrasts; but nevertheless, it would be a simplification to oppose the two movements too sharply, seeing one as the partisan of reason, and the other as defending the irrational. Criticism of a Cartesian or post-Cartesian reliance on natural intelligence goes together, in the very heart of Illuminism, with a desire to make good use of reason; but far more than a merely natural human capacity, “reason” for them included a spiritual dimension, as formulated by → Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-1803): ‘The inner eye is reason. However, this inner eye must be clarified by the divine light’. What is the nature of this light? Such was the question that inspired the Illuminist movement.

The Illuminists were adventurers of thought: their minds plunged into the ancient treatises of the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → alchemy, the mythologies of the Greeks, or those of the ancient Egyptians. They also questioned the theosophers [→ Christian Theosophy] who had preceded them, in particular → Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), who had become known partly thanks to → William Law (1686-1761) in England and → Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710) in Germany, and → Emanuel Swedenborg. As part of their quest, they developed activities in various directions. They invented new rites in order to renovate Christianity; as writers they analyzed the evolution of their soul and scrutinized the history of their time; as orators they enlivened the salons. Attempting to reconcile several intellectual systems, the Illuminists of the 18th century sought to combine ancient myths with modern cosmogonies. Sometimes their thoughts became overheated, so that, taken by millenarian frenzy, they interpreted the events of the present in the light of the Apocalypse. Seeking a faith that would combine reason and mystical élan, they bore witness to a cultural crisis and the attempt to resolve it. Illuminism saw itself confronted with the Church’s condemnations of → mysticism, such as that of Fénelon (1651-1715), and with the hardening of the attitudes of academic scholarship in the 18th century. The question was how to fray a path in all this. The figures we shall discuss here were part of an intense process of cross-fertilization that ended up engendering a modern kind of spirituality. Illuminism touched all of Europe and crossed over to the Anglo-Saxon world. Its complexity matched the problem that the new society had to

resolve: the collapse of Christianity and the emergence of secularism.

### 1. "CHRISTIANITY OF THE HEART" AND THE LIGHT OF REASON

Illuminism was a movement of transition: in a society moving towards increasing secularization, they carried on the analogical way of thinking typical of the magical [→ Magic] and alchemical practices of the Renaissance. → Mysticism survived in it as well, in the traditions of e.g. Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) and the quietists, → Pierre Poiret (1646-1719) and Madame Guyon (1648-1717). This was not a mysticism of "saints", however, but of believers who were already engaged in projects of religious synthesis. In a Christian world torn apart by the Reforms, the Illuminists wished to find the "inner" Christ beyond denominations.

The Illuminists criticized the excesses of the Enlightenment. They deplored the fact that language had been handed over to the grammarians, and knowledge to the encyclopaedists: for while seeming to respect the "letter", both tended to forget the "spirit". In trying to find alternatives, some Illuminists followed the prudence of the theosopher → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803), who preached the use of reason guided by divine light and emphasized the prayer of the heart. Others chose the way of power, involving themselves in theurgic operations. While many of them questioned themselves about the forces of will and the functions of reason, all of them were looking for the divine as a living spark provided by intuition and revelation. While reading the *philosophes*, they developed their own personal systems. Finally, Illuminism was also influenced by Rousseau's emphasis on "the heart". Between the extremes of sentimentalism and mystical exaltation, they sought to lay the foundations for a true generosity that should take the form of a communion with God, nature, and humanity; it should lead to a flowering of human potential that would benefit themselves and the whole world.

### 2. SECRET HISTORY, PROFANE HISTORY

Their reflections on the correct use of human faculties went together with a reflection on history. The Illuminists inherited a concept of sacred Christian history, the eschatology of which unfolded between the text of the Apocalypse and the hope for a kingdom of the Righteous; but they were also disturbed by the events of profane history at the time of the Revolution. As alternative to both, the

Illuminists tended to see history as a process of progressive theophany. They saw themselves as experiencing the end of a society based upon hierarchical order, and interpreted the social upheavals of their times in terms of prophecies, millenarian expressions, and judgments about the end of time.

Some illuminists were resolutely theocratic, such as → Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) or Saint-Martin. To the latter, the Revolution of 1789 appeared as a divine warning against human excess; and faced with it, he put his confidence in God, 'Far from dooming us to the annihilation of all religion, providence will cause a religion to be born in the heart of Man. It will be purer than the one which the sovereigns allow, and which they make disappear by their very power and human will, but also it will no longer be open to infection by the manipulations of the priesthood and the breath of imposture. . . .' (*Lettre sur la Révolution*, 1791). Other Illuminists allied themselves with the revolution, but interpreted profane history in terms of Providence. For the duchess of Bourbon [→ Bathilde d'Orléans], the Revolution forced people to open themselves to Christian virtues. She received in her salon bishop Pontard, accompanied by the prophet Suzette Labrousse; everything that the latter announced was faithful to the Jacobin spirit of the former. The revolutionary tendency of Illuminism inspired the precursors of the socialist utopias, as in → Nicolas Rétif de la Bretonne (1734-1806), who in his lectures shows as much sympathy for the quietist → Antoinette Bourignon as for Mirabeau; or as in Nicolas de Bonneville (1760-1828), the publisher of Saint-Martin and a supporter of agrarian communism. This revolutionary Illuminism must not be confused with what we find in the order of the → Illuminaten of Bavaria, founded in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt under the appearance of a Masonic order: his goal was a political one, namely the abolition of monarchy.

### 3. THE VEILED TRUTH

The Illuminists believed in a hidden truth outside the authority of dogmas and established Churches: the secrets of creation and of the other world lay sealed in the mysteries of the ancient traditions [→ Tradition]. Fraternities and lodges became the places where these seekers of truth were at home. The Masonic lodges, expanding quickly in Europe in the first half of the 18th century, often employed the image of the veil or the cloak. God was hiding behind the emblematic order of the universe and in the Scriptures, and invited the "Man of Aspiration" (*l'homme de désir*) to try and find him. For →

Jean-Baptiste Willermoz (1730-1824), founder of “rectified” → Freemasonry, as for Karl von Hund (1722-1776), creator of the Strict Templar Observance, the idea of an ancient lineage of descent, whose guardians they were, went together with a taste for gradual disclosure of the truth in the course of multiple initiations. The ability to uncover such hidden truths presupposed a profound conversion, that took place within the “chivalric sanctuaries” based upon a hierarchy of knowledge, and making good use of the well-known warning attributed to Saint Paul, ‘Noli altum sapere’. The German mystic Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) had taken recourse to this maxim in his *De imitatione Christi*, a work that was read by most of the Illuminists: ‘Do not let yourself be puffed up with pride in the arts or sciences; instead, fear that which you have been told. But admit your ignorance’.

Such prohibitions against the knowledge of “higher things” had been lifted at the end of the 17th century in the wake of Galileo’s scientific discoveries, when people came to believe themselves capable of knowing the mysteries of nature and the secrets of God. With respect to that development, Illuminism presented a rich array of attitudes. The current influenced by quietism, or the one that remained faithful to the teachings of Boehme, wanted to reject the pride of intelligence and seemed to follow the lesson of the *Imitation*. According to this perspective, the spirit must turn toward the wisdom that inspires it, the “mirror of God” in which the person who surrenders his individual will may contemplate the mysteries. The mysticism of William Law, an Anglican priest, is a good example of this tendency. However, the Illuminists’ quest for deciphering the signs of truth could take a much more active turn as well, leading to the quest for an intimate “experience” of the object sought for. Self-knowledge could be sought by means of analogical thinking, using the macrocosm as a mirror of one’s own microcosm. In the words of → Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), ‘In us is the key of nature, of Scripture, of the divine secrets’. Attention could also be directed to the outer world, where seekers deciphered the mysteries of a “science of God”. In their books, the 18th-century Illuminists constructed entire cosmogonies connected with eschatological visions, for example the one that → Martinès de Pasqually developed in his *Traité de la Réintégration*. From the primordial unity of God, or so we read there, myriads of intelligent creatures have emanated, among which Man has a place of central importance. Evil appeared because the emanated creatures misused their freedom, resulting in the separation of Man from God,

and the creation of matter. The “corporization” of Man meant his exile in the material world, but could be remedied because God had provided paths of “atonement”. The desire of salvation is the magnet, so to speak, that orients the inner work of the initiate, whose task is to bring about the redemption of the whole of nature (which has fallen together with Man). But the “men of aspiration” disagreed among themselves about the means to achieve this. Some emphasized intellectual and spiritual methods: the study of systems of symbolism, Holy Scripture, and the sacred nature of numbers [→ Number Symbolism], combined with prayer of the heart. Others chose the way of magic, with theurgy as an interesting example to which we will return. The arts of the kabbalah and of alchemy were available to aspirants in both directions.

There was yet a third path, prefiguring what was later to be known as → spiritualism: the search for visions, “auricular” perceptions, and automatic writing. A number of Illuminists such as J.C. Lavater, → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740-1817), and Jean Frederic Oberlin (1740-1826), became fascinated with such phenomena, later to be known as “métapsychique” in the French-speaking world. This approach was somewhat intermediary between that of Swedenborg, who showed the results of his visionary abilities in his *Arcana Coelestia*, and that of somnambulism in the wake of marquis de Puységur (1751-1825), who applied the magnetic method [→ Animal Magnetism] pioneered by Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). In the wake of Martinès de Pasqually, “spiritualist” magnetism was conceived of as an art that could reinstate the purity of Man before the Fall. This mediumistic path gave Willermoz some moments of enthusiasm. He investigated the trances of Jeanne Rochette, and believed for some time in the “divine writings” received, as early as 1785, by Marie-Louise de Monspey, sister of the Grand Profès of Lyons Alexandre de Monspey, who, guided by the spirit of the Virgin Mary, composed journals filled with esoteric teachings. Saint-Martin copied the most important of them, which seemed to confirm the doctrines of his master Martinès. Later, however, they took an excessively prophetic turn, and the “unknown Agent” believed to be their source came to display an increasingly Roman Catholic orientation; this made Willermoz reticent, and he finally took his distance from this “new” initiation.

#### 4. FORMS OF SOCIABILITY

Illuminist forms of sociability largely retained the spirit of the pietistic “colleges”, within a structure comparable to that of the speculative Lodges.



In the pietistic communities, a single religious sentiment united Christians of all denominations. The most important of them assembled at Herrnhut near Dresden, around Nikolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf (1700-1760), who as early as 1722 had restored the order of the Moravian Brothers. The quietist conventicles of the preceding century (condemned in 1687 by Innocent XI) likewise inspired the Illuminists' taste for Christian fraternities. It is not certain that these quietists were direct heirs to earlier "illuminated" currents such as the Spanish *alumbrados*, condemned in the 16th century and again in 1623. In any case, there was a persistent tendency among the Illuminists to follow a spiritual quest outside and parallel to the Church. In the 18th century it was notably the thinking of Madame Guyon (1648-1717) that guided certain Illuminists, such as → Niklaus Anton Kirchberger (1739-1799), toward the idea of the "rest" of the soul in its surrender to God. The quietists, assembled mainly in the Vaud region, had already developed the concept of an elect group, the members of which were requested not to pass on to others the mysteries revealed to them. Their leaders wrote under divine "dictation", as did Hector de Saint-Georges de Marsais (1688-1755), or they prophesied, as did Fleischbein (1700-1774). At the death of the latter, → Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini (1721-1793) took leadership of the Vaud group and moved its seat to Lausanne. This mystic, a great reader of the biblical commentaries of Madame Guyon, put forth in his *Philosophie divine* (1793) a theory of the "Astral", populated by beings described as 'neither angels nor demons'. Nevertheless, the quietists were averse against a concentration on spiritual "marvels" ('Neither prophecies nor miracles are any proof of adoption or holiness', wrote Dutoit), and "visions" were considered diabolical tricks.

But the scope of Illuminism by no means remained limited to such small circles. The vast network that they formed over the whole of Europe is attested by their voluminous correspondence, in which they sought to exchange their "secrets". In 1782, furthermore, Willermoz opened the Convent of Wilhelmsbad, in order to unite the mystical Masons; and the circle of the Philalethes invited its faithful to a Convent in 1784, in order to found a college of occult sciences. The quest for knowledge went together with an ecumenist élan, for example in Lavater, Eckartshausen, Jung-Stilling, Saint-Martin, and many others.

The Illuminists read one another's works and discussed them, for example in the salons, and these debates sometimes led to conversions. In the home of the duchess of Bourbon (1750-1822),

there was a rivalry in that regard between men of letters, healers, ecclesiastics, and theosophers. Saint-Martin and Lavater crossed paths with → Cagliostro (1743-1795); for personalities of the most different kind visited this magus to make up their own minds about his famous spirit apparitions. In the third quarter of the century, the Illuminist doctrines became a fashion among the educated circles. Around Nicolas Bergasse (1750-1832), co-founder with Mesmer of the first magnetic society, there gravitated Swedenborgians such as the marquis of Vaucroze, theosophers such as Saint-Martin, adepts of magnetism such as the duchess of Bourbon, and quietists such as Julie de Krüdener (1764-1824).

##### 5. FROM MYTH TO THE OPERATIVE PATH

In their writings the Illuminists paid special attention to basic problems on which the official Church took a firm position, such as e.g. the origin of evil, the destiny of souls, and the "great chain of being" leading up to God. In this area their thinking was guided by the theosophers of the second half of the century: Martinès de Pasqually (1714-1774) and Saint-Martin in particular. Their way of thinking drew support from the great Christian myths, among which that of the Fall occupied a prominent place. The myth implied a dramatic concept of human destiny, and its basic themes of loss and return haunted the Illuminists' visions and writings. Martinès de Pasqually's Order of the → Elus-Coëns is entirely based on the idea of Reintegration, the major theme of his great *Traité* (see above). If according to this theosopher we are all born prophets, and each person must cultivate the gift of vision, it is the elect, more in particular, who in their quest are able to distinguish among powers – that is to say, who know the identity of their invisible inspirers, and are able to avoid demonic influences and the lower "intelligences" believed to populate the "Astral" plane.

The theurgic teaching developed by Martinès involved the evocations of angelic entities. After the disappearance of his master Martinès, Willermoz reserved such practice for the circle of the most zealous Masons of Lyons, that of the Grand Profès. Best known among them were → Frédéric de Salzmann, Bernard and Jean de Turkheim in Strasbourg, → Joseph de Maistre in Chambéry, Prunelle de Lière in Grenoble, and Charles of Hesse-Cassel in North Germany. The testimony of the Profès Duroy d'Hauterive, as described by Kirchberger to Saint-Martin, suggests that Pasqually's teachings involved specific psycho-corporeal techniques; he writes about 'that kind of disorganization in which

he saw his body motionless, as though detached from his soul'. The practices of theurgy may also be seen as reflecting a quest for "proofs": the signature of the evoked entity, in the shape of fiery characters, was considered evidence of the presence of the entity in the chamber of the initiate. While "mystical" Freemasonry, expanding its lodges as far as Russia, under the instigation of → Nicolai Novikov (1744-1818) and → Ivan Vladimir Lopukhin (1756-1816), played an important role in the development of Illuminism, the operative path, supported by Willermoz, remained the adventurous portion. Those who, like Saint-Martin or Kirchner, came to see it as an "inferior science", distanced themselves from it and chose the meditative path.

#### 6. THE ORACULAR PATH

To clarify the different aspects of Illuminism, we must distinguish between the theurgic practices, based on a foundational myth; and practices of the oracular type, that pertain to another approach to the "supernatural". Part of the Illuminists were certainly moved by desire for tangible manifestations. The "School of the North", to give one example, was led by Charles of Hesse-Cassel (1744-1836), brother-in-law of Christian VIII, king of Denmark, and royal governor of the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein. A fervent Christian, he had a fascination for alchemy and retained a lifelong devotion to supernatural manifestations. He was convinced that, by means of special training, he could communicate with the spiritual world. The Illuminists of his School of the North practiced asceticism and prayer to awaken the mystical faculties, and invoked the celestial beings in the course of special rites. In his personal notes, discovered by the historian G. van Rijnberk in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Copenhagen, Charles of Hesse reported the teachings that gave access to the practices. They had been dispensed to him by Hans Heinrich von Ecker-und-Eckhoffen (1750-1790), one of the founders of the → Asiatic Brethren, a para-Masonic society whose seat was in Austria. The initiates learned how to fix their eyes on objects or luminous points, in order to develop a form of clairvoyance. Thus, in the 1790s, Charles of Hesse and his followers used to assemble around an image of Christ, which lit up at the time of the invocations. The initiates interpreted these "phosphoric manifestations" in order to obtain answers to their questions. This example clearly shows to what extent Illuminism foreshadowed the spiritual phenomena of the 19th century.

Another group of Illuminists devoted to oracular

practices is known as the → *Illuminés d'Avignon*, around → Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716-1796) and others. Pernety, a former Benedictine and translator of Swedenborg, wrote in his *Fables égyptiennes et grecques* (1758) that the Egyptian and Greek legends were veiled descriptions of the secrets of alchemical operations; and in fact the Great Work was the main concern of these Illuminists. They received celestial assistance in the form of an oracle named the "Holy Word" (behind which, as we now know, was hiding a specific person, Johann Daniel Müller [1716-after 1786]), which answered questions, and finally caused the group to move from Berlin to Avignon. Willermoz received information about this new oracle both from Baron Friedrich von Tieman, who declared that 'he had never seen anything greater', and from the Profès (Masonic grade of the Rectified Scottish Rite) Perisse-Duluc of Lyons. But Willermoz, made cautious by the affair of the Unknown Agent (see above), did not pursue the matter further.

#### 7. COMMUNICATION WITH THE BEYOND

The Illuminists evinced an "experimental" spirit, but far from having anything to do with that of contemporary science, it augured "research" of the kind that would be pursued in the following century in the movement known as spiritualism. The tendency of "spiritualist magnetism", well represented among the Masons of Lyons, found many followers, who found this new path more effective than that of metaphysical speculations because it promised to give actual demonstrations of the independence of the soul. Abbot Pierre Fournié (1738-1827), secretary to Martinès de Pasqually from 1769 to 1771, was not content with "visions" or "auricular" perceptions that put him in contact with the spirit world. Thus he engaged as early as 1785 in experiments in magnetism, described by him as a 'gift from heaven' (*Ce que nous avons été . . .*, 1801). In such a manner, spiritual magnetism led some people who were inclined to materialism to find the way back to religious faith. Such was the case of Fournié; but Saint-Martin, as well, stated that 'Mesmer . . . has opened the door to perceptible demonstrations of the spirit' (*Oeuvres Posthumes* [Posthumous Works]).

Illuminism also served as a medium of transmission of spiritual techniques. Of the two great founding heroes of Illuminism, Boehme and Swedenborg, only the second one was explicit about the conditions necessary for contact with the other world, and described the intermediary state between sleeping and waking as propitious for reve-

lations. The author of the *Arcana coelestia* claimed that in order to manifest themselves, the angels communicate an “influx” to people, which the latter in their turn may translate according to their own spiritual faculties. The angelic world “corresponds” with the world of humans; the universe is comprised of “discrete degrees” or levels of reality. Within such a framework, Swedenborg developed a physiology of the soul: ‘Just as the sense organs, external or corporeal, are the receptacles of natural things, so the organic substances of the internal senses, of the mental functions, are the receptacles of spiritual things’.

A number of Illuminists, such as Pernetty, attempted to follow this path, even though Swedenborg himself had emphasized that his revelations were unique to him alone. In 1787 a Swedenborgian “Société Exégétique et Philanthropique” was founded, which practiced the art of visions combined with the use of magnetic passes. But the most zealous Swedenborgians were hostile to the theosophers, the followers of Martinès or Saint-Martin. Thus, for example, the marquis of Thomé, the first proselytizer of Swedenborg in France, did not hide his disagreement with Saint-Martin’s book *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (1775). Clearly the heirs of Boehme or Martinès had chosen a path different from Swedenborg’s. If Willermoz retained much esteem for the Swedish visionary, he nevertheless considered him to have been lacking in “discrimination” and believed he had sometimes received instruction from inferior spirits. The theosophers came up with their own systems to parry the failings of Swedenborg’s visions. Mystics such as Dutoit-Membrini found him too confused, but an eclectic searcher such as baron Bourrée de Corberon found inspiration in him: after making the rounds of all the occult sciences, he finally chose, in 1790, to join the Swedenborgians of Avignon.

#### 8. A UNIVERSAL SCIENCE

Illuminism aspired to making all forms of knowledge converge in a single crucible that would include the sciences. The very separation between religion and science, philosophy and poetry, reason and intuition, and aesthetics and politics, was called into question. “Knowing Nature” meant responding to its desire to be unveiled. Inspired by Boehmianist visions, Antoine de la Salle (1754-1829) and → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) perceived the world as a living body engendered by the dynamics of two opposing forces. In the theories of Eckartshausen on the three reigns of nature, the mission of humanity is to “virginize” the earth and the opaque elements.

Opposed by the academies, Mesmer described, in his thesis of 1766, the influence of the planets on the terrestrial bodies and set out the bases of a universal therapy. In the last decade of the 18th century, we see the vigorous rise of a movement of thought known as “German idealism”. The philosopher → Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), a major figure of → *Naturphilosophie*, perceived in a flash of intuition the tormented identity of the absolute spirit, incarnated in the flux of history and the life of nature. Within this process of incarnation, human consciousness is the free point in which the organic movements of the divine universe is reflected. Human knowledge is the fruit of God’s self-perception. → Franz von Baader (1765-1841), a reader of Boehme and Saint-Martin, was simultaneously a doctor, theosopher, and mineralogist. In short tracts of a somewhat baroque beauty, he employed strong imagery (lightning, anger, hell) to develop the elements of his mystical naturalism.

From this period of intense cultural renewal in the way of thinking about nature and history, emerged finally the poet → Novalis (1772-1801). He grew up in the pietist community of Wierderstedt, of which he would always retain the contemplative attitude. Novalis read not only Kant, but also Paracelsus, Jacob Boehme, Franz von Baader, and Goethe, pursuing studies in mineralogy and organic chemistry before becoming an engineer. His life took a tragic turn when his fiancée Sophie von Kühn died in 1795. Love prematurely interrupted became the keystone of his mystical quest: ‘this flame consumes little by little that which is earthly in me’, he wrote to his friend Friedrich Schlegel. From then on, his life became rather like an incarnated Illuminist myth, in which the resurrected Christ took on the contours of an alchemical metaphor. To survive death, for Novalis, is possible only by making life divine. Novalis met the German philosopher Fichte, studied under the dramatist Schiller at Jena, and met Schelling at the end of the 1790s. For this universal spirit, knowledge was “one”: in a network of correspondences, poetry, religion, chemistry, and philosophy were combined. To open oneself to the life of absolute knowledge, he suggested one must consider poetry as experience, see that the true knowledge of nature is an art, and that the science of numbers is the very life of the gods.

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CHRISTINE BERGÉ

## Imagination

### 1. CLASSICAL THEORIES

(A. ARISTOTELIANISM B. GALENISM

C. NEOPLATONISM AND HERMETISM)

### 2. MEDIEVAL THEORIES (A. ARABIC

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RENAISSANCE SYNTHESIS 4. THE CREATIVE

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19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

According to a tradition derived from Aristotle, the imagination (Greek *phantasia*; Latin: *imaginatio*) is a faculty of knowledge intermediary between the senses and the intellect or rational intelligence.

Together with the "common sense" (*to krinon* or *sensus communis*) and the memory it belongs to the so-called "interior senses"; but one also sometimes encounters it as equivalent to these different senses taken together. Aristotle says that *phantasia* derives from φῶς (light, or glow) and is primarily visually oriented. Its function is to transform sensory impressions into images. The imagination stands under the dominion of reason, which distinguishes man from other creatures. Whenever reason loses its vigilance, for example during illness or sleep, the *phantasmata* can use the opportunity to lead their own life and create disturbing effects.

In the Latin and Arab tradition there has been much speculation about how the imagination can influence a person's own body, but it was sometimes believed to have the power to influence the spirit or body of other persons as well, and in a magical context it could even be the medium by means of which the magus could cause epidemics, heavy rains or other natural disasters. Due to the imagination's power over the spirit or body of other persons, it plays a role in theories of love. And frequent reference was made to the example, which has its origin in Quintilianus (35-96/8), of the influence exerted on the fetus of what the mother was seeing at the time of conception, either in her mind or in reality. For example, if she had been thinking of an Ethiopian, the child would be born black; but if she had been looking at certain images or paintings, the child would be beautiful, even if the father was ugly. The imagination was also believed to have an influence on animals; a frequent example was the story of Jacob, whose cattle produced striped or speckled offspring because he had put patterned rods in the water troughs (Gen. 30:25-43).

Finally, in a mystical and esoteric context the imagination has been believed to give access to levels of reality deeper than those that can be experienced by the senses, and thus to function as a domain of mediation between different ontological planes. As such it enables man to transcend the material world and gain access to the divine. In other words, the imagination could become a bridge between microcosm and macrocosm.

### 1. CLASSICAL THEORIES

In Greek philosophy and in later Latin traditions, three main currents can be distinguished concerning theories of the imagination: an Aristotelian, a Galenist, and a Neoplatonic one.

#### A. ARISTOTELIANISM

The Aristotelian current has been most influential. Aristotle limits his treatment of the concept of

*phantasia* to the part of the soul that is concerned with perception. In his *Parva naturalia* and *De anima* he adds to the five senses a sixth function, called the *sensus communis*, which compares the experiences of the senses with one another and bestows unity on them. Qualities such as time, size, number and movement, which influence more than one sense, belong to the *sensus communis*. To this, Aristotle adds the term *phantasia* (*De Anima* III, 3, 429 a 1-2). On the one hand, it stands for a sense impression which differs from other sense experiences, in that it continues to exist even when the object that caused it is no longer present. On the other hand, it stands for the cognitive power by means of which we can make an image appear in our mind.

Aristotle's most consistent statement about *phantasia* is that it forms a bridge between perception and intellect, because the soul does not think without images (*De Anima* III, 7, 431 a 16). In *De Memoria* he remarks that the memory and the imagination are both connected with the "common sense", and thus with the "primary perceptive power" (*to proton aisthetikon*). The latter is located in the heart, which is the most important organ and the source of all bodily functions. Sensory impressions are led from the senses to the heart by means of the spirit or *pneuma* (*to symphyton pneuma*; *De insomniis*, 3, 461 b 13-25): a vaporous substance consisting of the same matter from which the stars are made. Having arrived in the heart, the messages originating in the five bodily senses are transformed there in such a manner that they can be understood by the soul. This is done by the *phantasia*, which translates the information received from the senses into *phantasmata*.

As for the *pneuma*, it is also the instrument that makes it possible for the soul to communicate with the body, and to cause it to perform all vital activities, including movement. Referred to as *proton organon*, it bridges the gap between the physical and the nonphysical: it is so subtle that it comes close to the immaterial soul but it is nevertheless material, so that it can communicate with the world of the senses. Without the *pneuma*, body and soul would not be aware of one another. Ontologically, the soul has no window towards the material world; and as for the body, it is merely a combination of natural elements that would immediately fall apart without the soul.

Aristotelian concepts of *pneuma* were based upon the medical theories of authors such as Alcmaeon of Croton (ca. 500-450 BC), Empedocles (ca. 450 BC) and Hippocrates (460-377 BC). After Aristotle, the idea that spiritual processes can be explained physiologically was further developed

by the Stoics, and in particular by Zeno of Citium (333-264 BC). The theory of *pneuma* is central to the analogical worldview which provided a foundation for the magic of late antiquity. For the Stoics, the *pneuma* permeates the entire body and governs its activities. The "governing power" (*hegemonikon*) resides in the heart; there it receives the pneumatic currents from all the senses and converts them into *phantasmata* that can be understood by the intellect. The *hegemonikon* organizes the information it receives, and produces impressions in the human soul.

According to Couliano the phantasm has primacy over the word because in terms of classical theory, the soul dominates the body; accordingly, thinking precedes language. It follows that, next to a grammar of spoken language, there must exist a grammar of thought independent of language. Only the intellect is capable of understanding this "phantastic grammar". The attempt to understand this grammar and thus gain access to the hidden powers of the soul would become basic, Couliano concludes, to 'all the phantasmic processes of the Renaissance: Eros, the Art of Memory, theoretical magic, alchemy, and practical magic' (1987, 6).

#### B. GALENISM

Galenus (129-ca. 201), court physician of Marcus Aurelius, further develops the aristotelian approach. According to him, the power of perception is not located in the heart but in the brain. The brain functions consist of perception, movement and the *hegemonikon*. The latter is threefold, consisting of a phantastic part (*phantastikon*), a rational part (*dianoetikon*) and the memory (*mnemoneutikon*) (*De symptomatum differentiis*, 3). All these brain functions make use of the "spirits" or *pneuma psychikon* as their instrument (*De locis affectis*, III, 9; note that whereas the *pneuma psychikon* is located in the brain, Galenus distinguishes it from the vital *pneuma*, located in the left ventricle of the heart. He believes that through the arteries there flows a mixture of blood and *pneuma*).

For Galenus, the *phantasia* seems to have a function similar to that in Aristotle: it enables the soul to store sensory impressions, and it contains mental images. Like other bodily functions, the *phantasia* is subject to physical disturbances, which in Galenus' theory are almost invariably linked to a disbalance of the bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, and red and black bile. A surplus of black bile, or melancholy, leads to a cold and dry spirit and may cause the imagination to degenerate into hallucinations (*De locis affectis*, III, 10).

Galenus' threefold *hegemonikon* was adopted by later authors, and located in the brain ventricles.



Thus the Syrian bishop Nemesius of Emesa (4th century CE) writes in his *De natura hominis* that the *phantastikon* is located in the brain's front part, the *dianoetikon* in the middle, and the *mnemoneutikon* in the back. This theory was adopted by Johannes Damascenus (670-ca. 753 CE) in his *De fide orthodoxa*, and by early Arabic medical authors.

### C. NEOPLATONISM

Neoplatonism assigned a much more important role to the imagination than the Aristotelian and Galenist currents. According to Plotinus, at birth the human soul descends from the intelligible world, that consists of the so-called "three first principles" or *hypostases*: the One, the Intellect (*Nous*) and the (World-)Soul (*Psyche*). All the individual human souls emanate from the *Nous* in order to unite with the lower material world. In death, but also in states of contemplation during life, they can return to the splendour of the intelligible world. Note, however, that according to Plotinus a small part of the human soul always remains in the intelligible world (*Enn.* IV.8.8.1-4; IV.3.12.1-5; I.1).

In Plotinus, the soul's functions are intellect (*dianoia*), reason (*nous*) and the imagination (note that the distinction between reason and intellect is obscured by the fact that sometimes Plotinus uses the word *nous* for both, next to the already mentioned hypostasis *Nous* [Blumenthal 1996, 91]). The lower part of the imagination deals with sensory perception, and is sometimes referred to as "nature" (*physis*); the higher part of the imagination consists of the *phantastikon*. All these functions of the soul are located in the brain, the *phantastikon* being the connecting link between the lower and higher part of the soul. On the one hand it is connected with thinking, but it belongs to the lower part of the soul and cannot be separated from matter, the experiences of the body and the humors that influence the body. The soul as a whole again plays a mediating role between the higher and the lower world.

Although Plotinus speaks of "parts" of the soul, he repeatedly emphasizes its essential unity. According to him, man must submit his imagination to the intellect in order to escape the lures of the body. For only if the imagination is held in check, will the soul be able to leave the material world behind and ascend to the intelligible world.

There is a peculiar ambiguity in Plotinus' descriptions of the soul, which has its background's in Plato. In the *Phaedo* we find the idea that the soul resides in the body as though in a prison, and

is liberated from it at death (*Phaedo* 63-69, 81a); a similar idea is also found in the *Phaedrus*. But later, in the *Timaeus*, Plato is much more positive about the material world, which has been carefully built by the demiurge, in imitation of a prototype in his own spirit (*Timaeus* 29-30). Accordingly, in Plotinus one may find passages according to which the soul is dragged down by matter, as well as others according to which the soul moulds formless matter into a splendid reflection of the higher world.

The Neoplatonists who followed in Plotinus' footsteps developed theurgical practices in order to restore the contact between man and the divine, and here the *phantasia* played an important role. Iamblichus and Proclus identify the "phantastic *pneuma*" of the Aristotelian and Galenist tradition with the ethereal body or *ochêma*, the subtle substance that according to Neoplatonic metaphysics surrounds the soul. Because the ethereal body has a subtle material nature, the *phantasia* that resides in it can react to sensory impressions such as smells, vapours and sounds; accordingly it can be influenced by ritual practices that involve e.g. fasting, incense and spoken formulas. As part of the ethereal body, the *phantasia* continues to exist after the death of the material body.

In *De insomniis* of the bishop Synesius of Cyrene (ca. 373-ca. 414) the imagination gains cosmic importance: even prior to incarnation it has the capacity of storing information that derives from the planetary spheres and the metaphysical realm. Dreams, visions, prophecies and other functions of the *phantasia* are given a key role in philosophical discussion and religious practice. Generally speaking, the Neoplatonists believed that the imagination, being part of the ethereal body, can be influenced by smells, vapours and sounds; these are also capable of attracting powers from the world soul. Plotinus also speaks about attracting the world soul by means of statues, which like a mirror can receive its image (*Enn.* IV, 3, 11). This idea was transmitted by several important Arabic thinkers, and it has also influenced Renaissance philosophers like Ficino. Thus the imagination came to play a functional role in magical practice.

## 2. MEDIEVAL THEORIES

### A. ARABIC THINKERS

The works of Aristotle, Galen and the Neoplatonists were translated into Arabic, and from the 9th century onwards philosophy and the sciences were flourishing in the Islamic world. This created a fertile context for further theories about the imagination and the faculties of the soul.

In → al-Kindi's theory of rays, the imagination plays an important role in explaining magical effects. According to al-Kindi every thing in the *machina mundana* has a center that, like the stars, sends out rays. The human imagination also sends out such rays, by means of which it can imprint forms into matter; as a result, man is able to exert a strong influence on matter.

According to → Avicenna, as well, the soul has significant power over matter, which is subject to it. The soul, if properly cleansed of bodily impurities, can function like a mirror that receives the astral powers and reflect them on to the environment. Whatever is present in the imagination, it can transmit to matter, thereby becoming a *dator formarum*. By virtue of the imagination, the soul can also cure illnesses or produce rain and fertility, as well as natural disasters or epidemics. The magus can use the powers of the soul to act at distance, thus becoming like an earthly god. All this is possible because the soul is related to the formative principles. Avicenna also adopts Aristotelian theories about the powers of the soul, and orders them within a comprehensive hierarchy. Parallel to the five senses of exterior perception, there are five inner senses: the *sensus communis* (common sense), the *imaginatio* (which contains images), the *phantasia* (which combines them), the *vis aestimativa* (which judges them) and the *memoria* (which remembers them). These five functions are located in the three parts of the brain, which is reminiscent of Galen.

Al-Ghazali (ca. 1059-1111) likewise discusses the far-reaching powers of the soul, which is ontologically superior to matter and can imprint forms onto it at will. Just like the astral powers influence the sublunar sphere, the soul can influence the material world. The magus would even be able, or so he claims, to force a camel into a turkish bath. Like other Arabic thinkers, he considers several options to account for these powers of the soul: they might be mediated by vapours, particles, spirits, or rays. Al-Ghazali considers that the imagination is put into action by means of *fascinatio*, which has a power of enchantment like love, and works by means of sympathy and antipathy. The lover seeks to enchant the beloved by whispering sweet words, and the magus works similarly, transmitting by way of his eyes the particles by means of which he submits a weaker mind to his own. Al-Ghazali believes that by means of *fascinatio* one can disturb another person's mind, and even kill him (something which, by the way, was emphatically denied by → Albertus Magnus). The magical imagination has its place within a "holistic" uni-

verse in which influences can move into all directions, whereas the scholastic worldview recognized only an influence of the higher over the lower.

According to Rahman (1964, 168-169), some Arabic thinkers assigned to the imagination an ontological status much more important than what is found in the classical Neoplatonists. For example, Porphyry described how after death the soul leaves the body by means of the *ochêma*, which eventually is left behind as well. Avicenna, however, believed that the soul takes the *imaginatio* with it; it is by means of the imagination that the soul can experience the pains of hell or the state of heavenly bliss. These pains and pleasures are both real and unreal, in a manner comparable to dreams. Al-Suhrawardi (1154-1191) discussed the "realm of suspended images" as a world in between the material and the spiritual, where the soul after death experiences the quasi-physical pleasures of paradise or the pains of hell. The imagination here takes over the role of sensory experiences. Moreover, images from this realm can manifest themselves in the material world as demons or devils.

Finally, the powers of the soul are also discussed in the famous *Picatrix* (*Ghayat al-Hakim fi'l-sihr*). It claims that man has not only a vegetative and an animal soul, but also a "logical soul" that distinguishes him from other creatures (III, 6). The logical soul produces the arts (*artes*), makes what is absent present in thought, and creates images, such as those seen in dreams. The *Picatrix* also presents the *pneuma* as a magical force, referring in that regard to such authorities as → Hermes Trismegistus, and applying it to subjects such as talismans; as is well known, such elements have influenced the thinking of Marsilio Ficino.

#### B. LATIN AUTHORS

From the end of the 11th century, the major Greek and Arabic works were translated into Latin; and there was a revival of philosophical discussion about the soul and its faculties. Two main periods may be distinguished: one from ca. 1100-1220, largely dominated by Christian Neoplatonism, and one from 1220 on, when Aristotelianism gained the upper hand.

The most influential work on the soul and the imagination from the first period is the *Liber de spiritu et anima*, ascribed to Alcher of Clairvaux. It is a collection of various Christian thinkers, including → Augustine (354-430), Alcuin (ca. 732-804) and Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141), but Alcher also appears to be familiar with Plotinus. The soul's ascent and liberation from the material world is

presented as the goal that gives meaning to human life; and this is described as a process of interior ascent through the realms of the soul. Along the lines of Boethius (ca. 480-ca. 525), the powers of the soul are presented as sensory perception, imagination, reason, and intellect. Again, the imagination here plays the role of mediator between the material world and the world of the intellect, thereby highlighting man's inner duality. In order to see God, the soul must separate itself from the imagination that binds it to matter; the result is a christianization of Neoplatonic theurgy, which has become an inner mystical ascent by means of contemplation. The *Liber de spiritu et anima* also contains Galenist elements, such as the notion that the imagination is subject to the bodily fluids. To give one example, it is claimed that the dreams of choleric are different from those of melancholics.

During the second period, theories about the imagination take the form of commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*. → Albertus Magnus provides discussions about the soul with an Aristotelian foundation, referring to authors like Avicenna. He adopts the latter's series of five inner senses (see above). The *imaginatio* makes it possible to perceive the qualities of an image if its original is absent, and it produces a reservoir of images that can be used for thinking, dreams and visions. The *phantasia*'s function is to distinguish such images and re-combine them, thereby creating new images (e.g. that of a centaur). In terms of Aristotelian philosophy of nature, *imaginatio* is preferably "cold and hard", because it must be able to solidly retain the forms (in this context the imagination is frequently compared with wax); *phantasia*, on the other hand, must be "warm and moist" so as to enable the images to flow into one another. Albertus also describes the location of these functions in the brain ventricles: the *sensus communis* and *imaginatio* are in the first ventricle, the *phantasia* and *vis aestimativa* in the second, and the *memoria* in the third. The connecting element is, again, the *pneuma* or *spiritus*, which flows from the last ventricle to the spinal sinews and thus mediates between the brain and the bodily movements. Due to this connection certain physical disturbances may cause hallucinations. Albertus's theory of the inner senses is dependent on classical as well as Arabic thinkers, and may also reflect the influence of Costa ben Luca's (864-923) *De differentia animae et spiritus*. Albertus's model was adopted inter alia by Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225 - 1274).

The imagination also influenced Franciscus of Assisi's theory about the *stigmata*, as reflected in particular by Jacobus of Voragine (ca. 1230-1298)

and Thomas of Celano (ca. 1200-ca. 1255). Its concomitant physio-pathological theories spread beyond university circles and influenced literary theories about love, for example in Andreas Capellanus (*De amore*, ca. 1185), Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung (*Roman de la Rose*, 1230-1275), and → Dante and the *Dolce Stil Novo* (ca. 1300). In these traditions we find the idea that a woman's *phantasmata* may take possession of her lover's pneumatic system. Complex games may be played with the relation between illusion and reality, and sometimes the literary work is presented as a dream.

### 3. THE RENAISSANCE SYNTHESIS

Since the 15th century, new translations of ancient authorities and the discovery of previously unknown authors caused the theory of the imagination to develop into new directions. For example, the physician Niccola Tignosi da Foligno (1402-1474) used a new translation of Aristotle's *De anima* by Johannes Argyropoulos (1410-1487). He remarked that Aristotle in fact mentioned only three inner senses (*sensus communis*, *imaginatio*, *memoria*), since – contrary to Avicenna and Albertus Magnus – he considered the *imaginatio*, the *phantasia* and the *vis aestimativa* as one single function. This point was developed even more pronouncedly by his pupil → Marsilio Ficino, who builds upon Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, Galenist and medieval traditions, but whose ideas about the imagination constitute an important new phase of development. Due to Ficino's translations of Plato, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, → Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Iamblichus, Synesius and → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, Neoplatonic notions came to play a dominant role in his concept of the soul. Ficino discusses the imagination particularly in his *Theologia Platonica* XIII, his commentaries on Priscianus Lydus and on Plato's *Phaedrus*, and his *De vita coelitus comparanda*. A certain ambivalence about the soul and the imagination that we already found in Plotinus can be encountered in Ficino as well.

Ficino's less than positive opinions about the imagination are particularly clear in his *Theologia Platonica* and his commentary on the *Phaedrus*. In the former, Ficino adopts Boethius' powers of the soul (sensory perception, imagination, reason, intellect) and associates them with the steps by means of which the soul can gradually elevate itself to the divine world (see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* XVI, 3). He describes an eternal process of descent and ascent, in which light moves downward from the divine world down to the world of matter and

the soul reversely moves upwards to reunite with the divine light. As emphasized by Michael Allen (1984, 61), this ascent of the soul is primarily a spiritual and internal one. The highest part of the human soul is the intellect, which directly reflects the divine light like a mirror; in relation to it, reason and imagination are like shadows of the intellect. Referring to the *Phaedrus*' famous image of the soul's chariot, Ficino compared the imagination with the bad horse.

However, the imagination and the senses also have more positive functions in Ficino's thought. Since man is created after God's image, his soul contains the images of the basic principles or ideas after which the world has been created. Knowledge of these ideas is therefore potentially present in the soul, and can be actualized by the experience of sensual beauty, as a result of which the soul remembers the beauty of the divine ideas. Thus it is by means of the senses and the imagination that man is reminded of his divine origin. Furthermore, the soul may ascend by means of the so-called *furores* (frenzies): states of ecstasy particularly associated with melancholics, whose high concentration of black bile in the body amplifies their faculty of imagination. Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda* (written shortly after his translation of Synesius, who among the Neoplatonists attaches most importance to the power of the imagination) describes how one may attract the astral powers by means of smells, vapours, sounds, and images. If, in such contexts, one merely relies on the → correspondences between materials and their astral counterparts, the effect is less strong than if one adds the power of the imagination. Furthermore, Ficino describes the beneficent effect of making and contemplating an *imago mundi*: an image of the universe. As suggested by Frances A. Yates, such passages may reflect the influence of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, particularly C.H. XI, 18-22, which describes how one should imagine oneself to be present in the entire universe; and she also brings them in connection with the classical art of memory [→ Mnemonics].

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's (1469-1533) *De imaginatione* is largely Aristotelian, and strongly influenced by Savonarola (1452-1498). In the context of a strongly ascetic type of personal piety, it emphasizes that without divine grace and revelation the human mind is incapable of gaining access to religious truth. Like Ficino, Gianfrancesco Pico adopts Boethius' four powers of the soul, with the imagination as the connecting link between corporeal and incorporeal realities. Because the imagination connects the soul with mat-

ter, it can be seen as "the human faculty as such": it may be used for good as well as for evil (cf. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's similar emphasis on man as located in the centre of creation, and free to direct himself upwards to the divine or move downwards to the level of beasts). Gianfrancesco Pico was the first to call attention to the shift of meaning that had taken place from the Greek *phantasia*, literally meaning "sense impression", to the Latin translation *imaginatio*, which refers rather to a faculty of the soul. Like Ficino, Gianfrancesco Pico tends to unite all the inner senses under the heading of "*imaginatio*". Our imagination depends on the bodily temperaments, on our perceptions of things, on our faculty of judgment, and on the influence of demons or angels. As regards our faculty of judgment, we can and should allow it to be led by our intellect (*dianoia*) and our reason (*nous*). With reference to the *Enchiridion* of the Stoic author Epictetus (then recently translated from the Greek by Angelo Poliziano [1454-1493]), Gianfrancesco describes how these functions can be used against the irrationality of the imagination. It is through the intellect that man can have access to the angels and pure spirits who serve God.

Gianfrancesco Pico's *De imaginatione* was translated into French by Jean-Antoine de Baif (1532-1589), member of the Pléiade and one of the founders of the *Académie de poesie et de musique*. Influenced by Ficino, the main goal of this academy was to use → music so as to have a beneficent effect on the moral and emotional faculties of the listener. Music could do this by means of the imagination. Ficino had already discussed the imagination in relation with music and poetry; and indeed, already in late antiquity connections with the arts had been drawn by e.g. Quintilianus and Philostratus (ca. 171-ca. 247), who were much read in 15th-century humanist circles. Connections between the imagination and the visual arts began to be drawn in 15th-century Italian art theory, notably with Filarete (ca. 1400-1469) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), who discussed the imagination as an "inner sense". From the 16th century on, the imagination became a topic in art-theoretical treatises by authors such as Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1600) and Federico Zuccari (1540-1609). Simultaneously, of course, it played a prominent role in the new tradition of Renaissance magic that developed in the wake of Ficino, with → Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (esp. I, 61-68; III, 43) as a particularly prominent example. In all the authors associated with this trend, traditional notions of the imagination are routinely described as an obvious part of what *magia naturalis* is all about; but

with the notably exception of a new tradition started by → Paracelsus (see below), no important innovations seem to have taken place on the theoretical level.

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola must also be mentioned as an important early representative of the “anti-hermetic reaction” that developed during the 16th century in reaction to the new popularity of *magia naturalis*, and that questioned the alleged “transitive” powers of the imagination (i.e., its ability to influence the external world). Pico’s *De rerum praenotione* (1506-1507) contains a general attack on the magical tradition, with an entire chapter devoted to al-Kindi’s theory, and his *Strix, sive de ludificatione daemonum* (1523) addresses the → witchcraft controversy with frequent references to the imagination. Another crucial author in this context, the protestant Thomas Erastus (1524-1583), strongly refuted belief in the transitive powers of the imagination in the first volume of his *Disputationes de medicina nova Paracelsi* (1571). Alain Godet (1982, 49) emphasizes the political implications: if the natural faculty of the imagination was not capable of influencing the outside world, the magical powers that witches were believed to possess could only be explained by help from the devil. Refutations of *magia naturalis* in the Ficinian tradition could therefore function as legitimization for the witchcraft persecutions. The essentials of Erastus’ criticism of the imagination were repeated by a whole series of later Protestant authors, such as e.g. Georg Gödelmann (*Tractatus de Magis, Veneficis et Lamiis . . .*, 1591) or Otto Casmann (*Angelographia*, 1597); but the transitive powers of the imagination are also rejected by authors in the Roman Catholic camp, such as e.g. Martin del Rio (*Disquisitiones magicae* [1599-1600], I, 3) and, perhaps surprisingly, → Tommaso Campanella (*De sensu rerum et magia* [1620], IV, 2).

#### 4. THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

The authors discussed so far typically belonged to highly educated intellectual elites, and developed their theories by means of the essentially conservative method of exegetical commentary on earlier authorities. This changes with the visionary rather than exegetical and erudite discourse initiated by Paracelsus, who lay the foundations of what might be called the “creative imagination”. Although traditional perceptions of Paracelsus as a wholly independent creative genius are untenable (and reflective of Third Reich ideologies: Paracelsus as the quintessentially Germanic hero, the “Luther of medicine” uninfluenced by Galenic,

Arabic, or, most of all, Jewish traditions), he is nevertheless at the origin of an innovative discourse of the imagination that can be traced through Christian theosophical authors up to German → Romanticism and beyond. Clearly indebted to Florentine (neo)platonism and the occult philosophies that emanated from it, Paracelsus did inherit the full range of traditional notions of the imagination considered as a cognitive faculty of the soul or as a power that could “magically” influence one’s own body or the external world, and he abundantly used them in his medical work. He went beyond them, however, in presenting the imagination as not just a human faculty but a fundamental cosmic power of creation, crucially connected with will and desire. Using a strongly organic and sexualized language – replete with images of conception, generation, birth and incarnation – Paracelsus describes how the soul, spurred by desire, uses the power of the imagination to create images, which are, quite literally, the “bodily” incarnations of thought. As formulated by Alexandre Koyré (1971, 98): ‘The image is a body in which the thought and the will of the soul are incarnated. The soul that gives birth to thoughts, ideas, and desires, gives them an existence *sui generis* by means of the imagination’. It is likewise by means of the imagination that God’s primal will or desire “magically” created – or rather, gave birth to – the world; and the creation of the macroscopic heaven is mirrored by that of the human microcosm: ‘. . . just like a human being builds earth according to his will and by means of his body, by means of his imagination he also builds heaven in his own *Gestirn* . . . the imagination is confirmed and completed by faith . . . Fantasy is not *Imaginatio*, but a cornerstone of fools . . .’ (Sudhoff ed., X, 474-475). The latter distinction would remain a staple of the imagination discourse in the following centuries: fantasy, according to Paracelsus, merely consists of unconnected images floating around in our mind, which may lead us astray but are devoid of inherent power. The imagination, in sharp contrast, is grounded in the very nature of being; focused and carried by the will, it is the magical power *par excellence* for which almost nothing is impossible.

This amplification of the imagination into a creative power of cosmic proportions, within an organic, sexualized and visionary (rather than exegetical) discourse, is abundantly present in a variety of later Paracelsian authors. For → Joan Baptista van Helmont, for example, the power of the imagination is central to all life processes (generation, birth, and the maintenance of organic life) as well as to the uniquely human power of bringing



forth new creative ideas; and for Oswald Croll, it is due to his “vis imaginativa” that the human microcosm has unlimited power to work in the macrocosm (Godet 1982, 90-94). Typical for later paracelsian and related discourses is the strong emphasis on “incarnational” language, suggesting that by means of the imagination the human mind is capable of creating “entities” with a quasi-autonomous existence. Such a notion is, however, certainly not rooted in Paracelsus alone. For example, already Ficino suggested that by means of music one may create ‘a kind of airy and rational animal’ (*De vita coelitus comparanda* 21, 81-85; cf. Allen 1989, ch. 5); he could find support for such notions already in al-Kindi, who wrote that ‘when man, using his imagination, conceives of some corporeal thing, this thing acquires an actual existence according to the species in the imaginative spirit’ (*De radiis* V); and → Lazzarelli believed that the regenerated “new man” is capable of literally creating souls (*Crater Hermetis* 27.1ff). According to later authors such as e.g. Fabio Paolini, ‘feelings and conceptions of our souls can by the force of the imagination be rendered volatile and corporeal, so that, in accordance with their quality, they can be carried up to certain stars and planets [and] will come down again to us and will obey us in whatever we want’ (*Hebdomades*, 1589; see Walker 1958, 136). More research would be needed to trace the precise historical development of such notions, and to determine the relative importance of neoplatonic, kabbalistic and paracelsian notions.

The paracelsian combination of imagination with desire came to full development in → Jacob Boehme’s cosmology. The “birth of God” as described by Boehme begins with the primal desire awakening in the *Ungrund*, that wants to know itself. First, it is by means of the imagination that the *Ungrund* conjures up the image of Wisdom (Sophia), as a mirror in which it can contemplate itself; and next, burning with desire to unite with that image, it takes possession of it and uses the creative power of the imagination to give it concrete form, thereby literally engendering and giving birth to “Eternal Nature” – the manifestation of God as a pleromatic body of light. While originally desire and imagination were inextricably linked, they became separated when the paradisaical unity was broken and desire degenerated into what Boehme calls *Begierde*; as felicitously formulated by Faivre (2000, 106), ‘the original fall was nothing more than a perversion of desire by the imagination’.

Here we see clearly how, mediated by Paracelsus, the imagination has become, first and foremost, the

theogonic and cosmogonic power of creation itself. Diametrically opposed to common present-day notions of “reality versus (mere) imagination”, the (divine) imagination and its products *are* the very essence of reality. This fundamental notion would, eventually, lead to the opposition typical of German Romanticism (paradigmatically in authors such as → Schubert or → Kerner) between “Nature” [Natur] and “Reality” [Wirklichkeit]: the former refers to the deeper spiritual being of the world, to which the human soul has access by means of the imagination, whereas the latter is a limited and artificial illusion created by the blindness of the merely rational mind. Thus the cold and hard light of reason causes reality to petrify into an impoverished caricature of its actual being; but this “daylight perspective” dominated by mere rationality is opposed against the “nightside of nature” (Crowe 1848) dominated by the soul and its deep imaginative powers, that awaken during our sleep and cause us to experience dreams, but are also evident in various “occult” phenomena considered anomalous from a rationalist perspective. The terms *magia* and *imagination* are considered etymologically related, as reflective of their profound interconnection in terms of an “enchanted world”. This Romantic perspective was the outcome of a long development, leading from the time of Boehme through the various representatives of → Christian theosophy of the 17th and 18th centuries, many of whom (e.g. → Jane Lead, → John Pordage or → Johann Georg Gichtel), were primarily visionaries who, one might say, are actually describing the contents and products of their own creative imagination. The theosophical discourse on the imagination was further developed by important 18th- and 19th-century theosophers such as → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and → Franz von Baader (see Faivre 2000, esp. 143-149), and continued beyond the Romantic period in various late- and postromantic forms, such as e.g. Baudelaire. The red thread in this complex historical development consists of an emphasis on the human faculty of imagination as safeguarding the possibility of overcoming the effects of the Fall – whether caused by Lucifer’s rebellion or reflected in the *hubris* of mere human reason – and finding the way back to the reintegration with (and of) Eternal Nature, the body of God.

##### 5. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

In the wake of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the theme of the imagination has been taken up by a variety of authors, especially in the field of

literature and literary criticism. It is as yet far from clear to what extent the ideas of e.g. Voltaire (who distinguished between the undisciplined “passive imagination” and the “active imagination” characteristic of genius), Diderot (who denied that the imagination has any creative powers), Coleridge (with his famous distinctions between the primary imagination, secondary imagination, and fancy – distinctions that are commonly, although incorrectly, assumed to have been invented by him), Wordsworth (who criticized Coleridge’s distinction between imagination and fancy), and many others must be seen as re-enactments of positions derived from the traditions outlined above, or as relatively independent new departures. Generally speaking, scholars investigating such authors have tended to concentrate on how they reacted to well-known philosophical debates and authors, notably Hume and Kant. While the great importance of those backgrounds is not in any doubt, the relevance of pre-critical neoplatonic, paracelsian and theosophical traditions has traditionally been underestimated, and requires more research.

In the present context we will have to restrict ourselves to the role of the imagination specifically in esoteric and occultist contexts, but not before having emphasized that such a focus is mostly inspired by pragmatic considerations and is in fact artificial to a considerable degree: the boundaries between Western esotericism and the fields of art and literature in the 19th and 20th centuries are often vague and shifting (with a figure such as → William Blake, in whose personal mythology the imagination is personified by the entity Los and associated with Christ, participating equally in all three domains), and the frequent phenomenon of a migration of ideas and discursive transfers occurring between these various domains is of particular relevance and importance.

The status and powers of the imagination played an important role in the debate around mesmerism [→ Animal Magnetism / Mesmerism] investigated by a French committee in 1784. As explained by Méheust (1999, I, 322-328, 333), the committee members found themselves faced with a dilemma. They rejected Mesmer’s notion of an invisible “fluid”, and hence found themselves incapable of explaining the spectacular paranormal and healing phenomena claimed by him, other than as products of “the imagination”, a term that had obviously negative connotations from their Enlightenment perspective; but ironically, in doing so they ended up attributing to the imagination powers that, from that same perspective, it was not supposed to have. They thus opened up a “pandora’s box” that

made it possible for some mesmerists – referred to as the “imaginationist” current – to argue that the magnetizer’s will had the effect of liberating the powers of the patient’s imagination, which were considered capable of completely re-organizing his/her psycho-organic system (Méheust 1999, I, 138, 330-334).

The close connections that had been drawn, ever since Paracelsus, between the “imagination” and the “will” – the latter being the active agent by means of which the former’s formative and creative powers are focused and concentrated – were taken up and further developed in the context of the mesmerist discourse. This combination came to play a central role in the magical theory of → Éliphas Lévi, whose debt to mesmerism can scarcely be overestimated. According to Lévi, the universe is permeated by an “astral light” (clearly modeled after Mesmer’s invisible fluid, but also strongly influenced by Paracelsus, to whom he often refers in this connection), and it is by means of the imagination coupled with the will that one can establish contact with this hidden dimension of reality. It was only a small step, but an important one, to see this hidden and mysterious but universally present “astral light” not only as an invisible “life force” or psycho-physical agent of mediation (similar to Ficino’s “spiritus”), but associate it with the actual experiential realities to which the imagination gives us access, for example in visions and dreams. Reasoning along those lines, occultist authors came to draw the conclusion that this “world of the imagination” is – like the “nightside of nature” of the German Romantics – superior to and, therefore, somehow more “real” than the mere three-dimensional world of the five senses. The “disenchanted” world of the post-Kantian rationalist, subject to the restrictions of time and space, is more illusionary than the world of the imagination, in which those limitations no longer obtain. Thus the stage was set for the concept, central to all forms of 19th and 20th-century occultism, of a “magical plane” parallel to the every-day world.

A central role in this regard was played by the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, one of whose most important practices focused on attaining “spirit vision” by means of “astral projection”. According to the Golden Dawn teachings, specific occult and ritual techniques make it possible to project one’s spirit out of the “sphere of sensation” and into the “astral plane” of the reified imagination; and essentially the same approach has become a standard element of occultist magic in the 20th century. As pointed out by its most profound analyst, Tanya Luhrmann, the concept of a “separate-

but-connected” magical plane, existing on a different level of reality parallel to the world of the senses, is crucial for understanding how contemporary magicians legitimate magic in a disenchanted world. Its function ‘lies in keeping unhappy bedfellows apart’ (Luhmann 1989, 276) and allowing the magician to “live in two worlds” while avoiding cognitive dissonance: the rules that apply in the disenchanted world of the senses simply do not apply in the world of the imagination, and the reverse (cf. Hanegraaff 2003). Moreover, since there is no meta-level with rules that apply to both levels, there is no basis for denying the world of the imagination a “reality” at least equal to that of the world of the senses.

The imagination also plays an important role in various other 20th-century forms of esotericism, but all of them seem to be individual variations on the basic approaches that emerged from the 19th-century Romantic, mesmerist and occultist contexts, and their “para-paracelsian” and Christian-theosophical backgrounds. One example is → Carl Gustav Jung’s concept of the “active imagination”, which plays an important role in his psychotherapeutic system. Another is → Rudolf Steiner’s system for “attaining knowledge of higher worlds”, where the imagination is the lowest in a series of three spiritual faculties (followed by inspiration and intuition). And finally, → Henry Corbin – with primary reference to Islamic esotericism, especially Ibn ‘Arabi (Corbin 1969) – introduced a theory that has become highly influential not only in various esoteric currents, but has also left its mark on scholars of Western esotericism of a “religionist” orientation. The imagination, according to Corbin, is both a means of knowledge and a modality of being, and as such it constitutes a *mundus imaginalis*, a “mesocosm” or intermediary reality between the intelligible sphere and the realm of the senses. Corbin coined the term “imaginal” to distinguish his concept from the merely “imaginary” (yet another variation on Paracelsus’ and Coleridge’s distinction between fantasy and imagination), but its ontological status is predictably ambiguous: the imaginal is neither a place nor a non-place, but although Corbin insists on its “reality”, he remains elusive in referring to it by terms such as ‘le pays du non-ou’ (the land of no-where; see Berger 1986, 146). To what extent Corbin’s *mundus imaginalis* is indebted to the currents outlined above is a question that would require further investigation. In any case, as formulated by Steven M. Wasserstrom (1999, 148), the ‘emphasis on the reality of the imagination’s objects has made Corbin a favorite of theorists of poetics for de-

cedes, culminating in his preeminent influence on James Hillman’s post-Jungian archetypal psychology’. By such channels, the Corbinian imagination entered various “counter-cultural” and even → New Age discourses in the wake of the famous Eranos meetings; as such, it continues to influence popular perceptions of Western esotericism.

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## Intermediary Beings I: Antiquity

1. INTRODUCTION 2. DEMONS (2A. GREECE 2B. ISRAEL, JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY)
3. ANGELS (3A. GREECE 3B. ISRAEL, JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The belief in angels, demons and other intermediary beings has become an important aspect of Western religious thought and imagination, in mainstream Christianity as well as in esoteric currents. Its emergence was mainly the result of the combination of Greek and Jewish ideas about good and evil spirits that have a direct influence on human life. Sometimes these beings are individually distinguished by name, but often they are thought to operate as nameless members of a distinct group, which as a whole is named after the specific activity it deploys. In a further stage of development, especially in the Jewish and Christian tradition, they were conceived of as tightly organized, like an army, with a commander-in-chief (the archangel Michael or Satan) and lower commanding officers.



Under the influence of Christianity, it has become usual in the West to distinguish the evil and good spiritual beings as “demons” and “angels” respectively. For that reason, some aspects of the enormous corpus of material on intermediary beings that has been assembled (in particular by Colpe et al. and Michl) will be discussed here under those headings. Linguistically, these terms derive from the Greek words *daimōn* and *angelos*; historically, the Christian angels have their origin in Judaism, whereas the demons have their roots in both the classical and the Jewish world. It may be useful, however, to emphasize that the distinction between good angels and bad demons is Jewish and Christian: in Antiquity, demons were thought to be both beneficent and harmful.

Intermediary beings of quite another kind are those that are in fact individualized and personified attributes of the godhead, such as the Jewish Wisdom or the gnostic aeons. They are discussed in connection with → Gnosticism.

## 2. DEMONS

### 2A. GREECE

The Greek word *daimōn* originally designated a god or, more vaguely, a divine power. From the latter it evolved into an indication of the undetermined superhuman power that causes the good or bad events of human life, i.e. of fate (*kata tina daimona* = by accident). Another line of development led to the idea that souls become demons after death, – a belief that persisted until the end of the classical period and beyond. Already Hesiod (6th century B.C.) says that the people of the Golden Age became ‘pure demons dwelling on the earth, . . . delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men’ (*Works and Days*, 121–123). This led to the idea of a personal *daimōn* as a tutelary spirit or genius. Every human being has his own *daimōn*, who is given to him at birth, or whom he chooses himself, as Plato says (*Republic*, X, 617e). In Stoic philosophy the *daimōn* was identified with the divine part in man, his *nous*. Thus the emperor Marcus Aurelius said of the *daimōn* (*Meditations*, V, 27) that ‘Zeus has given a particle of himself as leader and guide to everybody, i.e. his mind (*nous*) and reason (*logos*)’. Though the belief in good and bad spirits primarily belonged to the domain of popular religion, the philosophers could not ignore it and, therefore, gave it a place in their reflections (Zintzen, 640–668). The Stoics held that the oracles and other mantic practices were due to the activity of demons. In his treatise *On the decline of the ora-*

*cles*, which is of great importance for our knowledge of ancient demonology, Plutarch (ca. A.D. 100) ascribed this decline to the gradual disappearance of the demons, who according to him were long-living but not immortal. The Stoic school-head Chrysippus (3rd century B.C.) taught that the gods punished unholy and unrighteous people through evil demons (Plutarch, *Quaestiones Rom.*, 51). According to the hermetic *Asclepius*, 23, 37–38, the statues of the gods in the temples are beneficent or harmful through the demons that have been conjured into them. The demons, which were thought to live in the air (cf. also Ephesians 6:12), played an important role in the fate of the soul after death, *inter alia* in → Hermetism. The *Asclepius*, 28, knows of a chief demon in the air that weighs and judges the soul’s merits and accordingly has it punished or rewarded (cf. also C.H. X, 21; XVI, 10–17). According to John Lydus, *De mensibus* IV, 32 and 149, the Greek version of the *Asclepius* distinguished between ‘avenging demons’ (on earth), ‘cleansing demons’ (in the air), and ‘saving demons’ (on the moon). The Neoplatonists, Iamblichus and Proclus in particular, developed a whole system of *daimones* or “souls” between heaven and earth. They were strongly influenced by the demonology of the so-called *Chaldaean Oracles* (2nd century A.D.), which, however, made a clear distinction between good and bad intermediary beings, by calling the former “angels” and the latter “demons”. This was in accordance with the increasing tendency of later Antiquity to consider the demons as evil beings, which had already become an established fact in Judaism and Christianity.

### 2B. ISRAEL, JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY

The development of Israel’s religion into a strict monotheism often involved the admission of other Near Eastern gods or mythological beings into the royal court of JHWH, as his servants. Biblical examples are the ‘sons of God’ (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) – though these apparently could be inclined to evil (Genesis 6:1–4) – and the adoption of mythological beings such as the cherubs (e.g. 1 Samuel 4:4; Isaiah 37:16) and the seraphs (e.g. Isaiah 6). The idea that each people has its own god was accepted at first, but was later rejected: in Psalm 82 these gods (cf. vs. 6: ‘You are gods, . . . children of the most high’) are judged and condemned to death. In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible, the foreign national gods, said to be idols in Hebrew, become demons, e.g. Psalm 95:5 (LXX): ‘All the gods of the nations are demons’. In



the Old Testament the borderline between evil that comes from punishing angels of God and that which is caused by wicked spirits, is difficult to discern. The latter were mostly conceived of as dangerous animals that live in destroyed and deserted places (cf. Isaiah 34:13ff.). A terrifying assistant of JHWH is ‘the Destroyer’, who killed the firstborn of Egypt (Genesis 12:23) and many Israelites after David’s census (then called ‘the Destroying Angel’: 2 Samuel 24:16; 1 Chronicles 21:15). A negative development is usually ascribed to the character of Satan (though doubted by Day, 730): from a messenger of God (Numbers 22:22-35) and the unfriendly ‘Accuser’ of Job at the heavenly court, who is nevertheless subject to God (Job 1), he gradually developed into the arch-enemy of God and man (first clearly visible in 1 Chronicles 21:1). Another name for the Prince of Evil became Belial or Beliar (originally a word meaning “wickedness”).

In the post-exilic period, the belief in good and evil spirits increased enormously. According to the *Community Rule* of Qumran, 3, 13-26, God has created two Spirits: the Spirit of Truth (also called the Angel or Prince of Light) and the Spirit of Falsehood (the Angel or Prince of Darkness), and accordingly there are two classes of beings: the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. In another famous Qumran writing, the *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, the latter are also called ‘the Army of Belial’. Whereas in the Old Testament the evil spirits are mostly nameless or identified with dangerous animals, the later development shows a tendency to distinguish individual demons by name (Maier, 679-687: a list of 123 demons in the Talmud). It was in Jewish popular religion in particular that the belief in all kinds of spirits assumed enormous proportions, which explains the occurrence of so many Jewish names in Greek magical texts.

The Christians adopted and combined the various forms of Hellenistic and Jewish demonology. The Gospels show Jesus in continuous confrontation with evil spirits, ejecting them from the possessed and forbidding them to reveal his identity (e.g. Mark 1:32-34). The apostle Paul shared the Jewish idea that the pagan gods are actually demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). In this view, which became generally accepted in the early Church, the gods of the Graeco-Roman world were not neutralized, but remained frightening supernatural beings, whose evil activities had to be averted. The idea that demons could be beneficent was abandoned: exorcism became a common Christian practice and the abjuration of the devil became part of the ritual of baptism.

### 3. ANGELS

#### 3A. GREECE

The Greek word *angelos* means “messenger”. If the gods wanted to send a message, they made use of special messengers, often birds or minor gods. The divine messenger *par excellence* was Hermes, who also functioned as guide of the dead to the underworld (cf. → Hermes Trismegistus). In Near Eastern adaptations of the Greek gods, these are sometimes also called *angelos* (Michl, 55: Zeus Hypsistos as ‘good angelos’; *Jupiter angelus*). An Orphic Hymn, preserved in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* V, 125, 3 (fragm. 248 Kern), speaks of “angels” that surround the throne of the deity and care for human affairs. In one of the “theological” oracles from Clarus, the gods describe themselves as “angels” of the transcendent Supreme God: ‘only a small part of God are we, his angels’ (preserved on a wall in the city Oinoanda, in the Greek *Theosophy*, 13, and Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae*, I, 7, 1). In the Greek magical papyri, mention is often made of angels and archangels, but it seems certain that this is due to Jewish or Christian influence. As a whole, the idea of angelic beings, serving at the heavenly court as servants and messengers of the gods, is not Greek but of Near Eastern origin.

In → Neoplatonism, the term “angels” was used for the various levels of being between heaven and earth, and as such it became equivalent to “demons” and “souls” (as a result, one could speak of “angelic demons”). As said above, the *Chaldaean Oracles* distinguished between good angels and bad demons, and accordingly Porphyry taught that the air was filled with bad demons, whereas the ether was the dwelling-place of the angels (→ Augustine, *City of God*, X, 9). It is difficult to determine to what extent these views have been influenced by Jewish and Christian traditions. This seems, however, almost certainly the case when these angels are presented as whole divisions commanded by “archangels”, who in their turn are under the supreme command of the gods (Michl, 58f.).

#### 3B. ISRAEL, JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY

The Hebrew word *mal’āk* is used to designate both a human and a divine messenger. The term primarily indicates a function, not a heavenly being of a specific nature. In the Old Testament, the term *mal’āk* JHWH can be applied to a prophet (e.g. Haggai 1:13; Malachi 2:7), but mostly it indicates a messenger from God, “an angel (or: the Angel) of the Lord”. If written with the definite article, the

Angel of the Lord is mostly a manifestation of JHWH himself, probably introduced to have God less directly involved in human affairs.

Only in the later texts of the Old Testament and in Judaism and Christianity the words *mal'āk* and *angelos* became generic terms for the heavenly servants of God. Then also the cherubs and seraphs could be indicated as “angels”, though they had never been conceived of as divine messengers. In early Judaism and Christianity the angels played an increasingly important role in the religious imagination and experience of believers, as is abundantly testified by the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and, for instance, the *Revelation of John* in the New Testament. Then it also became possible to speak of the powers of evil as “Angels of Darkness”. The Old Testament expression “Lord of Hosts” led to the idea of separate classes of angels, which were commanded by the seven Archangels. The first text to refer to them, 1 Enoch, 20:1 and 7, mentions Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Sariel, and Remiel. Other groups, often mentioned together in Jewish and Christian writings, are “Thrones”, “Sovereignities”, “Authorities”, “Powers”, etc. (e.g. Colossians 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:5; Michl, 79-80, 112-114).

The angels were thought to fulfil all kinds of duties with respect to the world and man. A special type of angels, which has to be mentioned here because of the great importance attached to it in Western Christendom, is that of the guardian angel. Just as all peoples have their own special angels, likewise each individual has his personal angel. This view seems influenced by the Pythagorean interpretation of the Greek idea of the personal *daimōn*, discussed above. The Pythagoreans connected it with that of the *eidōlon*, the recognizable unsubstantial shape of the deceased in the underworld, and identified this entity with the pre-existent soul. In the Jewish world this led to the idea that the guardian angel lives in heaven and resembles the person he is assigned to. In the Talmud, the guardian angel is indicated by the Greek loan word *iqonin*, i.e. “image” (*Deut. Rabba* 4, 201d). In Matthew 18:10, Jesus says of the little children that ‘they have their (guardian) angels in heaven, who look continually on the face of my heavenly Father’, and in Acts 12:15, the disciples, who cannot believe that Peter is knocking on the door, assume: ‘It must be his angel’. This idea of a heavenly counterpart of each individual was still held in the 3rd-century Jewish-Christian community in Mesopotamia in which → Mani grew up: he twice received an appearance of his heavenly twin.

In the Christian Church, especially that of the

East, the cult of angels and speculations about their nature and influences on human life flourished enormously, not only among ordinary people, but also among theologians (cf. the catalogue of 269 angels in Michl, 200-239). A typically Christian innovation is the assumption of nine angelic choirs, which is first attested in the 4th century (Michl, 171-174). → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita (ca. 500) divided the nine choirs into three groups in ascending order: 1. Angels, Archangels, Principalities, 2. Powers, Dominions, Forces, 3. Thrones, Cherubs, Seraphs. This angelology became generally accepted, not only in the East, but also in the West, especially after → Scottus Eriugena’s translation of the Areopagite’s works.

*Lit.*: F. Andres, “Daimon”, Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopaedie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplement Band III (1918), 267-322 ♦ C. Breitenbach & P.L. Day, “Satan”, *DDD* (see below), 726-732 ♦ C. Colpe, J. Maier, C. Zintzen *et alii*, “Geister (Dämonen)”, *RAC* 9 (1976), 546-761 ♦ M. Detienne, *La notion de DAÏMÓN dans le Pythagoréisme ancien* (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l’Université de Liège, CLXV), Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963 ♦ W. Foerster, “Daimōn”, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, II (1935), 1-21 ♦ J. Michl and Th. Klauser, “Engel”, *RAC* 5 (1962), 53-322 ♦ S.B. Parker, “Sons of (the) God(s)”, *DDD*, 794-800 ♦ K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P.W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, second, extensively revised edition, Leiden: Brill, 1999 ♦ J. Riley, “Demon”, *DDD*, 235-240 ♦ idem, “Devil”, *DDD*, 244-249.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

## Intermediary Beings II: Middle Ages

### 1. INTERMEDIARY BEINGS WITH A CLEAR RELATION TO LITURGICAL SOURCES

### 2. INTERMEDIARY BEINGS WITH BACKGROUNDS IN SOURCES OUTSIDE THE LITURGY

Intermediary beings are not separable from their modes of relation to living people, nor from the narratives and ritual processes through which these relations are enacted and interpreted. In the medieval context, the Catholic, institutional and acceptable forms of ritual process through which these relations often took place (such as the exorcism of demons, the conjuring of ghosts, the liturgical invocations of angels and saints in litanies for specific occasions) must be borne in mind when considering more private, extra-institutional ritual processes (such as the invocations of angels

described in texts like the *Ars notoria* or the commanding of demons in necromantic experiments). These extra-institutional practices often derived from liturgical rituals or had a conscious relation to them, as too, in other ways, did the spontaneous visitations of such beings (also extra-institutional in principle) recounted by visionaries like Margery Kempe or Joan of Arc.

In the later middle ages, new strands of intermediary beings begin to become visible with greater frequency in the cosmological tapestry. In some texts, hierarchies of named and categorized demons appear; planetary angels and more ambiguous entities begin to be described, deriving in some cases from Old Testament apocrypha or from newly circulating Hebrew sources, in other cases from translations or adaptations from Arabic works. While the origins of particular named angels or demons are not always clear, all angelic beings with strange names (i.e., names apart from the standard set of archangels, Michael, Gabriel and, though apocryphal, Raphael and sometimes Uriel), stand out as foreign against the more limited set of beings it was normal to invoke in Catholic liturgy. Strange angels tended to be regarded as potentially suspect, not necessarily benign whatever they might claim to the contrary, since it was well known that a demon could appear in the guise of an angel of light.

It must be emphasised, however, that the character of any intermediary being is likely to become ambiguous as soon as it manifests as an apparition to a living person. Whether an individual apparition should be understood as benign or malign was a matter that depended on the context of the apparition and the judgment of the individuals involved. Thus, while there was more than one stock of names to conjure by at the end of the middle ages, and while these stocks of beings are to some extent distinguishable, nevertheless these categories (Catholic, non-Catholic; institutional, extra-institutional) are fluid and permeable ones. For this reason it is not really possible to treat the types of intermediary beings invoked or conjured in more orthodox and public contexts separately from those invoked or conjured in the more private contexts situated most clearly in the history of esoteric thought.

#### I. INTERMEDIARY BEINGS WITH A CLEAR RELATION TO LITURGICAL SOURCES

The *Liber visionum* of John of Morigny (fl. 1304-1318) offers a case in point of individual and institutional judgements at variance. The *Liber*

*visionum* offers a ritual system for procuring visions of the Virgin Mary and angels, and attaining knowledge via angelic mediation, understood as divine knowledge, but encapsulated in the form of the seven liberal arts. John, a visionary himself, claimed to have received the prayer system from the Virgin Mary, and believed that it induced genuine communication with angels and the Virgin in the form of true and divine visions. Though his claims were not believed by everybody (the text was burnt as heretical at the University of Paris in 1323), there was little in John's system that was not inspired by, or in some cases directly drawn from, the prayers and divine offices John would have heard and used in daily worship. Within John's system, after a set of preliminary prayers designed to obtain communication with the Virgin Mary, each of the nine orders of angels is invoked (with careful attention to the heavenly hierarchies and correspondences of beings within each hierarchy), to deliver each of the seven liberal arts, philosophy and theology. In several instances certain liberal arts are also associated with certain of the holy and elect souls of the dead dwelling with the angels in the same hierarchy; for example at the level of Rhetoric (Thrones), the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists are also called upon; at the level of Astronomy (Principalities), the Martyrs, Confessors, Holy Widows, Monks and Hermits, and at the level of Theology (Seraphim), the Virgin Martyrs.

This list of angels, saints and martyrs works nicely as a synopsis of those heavenly beings whose intercessory powers were commonly invoked in liturgical contexts. The litany of saints invokes a substantially similar set of beings, as also, in somewhat abbreviated form, does the litany in the rite for commending a departing soul to God: 'Holy Mary, pray for him (her). All ye holy angels and archangels, pray, etc. Holy Abel, All ye choirs of the just, Holy Abraham, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, All holy patriarchs and prophets, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. John, All ye holy apostles and evangelists, All ye holy disciples of our Lord, All ye holy Innocents, St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, All ye holy martyrs, St. Sylvester, St. Gregory, St. Augustine, All ye holy bishops and confessors, St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Camillus, St. John of God, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Lucy, All ye holy monks and hermits, All ye holy virgins and widows, All ye holy men and women, saints of God, make intercession for him (her)' (*Roman Ritual*, vol. I, 407-409).

John's prayer system was designed to enable the

operator to engage in visionary communication with the divine beings whose alliance with the Christian world had long been institutionalized; but the fact that no strange angels were summoned did not put such interactions above suspicion – something which Joan of Arc was also to learn to her cost some hundred years later. There could be no common consensus about the nature of these saints and angels because, though not unorthodox, they were also not theoretical; because they appeared to real people who claimed to have spoken with them, they raised difficult questions which could not be answered by the simple application of theoretical categories of licit and illicit spirits. What could be questioned was the individual's mode of communication with these presences: where the prayers used to summon spirits were novel and extra institutional, the spirits themselves could not (or not always) be seen to be above suspicion.

If celestial beings such as angels, the Virgin, and the souls of the elect could be communicated with both in ways that were institutionally sanctioned and ways that were not, the same is true for other beings, such as demons and the ghosts of the ordinary dead. The similarity between necromantic formulae of conjuration and exorcistic practices by which both demons and ghosts might be commanded has already been noted. There was similarity too in the ways that information passed between demons and living persons through both licit and illicit modes of exorcism. In compilations of necromantic experiments, demons might be called upon for a variety of purposes, but very commonly they were summoned because the conjuror wished to derive information about something hidden, such as the location of stolen goods or buried treasure, or the outcome of some personal matter which was in doubt. While practitioners of legitimate exorcism might not in principle seek to accomplish divination by demons, nevertheless the ritual of exorcising a possessed person would be likely to involve repeated attempts to cast out the demon and some experimentation with formulae to see how the demon responded, so that even where the exorcism did not involve questioning of the demon (as it sometimes might) there would be a flow of information in both directions between demon and exorcist. To exorcise a demon from a possessed person was not thus a simple ritual act of command (as were the standard exorcisms performed during the consecration of holy water, salt, or other liturgical objects, where demons were not really expected to respond) but to some extent also always an act of interpretation of the demon's

behaviour. It is interesting that the instructions for performing an exorcism in the *Roman Ritual* (a 16th-century compilation of earlier materials) preserve the admonition that the exorcist should not digress into chat (*multiloquio*) with the demon, nor ask it curious questions about hidden or future things (*Roman Ritual*, vol. II, 171-173). It seems likely that the temptation to interrogate the demon about matters not pertinent to the exorcism was always strong, and, to judge from these warnings, not always successfully resisted.

In the later Middle Ages there are also recorded accounts of ghosts of the ordinary dead appearing to people they had known in life. Perhaps the most widely circulated account of such an interaction describes the ghost of Gui of Corvo who began to manifest in the form of a disembodied voice to his terrified widow immediately after his death on the sixteenth of December, probably in 1323. A report was written up and submitted to Pope John XXII by Jean Gobi, prior of the Dominicans of Alès, who had been called in by the widow and her friends to deal with the apparition. Concealing a consecrated host on his person to ascertain the non-demonic character of the spirit, the prior entered the widow's house and conjured the ghost to remain and speak with him. After he established that the spirit was a good spirit who had been obliged to perform a portion of his purgatory on earth, the prior's questions became more general: how does the ghost speak without a mouth or tongue? By what works can one best ensure entry into heaven? What are the worst punishments of purgatory? Do demons cluster about dying souls? In every case the ghost answered as best it could, or deferred its silence to the will of God.

Certain ambiguities about this case may be remarked, for in some ways the ghost is handled much like a demon; ritual precautions are taken in its vicinity to protect observers, and the spirit is conjured, just as demons are conjured, to remain until dismissed, and to answer questions truthfully. Clearly it is perceived as a spirit of a kind which it is legitimate and even necessary to command. But the ghost's apparition is also understood to be a miraculous event, and since the spirit is not malign it is also seen to be legitimate and even necessary for the prior to extract information from it. Formally, Jean Gobi's handling of the ghost very much resembles what the necromancer does (and what the exorcist is enjoined *not* to do): he commands a spirit to reveal information about hidden and future things. The difference (if there is one) is that the spirit is understood to be neither infernal

nor celestial, but something at this point still in between.

## 2. INTERMEDIARY BEINGS WITH BACKGROUNDS IN SOURCES OUTSIDE THE LITURGY

If we look more closely at the necromantic experiments, however, this difference is smaller than it may at first appear, since although the entities conjured are in some cases explicitly infernal, this is not always true. In the case of one necromantic experiment for conjuring a flying ship, for example, it is said that you do not have to worry about the naming of holy things in the conjured vehicle since the spirits responsible for the action are ‘between good and evil, not dwelling in hell nor yet in paradise’ (Kieckhefer, 219; more typically the rider in such vehicles is cautioned not to make the sign of the cross on account of the risk that, with the demons being driven away, the vehicle will vanish in mid-air). In other cases, due to the many strands of cultural influences on such texts, it seems as though the spirits conjured simply haven’t made up their minds what categories they belong to – whether they come from heaven or hell, or somewhere in between.

More important, perhaps, than the spirits’ location when they are at home is the idea of the spiritual hierarchy and earthly correspondences through which these otherworldly entities may be controlled by human beings. The notion that higher spirits have lower spirits in their power tends to be a constant in many genres of texts, whether or not the entities are explicitly described as infernal. In some cases of necromantic conjurations, a cosmological structure in which specific angels are in command of specific demons is implied by the manner of the command, as in the *Book of the Images of the Planets*, where each experiment tells the name of the angels who command the demons, the leading demon (who will perform the requested action), and the names of his minions: ‘the angels who command it to be done are thus – Saliciel, Ycaachel, Harmanel – and the name of the king of demons who commands is the Red Fighter, and his three servants are these: Karmal, Yobial, Yfasue’ (Lidaka, 51). Here there seems to be a clear distinction between the commanding angels and the demons who are commanded, but this is not always the case.

In another medieval list of spirits (a portion of the same list found later in Weyer’s *Pseudomonarchia Daemonum* and the *Goetia* portion of the early modern compilation of magic texts known as the *Lemegeton*), a variety of spirits are named, attributed certain ranks and powers, and described

as having various numbers of legions under them: ‘Barbarus is a great Count and Duke . . . He can open treasure stores not guarded by magic or incantations, and he is from the order of Virtues, and has under him thirty-six legions’ (Kieckhefer, 291). Barbarus is described as being from the angelic order of Virtues, and other spirits in the list are also named with reference to their rank in the nine orders (Virtues, Thrones, Powers etc). Though some of the spirits are described as having a frightening demeanor, others sound quite benevolent, and there is no special effort made by the compiler to clarify whether these spirits still inhabited the angelic orders referred to or were supposed to be fallen angels.

In the “Manual of Astral Magic” compiled in the same book (Kieckhefer, 296ff.), seven angels with names of obvious Hebrew morphology (Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, Anael, Satquiel, Samael and Casziel or Captiel or Caffiel) are aligned with the seven planets, with various legions of sub-spirits being under the control of each. These seven angels in the same alignments with the planetary spheres are witnessed with small variations in other texts, including the medieval *Liber Juratus* and, later on, in the works of → Agrippa, → Trithemius, and others following them. The *Liber Juratus* is explicit that these planetary angels belong to a median category of spirits. The celestial angels are described as being of two kinds ‘those who serve God only and those who serve God, but will also answer to man’ (Mathiesen, 151); the former are the familiar nine orders of angels, the latter are the angels of the planetary spheres.

In the *Book of the Essence of the Spirits* (an anonymous 12th-century work derived from an Arabic source), which also describes spiritual beings inhabiting the planetary spheres, a cosmological approach explicates the hierarchy of spirits in a similar manner and in a way which makes the cosmology specific to magical operations. The highest group, the spirits closest to God, are incorruptible and unbiddable; the spirits ruling each of the spheres of the planets, including Urania, may be subject to human invocation and entreaty. Beneath each of the planetary rulers is a host of more passible spirits who interact with mankind at the bidding of the planetary rulers. These spirits can be persuaded or compelled to enter matter, drawn down by the symmetry and harmony of the matter and spirit as well as by conjurations, in the same manner as the Hebrew planetary angels. The name “angels” is not used in the *Book of the Essence of the Spirits*, but it may be noted that the picture drawn here is not that of astral spirits as “forces”



but, as with the Hebrew planetary angels, conscious entities which can be compelled or entreated and imprisoned in material objects, more in the manner of the god-making passages in the Hermetic *Asclepius* than the resonant astral forces of Al-Kindi's *de Radiis* (or other texts of Arabic image magic).

While this discussion of the spirits or angels of the planetary spheres seems to bring us some distance from the orthodox Catholic saints and angels we started with, it should be noted that schemas with spirits ascending and descending through the planetary spheres also appeared in philosophical and literary contexts whose orthodoxy was never questioned, such as → Bernard Silvester's *Cosmographia* in the 12th century and → Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the fourteenth. Then as now, the difficult questions about intermediary beings tended to concern their actual apparition to and practical manipulation by human beings, not their theoretical hierarchies or attributes.

Jean Gobi, *Dialogue avec un Fantôme*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994 ♦ *The Roman Ritual* (Rev. Philip T. Weller, ed.), Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.

*Lit.*: Jean-Patrice Baudet, Henri Bresc & Benoît Grévin (eds.), "Les anges et la magie au Moyen Age", in: *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome: Moyen Age* 114:2 (2002), 589-890 ♦ Adolf Franz, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, vol. 2, Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlags Herder, 1909, esp. section 14, "Bei Besessenheit" ♦ Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1997 ♦ Juris Lidaka, "The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets attributed to Osbern Bokenham", in: C. Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998, 32-75 ♦ Robert Mathiesen, "A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book* of Honorius of Thebes", in: Fanger, *Conjuring Spirits*, 143-162 ♦ Sophie Page, *Magic at St. Augustine's, Canterbury in the Middle Ages*, Dissertation, Warburg Institute, 2000 ♦ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

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## Intermediary Beings III: Renaissance

1. INTRODUCTION 2. INDIVIDUAL ANGELS & HIERARCHIES 3. ANGELS OF THE TEXT 4. THE SEVEN DIVINE SPIRITS 5. EVIL SPIRITS 6. ELEMENTALS AND DISINCARNATED ENTITIES 7. CONCLUSION

### I. INTRODUCTION

Intermediary beings retain a considerable importance during the Renaissance era. As in medieval times, they pertain to different categories, yet share several common features. Their perception is framed within a cultural context which, as remarked long ago by Alexandre Koyré and Lucien Febvre, in principle considers nothing as impossible, on account of the unlimited (and divinely sanctioned) generative faculty attributed to nature; since it is possible for any kind of being (intermediary or otherwise) to exist, it may also manifest itself at will, regardless of circumstances. Correlatively, the notion of "supernatural" is invalidated as well by this all-pervasive conception of nature, and by its overwhelming creativity: as a result, any being may be seen as "natural", belonging to one or another order of an organic universe. Prevalent in humanistic natural philosophy and theology, a multi-layered cosmology adapted from the Greeks extended its reach from the sublunar world to the celestial one, and upwards to the "intelligible" realm itself, next to the divine sphere, thus including the realm of the aristotelian "separate substances" which the Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholastics turned into "angels". The unicity of such a continuous hierarchy of natural planes (outlined, for instance, in → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Commento, Oratio, and Heptaplus*, or in → Ficino's *Platonic Theology*) put emphasis on the ontological familiarity or kinship between all living components of this universe, from the angels on down. Analogically, man himself is perceived as "triple" in structure, that is endowed with a corporeal, animated ("ensouled") and rational nature, parallel to the material, astral and angelic spheres of the macrocosmos. From a slightly different perspective, neoplatonic in origin, embodiment was considered specific to man, passions to the demons, and intellectuality was correlated with the supposedly contemplative angels. Such a *psychocosmia* prevents a perception of clear boundaries between the material and the spiritual and, insofar as it is not restricted to learned circles, is in accordance with a general worldview literally swarming with immaterial creatures of all sorts: it is familiar to and shared by many people in the period under discussion, as shown for example by Ronsard's *Hymne des Daimons* or some works of → Paracelsus. That man should appear to almost constantly find himself in the proximity of such entities comes as no surprise since they are "intermediaries" in more ways than one, being also – mainly, even – considered as messengers, transmitters of knowledge and/or of portents, at the service of humanity or

ready to trap and deceive it, on errand from God or the devil.

## 2. INDIVIDUAL ANGELS & HIERARCHIES

If, judging for instance from → Trithemius' lists featured in his *Antipalus* (pub. 1605), it would of course be impossible (and quite pointless) to attempt to name them all, two angelic beings of primary importance make a breakthrough in early modern esoteric literature, under the obvious influence of Jewish kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]: Metatron and Raziel.

Already found in the earlier documents of Jewish → gnosticism, and often referred to as the *Sar ha-Panim* (Prince of the Countenance), that is "head of the angels who stand before the divine Face", Metatron nevertheless possesses an ambiguous status. Sometimes identified with Enoch (Gen. 5:21-24), or with the angel who spoke to Moses on several occasions (Exod. 23: 21), he is occasionally (even in Jewish sources) considered almost identical with the Godhead, as the "lesser Adonai" (in accordance with his name being written with or without a *iod*). Present in the works of most important Christian kabbalists (Pico, → Reuchlin, → Giorgio, Rici, → Postel, → Knorr von Rosenroth), where he is frequently equated with the Active Intellect of medieval scholastics, he appears in his traditional role of guide into the divine presence, being simultaneously perceived as the penultimate rung of the cosmological ladder, and the uppermost spiritual intermediary in the contemplative ascent of the soul. In a way, albeit definitely an angelic being in most respects, he is perhaps even more representative of an exalted function (but a dual one, both cognitive and ontological) than of a singular entity, as stated by Giorgio (*De harmonia mundi*, I, 5, VI).

Raziel is scarcely less important, but much more magically connotated [→ Magic]; indeed, along with the *Picatrix*, the *Sefer ha Razim* (or, more usually, *Sefer Raziel*) is one of the most widespread and appreciated magical textbooks in the Renaissance and many authors, Jewish as well as Christian (Postel, in particular), took for granted the title of the book which mentioned the angel as Adam's teacher in paradise (or Noah's, after the Flood). Thus, if somewhat differently from Metatron, Raziel also serves as spiritual instructor while belonging to the higher angelic ranks, with a status that fluctuates in accordance with the various documents in which he is featured, and with the actual contents of the many differing versions of the magical compilation which bears his name. The numerous angels popu-

lating the seven heavens to which the parts of the book are respectively devoted – in its most extended versions at least – are attributed diverse functions for the most part in strict relation with the nature of the firmament they belong to, and invoked by name to perform all sorts of wonders, natural, divinatory and otherwise. A wide variety of "astrological" angels or spirits is also involved in the *Picatrix* and in the rituals of *ars notoria*, and regarded as important enough to sometimes be represented in the magical diagrams pertaining to these practices.

The necessity of equating the more "esoteric" angelic hierarchies, usually borrowed from hebraic writings, with the dionysian ones of official theology, combined with the requirements of correlative symbolism, led to the appropriation, by several Christian kabbalists, of the order of *Ishim* as the lowest rank of angels and, given its name (derived from *ish*, man), the closest to humanity. It was sometimes simply considered as the ninth one (in obviously deliberate accordance with the global number retained by → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita), as Pico wrote for instance in his *900 Theses* (*Concl. Kab.* [1st s.], 2), sometimes explicitly as a tenth one (Reuchlin, Giorgio, → Agrippa, Rici, Postel), in order to establish a direct correspondence between these hierarchies and the ten *sefirot* (divine attributes), interpreted in turn as the fundamental symbolic archetype of the structure of macrocosmic or microcosmic man.

The *macranthropos*, assuming cosmic dimensions and familiar to both the platonic and Jewish traditions, is also frequently considered as a particular angelic being, constituting the perfect "spiritual form" of individual man. Conjunction or *unio* with him is considered a very high – if not the highest – contemplative attainment, and his kinship with the Active Intellect and Metatron is therefore underlined (Rici, Postel). Great, and probably not always resisted, must have been the temptation to acclimatize such speculations with those of the *Picatrix* (III, VI, 5) regarding the possible manifestation of the "universal intellect", more or less identical to one's "perfect nature" in angelic guise, thanks however to an invocation and to joint practical operations seemingly pertaining to astral and talismanic magic. Under clear arabic influences, one might well be confronted here with a peculiar mix of astral and angelic magic that merges the contemplative and ritual attitudes.

A final ambiguity must be briefly signaled here: that which exists between such a supernal entity and the angelic shape or "garment" which Christ himself is sometimes supposed to assume, the more

so since some sort of *unio mystica* (contemplative or otherwise) is sought with both, as already noted in the case of Metatron.

### 3. ANGELS OF THE TEXT

Angelic names are sometimes envisaged, in kabbalistic thought, as actual components of “secret” divine names, and extracted by mystical hermeneutics from the biblical text itself. Such views have been directly adopted by certain Christian writers, such as Giustiniani, → Galatino or Reuchlin (*De arte*, III), who mention the scriptural verses in question and the manner of extracting from them seventy-two three-letter angelic names, all ultimately depending on the *Tetragrammaton* and making up the “great name” of seventy-two names; Reuchlin insists particularly on the essential role played by these “textual” angelic entities in both cosmological and contemplative issues, a topic still taken up by → Athanasius Kircher around 1650, and which later degenerated in almost unrecognizable magical recipes.

Albeit in a very different manner, the Bible also represents the basic source and model for John Dee’s (1527-1609) angelic magic. The use of his famous *shewstone* (“magic mirror”) is explicitly inspired by the scriptural example of the High Priest’s breast-plate, and the presence of the biblical archangels (see below) is frequently recorded in his magical diaries. Apart from a few cases of angels with a feminine outward appearance (which puzzled him very much at the outset!), Dee’s angels generally conform to their classic, ps-dionysian role as cosmological intermediaries, spiritual tutors and divine messengers; this is unsurprising enough since our man goes out of his way to try and prevent dealing with possibly dubious spirits. Prayer and scrying are the two cornerstones of Dee’s method of communicating with angelic entities, an activity which he understands as a notable part of natural philosophy, and as the most efficient way to attain both natural and divine knowledge. Essential to such conversations is the recovery of the primordial, “divine” or angelic language that was Adam’s prerogative before the Fall, and the privileged expression – insofar as it is accessible to humans – of this superior understanding of God and nature which Dee was so actively seeking. Seen from this perspective, such an intricacy of speech, angelic magic and nature reminds us of certain kabbalistic speculations.

### 4. THE SEVEN DIVINE SPIRITS

Aside from these “hidden” angels of the Book, and following up on the harmonization of Jewish

esoteric and traditional Christian perspectives on angelology, the biblical passages (Tb. 12:15; Rev. 4:5) pointing to the existence of a septenary of archangels or divine spirits (although three names only are actually mentioned in Scripture, those of Gabriel, Michael and Raphael) who are always in God’s presence and are prime ministers of his will, have no doubt inspired Trithemius’ *De septem secundeis* (1508). In this famous booklet, seven angelic rulers with classic hebrew names are each assigned regency over one planetary sphere, determining a recurrent sevenfold cycle in history according to which social and spiritual transformations intervene. Hebraic sources (such as – hypothetically – the *Pirke R. Eliezer* and *Sefer ha Temunah*) may also have inspired the elaboration of this influential little tract, the actual contents of which resemble a concise *exposé* of astrological cycology, where the “Intelligences” of the title are classically assigned, as secondary causes, to the movement of the planets. Whole sub-hierarchies of angelic beings, multiplied mainly according to astrological symbolism, were subordinated by later writers (Giorgio, Kircher) to the seven “chiefs”.

A more or less identical list of seven angels found its way (independently from Trithemius) into contemporary Catholic worship and liturgy, as the official cult of the seven divine spirits. Stemming first from the private revelations granted to the Blessed Amadeus (João da Silva e Menezes, 1431-1482), and later from the efforts of a sicilian priest, A. Lo Duca (1491-1564), the “recovery” of the names and specific iconography of all seven angels of the Presence led to the renewal of their worship and to the erection of several sanctuaries dedicated to them, most notably that of Santa Maria degli Angeli alle Terme in Rome, completed by Michelangelo in 1561. A proper religious office was even composed to honor the seven archangels, duly sanctioned by the Papacy and published by Lo Duca in Venice in 1543 (1594<sup>2</sup>). The cult of these seven spirits enjoyed great favour well into the 17th century, and particularly in viceregal Spain, where they were frequently and richly depicted.

In line with these events and the spirit of the Counter Reformation is of course the 16th-17th century spread of the devotion to the “holy guardian angel”, officially sanctioned by the Catholic Church in 1608, and which enjoyed even more durable existence. By establishing and recommending the devotion to spiritual entities such as these, the Roman See nourished the obvious intention (among others) of recuperating the theme of angelic intermediaries, linking them to the renewal of theological speculations about the purgatory and

the *communio sanctorum*, and integrating them within the new outlook on ethics and ecclesiology.

Finally, even though spiritual intermediaries as such, and angel-worship in particular, were never well received in protestant environments, the famous theme of the seven divine forms or spirits in → Jacob Boehme's theogony enjoyed favour in some later pietistic and/or theosophically-inclined circles, not all of them protestant. During the 16th and 17th centuries, angelic beings were sometimes entreated in a specific current of "theosophical medicine", the most well-known *manifesto* of which is A. von Franckenberg's (1593-1652) *Raphael, oder Artzt-Engel* (pub. 1676), with his tripartite medicine: kabbalistic, magical and chemical. Other authors, both catholic and protestant, such as L. Meyssonier (*La Philosophie des anges*, 1648), J. Pistorius Jr (1546-1608), M. Baldit (*Speculum sacro-medicum octogonum*, 1666), have included angelic prayers and interventions in their therapeutic methods.

#### 5. EVIL SPIRITS

The actual mention of evil demons as such is of course unfrequent, unless it is in order to issue the classic warnings and/or disclaimers about intercourse with them. That a whole *corpus* of earlier magical texts devoted to their hierarchies and operations, and discussing ritual invocations of them, did continue to be available and to circulate more or less openly during the Renaissance, is nevertheless not in any doubt. Even though it is necessarily rare for authors to admit explicitly to a positive interest in them, there is absolutely no reason to imagine that such had declined, or that the relevant literature had suddenly and unexpectedly become unavailable. The well-known example of → Giordano Bruno, approvingly quoting in his *De monade* (1591) several passages from Cecco d'Ascoli (?1269-1327)'s necromantic commentary on J. of Holywood's *De sphaera*, would suffice to indicate that some purpose was still attached to the invocation of demons. In this specific case, the entities concerned are clearly and unequivocally diabolic in nature, since they are reputed to be "fallen from grace" with God, and to have formerly belonged to the order of the Cherubim.

Agrippa does discuss demons as well (*De occulta philosophia*, III, XVI), and places them in three categories: *supraeaelestes* (more or less akin to *mentes* floating about without a body, and to the Greek *daimôn*), *mundanos* (cosmic, that is mainly zodiacal and planetary entities – such as Bruno's) and *subterranei* (terrestrial, mainly distributed according to the elements). Here as elsewhere, the incon-

sistency of the available vocabulary only serves to make it even more difficult to pin down the exact nature ("good" or "bad") of the beings involved, as well as the hierarchy they purportedly belong to. Naturally, demons may also appear spontaneously, mainly the aerial ones (lower angelic beings, being immaterial, were considered to have the nature of air); they did so sometimes in their own guise, or through meteorologic phenomena they were believed to provoke at will, either as pranks or as means to deceive or terrify humanity. Needless to add, the actual manifestation of the Devil himself was thought to be equally possible, albeit rare; he could appear either of his own will or consciously summoned by the appropriate rites and prayers, for instance to preside over the witches' sabbath [→ Witchcraft].

#### 6. ELEMENTALS AND DESINCARNATED ENTITIES

A last category of intermediary beings is that of the "elemental" spirits, raised to prominence by → Paracelsus' tract *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmæis, salamandris et de cæteris spiritibus* (1530) but known from time immemorial in European folklore. They strikingly illustrate Paracelsus' important use of "unscientific", popular data, mostly ignored by contemporary scholarship, and his equally strong insistence on "experimentalism": since the existence of such beings is attested by daily experience, reflection must therefore take them into account. One may note, by the way, how much the common religious practice of exorcisms (that of water or salt during the ceremony of baptism, for example, or of a house or a site to be built upon) contributed to confirm people in such beliefs. Elemental spirits (nymphs, elves, gnomes and salamanders) were believed to live each in one of the four elements (water, air, earth, and fire respectively) and consequently share its nature. Their existence is explained by the fact that the material elements, for Paracelsus, are not the real ones but only the outward appearance of the true, immaterial ones. Whereas man is conceived of as a synthesis of the whole universe, these spirits are only related to the element they inhabit; and, being devoid of a soul, so that they have never sinned, unlike man they will neither be granted eternal life nor damnation. Accordingly, following Paracelsus, they have nothing in common with demons (except for a serious taste for practical jokes), who are fallen angels and therefore damned. The next enhancement in the cultural popularity of such entities was Montfaucon de Villars (?1635-1673)' *Le comte de Gabalis* (1670), which enjoyed con-



siderable fame and was to foster a whole occultistic and literary posterity on the subject, all over Europe and up to our day.

Innumerable other immaterial creatures supposedly peopled the “atmosphere” around man, and were able to engage him. Larvæ, incubus and succubus spirits, lemuriæ, penates, wraiths, empuses, ghosts, souls of the recently deceased, *mentes*, “heroes”, etc.: an entire host of “phantoms” of fluid and necessarily uncertain status. They were feared by some as malignant demons, while being held by others to be more or less harmless spirits, causing dreams, bringing portents, conveying divine orders or fiendish temptations, and generally supporting the absence of a conscious frontier between corporeal existence and immaterial life, both coming under the heading of “nature”.

## 7. CONCLUSION

If a main characteristic of all “intermediary beings” were to be outlined, ambiguity would be a perfect candidate. Not so much, perhaps, as regards theoretical issues – such as types or hierarchies of entities – but most certainly in relation to concrete reality and practical dealings with them. Theory – when it actually exists in this domain, and hampered though it is by the absence of any lexical precision – is obviously more at ease with defined hierarchies, often related to cosmological structure(s), than with coping with the awe engendered by some unexpected appearance of spirits, and the indefinitely varying manifestations of nature. Obviously again, intercourse with such beings is only acceptable to Churches insofar as these are able to retain control over the relevant procedures, and their spiritual authority (and mediation) remains unquestioned. Whether intermediary beings are to be considered as “conscious” entities or as impersonal “forces” is a very ambiguous issue as well – but one of crucial importance, since demons were regarded as “personal” and intelligent beings, endowed with a perverted will, yet capable of understanding invocations and deciphering *characteres*. Ficino made the most of such a distinction, by declaring impersonal (thus, not demonic) the astral *spiritus* and intelligences which he invoked. This very notion of *spiritus* in Ficino is itself extremely ambiguous, since it is both a medium and some sort of an entity, immaterial yet very much linked to physical reality, in between the celestial and the terrestrial.

In fact, one may well ask whether such a seemingly inescapable ambiguity, which appears to be implied in all dealings (whatever their shape and aim) with intermediary beings, and is sometimes

even implied by their intrinsic nature, does not reflect the situation of man himself: the most “intermediary” being of them all, according to Renaissance theology, philosophy, and magic.

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## Intermediary Beings IV: 18th Century – Present

1. INTRODUCTION 2. SPIRITS  
3. HIERARCHIES 4. MASTERS  
5. EXTRATERRESTRIALS 6. CHANNЕLED ENTITIES

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The ambiguity of “intermediary beings” in esoteric contexts [see → Intermediary Beings III] was amplified by the impact of the new rationalist and materialist worldviews since the 17th and 18th century. In the wake of the Enlightenment, there is often reason to wonder whether the very adjective “intermediary” is still applicable at all. Originally, beings such as angels or demons occupied a place intermediary between the supernatural Divine Being and the natural world of created beings; by the very fact alone that they were not embodied, angels and even demons were somehow closer to the divine (which in the case of demons made their moral depravity all the more serious), while their very multiplicity distanced them from the perfection of the One and made them closer to human embodied creatures. Even if on the basis of the Judaeo-Christian legacy they were theologically considered to be creatures, the alternative perspective originating rather from “pagan” (particularly Platonic and Hermetic) traditions – that saw them as emanations from the divine – remained quite as influential, in Christianity generally and most certainly in its esoteric manifestations.

Since the 18th century, however, the notion of a supernatural divine reality in the strict sense of the word became increasingly alien to religious thought, in esoteric as well as in general religious contexts; for even in many cases where lip-service is being paid to the “supernatural”, at closer scrutiny this purportedly “divine” reality actually turns out to be conceived of as perhaps a “higher”, but nevertheless a *natural* reality. If invisible intelligent “entities” are still believed to exist in such a context, they may engage in contact with embodied human beings, but in the absence of a supernatural divinity they come to play an autonomous rather than an intermediary role. Much more typical for modern consciousness is the perspective – pro-

grammatically announced already during the Renaissance in → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Oratio *De hominis dignitate*, and with roots that may go all the way back to e.g. Plato's famous image of the soul's chariot in the *Phaedrus*, with one horse tending upwards and the other one downwards – that sees Man himself as tragi-comically suspended in a place “intermediary” between his higher and his lower aspirations, as famously expressed by Alexander Pope: ‘Plac'd in this isthmus of a middle state,/ a Being darkly wise and rudely great, . . . / He hangs between; in doubt to act or rest;/ In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;/ In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer;/ Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err; . . . Created half to rise, and half to fall, Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;/ Sole judge of Truth, in endless error hurl'd;/ The glory, jest and riddle of the world' (*An Essay on Man*, epistle II [1733]).

Such an ironic twist on “Man the Great Miracle” has become quite congenial to modern(ist) sensibilities, and places him in a position in which he alone will have to make up his mind about whether to prefer his “lower”, merely natural intelligence or, rather, listen to messages and intuitions purportedly conveyed by “higher” spiritual beings or entities. Adherents of esoteric currents in the 19th and 20th century have, of course, chosen the latter option. But in yet another twist on earlier traditions, the “higher entities” have also come to play their traditional function in an entirely new manner: as representing “intermediary” stages not between embodied creature and divine Creator, but between the incarnate personality and the latter's own “higher Self”. This option is frequent in psychologized forms of esotericism since the 20th century, usually in a context of → reincarnation understood as a process of spiritual evolution by means of which the soul gradually overcomes the limitations of the personality and realizes its own divine nature. From such a perspective, all “higher entities” may be seen as souls on their way towards “self-realization”: intermediary somewhere between the poles of complete ignorance about their own inner divinity and a supreme “gnosis” as knowledge of the Self as divine.

### 2. SPIRITS

The spirits of the departed typically play an intermediary role between the divine and the human: they come from earth but are now closer to God than those of us who are still in the body, so they are in a good position to give us messages about the after-death state. With respect to modern ideas about the spirits of the deceased as intermediaries,

the writings of → Emanuel Swedenborg have been crucial. Swedenborg denied any essential difference between angels and spirits, claiming that all angels have once lived on earth as human beings. To be precise, he distinguished between spirits, angelic spirits, and angels, and further subdivided each of these into spiritual and celestial (governed by faith and by love respectively, the latter being superior to the former). After death, each human spirit gravitates towards a community in heaven or in hell that is in line with his true inner motivation or “ruling love”; as a result, the structure of Swedenborg’s heaven and hell automatically categorizes human beings into a hierarchical order according to their inner moral condition. Angelic/spiritual and demonic beings are constantly present with embodied human beings, seeking to influence them to use their free will for good or evil; but Swedenborg claimed that only he himself had been granted the privilege of actually seeing them and talking with them, and of freely “traveling” through heaven and hell. Spiritual and angelic beings can perceive only the “internal” realities of embodied human beings but remain as blind to any “external” realities as human beings are to internal ones. As a result, Swedenborg himself is explicitly highlighted as the only true “intermediary” between the internal and the external. Only he has access to both; and as a result, he is unique not only in that he can tell human beings about the realities of heaven and hell, but also in that he can tell spirits and angels about earthly realities.

Swedenborg’s ideas have had an incalculable impact on 19th- and 20th-century esotericism, and on → Spiritualism in particular, as is clear from the writings of its major theologian, → Andrew Jackson Davis. Davis’s worldview was largely modeled on Swedenborg’s, but he gave a progressivist and evolutionary twist to it by emphasizing an optimistic prospect of spiritual growth and development, first through six spiritual spheres surrounding earth, and beyond these through higher spiritual realities. Spirits closest to earth could communicate with human beings by means of mediums, and such claims had two crucial implications. First, they opened the door for a “democratization” of spirit contact: far from being dependent on the authority of a divinely privileged mediator like Swedenborg, everybody could communicate with the spirits and learn from them about the higher life. And second, the fact that these spirits were themselves still in a relatively early stage of post-mortem spiritual development (not yet having progressed very far “from earth”) had the effect of relativizing their spiritual author-

ity: they might be somewhat ahead of us in their spiritual evolution, but still had much to learn themselves.

Thus the spirits of the deceased that supposedly manifested themselves in spiritualist seances could by no means be seen as unproblematically mediating between human ignorance and divine truth. And their limited spiritual authority was, of course, further underlined by the frequent mediocrity of the messages they conveyed by means of mediumship. While some mediums and “their” spirits did set themselves up as teachers of higher truths (cf. “channeling”, below), in many cases the spirits seemed to be content merely to manifest their presence by means of trivial messages or signs.

### 3. HIERARCHIES

Quite traditional angelic and demonic beings, understood in a sense close to → Gnosticism and → Christian theosophy, were still prominent in 18th-century esoteric currents such as, notably, → Martinès de Pasqually’s theurgic order of the → Élus Coëns and its later developments; and these traditions continued well into the 19th century. The general idea of “hierarchies” of non-human spiritual beings or entities representing various levels of existence, became central to occultism [→ occult / occultism] as it developed during the 19th century. The elaborate number-symbolical tables of angelic and demonic hierarchies provided by → Cornelius Agrippa (esp. *Occ.Phil.* II, 5-14; III, 25), with some of the demons portrayed in bizarre pictures in → Francis Barrett’s *The Magus* of 1801, certainly influenced → Bulwer-Lytton’s famous occult novel *Zanoni* (1842), which assumes a universe full of intelligent beings on all levels of reality.

Such ideas came to full fruition in → Paschal Beverly Randolph, whose *Dealings with the Dead* (1862), described a stream of innumerable “soul monads” emanating from the “Central Sun”, and ordered them according to a sevenfold ascending hierarchy: Spirits-Angels, Seraphs, Arsaphs, Eons, Arsasaphs, Arch-Eons, and Antarphim. By communicating with these beings, the occultist could learn the secrets of existence that would help him in his own process of spiritual evolution. Randolph’s hierarchies were described particularly clearly in “The Mysteries of Eulis” (1874): ‘. . . there are Societies of Beings, invisible by material eyes, who were of earth once, and others who *never knew* material bodies at all – who understand any and everything man can imagine; who cultivate every possible species of knowledge, and who answer the desire and invocation . . . of those of us who take to the same lines of thought and feeling; who

belong to the same category of intelligences or who voluntarily place themselves under the essential conditions of *rapport* or contact' (cit. in Deveney 1997, 332). The enormous powers of these hierarchies (the 'arbiters of the destinies of worlds') was emphasized in the strongest possible terms: there are 'armies of them! – Potencies, Powers, vast Intelligences . . . before whose awful grasp of mental powers, before whose amazing sweep of mind, the grandest intellect earth ever did or can produce, is as a pebble to a mountain range . . .' (o.c., 333). Randolph called them the "Neridii", and referred to their teachings as "the philosophy of Eulis".

Similar ideas about vast supra-human hierarchies of spiritual beings with god-like powers have become a staple of occultist theory and practice since the later 19th century. As has been demonstrated by scholars such as Godwin, Deveney, Mathiesen and others, they were deliberately put in opposition against what occultists considered the more timid and intellectually inferior perspective of the spiritualists. It is clear that the higher beings had entirely taken over the place formerly reserved for the Christian God. While a single Divine Source is usually mentioned as the ultimate origin of all reality and the final goal of spiritual evolution, this is a non-personal God who does not intervene in human affairs; for all intents and purposes, it is to the spiritual hierarchies that man has to look for any kind of spiritual assistance he may need.

Within the milieu of occultists believing in such spiritual hierarchies, attitudes towards Christianity have varied greatly, from those who saw occultism as the theory necessary to an understanding of true Christianity (see e.g. → Anna Kingsford) to those who developed it into an explicitly anti-Christian religion (see e.g. Aleister Crowley, whose new religion called Thelema was based upon a revelation by a non-human entity called Aiwass). Such differences were made possible by the moral ambiguity of the hierarchies themselves, which could be explained in many ways. In occultist literature one may find ideas about a grand metaphysical battle, behind the scenes of history, between the powers of "light" and "darkness"; but there are also more optimistic perspectives according to which even the so-called evil forces merely play their necessary role in the grand process of spiritual evolution; other authors suggest that the entire process is ultimately beyond good and evil, and our perception of it in terms of "black and white" merely reflects our still limited point of view; and finally, there are those in the domains of → Satanism (e.g. the Temple of Set) who deliberately choose the side of the so-called powers of darkness against those of the light,

claiming that the former represent the truth whereas the latter are merely hypocritical.

#### 4. MASTERS

A typical development in modern Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society] is the idea that members of the occult hierarchy – and especially, in this case, of the "Great White Brotherhood" that supervises spiritual evolution on our earth – may actually be living in our own world. As such they literally embody the theosophical ideal of spiritual perfection: being "in the world but not of it" they can use the body but are not dependent on it, free as they are to manifest themselves wherever they want by means of astral travel. The theosophical "masters" (or "mahatmas") were believed to live in remote places in the Himalayas, but frequently appeared to theosophists in person, or communicated with them by means of letters transmitted by occult means.

Precedents to the notion of Masters can be found in the "unknown superiors" of the high-degree masonry of the "Strikte Observanz" (18th century), which may in turn be inspired by the Rosicrucian notion of a hidden brotherhood [→ Rosicrucianism]. The idea that certain persons who are leading seemingly unremarkable lives among us are actually powerful "adepts", whose real business it is to work in secret for the good of humanity (or for its ruin, as the case may be), has become an important motif in occult fiction, from Bulwer-Lytton to → Gustav Meyrink and a variety of more or less successful imitators up to the present.

In theosophical contexts of a more Christian orientation, one also finds the notion of embodied masters interpreted in a relatively traditional "incarnational" sense. → Rudolf Steiner interpreted the incarnation of "the Christ" into the body of Jesus as the crucial turning point in the evolution of humanity. Significantly, Steiner had broken away from the Theosophical Society over the issue of Jiddu Krishnamurti, whose body was expected by theosophists to be "inhabited" by the supreme being called "Maitreya the Christ", in a kind of Second Coming. In both cases we have the idea of a material "vehicle" – Jesus in the case of Steiner, Krishnamurti in the case of the Theosophists – turned into a Master of Wisdom due to the incarnation of the Christ.

#### 5. EXTRATERRESTRIALS

Incarnated beings from other planets than earth may also play the role of "intermediary beings" in esoteric contexts. Many influential authors, such as

Swedenborg in the 18th century and → Jacob Lorber in the 19th, wrote about their communication with the inhabitants of other planets, and such contacts became a standard component of Spiritualist literature. In modern Theosophy as well, most planets outside our solar system were believed to be inhabited by intelligent beings, and in fact the teachings of Theosophy were believed to have been planted on earth by “adepts” from Venus. This esoteric and occultist mythology became basic to the worldview of → UFO traditions after World War II, and has obviously had a significant impact on popular science fiction as well. Some UFO enthusiasts claim to have physically met the extraterrestrials, while others believe to be in psychic contact with them. Usually the extraterrestrials are seen as representing a higher level of spiritual attainment, which makes it easy for them to be perceived as semi-divine messengers from occult hierarchies such as the Great White Brotherhood, who manifest themselves to warn humanity for impending disasters and assist them in the transition to a new evolutionary level.

#### 6. CHANNELED ENTITIES

The → New Age movement has important roots in such theosophically-oriented UFO cults, but since psychic communication with “higher entities” by no means had to limit itself to extraterrestrials, the latter eventually became only one among many kinds of beings believed to be “channeled” by mediums. The sheer variety of these “entities” is amazing: they include e.g. “ascended masters”, spirit guides, angels, extraterrestrials, various historical personalities (e.g. Jesus, Paul), God or “the Ultimate Source” himself, gods and goddesses from antiquity, the collective unconscious or “Universal Mind”, nature spirits or “devas”, gnomes, fairies, and even animals (dolphins, whales) or plants. One channel even reported communications from “the Committee”, described as a geometrical consciousness comprised of a line, a spiral and a multidimensional triangle! (see Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 23 nt 2)

Of particular interest is the claim that it is possible to channel one’s own “higher self”. Here we encounter a line of development that has important roots in the “communication with the Holy Guardian Angel” highlighted by the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, where this “Angel” was frequently interpreted as being in fact the operator’s true higher self. Due to the rise of psychology as a powerful hermeneutical framework for understanding psychic experiences, with → Carl Gustav Jung as a major influence, there has been an

increasing trend to see other (perhaps even all) “entities” as inhabitants of the personal or collective unconscious. Usually this is not understood in a reductionist sense, according to which channeled entities, like personalities encountered in dreams, would be “merely” products of one’s own mind. Rather, in the context of a “sacralization of psychology”, the very attempt to differentiate between “real” and “imagined” entities tends to be seen as an example of narrow reductive thinking. From such a perspective, all “entities” are images conjured up in the interior mirror of the mind, which may help the individual on his or her path towards self-realization. Strictly speaking, in such a context of radically psychologized esotericism the only “intermediary” left is the mirror of the mind itself, which makes it possible for the human soul to “create its own reality”.

John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex-Magician*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1997  
 ♦ Brendan French, *The Theosophical Masters: An Investigation into the Conceptual Domains of H.P. Blavatsky and C.W. Leadbeater* (2 vols.), PhD thesis, University of Sydney: Department of Religious Studies, 2000  
 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994  
 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden etc.: E.J. Brill, 1996/Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, esp. 23-41, 182-202, 482-513  
 ♦ idem, “Swedenborg’s *Magnum Opus* and its Reception”, in: Emanuel Swedenborg, *Secrets of Heaven*, West Chester: Swedenborg Association, 2005  
 ♦ J.G. Platvoet, *Comparing Religions: A Limitative Approach. An Analysis of Akan, Para-Creole, and Ifo-Sananda Rites and Prayers*, The Hague, Paris, New York: Mouton, 1982, esp. chapter 7.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

Jennings, Hargrave, \* 1817 London?,  
 † 11.3.1890 London

Writer on Buddhism, Rosicrucians, Phallicism. Jennings is the sole source of biographical information on himself. He states that his family circumstances were ‘not poor, though not overwhelmingly rich’. He grew up in the West End of London, and in 1854 was living in Harewood Square, Regent’s Park. He may have worked as secretary to an opera company manager. He had a brother who lived at Ambassador’s Court, St. James’s Palace; Jennings himself used this address in later life, and died there.

At the age of fifteen, Jennings contributed a series of sea-sketches to the *Metropolitan Magazine*, and

went on to write at least two novels. His treatment of metaphysical and religious matters began with *The Indian Religions, or, Results of the Mysterious Buddhism* (1858). Stated to be ‘by an Indian missionary’, it was written to criticize and correct the lack of understanding of the Orient, especially as shown in an essay on Buddhism by Max Müller (1823-1900) published in the *London Times* (17 and 20.4.1857), and, more generally, in the climate following on the Indian Mutiny of May-September 1857. Jennings had no training or expertise in oriental studies, but he recognized a kinship between the non-rationality of the Buddhist Nirvana, which Müller had abused, and that of some Western mystics. Jennings cites → Cornelius Agrippa, → Paracelsus, → Joan Baptista van Helmont, and → Emanuel Swedenborg, Thomas Taylor’s translation of Plato, recent books on magnetism [→ Animal Magnetism] and → spiritualism, Catherine Crowe’s *The Night Side of Nature* (1850), Joseph Ennemoser’s *History of Magic* (1854), the *Asiatic Journal* and *Asiatic Researches* (1788-), and William Ward’s *The Religion of the Hindoos* (1815).

Jennings’s second book, *Curious Things of the Outside World* (1860) continued his attack on rationalism by forcing attention to the inexplicable. It is a philosophical treatise prefaced by a collection of ghost stories and tales of the supernatural, similar to Crowe’s compilation. Jennings now expounds a world-view based on Hermetic → correspondences and Gnostic cosmology. He sees the destiny of the human being as a dual path, leading either to the dissolution of self in the Pleroma (which he equates to the Buddhist Nirvana), or else to a purifying series of → reincarnations in the world of the diabolical Demiurge, which have the same end-result. *Curious Things*, published under Jennings’s own name, reproduces a large portion of *The Indian Religions*, but his erudition has increased. He now cites → Robert Fludd’s *Mosaical Philosophy*, mentions the Rosicrucian manifestoes [→ Rosicrucianism I] and → Johann Valentin Andreae, and the Rosicrucian Mss. of Dr. Rudd in the British Museum. He gives much disorganized information on these and on the “Fire-Philosophers”, whom he calls a fanatical late 16th-century sect, active in almost all the countries of Europe. Jennings now regards Fire (or Light) as the first principle of all religions and mythologies, and finds its symbols everywhere. He commends a ‘special group of books’ that share this approach to comparative religion: Godfrey Higgins’ *The Celtic Druids* and *Anacalypsis*, and Sir William Drummond’s *Oedipus Judaicus*.

Jennings’s next discovery was of the “phallic theory” of the origin of religions, hinted at by Higgins and expounded in Henry O’Brien’s *The Round Towers of Ireland*. Thus prepared, Jennings wrote his third and (undeservedly) most successful book, *The Rosicrucians* (1870). This tells us almost nothing about the Rosicrucians. Its torrent of information serves to frame the theory that all religions derive from the original worship of mankind, which was of the one primordial energy that brings the universe out of Nirvana. This was symbolized variously as Light, as Fire, as the Sun, and as the procreative power of the male, hence by the phallus or (since these writers preferred the Sanskrit term) the lingam. Jennings also reveals the origin and purpose of the Order of the Garter, founded by Edward III in 1344. The “garter”, he explains in veiled terms, actually secured a lady’s menstrual napkin, and the Order was founded ‘in honour of Woman, and to raise into dignity the expression of the condemned “means” . . . which is her mark and betrayal, but which produced the world in producing Man, and which saved it in the person of the Redeemer . . .’. These were bold thoughts in 1870. Jennings then sees symbols of the phallus and vulva everywhere he looks, especially in church and temple architecture.

*Phallicism* (1884) was Jennings’s last major work, and his best, gathering most of what was of value in all his preceding ones. He complains that other writers on the subject are destructive to faith and religion, whereas he regards religion as true and the present book as constructive of Christian belief. He writes of the magical qualities of virginity (clairvoyance, and a certain invulnerability) and on the consequences of its loss; yet, he says, when maidenhood is maintained too long it is ‘attended with unutterable mischiefs’, that are Nature’s revenge for the denial of her purposes. In these ‘strange contradictory theosophic speculations’, as he calls them, Jennings strives to express the paradoxical existence of two paths of Gnosis. The first rejects creation, seeing everything manifested as a sham and an evil, and finds its goal in the Non-Being of Nirvana. The second accepts creation as holy and aims at unity with its Creator.

Among Jennings’s other works are books on the history of one of Judas’s thirty pieces of silver, on the symbolism of church candles, on the obelisk known as Cleopatra’s Needle, sea stories, London stories, and (edited and partly authored by Jennings) the “Nature Worship and Mystical Series” (also called the “Phallic Series”) of books privately printed by George Redway (1880-1891). In 1890 he published an expanded fourth edition of *The*



*Rosicrucians* in two volumes, including in it much from *Phallicism* and his other books.

Jennings was admitted to the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (S.R.I.A.) in 1870. In the same year, he wrote a courteous but pathetic letter to → Bulwer-Lytton, hoping for patronage. He seems to have been on the fringes of esoteric circles, but never intimate with them. In a series of letters (1879-1887) to the publisher Robert Fryar, Jennings expresses contempt of almost everyone in the spiritualist, Theosophical [→ Theosophical Society], and occultist [→ occult/occultism] world, while making extravagant claims for his own status and wisdom. Jennings deserves credit for wrestling with the metaphysical questions raised by oriental philosophies, in comparison to which the concerns of most Victorian theologians and philosophers seem rather trivial. His emphasis on sex as the foundation of religion, symbolism, and psychology should have earned him credit as a precursor of Freudian theory. But his works are too obscurely written and disorganized, and his learning too autodidactic, to have gained him academic recognition.

*The Indian Religions, or, Results of the Mysterious Buddhism*, London: T.C. Newby, 1858 ♦ *Curious Things of the Outside World: Last Fire*, 2 vols., London: T. & W. Boone, 1860 ♦ *The Rosicrucians, Their Rites and Mysteries*, London: J.C. Hotten, 1870 ♦ *Phallicism, Celestial and Terrestrial, Heathen and Christian; its connexion with the Rosicrucians and the Gnostics and its foundation in Buddhism. With an Essay on Mystic Anatomy*, London/New York: George Redway/J.W. Bouton, 1884.

*Lit.*: Joscelyn Godwin, "Hargrave Jennings", *Hermetic Journal* 1991, 49-77 ♦ idem, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1993, 261-75, 383-85 ♦ Some insights into Jennings' biography and character appear in *The Letters of Hargrave Jennings . . . Forming the unabridged Correspondence with the Editor of the Bath Occult Reprints, between 1879 and 1887*, Bath: Robert H. Fryar, 1895.

JOSCELYN GODWIN

## Jewish Influences I: Antiquity

The nature and extent of contacts between ancient Judaism and the assortment of sources commonly labelled "Gnostic" (or more recently "biblical demiurgical", see Williams) is one of the most fiercely debated issues in Gnostic studies. This, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. The Church Fathers localized the origins of the Gnostic movement in Palestine (→ Simon Magus, Dositheus), but the adherence to a Gnostic sect was

never seen as a relapse to something Jewish. For centuries, → Gnosticism was seen predominantly as a Christian heresy.

Modern research on Gnosticism – still seen as a Christian heresy – started with F. Chr. Baur's *Das manichäische Religionssystem* (1831) and *Die Christliche Gnosis* (1835). Some years later, however, H. Graetz published a short book entitled *Gnosticismus und Judenthum* (1846). With this book he became the first to interpret various stories about dogmatic disputes among the Rabbis as anti-gnostic polemics. Neither Graetz's book, however, nor M. Friedländer's *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus*, which was published in 1898, became very influential. The scholarly debate of the first half of the 20th century was dominated by the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and its "Iranian hypothesis" which left little room for Judaism. It is significant that an influential work such as H. Jonas's *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (1934) could ignore ancient Judaism almost entirely. The Bultmann school assumed that a (largely hypothetical) pre-Christian adaptation of the Iranian redeemer-myth must have existed in ancient Judaism, on which the Christian authors of the New Testament could draw.

It was with the decline of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and the successive publication of the Nag Hammadi texts that Judaism started to assume a more important place in Gnostic studies. Many of the newly-discovered Gnostic texts seemed to rely heavily on Jewish traditions not mediated through Christian channels. Therefore, many scholars took various aspects of ancient Judaism as one of or even as *the* crucial momentum for the development of Gnostic systems.

These approaches imply serious methodological problems due to our lack of adequate sources on the Jewish side: we possess neither first hand evidence of any Jewish-Gnostic system comparable to those preserved in the Nag Hammadi library, nor anything in the Jewish context that could be compared to the attacks the Church fathers launched against their Gnostic enemies. The most important corpus of Jewish texts roughly contemporaneous with Gnosticism is Rabbinic literature, but the Rabbis almost never attack their enemies explicitly, nor do they adopt foreign ideas in a way which makes them easy to discern. Therefore an undeniable gap exists between the Gnostic sources and the Jewish ones. That scholars have nevertheless so fervently scrutinized Jewish sources for Gnostic elements is either because of their assumption that Gnosticism has Jewish origins, or their judgement that a movement which played such a powerful

role in late antiquity must have left traces in Judaism as well.

Elements related to Gnostic sources are to be found in two different layers of Rabbinic literature: firstly, common motifs and ideas in – mainly cosmological – *aggadic midrashim*, and secondly, polemics against opponents and/or polemical interpretations of Biblical verses. The first one to identify traces of Gnostic influence on *aggadic midrashim* (mainly Genesis Rabba) was A. Altman. He analyzed midrashic interpretations of the *Tohu-wa-Bohu* and the idea of the primordial light in the Babylonian Talmud and Midrash Genesis Rabba. He argued that the Rabbinic doctrine of creation was formed in response to Gnosticism as ‘a rabbinic Gnosis of its own’. Most attention, however, was given to ‘the Gnostic background of the Rabbinic Adam legends’ where close parallels can be drawn between the Gnostic myths about the primordial man and Rabbinic cosmology. Recent research, however, questions the importance of Gnostic influence on these legends (e.g. Niditch).

The Rabbis become strikingly imprecise when it comes to discussing opinions held by persons from outside their own circles. One group of persons who held views obviously not shared by the Rabbis were the *minim* (heretics). Many legal regulations were introduced in order to draw clear-cut boundaries between “true Jews” and *minim*, and many dogmatical heresies were attributed to the latter. All attempts, however, to identify the *minim* with either Christians or Gnostics have utterly failed. In Rabbinic literature, *minim* is a generic term which designates not a specific group but different things at different times (cf. Goodman). A kind of sub-category of the *minim* are those who believe that ‘there are two powers in heaven’ (*shete reshuyot ba-shamayim*). It is patent that some of these passages may refer to Gnostic dualism, but also this term is far from being univocal. It may designate philosophical and Christian as well as Gnostic ideas (Segal). Another group of texts often quoted in relation to Gnosticism describe dialogues between the famous Rabbi Jose b. Halafta and a Roman lady (*matrona*). Various scholars subscribe to the opinion that the unnamed *matrona* is the disguised representative of Gnosticism (Gershenzon/Slomovic, Agus); but whereas in some cases the parallels are indeed striking, others are forced. Finally, the Rabbinic arch-heretic, Elisha ben Avuya, alled Aher (the “Other”) is believed to have held Gnostic opinions (*locus classicus* bHag15b), but the allusions to his teachings are difficult to interpret.

In addition to the rather unspecific descriptions of the Rabbi’s opponents and their teachings, another problem for interpreting Gnostic motifs both adopted and refuted by the Rabbi arises: both Gnosticism and Rabbinic Judaism have grown in an epoch when the existence of secondary divine powers, the problem of theodicee and cosmological speculations were part of the general intellectual atmosphere. Therefore almost everything in Rabbinic literature can theoretically be interpreted either as influenced *by*, directed *against* or influential *on* Gnosticism. On the whole, Rabbinic literature thus provides little unambiguous evidence for either a Jewish background of Gnosticism or Gnostic influence on Judaism. The search for Gnostic motifs in Rabbinic literature resembles the gathering of disseminated sparks which reveal their Gnostic origin only if (re)integrated into a Gnostic context.

The assumption that Rabbinic Judaism developed a Gnostic branch in the form of Merkavah-mysticism has influenced the study of ancient Jewish mysticism for some time. The first attempts to single out Gnostic elements in ancient Jewish mysticism were made in 1893 by M. Gaster, who claimed a Gnostic origin and high age for the passages on *Shi’ur Qomah* (lit. “measurement of the body”) which deal with the measures of God’s body. A few years later, H. Odeberg identified Gnostic elements in 3 Enoch. The classic treatment of the subject, however, was provided by G. Scholem. According to his interpretation, the descriptions of the “Body of Truth” (*Sôma Alêtheias*) of the Gnostic Markos [→ Marcus the Magician] can be fully understood only if interpreted as an offshoot of the Jewish *Shi’ur Qomah*-speculations which thus have to be dated back well into the 2nd century. Moreover, the descriptions of the heavenly realms correspond to the divine *plêroma* of the Gnostics. The ascent of the mystic through the heavens in order to receive esoteric knowledge can be put in parallel with the heavenly ascent of the soul. The Gnostic demiurge re-appears in Jewish mysticism as *Yozer Bereshit* and the “Little Yao” of the Gnostics can be found in Jewish sources as well. Numerous motifs from the Greek Magical Papyri reappear in Hekhalot-literature. In spite of these similarities, Scholem was aware of some important differences as well: unlike Gnosticism, Merkavah-mysticism does not develop myths and it is neither dualistic nor antinomistic. Merkavah-mysticism as “Jewish Gnosticism” therefore could have developed in the heart of early Rabbinic Judaism. This assumption not only allows Scholem to interpret several Rabbinic texts

as referring to Merkavah-mysticism, but also locates early Jewish mysticism in close chronological proximity to Gnosticism.

Scholem's views, though influential among some of his disciples and among scholars defending a Jewish origin of Gnosticism (Quispel), were sharply criticized by both scholars of Gnosticism (e.g. Jonas, Yamauchi) and of ancient Judaism (e.g. Flusser). Moreover, there is no unanimity among scholars as to Scholem's early dating of Hekhalot-literature and whether they represent a movement at the heart of Rabbinic Judaism rather than at its fringes. Nevertheless, all subsequent studies on Merkavah mysticism (Gruenwald, Halperin, Schäfer) have minimized the importance of Gnosticism. The main point of critique did not so much reflect an over-all denial of the existence of elements reminiscent of Gnostic sources; rather, it was based upon the observation that the general religious outlook is a different one: in addition to the differences mentioned above, it may be pointed out that the mere participation in the celestial liturgy seems to be the mystic's aim (Schäfer). It is indeed striking that at the very climax of the ascent, the mystic of Hekhalot-literature neither gets to see a vision of the divine throne nor receive any other kind of redemptive, secret knowledge. Therefore, seemingly similar liturgical passages in Gnostic and Hermetic texts (NHC I, 15, 5ff.; NHC VI, 59-61, Poimandres 30ff.) have a different function, since there God is praised for the revelation of redemptive truth.

The general survey of Jewish sources roughly contemporary with Gnostic scriptures shows that from what we *positively* know about ancient Judaism, we cannot deduce that "Gnosticism" of any kind played a dominant role among the Jews. The search for Jewish influences on Gnostic sources therefore does not so much arise from the Jewish sources themselves but from a hermeneutical need of the interpretation of Gnostic and Hermetic (*Poimandres*, cf. Holzhausen; *Asclepius*, cf. Philonenko) texts: many of these texts seem to reveal such strong Jewish influences without being predominantly Christian that the question whether Judaism was among those who stood at the cradle of Gnosticism (and Hermetism) is a natural one.

In some cases, the influence of Jewish ideas and motifs led to the far-reaching assumption that Gnosticism as a whole was of Jewish origin. Grant, e.g., argued that the experience of the Jewish defeat in the war against the Romans was a catalyst for Gnosticism, whereas others highlighted dualistic teachings from Qumran as possible predecessors of

similar Gnostic concepts. Moreover, Hellenistic Judaism and the Platonic interpretation of Judaism by Philo contain ideas influential in Gnostic writings, and there can be little doubt that the hypostazation of "wisdom" (*sophia*) in Gnostic literature cannot be separated from its Jewish background (MacRae). The diffusion and further development of such ideas was sometimes located among Jewish baptismal sects, the "Magharians", Therapeutes or Samaritans (Fossum).

The most important impact of Judaism can be detected, however, in the use of the Bible and biblical exegesis. Although the depth of the knowledge of the Bible in Gnostic literature is still a matter of dispute, a strong Gnostic curiosity for certain biblical stories and motifs cannot be denied. These stories and motifs were almost always subjected to heavy exegetical reworking, but some scholars have devoted much endeavor to demonstrating that Gnostic exegesis is strongly dependent on Jewish models known from Rabbinic (*targumim*, *midrashim*) and medieval sources (e.g. Pearson, Stroumsa). The enormous popularity of Jewish apocryphal texts (especially Enoch-traditions) among Gnostics corroborates these observations.

On the other hand, it has to be recognized that the Gnostic interest in Judaism is obviously a rather selective one (mainly cosmological and focused on the mythological chapters of Genesis), and the anti-Jewish attitude displayed in some texts is patent. Moreover, not all the Jewish sources mentioned above (Philo, most apocryphal texts etc.) can be called Gnostic, and scholarship has failed to point out a convincing inner-Jewish factor for a "Gnostic turn". Most important, however, is the fact that the Jewish sources at our disposal today almost never match the evidence extrapolated from Gnostic sources directly. This does not mean that Jewish trends unattested in ancient Jewish literature could not have existed. But due to a lack of adequate sources many scholars resort to more or less plausible hypothetical reconstructions of underlying "Jewish myths", which cannot be positively substantiated from Jewish sources, and implement rather unspecific terms such as "pre-Gnostic", "proto-Gnostic" or "heterodox" Judaism, "semi-Judaism" and certain unattested "Jewish circles".

It can be stated that Gnostics were obviously attracted by Jewish ideas on various levels. However, one should be cautious not to hypostasize this selective curiosity and knowledge displayed in Gnostic texts into a real branch of ancient Judaism. According to the sources available to us today, it remains an open question whether the Jewish

elements adopted and reworked in the Gnostic writings were simply “Jewish”, “heterodox”, “pre-Gnostic” or “proto-Gnostic”, and whether their occurrence reveals an intimate, first-hand knowledge of Jewish traditions or the knowledge of interested “outsiders”. Whereas there is clear evidence for a *use* or even *instrumentalization* of Jewish motifs and ideas in Gnostic thinking, we can speak of Jewish *influence* only in the restricted sense that the active role of Jews and a decisive influence of Jewish concepts in the development of the Gnostic message(s) cannot be firmly established.

In recent years, scholars have called for strict methodological criteria for analyzing mutual “influences” of ancient Jewish mysticism on Gnosticism and *vice versa*. Models of direct borrowing from one side by the other and the assumption of common sources have to be supplemented by models which allow parallel though genealogically independent developments and influences mediated through other sources, such as magical literature (Alexander). Also, a distinction must be made between phenomenological and historical parallels (Dan).

→ Magic has always been seen as an important melting pot for Jewish, Christian, Gnostic and Pagan ideas in late antiquity. Recent studies on Jewish and Greek magical texts have indeed brought to light a number of striking parallels (e.g. Sperber, Veltri, Schäfer/Shaked). Moreover, more and more evidence for close contacts between Jewish and Christian magic comes to light. The specifically Gnostic character of most of the Greek magical texts, however, is no longer generally accepted (cf. Brashear), so that the textual basis for Jewish-Gnostic studies is rather limited here as well. Unambiguous Gnostic motifs in Jewish magical texts exist but are rather rare (Leicht). Close connections between Jews, Christians, → Mandaeans and even Manichaeans [→ Manichaeism] are attested by the magic bowls from late Sassanian Mesopotamia, but the comprehensive historical and philological analysis of these texts is still in its beginning phase.

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REIMUND LEICHT

## Jewish Influences II: Middle Ages

The Middle Ages are largely characterized by a process towards a successive domination of public life by Rabbinic Judaism, on the one hand, and Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christianity, on the other. Although "orthodoxy" sometimes set up rather strict rules to impede interreligious contacts, exchange of ideas between Jews and their non-Jewish contemporaries always existed. The different fields of esoteric lore, heretical ideas, → magic and → mysticism were always seen as particularly fertile grounds for such contacts.

Medieval Jewish and non-Jewish esoteric lore is based upon ancient foundations. One of the main sources for the transmission of Jewish esoteric lore in Antiquity were apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings. The relevance of various apocryphal texts in the development of medieval Christian sects cannot be denied, but a growing number of sources shows that these traditions did not vanish from Judaism with the decline of the Hellenistic Diaspora in the 2nd century C.E. either. The Hebrew Book of Enoch (6th cent. C.E.), e.g., is an adaptation of ancient Enoch-traditions in the spirit of Hekhalot-literature. At different times, too, apocalyptic traditions were revitalized (e.g. Apocalypse of Zerubbabel, 7th cent. C.E.). Therefore, the occurrence of apocryphal traditions in medieval Christian sources can reflect either developments of previously adopted traditions or direct Jewish influences. The latter could be the case with some apocryphal material preserved in Old Slavonic sources (*Palaia*-literature) probably influential on the "Gnostic" Bogomil movement [→ Bogomilism]. Some of these texts may have been translated directly from Hebrew (Apocalypse of Abraham) and of others, Hebrew versions have been discov-

ered recently (Prayer of Jacob/Ladder of Jacob). Moreover, it is a conspicuous temporal coincidence that apocryphal traditions unknown from Rabbinic sources suddenly re-appear in Jewish midrashic texts in medieval Western Europe (e.g. *Midrash Tadsheh, Chronicle of Ierahmeel, Bereshit Rabbati*), when Christian heretical movements flourished there as well.

The most important revival of ideas and motifs akin to Gnostic thinking in Jewish literature is attested in the writings of early Kabbalah. G. Scholem was the first to interpret central teachings of the Book *Bahir* as repercussions of ancient → Gnosticism: for the first time in Jewish sources, God is theosophically described not merely as a heavenly king but with a pleroma of hypostatized potencies and a cosmic tree as the totality of his powers. M. Idel radicalized this view and argues that the Book *Bahir* reveals fragments of ancient Jewish Gnosticism which predates the ancient non-Jewish Gnostic sources. As a matter of fact, in many respects the Book *Bahir* is much more reminiscent of ancient Gnosticism than Hekhalot-literature, since it contains for the first time a detailed theosophical and mythological account of the creation of the world and of man. The hypothesis that the contemporary Cathar movement [→ Catharism] may have influenced the early Kabbalah could not be substantiated so far (Scholem, Shahar).

Gnostic-dualistic concepts can also be found in 13th-century Castilian Kabbalah (Cohen-brothers) with the concept of the "emanation of the left side" as a satanic realm within the godhead, and in 16th-century Lurianic Kabbalah, which located the origin of evil within God himself and created a myth about the fallen sparks of the souls through the "breaking of the vessels". These traditions were further developed in Sabbatianism (17th cent.) with its "gnostic" concept of a Messiah who has to enter the realm of evil in order to redeem the dispersed divine sparks. In other kabbalistic schools and works like the *Zohar* (13th cent.), "gnostic" motifs play a minor role. It has to be noted, however, that "gnostic" motifs in Jewish mystical systems paradoxically become stronger the more they are historically remote from ancient Gnosticism (Dan).

Kabbalah developed in close geographical vicinity to the medieval centres of Christian intellectual life. Many kabbalists adopted philosophical (mainly neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism]) and religious ideas current in their Christian environment. In spite of certain resemblances, however, there is almost no evidence that kabbalistic teachings influenced their Christian contemporaries prior



to the beginnings of Christian Kabbalah in the Renaissance. In a time of religious disputations on the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, kabbalists were not eager to popularize their esoteric teachings among Christians either. Evidence for occasional contacts (cf. Kieckhefer) have to be analyzed carefully with respect to possible sources.

Jews undoubtedly played an important role in the transmission of → astrology, → hermetism, magic and astral magic from the Arabic into the Latin world, just as they did in many other fields of medieval science: astrology and astral magic have strongly influenced the thinking of medieval Jewish philosophers like Yehudah ha-Levi (1085-1145), Abraham bar Hiyyah (died ca. 1136) and in particular the famous exegete Abraham Ibn Ezra (1093-1168), whose scientific astrological works were also translated into many medieval European languages (cf. Levy). Numerous Hebrew translations show that Spanish Jews were active as translators of ancient and medieval treatises from Arabic sources, but also originally Jewish texts written in the spirit of hermetic astral magic seem to have existed. An example in case is the Latin *Sefer Raziel* (which is not always identical with the Hebrew books entitled *Sefer Raziel* and *Sefer ha-Razim*). It was translated in the twelfth century and later revised, together with other presumably Jewish works, under the auspices of Alfonso X Sabio (cf. Steinschneider, Leicht). In these texts, many of the traditions commonly linked with → Hermes Trismegistus or Apollonius of Tyana are attributed to Adam, Enoch or Solomon. However, most of the relevant Hebrew material is still unpublished and requires further investigation. Many other manuscripts do not predate the Renaissance, and therefore a careful investigation is needed in order to isolate medieval Jewish traditions from younger Jewish translations from Latin sources (e.g. *Clavicula Salomonis – Mafteah Shelomoh*).

During the whole Middle Ages, scholars were obsessed by the idea that → alchemy was a science in which Jews were especially active. Although many of the traditions which have grown from this idea are legendary, recent research recognizes a certain Jewish influence on ancient and medieval alchemy and argues that alchemy played a more important role among medieval Jewish scholars than hitherto assumed (Idel, Patai). Already Scholem was able to show, however, that in the classical works of Kabbalah alchemy is occasionally alluded to, but that it forms no constitutive factor in kabbalistic thinking. The great synthesis of alchemy and kabbalistic symbolism did not happen during the Middle Ages but is a Renaissance and post-Renaissance phenomenon.

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REIMUND LEICHT

### Jewish Influences III: “Christian Kabbalah” in the Renaissance

The term “kabbalah” in the concept “Christian kabbalah” is a misleading one: it suggests a phenomenon much narrower in scope than the works of the thinkers included in it actually present. The group of humanists in Florence at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the sixteenth who laid the foundations of this important current in European esotericism discovered and adopted into Christian culture the whole wealth of Hebrew post-Biblical creativity: the Talmud and the Midrash, the Jewish prayer-book, medieval Hebrew

biblical commentaries, the writings of Jewish rationalistic philosophy, and non-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. They themselves often used the term "kabbalah" to denote all this vast library, encompassing Hebrew religious traditions extended over nearly a millennium and half; in this they did follow Jewish concepts, which saw the oral torah, including its legal and exegetical material, as the "tradition" (i.e. the literal meaning of *Kabbalah*) which Moses had received on Mount Sinai by oral revelation directly from God and transmitted to the elders of Israel, who in turn had transmitted it to the judges and the prophets and so on, from generation to generation. The narrower meaning of "kabbalah", as relating to the esoteric tradition concerning the secrets of the divine realm which begins in the late 12th century, is a result of the desire on the part of the new medieval esotericists to insist that their ideas concerning the structure and nature of the divine world is part of the more general "kabbalah", or tradition – that is, of the oral torah – and not a medieval innovation. This distinction is important, because it expresses the nature of the Christian interest in this realm: the humanists believed that they had discovered another important layer of divine truth which was preserved in Jewish extra-biblical traditions. The notion that the appearance of the Christian Kabbalah in late-15th century Florence is one of Christian mystics discovering Jewish → mysticism is completely erroneous. The Florentine humanists were not mystics, and what they discovered in the Hebrew sources that they studied was not mysticism. They were looking into many directions in search of ancient secrets: the Egyptian hieroglyphs, the enigmatic Hermetic treatises [→ Hermetic Literature], and many other places, and within this framework they also became interested – sometimes intensely so – in Jewish ancient traditions known as "kabbalah". The emphasis on a particular aspect of this vast tradition – that of the writings of the Jewish kabbalists concerning the divine world – occurred much later, and was never an exclusive one. → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his friends and followers extended the Christian sanctification of the Hebrew bible to the totality of Jewish tradition: a courageous and radical theological breakthrough, which stood in opposition to the current Christian attitude of rejection and hatred towards the Talmud and everything descended from it, as well as to the theological insistence that after the appearance of the New Testament Jewish culture was destined to decline and stagnation. This novel approach had a significant impact on Christian esotericism in the following centuries, but was never accepted by Christian

mainstream theology. In fact, even today, most Christian thinkers are closer to Pico's and → Reuchlin's opponents than to the latter's new approach. The main Jewish idea which the "Christian kabbalists" adopted, therefore, is that which denies the novelty of the Talmud and Midrash and much of medieval Jewish culture, and sees them as a continuation of an oral tradition which began in biblical times and was preserved unchanged by Jewish scholars. The term "kabbalah" in the concept "Christian kabbalah" should therefore be understood in the original, general, Hebrew meaning of the term, that is, Tradition.

The material which the early Christian kabbalists derived from the Hebrew sources was, to some extent, just information (for instance, Pico quotes Rabbi Eleazar of Worms's *Wisdom of the Soul* [*Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*] as the authority for the fact that the legs of the cancer can be divided into "hands and feet"); details concerning nature, earthly and celestial, which may be regarded as belonging to the realm of science, and more than that, mainly of a methodological-linguistic kind. The Hebrew sources introduced the humanists to a new concept of language, very different from that which prevailed in Christian culture. This concept, and the exegetical methodologies derived from it, are characteristic of the Jewish midrash, and involves a group of hermeneutical procedures which do not have a counterpart in Christianity. Christian scriptures were studied and interpreted in their translated form, mainly Latin; and therefore the semiotic level of meaning – the only one that is transmitted in translation – was almost the exclusive one. In contrast, Hebrew scriptures were regarded as written in a divine language which preceded the creation and was a means for the physical creation ('And God said let there be light and there was light', Gen. 1:3); it was a part of the infinite divine wisdom, rather than a means for human communication, and therefore its meaning could never be exhausted. The midrash did not seek a definite, final meaning or meanings of the verses, but was open to ever-increasing additional meanings, even when these were different and conflicting. The means of revealing these meanings were not found only on the semantic level; rather, letter, word and verse represented a semiotic entity, conveying messages by means of the shapes of the letters, the vocalization and musical signs (*nikkud*, *te'amim*), their adornments (*tagin*), their numbers and numerical values (*gematria*), acronyms of many kinds, including letter endings (*notarikon*), and the transmutation of letters into others, according to fixed rules (*temurah*). The library of Jewish texts which was available to the Renaissance humanists,

in Latin translation or in the Hebrew originals, included extensive use of these methodologies (especially in the writings of Rabbi Judah the Pious of Regensburg, Rabbi Eleazar of Worms and Rabbi Abraham Abulafia). These methodologies (which are not directly associated with kabbalah in the narrow sense of the term; some kabbalists used them extensively, others very rarely) opened up new vistas of interpretation and the discovery of secrets for Christian scholars; they constituted a fascinating novelty and would remain characteristic of the works of Christian kabbalists in later centuries. One of the most potent ideas in this context was the description of creation by means of the letters of the alphabet, as presented in the *Sefer Yetzirah* (both the original and the various commentaries on it figured prominently in the library of the Christian kabbalists).

The first discovery that attracted the Christian scholars was that of the multiplicity of the names of God, a concept unfamiliar in Christian culture. The ancient translators into Greek of the Hebrew bible translated the Hebrew names of God into words (God, *theos*, the Lord), and thus obscured the fact that God is referred to in the Hebrew bible by different names. The Hebrew tetragrammaton evoked significant Christian interest during the Middle Ages (mainly through the works of Jewish converts to Christianity), but now a whole field of sacred names and their interpretations was opened up. A personal name is that part of language which does not carry any semantic message; it is just a reference to its bearer. Christianity had only one such name, Jesus, while Judaism – including its esoteric and kabbalistic sources – contained an almost infinite treasury of them. The Christian scholars returned to the existing tradition of tetragrammaton interpretations, but this time as a field containing enormous exegetical possibilities. One of the best-known examples is Reuchlin's historical interpretation of the Name: its early version was *Shaddai* (SDY, three letters in Hebrew), which was the name by which God revealed himself to the patriarchs; in the age of the Torah the tetragrammaton (YHVH, four letters) was supreme, and in the age of redemption the name consisted of five letters – YHVSH – which was read as Yehosha, that is, Jesus.

Another meaningful discovery was that of the Hebrew expression of the concept of *harmonia mundi* – macrocosm and microcosm in harmony and symmetry – as expressed in the *Sefer Yetzirah* and its numerous interpretations in the Jewish tradition. The Christian scholars could find expressions and elaborations of these concepts in all

aspects of the Jewish tradition which they read or as it was translated to them, because it served as a fundamental element in the understanding of the structure of the universe, of Man, and of God throughout the teachings of most of the Jewish schools of thought represented in those writings. The *Hasidey Ashkenaz* (the Pietists and Esotericists of medieval Germany) believed and developed it, and it is found as well in the kabbalists of Spain and the writings of Abulafia. As these concepts were central to the world-view of the humanists of the → Ficino school, where they received support from other classical and medieval sources as well, together they formed a powerful body of ideas which had a major impact on the theological and scientific schools in the 16th, 17th and even the 18th centuries in Europe.

It is ironic that those elements in kabbalistic writings according to the narrow meaning of the term, which are usually identified as gnostic in some sense, actually exerted the least impact on the Christian kabbalah. The duality of gender within the godhead – a new, revolutionary concept found for the first time in the book *Bahir* (circa 1185) and which became basic to the erotic myths of the *Zohar* and other kabbalistic writings – did not make much of an impression on the Christian kabbalists, who had a celestial feminine figure of their own in the person of Maria. Likewise, the kabbalistic pleroma of ten divine emanations – the *sefirot* –, though often mentioned and discussed, did not present a novel aspect for speculation for the Christian scholars, probably because they already had at their disposal a vast body of literature and speculation on the trinity, which they believed to find back in the kabbalistic structure. Nor did the dualistic world-view of the *Zohar* and subsequent kabbalistic works, in which the celestial and the human worlds were conceived as battlegrounds between the forces of good and evil, attract their attention, because most of them opposed the dualistic concepts which were gaining ground within Christianity at that time. Expressions of Jewish messianism and apocalypticism were not meaningful to them either, but were often interpreted in a Christological manner.

This pattern was repeated during the second phase of the development of the Christian kabbalah, when the first Lurianic texts were translated into Latin and had a significant impact on European esotericists. From the elaborate, multi-faceted Lurianic myth, which included important new ideas like the primordial catastrophe within the divine world before the creation – the failed attempt of the Godhead to emanate a system of

divine powers, described in Lurianic terminology as "the breaking of the vessels" [*shevirah*], and the on-going process of theurgic correction [*tikkun*] – very little was absorbed by the Christian scholars. This "breaking of the vessels", which caused numerous divine sparks to be scattered, captive of the evil powers and yearning to be saved, is especially reminiscent of ancient gnostic myths. The most influential Lurianic concept which was integrated in European thought was the *zimzum*, the primordial withdrawal of God into Himself before the beginning of the positive processes of emanation and creation. This concept came to be interpreted mainly in a philosophical manner, and the possibilities for speculations of a gnostic type were neglected.

While Pico had around him devoted Jewish teachers of kabbalah like Yohanan Alemanno, and translators like Flavius Mithridates, and → Reuchlin had a teacher like Luanz, there were Jewish scholars who objected to his enterprise. Furthermore, Pico studied the writings of Aristotle with a Jewish scholar, Rabbi Eliyahu del Mediggo, who tried to dissuade the young count from indulging in kabbalah and concentrate on the study of Aristotelian philosophy. When Pico chose the opposite way, Del Mediggo expressed his frustration by writing a theological treatise, published in Hebrew in 1490, which is the first systematic attack on the kabbalah and the first clear statement that the *Zohar* is a medieval composition. There can be little doubt that Pico heard these views from Rabbi Eliyahu, but he apparently rejected them, accepting instead the insistent claim of the kabbalists that their teachings are derived from ancient sources.

Pico and Reuchlin made very little use of the *Zohar* itself; they often relied on secondary sources, like the Torah commentary of Rabbi Menachem Recanati. Other Christian kabbalists did use the *Zohar*, like → Francesco Giorgio (1460-1541) of Venice, whose *De Harmonia Mundi* exerted a significant influence during the Renaissance, and who introduced some keen observations concerning the nature of language (resulting from his experience with the kabbalistic use of language). Less influential, though profound and insightful, was the use of the *Zohar* by the great mystic → Guillaume Postel in Paris; he translated sections of the *Zohar* (as well as the *Sefer Yetzirah*), but these were not printed until the 20th century.

The image of the kabbalah in the history of Christian thought was shaped to a very large extent by the popular work of → Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim's *De Occula Philosophia libri tres* (1533). This work became the most important

16th-century textbook of esoteric and occult philosophy, and it presents the kabbalah as a discipline dealing mainly with → magic and numerology [→ Number Symbolism], together with other esoteric traditions of the Renaissance. For nearly five hundred years now the erroneous image of the kabbalah as a fuzzy discipline combining → witchcraft, number mysticism and magic has persisted; it is dominant today even among Hebrew readers in Israel, who have absorbed the European image of this traditional Jewish discipline.

After the great upsurge of attempts to translate and study Hebrew kabbalistic works, later Christian kabbalists, in Scholem's words, 'remained content to speculate in the realm of Christian kabbalah without any firsthand knowledge of the sources. Indeed, in the course of time the knowledge of Jewish sources diminished among the Christian kabbalists, and consequently the Jewish element in their books became progressively slighter, its place being taken by esoteric Christian speculations whose connections with Jewish motifs were remote' (*Kabbalah*, 199). In the second half of the 16th century there began a process of associating the kabbalah with → alchemy, and presenting both as one and the same doctrine, despite the fact that alchemy was rather marginal in the history of Jewish culture in general and the Hebrew kabbalah in particular (this identification of kabbalah and alchemy has been reaffirmed in strong terms in the 20th century, in the writings of → Carl Gustav Jung).

There were, however, exceptions to this general picture, which caused a new resurgence of interest in the Jewish kabbalah during the last decades of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th. The most prominent among them was the great anthology of kabbalistic texts, *Kabbalah Denudata* (three volumes, 1677-1684), by → Christian Knorr von Rosenroth. In this collection the kabbalah is presented by means of its authentic masterpieces, from the *Zohar* to the Lurianic kabbalah. From these volumes a line of influence was spreading to the heart of Christian creativity during this period. At the end of the *Kabbala Denudata* is inserted an anonymous treatise, whose author has been identified as one of the most profound writers among the Christian kabbalists: the Flemish scholar → Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, who wrote several other Christian kabbalistic treatises. His writings had meaningful influence in several directions: on Leibniz (with whom he was closely associated, and who completed one of his works left unfinished at his death) and his school of thought, and, in another direction, on → Henry More, →



Ralph Cudworth and other representatives of the Cambridge Platonists. His impact can be traced among important scientists and philosophers, including → Newton and Locke.

A special case is the relationship between the theosophical mysticism of → Jacob Boehme and the Christian kabbalah. There exists a significant typological proximity between some of Boehme's ideas and those of the kabbalah, yet no direct source of influence has been identified, neither in Hebrew nor among the treatises of the Christian kabbalists. Yet several of Boehme's disciples and interpreters did make use of the Christian kabbalah and intensified the typological connections between the two currents.

*Lit.*: Gershom Scholem, "Zur Geschichte der Anfänge der Christlichen Kabbala", in: *Essays Presented to Leo Baeck*, London, 1954 (revised version in: *Kabbalistic chrétiens* [A. Faivre & F. Tristan, eds.], Paris: Albin Michel, 1979, 17-46) ♦ idem, *Kabbalah*, New York: Dorset, 1974 ♦ François Secret, *Le Zohar chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (1958), repr. Paris-The Hague: Mouton & Co. – E.P.H.E., 1964 ♦ idem, *Les Kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (1964), repr. Milano/Neuilly-sur-Seine: Archè/Arma Artis, 1985 ♦ Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989 ♦ Frances Yates, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Magic", in: *L'opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'Umanesimo*, I, Firenze, 1965, 159-203 ♦ Joseph Dan (ed.), *The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books and their Christian Interpreters*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997 ♦ Allison P. Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*, Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1995 ♦ idem, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698)*, Leiden/Boston/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1999 ♦ Andreas Kilcher, *Die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala als ästhetisches Paradigma: Die Konstruktion einer ästhetischen Kabbala seit der frühen Neuzeit*, Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1998 ♦ Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (ed.), *Christliche Kabbala*, Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2003.

JOSEPH DAN

## Jewish Influences IV: Enlightenment/Romanticism

The interpretation and estimation of Jewish mysticism changed fundamentally in the Enlightenment. Whereas in the Renaissance Kabbalah had passed as the model of a rediscovered original Christian and esoteric knowledge, and even in the late 17th century (e.g. in → Knorr von Rosenroth, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz [1646-1716] and →

Athanasius Kircher) it had served as a theological and philosophical paradigm, the Enlightenment situated it firmly outside its more narrowly-drawn frontiers of reason. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), for example, in his satirical discussion of → Swedenborg's "Geisterlehre" (spirit-teaching), defined reason outright as "Anti-Kabbalah". In the 18th century the magical elements of Christian Kabbalah, especially – those elements known since → Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) as *cabala practica* (practical Kabbalah) and placed by → Agrippa of Nettesheim, in his *Philosophia occulta* (1533), at the very center of an esoteric philosophy – were declared to be a manifestation of "superstition". The same applies to the Jewish Enlightenment, the "Haskalah", and the "*Wissenschaft des Judentums im 19. Jahrhundert*", in which the Kabbalah was no less vigorously rejected. There are examples of this in the chapter on Kabbalah in the well-known *Lebensgeschichte* (1792-1793) by the Kantian Salomon Maimon (1753/54-1800), and in the *Geschichte, Lehre und Meinungen aller bestehenden und noch bestehenden religiösen Sekten der Juden und der Geheimlehre oder Kabbalah* (History, Doctrines and Opinions of all Past and Still Existing Religious Sects of the Jews and the Secret Doctrine or Kabbalah; 1822/23) by Peter Beer (1758-1838). In non-Jewish circles, the criticism of "practical Kabbalah" was often combined with anti-Semitic arguments. The thesis of the Jews as magicians and of Hebrew as a language of sorcery appears in the 18th century in this hostile spirit, for instance in *Entdecktes Judentum* (Jewry Unveiled; 1700) of Johann Andreas Eisenmenger (1654-1704) and in *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten* (Jewish Curiosa; 1714-17) by Johann Jacob Schudt. The lasting influence of these two texts can still be detected in later Romantic writers, such as Clemens Brentano (1778-1842), Jacob Grimm (1785-1836), Achim von Arnim (1781-1831), and Joseph von Görres (1776-1848), who in his *Christliche Mystik* (Christian Mysticism; 1836-1842) classed "Jewish sorcery" as "demonic mysticism".

But the Enlightenment was not only "anti-Kabbalah". Simultaneously with these rejections, the 18th century brought a multitude of positive perceptions, adoptions, and "rescuings" of Kabbalah and the Hermetic tradition. The Enlightenment had two possible ways of rescuing the Kabbalah. First, one could think of a philosophical and unhistorical transformation of Hermeticism and Kabbalah, in the course of which their historical, "positive" manifestation was understood as "pre-rational" allegorical language and symbolism that could be translated into rational notions. This



strategy allowed a rational re-formulation of Hermeticism within the project of a “natural religion of reason”. It claimed that reason could be distilled, like the hidden quintessence, out of a traditional pre-rational context, thereby saving Hermeticism and Kabbalah for the project of the Enlightenment. This approach can be perceived in attempts to qualify Kabbalah in the histories of philosophy (from Jacob Brucker to Dietrich Tiedemann) and the encyclopedic lexica of the Enlightenment (like the *Encyclopédie*), in which long chapters or articles on Kabbalah repeatedly tried – for all their criticism of “practical Kabbalah” understood as → magic – to recast at least some elements of its metaphysics in philosophical terms. A leading issue in this was the debate over Spinoza’s pantheism, which ever since *Spinozismus im Judenthumb* (Spinozism in Jewry; 1699) by Johann Georg Wachter (1663-1757) had been repeatedly explained as a philosophical reformulation of the Kabbalistic concept of nature and God. Of course, → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) expected much more from a philosophical rescue of the Kabbalah. In his explanation for the *Öffentliches Denkmahl der Lehr-Tafel der Prinzessin Antonia* (Public Monument of the Didactic Tablet of the Princess Antonia; 1763), in the context of a ‘juxtaposition of Hebrew with contemporary philosophy’, he ascribed to the ‘philosophia sacra cabbalistica’ the decisive function of mediating between revelation and reason. Oetinger’s Kabbalah was thus part of a Christian theology of the 18th century which attempted to set forth ‘die Grund-Begriffe Jesu Christi nicht nur ex fide, sondern auch ex ratione für raisonnable’ (the basic concepts of Jesus Christ as reasonably, not only from the perspective of faith, but also from that of reason).

The second possibility for a rescue of Jewish mysticism was to place it on an esoteric plane of discourse and explain it as an arcanum, which is what happened in the secret society culture of the Enlightenment. There the esoteric realm of the arcanum appeared as a possible residue of esotericism and Kabbalah, but within a discourse that fundamentally excluded them. Kabbalah, even if understood literally as a secret, oral teaching, made its appearance as the founding myth of a → Freemasonry aware of its esoteric elements and reaching back explicitly to the Kabbalah for the explanation of its symbols. Even more clearly this is the case in esoteric Freemasonry, especially the Orders of the Gold- und Rosenkruz and the → Asiatic Brethren, which included in their programs elements of early modern nature-mysticism, as well as Kabbalah.

A direct line leads from this esoteric Freema-

sonry to the rehabilitation of Kabbalah in the Romantic era. Around 1800, in fact, one can even speak of a reintegration of Kabbalah as it had been understood in the early modern era, also in non-Jewish circles, and had been excluded from the discourse of reason in the Enlightenment. This occurred within philosophy on the one hand, and within literature on the other. For the former, → Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1755-1845), → Franz von Baader (1765-1841) and their circle are notable for their integration of Jewish esotericism in a religious-philosophical sense. Baader occupied himself with Kabbalah from 1796: he saw it primarily as post-Enlightenment religious philosophy, as an anti-Kantianism, which he sought especially in the esoteric Freemasonry launched by → Saint-Martin. Schelling, again, considered Kabbalah within a philosophy of mythology, as in his lecture of 1815, *Ueber die Gottheiten von Samothrake*. He presents it there not merely as an ancient “Jewish philosophy”, but as the branch of ‘that primordial system that is the key to all religious systems’, thereby making an impressive plea for further research into it. Initial attempts at taking up this challenge can be seen in the Protestant theologian Johann Friedrich von Meyer (1772-1849) – i.e. in his periodical *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit* (1819-1832) and his German translation of the *Sefer Jezirah* (1830) – and in particular the Catholic private scholar Franz Joseph Molitor (1779-1860) in his four-volume *Philosophie der Geschichte* (1827-1854). Collaborating with Jewish scholars like the Freemason Ephraim Joseph Hirschfeld (1755-1820), and basing himself on the religious-philosophical terminology of Schelling and Baader, from ca. 1810-1860 Molitor spent decades studying original texts in view of making the Kabbalah available again on the basis of its original sources, and of rehabilitating it from a philosophical and theological point of view. The subtitle of his work clarifies the actually Kabbalistic program of this monumental undertaking in the philosophy of history: *Oder über die Tradition in dem alten Bunde und ihre Beziehung zur Kirche des neuen Bundes. Mit vorzüglicher Rücksicht auf die Kabbalah* (or: On the tradition in the old covenant and its relation to the church of the new covenant. With particular reference to the Kabbalah)

Quite distinct from this religious-philosophical treatment of the Kabbalah, the Romantic era witnessed an aesthetic program, especially in the work of → Novalis (1772-1801) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829). Following in the steps of Johann Georg Hamann’s (1730-1788) reevaluation of language as such as the “organon of reason”, the

aesthetic Romantics paid most attention to the Kabbalah's theory of language. Their program was summarized in Friedrich Schlegel's programmatic saying of December 1802: 'The true aesthetic is the Kabbalah'. The philological basis for this configuration of Kabbalah and aesthetics did not lie in any direct knowledge of the Jewish sources, and only selectively in the Christian Kabbalah of the Renaissance. Knowledge of the Kabbalah came from secondary sources such as the Enlightenment's histories of philosophy and encyclopaedias, but also from the writings of → Giordano Bruno, → Paracelsus, → Robert Fludd, and → Jakob Boehme. The aesthetic paradigm of the Kabbalah in Romanticism was a secular reinterpretation of the language-theory of early modern Kabbalah. The older theological, philosophical, and nature-mystical language-theorems of Christian Kabbalah were understood as aesthetic parameters. The language of the Kabbalah was no longer seen as a metaphysical model, but as the paradigm and metaphor of a poetical language. The Kabbalah that was thus mediated, translated, and reinterpreted can be characterized under three aspects: hermeneutics, language-mysticism, and language-magic. The Kabbalistic concept of hermeneutics, as developed in the literature of Christian Kabbalah, became (as in Hamann and Schlegel) a stylistics of writing. The early modern projects of a sacred, natural, mathematical language of Kabbalah came to be seen as manifestations of a poetic concept of language and knowledge (as in Novalis and Schlegel). And experiments in language-magic were transposed (in Novalis, Schlegel, and E.T.A. Hoffmann) to a theory of the magical function of poetical language. This aestheticized Kabbalah of Romantic aesthetics found considerable resonance in the poetry of the modern aesthetic movement. Elements of it are found in the poetry of French Symbolism, also in many German-Jewish authors circa 1900-1933, and again after 1970 in post-structuralist literary theory.

*Lit.:* Andreas B. Kilcher, *Die Sprachtheorie der Kabbalah als ästhetisches Paradigma*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998 ♦ Eveline Goodman-Thau, Gert Mattenklott & Christoph Schulte (eds.), *Kabbalah und Romantik*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994 ♦ idem, (eds.), *Kabbalah und die Literatur der Romantik*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999.

ANDREAS B. KILCHER

## Jewish Influences V: Occultist Kabbalah

The history of kabbalistic influences on 19th- and 20th-century occultism [→ occult / occultism]

has been neglected by scholars, with the argument that what passes as "kabbalah" in this context is in fact a "pseudo-kabbalah" unrelated to its original meaning in Jewish culture. Gershom Scholem, in particular, has lent his authority to this approach by dismissing the occultist "kabbalah" of → Eliphas Lévi as 'brilliant misunderstandings and misrepresentations', that of → Aleister Crowley as 'highly coloured humbug', and the whole of occultist interpretations as 'supreme charlatanism' (Scholem 1946, 2; 1974, 202-203; 1984, 20). While the term "charlatanism" is unfortunate, as it suggests a policy of deliberate deception, it is certainly true that occultist "kabbalah" has only the most superficial of connections to original Jewish kabbalah. However, from a historical perspective this is not sufficient reason to exclude the phenomenon from historical scrutiny. Scholem himself emphasized "misunderstandings" as an important factor of religious innovation in any period (1946, 24-25); and the role of "kabbalah" in non-Jewish contexts from the Renaissance up to → Romanticism has been seriously studied in spite of the fact that already the Christian kabbalah can hardly be considered "authentic" from a Jewish point of view, not to mention the thoroughly non-Jewish "esthetic kabbalah" of the Romantics.

The general pattern that characterizes the periods of Enlightenment and Romanticism is continued in the 19th century: occultist ideas about "kabbalah" reflect no familiarity with Jewish sources but are entirely dependent on second-hand materials passed on via Christian kabbalistic channels. An exemplary early case is Francis Barrett's *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer* (1801), whose main sources are → Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, pseudo-Agrippa's *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, and pseudo-Abano's [→ Peter of Abano] *Heptameron*. "Cabala", understood entirely along Agrippian lines, plays a central role in the book, which established for the 19th and 20th centuries a second pattern that would continue to dominate occultist "kabbalah": its almost exclusive association with → magic.

As far as the domain of Western esotericism is concerned, the main exception to both patterns is the French philosopher Adolphe Franck (1809-1893). His *La Kabbalah ou la Philosophie Religieuse des Hébreux* (1843) was a pioneering synthesis based upon serious study of the original sources. It was widely read and translated, and its influence can be discerned not only in the early academic study of kabbalah, but also in masonic and occultist authors such as Albert Pike, → Manly P. Hall, and → H.P. Blavatsky. This occultist reception

was no doubt facilitated by the fact that Franck (who also published about → alchemy and → Saint-Martin, and a letter of whom to → Papus is published in the latter's *La Kabbale* of 1892) discussed the Christian kabbalists in some detail, investigated the possible relations of kabbalah with → Neoplatonism, → gnosticism, and the Chaldaeans and Persians, and concluded – wrongly, of course – that it had very ancient origins traceable to the Zoroastrianism of the Persian magi. All this could serve to confirm occultist perceptions of kabbalah as a mysterious “ancient wisdom” that held the key to magic and the occult.

Éliphas Lévi was the first to develop such a perspective at length, in all the major works of his occultist period (but for a short summary, see his “Elements of the kabbalah in ten lessons”, published in *Le livre des splendeurs* and several times reprinted, *inter alia* by Papus in the second edition of his book quoted above). He was almost completely ignorant of Hebrew, resulting in spectacular blunders (Secret 1988), and his ideas about kabbalah are wildly fantastic; but the important point is that they were taken seriously by generations of occultists after him. Taking his cue from → Court de Gébelin and → Etteila, Lévi closely associates the kabbalah with the → Tarot, arguing that its twenty-two “great arcana” correspond with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the twenty-two “paths” linking the sefirot in the “tree of life” diagram; to these are added the numbers one to ten that are basic in traditional → Number Symbolism and are associated with the ten sefirot. The result is a system of → correspondences based upon thirty-two “paths”, presented by Lévi as a universal system of classification that contains the totality of human knowledge. Specific insights can be deduced from this system, or so it is claimed, by means of the kabbalistic methods (actually standard methods of exegesis in Judaism) of gematria and temurah. It might be added that Lévi sees not only the great ancient and oriental religions, but Roman Catholicism as well, as ‘completely kabbalistic’; but the priests have lost the key that could unlock the true nature of their cult.

Lévi's ideas have had a great influence on the later development of French occultism, as reflected e.g. in the foundation of organizations with titles such as “Rose-Croix kabbalistique” (founded in 1887 by → Stanislas de Guäita and → Joséphin Péladan). Fully characteristic for the later French perspective is the book by Papus, already mentioned above, which appeared in 1892 and was republished in 1903 in a much expanded edition (with new contributions by Lenain [author of a *Sci-*

*ence cabalistique* published as early as 1828], Lévi, de Guäita, Marc Haven, → Sédir, J. Jacob, Saïr and Chevalier Drach, and containing a complete translation of the *Sefer Yetzirah*). Papus' ‘methodical presentation of the kabbalah’ is conspicuous for its complete absence of any reference to Jewish sources; instead, we find all the great names of Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III] combined with other esoteric and occultist authors including → John Dee, → Fabre d'Olivet, → Saint-Martin, → Lacuria, → Hoëné Wronski, → Ragon de Bettignies, → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, → Barlet, and → de Guäita.

The ideas of French occultist kabbalah were made available to an English readership originally by fringe-masonic authors such as Albert Pike and Kenneth Mackenzie. Pike's *Morals and Dogmas of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (1871) is full of references to kabbalah, dependent on Franck, Lévi (whose writings are plundered without acknowledgement) and → Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah Denudata*. Mackenzie is likewise strongly dependent on Lévi, whom he had visited in Paris; in his famous *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (1875-1877) he devoted a long article to kabbalah and a shorter one to the *Sefer Yetzirah*, thus forging another link in the occultist-kabbalistic chain.

→ H.P. Blavatsky refers to kabbalah in many parts of her writings, and once again her interpretations are shot through with errors and misunderstandings. Important is her reference on the very first page of *Isis Unveiled* to a mysterious ‘old Book’ of which only one copy has survived, and from which ‘the most ancient Hebrew document on occult learning – the *Siphra Dzeniouta*’ is said to be compiled. Vol. II, ch. V is devoted to “Mysteries of the Kabala” and further confirms that Blavatsky saw the kabbalah as dependent on more ancient traditions, Hinduism in particular; indeed, she states quite bluntly that ‘The ten Sephiroth are copies taken from the ten Prâdjapatis created by Viradj’ (*Isis* II, 215). Apart from earlier French occultist authors, Blavatsky seems to have been dependent mostly on Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah denudata*, which contains the *Sifra Di-Tseniuta* alluded to on her first page (see Scholem 1946, 398-399 nt 2; Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 453). In her chapter on kabbalah she is interested mostly in the concept of En-Soph and the system of the sefirot, and most of her references are to the *Zohar*; but most conspicuous about the chapter is the fact that, in spite of its title, large parts are not actually about kabbalah but about the ancient and oriental religions from which its fundamental ideas

are said to be derived. It ends, not surprisingly, with one of her vehement polemics against Christian theologians.

Of particular importance for the development of occultist kabbalah is the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Two of its founders were instrumental in “translating” kabbalistic texts into English and writing popular books about the subject. → William Wynn Westcott’s *Sefer Yetzirah* (1887) was derived from Pistorius’ edition (*Artes Cabalisticæ*, 1587), and in 1894 he also published a translation of an alchemical-kabbalistic text called *Aesch Metzareff*, taken from Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbalah denudata*. → Samuel MacGregor Mathers’ *Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887) contains some parts of the *Zohar*: the *Sifra DiTseniuta* already referred to by Blavatsky (see above), the *Idra Rabba* and the *Idra Sutha*. These annotated translations and discussions, questionable though they are from a scholarly point of view, are essential to occultist kabbalah as it developed into the 20th century. A central role in the Golden Dawn tradition in this regard is played by the sefirotic “tree of life”, understood as a system of correspondences that can be used not only to understand the structure of the universe but also as a basic tool for magical/spiritual practice. One typical ritual, for example, as transmitted by Israel Regardie in his edition of the Golden Dawn rituals, requires the operator to stand in front of a man-high picture of the tree, and imagine how ‘the universal energy’ flows down from sefirot to sefirot and thus through all the corresponding parts of his own body; this practice can be expanded e.g. by making use of the sounds and colours that are believed to correspond to each of the sefirot. One sees here how the sefirotic system is put to entirely new uses in the context of a strongly psychologized spirituality. Typical of the Golden Dawn approach and its later derivations is that “kabbalah” is almost completely reduced to the symbolism of the Tree.

All forms of “kabbalistic magic” in the 20th-century are heavily dependent on the foundational writings of Westcott and Mathers, but each of the important authors in the tradition have their own emphases. → Arthur Edward Waite, with his *Doctrine and Literature of the Kabbalah* (1902) and *The Secret Doctrine in Israel* (1913; combined in *The Holy Kabbalah* published in 1929), must be mentioned in this context, although his comparatively scholarly and historical approach – which earned him the respect even of Gershom Scholem – makes him a case apart. Scholem deplores his uncritical attitude towards facts of history and

philology, and his ignorance of Hebrew and Aramaic, but states that he is nevertheless one of the few contemporary authors whose work is ‘distinguished by real insight into the world of Kabbalism’ (Scholem 1946, 2, 212).

No such thing could be said about the kabbalism of two other central authors in the Golden Dawn lineage, → Aleister Crowley and → Dion Fortune. Crowley’s *Liber 777* is presented by his editor Israel Regardie as ‘a qabalistic dictionary of ceremonial magic, oriental mysticism, comparative mysticism and symbology’; it consists largely of long tables of correspondences, many of which make heavy use of Hebrew and kabbalistic terms. Crowley’s other kabbalistic writings, published in his journal *Equinox* and re-edited by Regardie together with *Liber 777*, confirm that for him the term kabbalah was more or less synonymous with “tabulation of knowledge” as such. Hence it should not surprise that as the ‘principal sources’ of his tables he does not mention any Jewish or even Christian kabbalistic author at all, but instead lists ‘Pietro di Abano, Lilly, Eliphaz Levi, Sir R. Burton, Swami Vivekananda, the Hindu Buddhist, and Chinese Classics, the Qúran and its commentators, the Book of the Dead, and, in particular, original research’ (Regardie 1977, Book Two, xi).

Dion Fortune’s *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935) is a classic of 20th-century occultism, and one of the clearest overviews of what kabbalah means in that context. Fortune is well aware of how strongly her system differs from Jewish kabbalah: ‘I do not say, This is the teaching of the ancient Rabbis; rather do I say, This is the practice of the modern Qabalists’ (Fortune 1984, 2, 20). It may well be that ‘the ancient Rabbis knew nothing of some of the concepts here set forth’, but although Fortune welcomes corrections regarding historical accuracy, in the end, she says, ‘I do not care a jot for the authority of tradition if it hampers the free development of a system of such practical value as the Holy Qabalah’ (o.c., 9-20): a pragmatic attitude that makes her book perfect for the modern spiritual market in a → New Age context. Fortune’s modern kabbalah is presented as ‘the Yoga of the West’, and focuses entirely on the kabbalistic “Tree of Life”: ‘the best meditation-symbol we possess’ (o.c., 2). In elucidating the Tree as a ‘compendium of science, psychology, philosophy, and theology’, she explicitly places herself in the tradition of Crowley, Westcott, Mathers and Waite (o.c., 13, 22). *The Mystical Qabalah* discusses in detail each of the ten sefirot and its correspondences, with their practical applications for meditation and spir-



itual development, on the basis of Crowley's 777. Again Fortune is quite clear about her Western-esoteric and occultist rather than Jewish sources: she mentions Plotinus, Dee, Agrippa, → Llull, Peter of Abano, Knorr von Rosenroth, Westcott, Lévi, Mary Anne Atwood, Blavatsky, → Anna Kingsford, Mabel Collins, Papus, Saint-Martin, Gerald Massey, → G.R.S. Mead, but also James Frazer, Wallis Budge, → Carl Gustav Jung, Sigmund Freud, the Sacred Books of the East series, the Loeb classical library and, finally, the Bible and the Soncino Press edition of the Zohar (o.c., 104-105). Fortune's work can indeed be seen as the culmination of a trend that could already be perceived in Lévi: the understanding of "kabbalah" as a cross-cultural analytical tool on esoteric and occultist foundations. As such, it perfectly exemplifies Godwin's analysis of occultism as a species of "comparative religion" (Godwin 1994).

This comparative-religions approach to kabbalah is also evident in some other popular authors who do not directly represent the Golden Dawn tradition, such as Charles Poncé and Leo Schaya. Poncé is an author with strong Jungian leanings [→ Jungism]; referring to scholars like Scholem and Tishby as well as to the well-known occultist authors discussed above, he compares Jewish kabbalah with oriental religious systems such as Yoga, Tibetan Buddhism and Tantra. Schaya approaches kabbalah from the perspective of Traditionalism [→ Tradition]: he believes that the premises of kabbalah 'are those of esotericism or metaphysics in general' and points out that in his book he 'has undertaken to rediscover in Judaism the *philosophia perennis* that he learned through the Hindu, Buddhist and Sufi traditions' (1971, 7, 10).

In the wake of the central authors discussed above, a plethora of popular books have been published during the later 20th century that embroider upon their basic ideas and approaches and cater to the magical-occultist subculture within a general "New Age" framework. Among the many authors in this context some of the better known are Israel Regardie, Frater Achad (Charles Stansfield Jones), Pat Zalewski, and John Michael Greer, but any such selection is somewhat arbitrary since new books rehashing the same basic approaches keep appearing. All of them share the basic perspectives outlined above: they espouse a universalist rather than specifically Jewish or Christian understanding of kabbalah, interpreted as a system of correspondences according to the model of the sefirotic "Tree of Life", and are focused on practical "magical" application – which often means a

kind of applied psychology. That magical practice in this context has increasingly come to be understood in psychological terms as focused on spiritual self-development is a fact that makes occultist kabbalah congenial to the popular New Age market.

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**Jung, Carl Gustav**, \* 26.7.1875 Kesswil (Switzerland), † 6.6.1961 Zürich

1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 2. TRADITIONS AND CONTEXTS 3. SEVEN SERMONS TO THE DEAD (1916) 4. DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND INITIATION 5. JUNG, INTERPRETER OF THE WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITION 6. ESOTERICISM AND PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION 7. ESOTERICISM AND CRITICISM OF MODERNITY 8. RECEPTION AND POSTERITY

#### 1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Jung, son of a Zwinglian pastor, grew up in an environment profoundly marked by religion. After medical studies at the University of Basle and a doctoral thesis in psychiatry devoted to the psychology and pathology of occult phenomena (1902), he practiced psychiatry at the Burghölzli Clinic (Zurich) as assistant to Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939). He discovered the early theories of Freud (1856-1939), of whom he became one of the closest disciples from 1907 until 1913, when he left Freud to found his own development of psychoanalysis, Analytical Psychology. The scope of his work and the extent of his knowledge make Jung one of the greatest figures of Western esotericism in the 20th century; and he also had, by his own account, a personal experience of occult [→ occult / occultism] and paranormal phenomena. He relates some of these experiences, including the most impressive ones, in the account of his life, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken* (Memories, dreams, reflections, 1961). This “interior autobiography” reveals the importance of the esoteric paradigm for his life and work; it ascribes capital importance to all the paranormal phenomena, as well as to dreams, notably in their premonitory dimension. Settled beside Lake Zürich, where he headed a school with the collaboration of several disciples, mostly women (Jolande Jacobi, Aniela Jaffé, Marie-Louise von Franz), Jung divided his time between therapeutic work and the writing of long books on the psychology of the individual, that of cultures, and the hermeneutics of religions – all subjects in which the relation to esotericism was decisive for him. The paintings he made on the walls of his second home, the “Tower” at Bollingen, where he retired with increasing frequency from 1923 onwards, bear witness to the place occupied by esotericism in Jung’s personal imagination. A great traveler, between 1920 and 1940 he explored various non-European civilizations (North Africa, New Mexico, Central

Africa, Egypt, India, Ceylon), and acted as a cultural mediator, thanks to his excellent knowledge of Asiatic philosophies and religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism), which he helped to make known in Europe – for which he was rewarded by honorary doctorates by three Indian universities. His correspondence with men and women all over the world, specialists in various fields or unknown, on psychological, cultural, or topical subjects shows the lively character of a mind in ceaseless evolution and constantly seeking engagement with its own time. The intercultural openness of his work – contemporaneous with the great theories of modern ethnology, whose discoveries it took into account – determined Jung’s concepts as he sought to show the existence of links between all civilizations through study of their myths and images. Open to dialogue with the most varied disciplines – he participated regularly at the meetings of the Eranos circle from 1933 onwards – Jung was also one of the founders of transdisciplinary thought.

#### 2. TRADITIONS AND CONTEXTS

Jung was interested in all forms of the mystical, gnostic, and esoteric tradition, whether historical or contemporary, European or non-European, and this interest profoundly marked his thought and his anthropology. His first works arose in the context of the infatuation with the occult sciences in Europe and the United States at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, as it manifested both in the writings of esotericists and Theosophists (→ H.P. Blavatsky, → Rudolf Steiner) – from whom Jung, incidentally, tried to dissociate himself – and in literature (→ Gustav Meyrink, Hermann Hesse [1877-1962], Robert Musil [1880-1942]). Whereas Freud had based his approach to the psyche on the rejection of the “muddy tide of occultism”, Jung accepted the challenge of the irrational up to the limit, and conceived of his own approach as the prolongation of that tradition. He came to know it partly through his lifelong reading of esoteric texts of all ages and cultures, and partly in second-hand fashion as handed on in → Goethe’s work (principally in *Faust*) and in German Romantic psychology (→ Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, Carl Gustav Carus [1789-1869]), which had already integrated elements of → Paracelsianism and Boehmian theosophy [→ Jacob Boehme; → Christian Theosophy]. Jung’s entire oeuvre, from his first researches into → spiritualism at the turn of the century up to the writings of the 1940s and 1950s on → gnosticism, → alchemy, and oriental religions, related directly to the problems treated by esotericism. In his doctoral thesis (1902), devoted

to paranormal events and more especially to mediumism, Jung interpreted the spiritualist phenomena as exteriorizations of autonomous complexes of the unconscious. Towards the end of his life he authored many essays on the psychological significance of various occult sciences (→ astrology, alchemy) and of divinatory phenomena (such as the *I-Ching*). References to the texts of various esoteric traditions are scattered throughout his works. This interest continually lighted on new objects, with the result that Jung's work touched on almost all the fields and all the epochs of the esoteric tradition. His correspondence, as well as the many volumes of his seminars (e.g. those devoted to a series of visions from one of his patients, or to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*), bear witness to the same preoccupation.

### 3. SEVEN SERMONS TO THE DEAD (1916)

One of Jung's first works that displays most vividly his privileged relationship with esotericism is *Septem sermones ad mortuos* (Seven sermons to the dead, 1916), a text of poetic character that borrows the language of gnosticism (the principal speaker is → Basilides of Alexandria). This text-program, unique in its genre among the published works of Jung, sets forth an esoteric anthropology, cosmology, and theology, and calls upon various gnostic images (the Pleroma, the god Abraxas as demiurge), but also on elements borrowed from different oriental and European traditions, notably from Jacob Boehme's thought, such as the myth of Sophia and the status of the principle of evil (Lucifer). Typical of Jung's eclecticism, the Sermons present in cryptic form the ensemble of themes which would structure both his clinical work and his religious thought. In the same vein were his private journals written during these years (the "Black Book" and the "Red Book", 1913-1916), to which he consigned his inner experience, notably the dialogue with his "inner master" whom he christened Philemon. These texts from the first period of Jung's work constituted the esoteric facet of his thought, of which the clinical and hermeneutic works were therefore the exotericism.

### 4. DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND INITIATION

Jung's first post-Freudian work, *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* (1911-1912) drew on mythological images to comment on and interpret the fantasies of a young schizophrenic, called Miss Miller. The idea was sketched out there that psychological evolution is structured as a process

of initiation, which may succeed or fail. *Psychological Types* (1921) develops the ideas of polarity and quaternity which would be at the base of all Jung's later work, as well as those of unity and totality, from which he made categories for the description of the psyche. Thereafter Jung's clinical work appealed ever more explicitly to notions borrowed from esoteric traditions, to the extent of devoting some of his studies to one or another of these, such as alchemy. He developed a model of the psyche which conceived of it as a polarity, making room for a spiritual pole as well as an impulsive pole. The originality of Jung's views appears above all in his theory of the archetypes, developed during the 1920s-1940s, which also explains his concept of the unconscious. The latter was first based on a rupture with the Freudian view that the unconscious is a product of repression: for Jung, the unconscious, like the "poetic" universe of the German Romantics, possessed a reality that is autonomous and anterior to consciousness. Following the romantic concepts of the unconscious (such as Carl Gustav Carus expounded) and the "philosophy of the unconscious" of Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906), Jung held that the unconscious psyche is "collective", common to all humanity or at least to some of its groupings. Its contents are structured in "primordial images" (the "archetypes", a notion which he owed to Plato, to → Augustine, and also to Kant), which appear in dreams and in the products of the imagination, and also find resonances in individual existence by way of the major existential experiences. The experience of the unconscious leads the subject to live through the confrontation with evil, with his own interior negativity (archetype of the "shadow"), that of the Other in its gendered dimension ("animus" for the woman, "anima" for the man), and finally – as a consequence of the preceding – that of the potential totality of the individual subject (archetype of the "Self"). This model of the unconscious also modifies the status granted to dreams. A dream does not merely reveal desire, but brings to light the other face of the dreamer's conscious situation, thus taking on a compensatory value, even a prospective one heralding evolutions to come. The question posed is thus no longer that of the *origin* of the dream, but that of its *function*, the unconscious intention that it reveals: Jung substituted for a causal interpretation of dreams a final or teleological interpretation. He moreover distinguished a category of dreams that do not refer to an individual situation alone, but to the collective plane, and which thus have a "prophetic" status (such as those which he himself had at the eve of World War I).

Jung's anchoring in an esoteric tradition is equally evident in the status he accorded to the products of the → imagination. Unlike Freud, for whom the phantasy always has a sexual significance, Jung conceived of a *creative imagination*, a mediating faculty between man and the sense-world (the divine world of the Hermetic tradition). He developed the therapeutic method of "active imagination", which posits that the patient, through creative work on the symbols brought up by his unconscious, can work the transmutation of the latter's contents, thus increasing his consciousness and arriving at a cure. The cure of neurosis, defined as the "suffering of a soul which has not found its destination", is presented as a process of initiation, in the course of which the subject stops identifying himself unilaterally with conscious positions and comes little by little to integrate unconscious elements. This process, which Jung styled "individuation" or "self-becoming" (*Selbstwerdung*), is a modern equivalent of the initiatic path, and Jung himself called it "mystical". Coherently with these ideas, Jung offered a view of the subject derived from mystical concepts, and conceived, beside the I (*Ich*, ego), of another pole of the subject, the Self (*Selbst*), which is the potential totality of the subject who has integrated the unconscious. This representation of the Self, thus named after the *âtman* of the *Upanishads*, to which Jung explicitly referred, is one of the proofs that, however important his anchorage in the Western tradition, his ideas were nonetheless profoundly indebted to Eastern models.

Jung's psychology thus expounded all the themes of an esoteric anthropology. But his work went beyond the plane of mere individual psychology to offer, from the 1940s onward, a vision of reality just as firmly founded on esoteric concepts. His hypothesis of *synchronicity* (1952) examined the phenomena of coincidence, apparently due to chance, and explained them through the action of a principle of acausal relationship, which gives a meaning to this chance. This theory, which may be considered a modern version of the doctrine of → correspondences, sees an analogical relationship between the human microcosm and the macrocosm of the universe, thanks to which such manifestations of the unconscious are possible in the objective sphere. Such "significant chances" are thought to be produced spontaneously in situations with a strong emotional charge, capable of allowing the contents of the unconscious to emerge. They are also at the base of the phenomena of divination [→ Divinatory Arts], as also of astrological prediction,

on which Jung was one of the first to conduct a statistical inquest. His study on the *I-Ching* (1950) sought to explain the functioning of divination by basing it on the interaction between the psyche of the person questioning the oracle and the objective situation. Jung's last great works (including *Mysterium coniunctionis*, 1955/1956) developed these concepts within a vaster framework, postulating a unity of the world, an *unus mundus* whose different levels of reality are articulated with one another and, due to the "psychoïd" character of the universe, able to intercommunicate. Jung thus tried to bring about a meeting between the Hermetic world view and that of the scientific revolutions of his time. His fruitful dialogue with Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958), Nobel prizewinner in physics, with whom he published *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche* (1950), allowed him to integrate into his vision of man and the world the new perspectives offered by quantum mechanics.

Thus, if one follows the criteria established by Antoine Faivre (*Access to Western Esotericism*, 1994) to judge whether an oeuvre belongs to the field of esotericism, one must admit that the work of Jung satisfies several of the requisite criteria: it is based on the idea of "correspondence" between the great and small world; on that of a mediation through the imagination, the creative faculty; on that of "transmutation" or the transformation of the individual through work on the *materia prima* of the unconscious contents; one may add the idea of a "second birth" of the person, attaining a new identity at the close of an initiatic process. Jung, to be sure, established a special relationship with this tradition that was not merely allegiance to one of its forms, but an integrating synthesis, seeking the connection between its different and particular forms. Moreover, through his rooting in a scientific discipline – psychology and psychiatry – he offered an interpretative viewpoint on the discourse between the various forms of traditional knowledge.

##### 5. JUNG, INTERPRETER OF THE WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITION

Parallel with this building of psychological theories on esoteric foundations, Jung also worked as a cultural interpreter, suggesting interpretations of various currents of Western esotericism that he wanted to restore to their former place in European cultural history. Without completely abandoning the territory of occultism and spiritualism, he devoted studies to gnosticism (*Aion*, 1951), to astrology and alchemy, and to their relationship with modern science. His project was thus to sug-

gest a reading of the hidden face of Western culture, at the same time as discovering his own presuppositions in history.

Within the body of esoteric learning entered on by Jung, it was alchemy that held the most important place. Jung devoted several thousand pages to the Western alchemical tradition and to some of its principal representatives (→ Paracelsus, → Gérard Dorn), and wrote detailed commentaries on some of them, such as the *Rosarium philosophorum*. An initial study on a Chinese alchemical text (*Commentary on the Secret of the Golden Flower*, 1929) was followed by an essay on the psychological interpretation of alchemy (*Psychology and Alchemy*, 1944), then by a group of studies of a central symbol of the alchemical tradition, the *coniunctio* (*Mysterium coniunctionis*, 1955/1956). Among the numerous alchemists whose texts Jung commented on, Paracelsus held the first place. Jung devoted to him and his disciple Gérard Dorn two long studies (1940 and 1942), which contributed to making known the work of the Swiss physician-philosopher: there are expounded the bases of Paracelsian thought; his philosophy of nature; the theory of the two “lights”, that of nature and that of the Holy Spirit; the elements and principles at work in nature and in transformation, like the *archaeus*. Jung saw in Paracelsus’s work the implicit formulation of a discourse on the unconscious, and this decisive encounter with one of the prime representatives of Hermeticism and the philosophy of nature led Jung on to an interest in alchemy as a para-scientific discourse, as a spiritual phenomenon, and as a religious discourse. These studies allowed Jung to shed light on the representations of one of the most enigmatic disciples of arcana, and to illuminate certain processes at work in the psyche by analyzing them through alchemical representations. The three principles (sulfur, mercury, salt) and the phases of the *opus* (*nigredo*, *albedo*, *rubedo*) are interpreted as states of the psyche, or as moments of confrontation between consciousness and the unconscious. As for the philosophers’ stone, it is a symbol of the Self, the realized state of the subject after transmutation. The alchemists, Jung maintained, sought by working on matter to give expression to modifications of consciousness, and to the tendency of the psyche towards the state of wholeness. The recourse to alchemy as a metaphorical discourse allowed Jung to formulate the final state of his theory and to explain precisely his concept of the analytic cure and the phenomenon of transference (*Psychology of the Transference*, 1946), postulating that in the

transferential situation, the analyst and the patient find themselves in the position of the adept and the *soror mystica* working together at the realization of the *opus*, i.e. to the extension of consciousness and the realization of the Self.

## 6. ESOTERICISM AND PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

This project of the hermeneutics of culture caused Jung to have a lifelong interest in religious phenomena and to seek out dialogue with theologians, both Protestant and Catholic, and with historians of religion. The stature he accorded to religious people makes of his oeuvre one of the major works of the 20th-century psychology of religion. Going beyond the projectional character of every representation of the divine, as conceived by Feuerbach (1804-1872), beyond Nietzsche’s “death of God”, and the idea of a “self-destruction of Christianity” as announced by Eduard von Hartmann, Jung proposed an approach to the religious phenomenon that assumed a position beyond both its devaluation and the unconditional embrace of dogma. Convinced of the existence of a “religious impulse” in the human psyche, he wrote many studies on religious subjects and underlined the importance of heterodox currents, from gnosticism to → mysticism. Carefully distinguishing “confession” from “religion”, he proposed a definition of the religious attitude as ‘scrupulous attention paid to the manifestations of the irrational’ (*Psychology and Religion*, 1940), and urged the necessity of a “symbolic” life that takes the “numinous” factors (Rudolf Otto’s term) into account as bearers of meaning, and restores the dimension of the sacred to individual existence.

Although he recognized the importance of the Christian roots of Western civilization, Jung, as a great reader of Meister Eckhart and → Jacob Boehme, undertook a critical revision of certain Christian dogmas in the light of mystical and esoteric ideas. His essay on the dogma of the Trinity (1940) reflected on the exclusion of the feminine from the Christian representation of the divine, and juxtaposed this with a group of heterodox doctrines which, from the Gnostics to Boehme, sanctioned the reintegration of the feminine. As a parallel to the mother archetype (of which the Virgin and Divine Mother is an aspect), Jung placed the figure of Sophia or Divine Wisdom, archetype of feminine spirituality. These studies on the religious representations of the feminine went together with a validation of the feminine on the psychological and cultural levels. Referring to Joachim of

Fiori († 1201) and his tripartite vision of history, Jung went further by conceiving of the Trinity on a progressive model: the Holy Spirit here corresponds to the third stage of the manifestation of the divine, in which the opposites constituted by the reigns of the Father and the Son reunite in a *coniunctio*.

Jung's work in religious psychology also included a reflection on the question of evil and its origin, expressed mainly in his correspondence with the Jesuit Victor White. *Answer to Job* (1952), containing Jung's debate with the Judeo-Christian conception of God, was his most important contribution to this problem. Commenting on the Book of Job, Jung pointed out the ambivalence inherent in the divine *imago* of the Old Testament and the problem of the "divine unconscious". He questioned the identification of God with goodness, and reintegrated evil within the divine sphere. Jung saw in the 20th century the end of a world and the passage to a new stage of religious evolution, which he called a "new aeon". In view of this visionary dimension, and in view of the theme of a spiritualization of matter (alchemy!), Jung's religious thought might be seen as comparable with that of his contemporary Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Jung saw the great currents of Christian esotericism as being in a compensatory relationship to institutional Christianity and its dogmatism. His interest in gnosticism, present ever since the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, reappeared in his works of the 1950s (*Aion*, 1951), especially with commentaries on → Zosimos of Panopolis. Jung's oeuvre equally made room for oriental esotericism, with his studies on Chinese alchemy (1929), the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1935), the *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* (1955) and the *I-Ching* (1950). In these studies, conceived as "psychological commentaries", Jung attempted to demonstrate both the differences and the similarities of archetypal representations in the East and the West, thus posing on a fresh basis the question of a universal esotericism and its invariable features. His own oeuvre, heir to both Eastern and Western influences, was largely founded on the idea of a synthesis between the two traditions, or at least on that of their dialogue.

#### 7. ESOTERICISM AND CRITICISM OF MODERNITY

One part of Jung's work was dedicated to collective psychic phenomena and their repercussions in the political sphere and in social life, thus to fanaticism and mass-movements in contemporary societies as they manifested in phenomena such as

National Socialism (*Wotan*, 1936). The originality of his analysis lay in seeking the origin of these phenomena in the collective unconscious. The critical view of modernity, often present in the writings of esotericists at the beginning of the 20th century (thus, in very different ways, in both → Rudolf Steiner and → René Guénon), was no less so in the work of Jung, who warned that the danger of mass-movements increases as secularization grows, if outdated religious values are not replaced by other forms of access to meaning. The solution to this conflict is possible, Jung thought, through "individuation", in which the evolution of the subject towards greater consciousness allows him to acquire personal convictions about the meaning of existence, and enables him to resist contamination by "psychic epidemics".

#### 8. RECEPTION AND POSTERITY

For all these reasons, Jung's oeuvre holds an eminent and unique place in the field of 20th-century esotericism. At the same time, it marks a turning-point in the history of esoteric doctrines, insofar as it offers an innovative approach to them limited neither to pure erudite study, nor to the adhesion to some institutionalized current. This position earned Jung criticism both from the detractors of esotericism and from its adepts. Although contested by the perennialists [→ Tradition], who are often opposed to psychoanalysis, Jung was still one of the contemporary authors who possessed the widest knowledge of esoteric currents of the modern West. His work contributed to the bringing to light of a Western "path" and its specific nature. Beyond the various trends of analytical psychology and the post-Jungian currents that developed after his death, he was of capital importance for the field of researches into the imagination and the mythic in culture and society (G. Durand, M. Maffesoli, J.J. Wunenburger), for the dialogue between religions (M. Eliade), and for studies of the "two cultures", that of the humanities and that of the exact sciences, and their integration within a transdisciplinary perspective (E. Morin, B. Nicolescu). In its popular form, Jung's thought is also claimed as a foundation of the → New Age movement.

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CHRISTINE MAILLARD

## Jungism

The impact of → Carl Gustav Jung's ideas in contemporary society has been both considerable and selective. To mention just a few areas, there are modes of therapeutic intervention, psychological tests, forms of myth analysis, branches of Christian theology as well as a host of literary and artistic products that betray the influence of Jungian thought.

Specifically for the domain of religion, Wulff

(1997) distinguishes six areas in which Jung's influence is particularly strong. Jung's critique of mainstream forms of Christianity has inspired theological perspectives that incorporate key concepts from Jung's work. Certain forms of feminism have incorporated Jung's ideas on the specificity of, and the differences between, the male and female psyches. There are forms of Biblical interpretation that attempt to read Scriptural narratives as myth and to decode these myths by means of a Jungian hermeneutic framework. In the phenomenology of religion there have been efforts to ground the presumed universality of certain religious elements, such as hero myths, in Jung's archetypes. A number of writers attempt to make various Eastern religious traditions relevant to a contemporary Western audience by explaining these traditions in a Jungian, psychologizing framework, e.g. as dealing with individuation and the quest for the Self. Finally, a genre of Christian spiritual literature has attempted to use Jung's concepts as a resource for spiritual growth.

In the context of this Dictionary, it is of particular interest to note how themes prevalent in earlier esoteric currents, such as the concept of archetypes and specific symbolic methods of interpreting myth, have entered contemporary culture through the mediation of Carl Gustav Jung. Whereas most manifestations of Jungism included in Wulff's review arguably belong to "high culture", there are forms of more popular Jungism that have largely been left uncharted in the scholarly literature but are highly relevant to understanding the historical vicissitudes of present-day esotericism. In this sense, Jungism denotes the variety of forms in which certain of Jung's key concepts have been adopted by the cultic milieu and have been integrated into a popularized esoteric world view that hovers between the psychological and the religious.

The incorporation of Jungism into modern unchurched religiosity in general, and into → New Age discourse in particular, is hardly surprising, considering that Jung was deeply interested in a variety of beliefs and practices that have later come to interest many individuals and groups in the cultic milieu. As is well known, Jung wrote on topics such as mediumistic trance phenomena, the divinatory techniques of → astrology and the *I Ching*, on UFO's, on the astrological ages and on → correspondences (under the guise of synchronicity). He adapted such esoteric motifs to the requirements of a psychologizing and scientific epoch. However, Jung's oeuvre is vast and diverse, and popular Jungism as defined here represents a selective appropriation and recasting of this corpus.

The precise genealogies that lead from Jung's own work to the popularizations and reinterpretations found in the cultic milieu have to date not been traced in any scholarly work, and only the outlines of the process can be given here. Perhaps the most important single line of transmission of Jung's ideas into a broader Jungian religiosity have been the Eranos conferences. Beginning in 1933, Jungian speakers, including Jung himself, were invited to hold lectures on a variety of topics in the history of religions. These lectures were recorded in a series of highly influential yearbooks. Due to this distinct Jungian emphasis, Eranos became a forum for the dissemination of a specific interpretation of Western esoteric thought, primarily to an intellectual audience.

Whereas the Eranos conferences were conducted in a cerebral and elitist format, Jungism entered the mainstream of popular culture in America and Western Europe not least due to the influence of Joseph Campbell (1904-1987). Campbell popularized Jungian ways of approaching myth, and disseminated them widely through popular books and through his many appearances in the media. His book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) has thus been one of the most successful Jungian books on myth ever to be published.

Beside the specific influence of Eranos and of Joseph Campbell, Jungism is also a loosely bounded form of discourse created by a host of separate individuals and groups. To name a few examples, there are Jungian modes of astrology, Jungian → tarot interpretations and Jungian readings of myth that have been created by people operating independently both of the Eranos movement and of each other.

Four themes in Jung's work have resonated especially well with the concerns of later Jungian spirituality. Firstly, myths are read for their potential to enrich the lives of their contemporary readers with spiritual and psychological insight. An especially influential sub-genre, represented by authors such as Jean Shinoda Bolen (*Goddesses in Everywoman*, 1985) and Robert Bly (*Iron John*, 1990), is directed at exploring one's masculinity or femininity through myths. Secondly, the concept of archetypes is ubiquitous in Jungian attempts to explain the inner meaning of myths, of dreams and of certain powerful experiences. Jungian astrologers and Jungian tarot readers thus commonly understand the symbols of the birth chart and of the tarot deck as representing archetypal experiences. Thirdly, synchronicity, the purported connection between causally unrelated events that have a feel of significance, is a topic explored by many Jungian writ-

ers. The belief that an enhanced awareness of synchronicities can enrich one's life is found in a wide range of literature, from James Redfield's → New Age best-seller *The Celestine Prophecy* (1995) to a host of contemporary management texts. Fourthly, the Jungian concept of individuation, i.e. of psychological and spiritual development as teleologically directed toward the goal of wholeness, is a recurrent theme. Jungian astrologers can thus understand transits, i.e. the celestial events said to correspond with events in a person's life, as parts of a vast cycle of development that potentially leads to psychological as well as spiritual integration.

A feature that is common to these popular esoteric manifestations of Jungism is the more or less extensive reinterpretation of Jung's own thought. Seven main differences between the corpus of Jung's writings and the uses made of it by later Jungians can be singled out: (1) Jung saw religious experience as a form of personal experience, albeit an important one, not as an unproblematic reflex of a spiritual reality. Jungian beliefs that religious experiences point at some part of the mind being linked to the divine are not readily compatible with Jung's own perspective. (2) Jung explored and modified his concepts repeatedly throughout a career that spanned 65 years, and often changed his opinion or contradicted himself. Jungism tends to be far more homogenizing, a propensity that may be due to Jung's often arcane references and obscure style and the concomitant temptation for Jungians to be largely reliant on secondary literature. (3) The aspects of Jung's work that are the least "spiritual" are among those that have been tacitly dropped. This applies especially to experimental, psychological research on word associations and on complexes, in which Jung reveals a positivistic side that one rarely if ever sees a trace of in later Jungian literature. (4) Jung is prone to seeing the human psyche as the locus of overpowering, even destructive forces, a view that is fundamentally at odds with the generally optimistic outlook of much later Jungism. Whereas Jung repeatedly warns of the dangers of being swamped by archetypal forces, Jungian literature can invite readers to identify with or draw power from archetypes. (5) Jung was also fundamentally elitist, believing that only a minority of people has reached the spiritual maturity needed to understand and accept his ideas. The egalitarian ideal of much of contemporary Western society is at odds with such a view. (6) Jung was highly critical of the attempts by Westerners to adopt Eastern doctrines or to practice rituals of Indian origin such as yoga. Modern Jungians, on the other hand, are apt to eagerly embrace

the Orient as a positive Other. Conversely, Jung was also heir to a nationalist or *völkisch* stream of thought, seeing certain spiritual practices as more suitable to one's own "race" or people. This is a topic explored at length by critics but generally passed by in silence in Jungian texts. (7) Finally, Jungian concepts are readily applied to domains in which Jung himself had only a marginal interest. A prime example is the tarot. Jung mentions the tarot only in passing, whereas the 1980's and 1990's have seen the emergence of an entire genre of Jungian exegeses of the tarot.

Jung's ideas have thus been received in a way analogous to that of many canonical scriptures. They are referred to with great respect by Jungians as constituting a fund of spiritual wisdom, but are nevertheless in practice used as a pool of cultural resources from which one can freely pick, choose and reinterpret various elements.

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OLAV HAMMER

**Jung-Stilling, Johann Heinrich**  
(Johann Heinrich Jung), \* 12.9.1740  
Hilchenbach, † 2.4.1817 Karlsruhe

Raised in a pietistic family, Jung soon distinguished himself by his intellectual gifts, his sensitivity and his lively imagination. Having worked in various teaching positions, he left his natal home in 1762 to escape his father's rule and exercised various occupations while leading a hard life of wandering. Following an illumination, he decided 'to ally himself with God and let himself be guided by him', considering adversity a necessary purifying fire. A patron made it possible for him to broaden his culture, introduced him to the art of medicine, and ultimately oriented him toward the treatment of eye diseases. He went to Strasbourg to study medicine, where he befriended → Goethe and Herder and through them discovered the literary movement of German pre-Romanticism. In 1774, he gave the first part of his *Lebensgeschichte* to

Goethe, who published it anonymously without the author's knowledge. In 1778, he was named professor of political economy at Kaiserslauten. His first wife having died, he remarried. An Aulic Councilor in 1784, he was named professor at the University of Marburg in 1786. Simultaneously with his teaching activities, he undertook many cataract operations, many of them successful. His major concern remained nevertheless to write works to the glory of the Christian religion. This activity and its success excited the envy and criticism of his university colleagues. To his professional worries was added the pain of losing his second wife. He married a third time, with an accomplished woman who was able to bring harmony to his disordered lifestyle. Having finally entered into the service of prince Friedrich von Baden, who freed him from material worry, he was able to write and publish at his leisure, producing many religious writings of eschatological and prophetic content. He devoted himself to this zealously until his death in 1817.

Prior to becoming a reputed economist and a famous surgeon, Jung had known literary glory owing to his autobiography. The first three volumes are marked by a sensitive tone and style, simultaneously colored by piety, freshness, and naivety, that found an enthusiastic response in pre-Romantic literary circles. In the fourth and fifth volumes this charm is missing because the author relies too much on the intervention of divine providence. His edifying and didactic side henceforth becomes all the more tiresome as his style suffers from obvious carelessness.

The tireless zeal he displays in glorifying and deepening religion has often caused Jung to be perceived as a Pietist, but such a judgment is questionable. Jung appreciated the pietistic conventicles and even strove to minimize their divergences, but he did not adhere to any of them. Moreover, he showed no reserve in criticizing certain extremist separatist movements. Partisan of a fusion of Catholicism and Protestantism, he was much more a precursor of the ecumenical spirit than he was a sectarian Pietist.

In his *Lebensgeschichte*, he wanted to show that human destiny is not subject to blind determinism, but that a divine plan can be read in it, which does not deprive one of free will and the power to change individual destiny. As far as Jung was concerned, he considered his own desire to work for Jesus Christ as having been inspired "from outside", that is, by God, for his sensual nature worked against it. On all the crucial moments of his life, he relied on God's guidance.

Jung's system is not much different from that of

the other Christian theosophers. We find in it the theory of the double fall, first of Lucifer and his cohorts, then of Man, who lets himself be tempted by the fallen angels and sees himself punished by being deprived of the divine Light and plunged in a world of opaque matter. To remedy such a dramatic situation, nothing less is needed than a good and compassionate God sacrificing his only Son for the love of humanity.

The troubled events of the era, notably the French Revolution and the abominations of the Reign of Terror, pushed Jung to favor, in his work, the eschatological aspect of theosophy at the expense of cosmogony and cosmology. From 1779 to 1783 appeared three educational novels in which the hero, like the author, has to undergo a "trial by fire" before divine providence assures his triumph and salvation. His novel *Theobald oder die Schwärmer* (Theobald or the Enthusiasts; 1783-1785) denounces the errors of the separatists and other exalted dreamers. His anonymous little work entitled *Blicke in die Geheimnisse der Naturweisheit* (Glances into the Secrets of the Wisdom of Nature; 1787) develops a mystico-kabbalistic system where all the themes dear to the Christian theosophers are found again. His roman à clef *Das Heimweh* (Nostalgia; 1794-1976) is a long initiatory and symbolic story that plunges the reader into a prophetic and eschatological atmosphere. Later, exposed to criticism from intellectual circles, the author turned toward the concerns of the common people and published several reviews of popular edification, of which the most important remains *Der Graue Mann* (The Grey Man; 1795 to 1816). Criticism and gibes did not prevent the intrepid philosopher from scrutinizing the secrets of the intermediary world of the invisible spirits in his *Scenen aus dem Geisterreich* (Scenes from the Spirit Realm; 1795-1801) and in his *Theorie der Geisterkunde* (Theory of the Science of Spirits; 1808-1809).

To this indefatigable worker we furthermore owe, besides his theosophical publications and an enormous correspondence, eleven works on political economy, without forgetting two thousand cataract operations. However, it is especially for his tireless zeal in announcing the kingdom of God and for his intense quest for a position midway between an arid rationalism and an equally deadening religious fanaticism that the theosopher from Siegerland deserves a place among the greatest.

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JACQUES FABRY

## Justin the Gnostic, 2nd cent.

Justin was a 2nd-century Gnostic of whose life nothing is known, but whose ideas have been preserved in a rather extensive report by Hippolytus, *Refutatio* V, 23-27 (summary in X, 15, 1-7). Hippolytus' report was based on Justin's most famous book, called *Baruch*, but it cannot be decided with certainty whether he knew the work directly or only through an intermediary source.

According to Justin, there are three eternal principles of the universe, called the Good One, Elohim and Edem. The first two are male, the third one is female. Only the Good One has the foreknowledge of everything, the two others are without foreknowledge. The Good One is obviously the unknown and unknowable first principle that is found in many Gnostic systems. Elohim is called 'the Father of all things created'. As already indicated by his name, he has a strong resemblance with the Jewish Creator God. Edem is said to be 'irascible, double-minded and double-bodied'; she is also called Israel and Earth. She has apparently borrowed her name from the Garden of Eden



(Genesis 2:8ff.), but since she is the mythical personification of Earth there must also be an association with the Hebrew word *'adamah*, "earth". She is called "double-bodied" because she is a half-maiden, a virgin above and a viper below.

According to Justin, the material world is not bad, nor is marriage. From the mutual sexual desire of Elohim and Edem sprang twelve paternal and twelve maternal angels, who together formed the Paradise in Eden; they are allegorically called "trees". The third paternal angel, Baruch (= Hebr. "the Blessed One"), is identified with the Tree of Life, the third maternal angel, Naas (= Hebr. "Snake"), with the Tree of Knowledge. The angels of Elohim created Adam by taking some of the most excellent earth, i.e. from the upper, anthropoid parts of Edem, whereas the animals and other living beings were created from her lower, animal parts. Adam received his spirit (*pneuma*) from Elohim and his soul (*psychè*) from Edem, and the same happened to Eve after her creation. 'And man became a kind of seal and memorial of their love and an eternal symbol of the marriage of Edem and Elohim' (V, 26, 8). Every human marriage is an image of the archetypal marriage of Elohim and Edem, i.e. of Heaven and Earth.

After the creation of the cosmos, 'as a result of their joint pleasure' (V, 26, 14), Elohim ascended to the highest parts of heaven in order to see whether there was any deficiency in the created world. There he saw a light far superior to that which he himself had created and by that he discovered the existence of the Good One, who said to him: 'Sit on my right hand' (Psalm 110:1). When Edem realised that Elohim would not return, she became angry and commanded her first angel, Babel, i.e. Venus, to cause adultery and dissolution of marriages among men, so that they might undergo the same suffering she endured from Elohim's departure. She also ordered Naas, her third angel, to chastise the spirit of man, so that Elohim might be punished through the suffering of the spirit he had given. Naas seduced Eve and also had a homosexual relationship with Adam, 'whence have arisen adultery and homosexuality'. In Justin's view, the origin of evil was ultimately due to the fact that both Elohim and Edem were without foreknowledge, so that Elohim could not foresee what was to happen when he did not return to Edem after his discovery of the Good One. It is even said that vice and virtue arose 'from one single source – that of the Father' (V, 26, 23-24).

In order to save the spirit of man, Elohim sent his third angel, Baruch, to Adam, to Moses and to the prophets, inciting the spirit to desert Edem and to

turn to the Good One, just as Elohim had done himself. But Naas, through the soul in man, seduced them not to follow the words of Baruch. Even an uncircumcised "prophet", Heracles, was sent by Elohim to prevail over the twelve angels of Edem (his twelve labours), but he failed too. Finally, Baruch was sent to Nazareth, and there he found Jesus, the twelve-year-old son of Joseph and Mary, who was tending sheep. He was sent to explain what had happened in the beginning and to tell the people about the Father Elohim and the Good One. As Naas failed to beguile Jesus too and for that reason caused him to be crucified, Jesus gave his body and soul back to Edem, commended his spirit to Elohim, and ascended to the Good One.

In Justin's system, Jesus is the first person who listened to Baruch's exhortation to leave Edem and to ascend to the Father and the Good One. The initiates of Justin's sect follow his example. Before the mysteries were disclosed to them they had to swear 'not to divulge them to anyone and not to relapse from the Good One to the creation'. Then they ascended to the Good One and saw 'what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man' (V, 27, 2). They also drank from life-giving water, which they interpreted as a bath in the water above the firmament, 'in which spiritual and living men are washed' (V, 27, 3).

Since nothing of Justin's life and career is known, it is only on the basis of his ideas that some suggestions about his background can be made. Many of his ideas are reminiscent of those fostered by the Jewish Christians, by the Elkesaites [→ Elchasai], by the → Mandaeans and the Manichaeans [→ Mani; → Manichaeism]. In addition to the general Jewish outlook of Justin's myth, the following may be mentioned: Jesus' instruction by Baruch at the age of twelve, that of the *bar mitswāh* (Jewish; cf. Luke 2:42, but also Mani's first encounter with his Twin); Jesus as the natural son of Joseph and Mary (Jewish Christians); the emphasis on marriage and procreation and the severe rejection of sexual sins (Jewish Christians, Elkesaites, Mandaeans); the successive missions of Baruch to Adam, → Moses, the prophets, Hercules, and Jesus, corresponding to those of the "True Prophet" (Jewish Christians), of Elchasai and the revealers of truth before Mani; the corruption of the Law and the prophets (Jewish Christians, Elchasai). On the basis of all this, it seems most likely that Justin had a Jewish-Christian background. He retained the basic Jewish and Christian idea that the Creator and the creation are good and he stuck to the Jewish-Christian belief that Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth, had



brought the final revelation, but his Gnostic inclinations apparently compelled him to a radical reinterpretation of Jewish religious history.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

## Kabbalah → Jewish Influences

**Kardec**, Allen (ps. of Denizard Hyppolyte Léon Rivail), \* 3.10.1804 Lyons, † 31.3.1869 Paris

Léon Rivail was born at 76 Rue Sala in Lyons. His father, a jurist in that city, sent him to study, from the age of ten, in Yverdon (Switzerland), in one of the most famous institutions of the era, directed by Rousseau's disciple Jean Henri Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi put the pedagogy of *Emile*

into practice and offered his pupils, who came from every country in Europe, an original method that he called "mutual instruction". The older children taught the younger; mutual aid rather than competition was encouraged. Rivail was to retain the hallmark of this environment, in which a sense of order, personal discipline, and respect for differences were basic values.

When he was twenty, he moved to Paris and soon established a private school (Institut Rivail) in Rue de Sèvres, based upon Pestalozzi's pedagogical method. The young teacher soon published his first book, *Cours pratique et théorique d'arithmétique* (Practical and Theoretical Course of Arithmetic). Convinced of the need to reform educational methods in France, he believed that pedagogy had to become a precisely defined science. In 1828 he published his *Plan pour l'amélioration de l'Éducation Publique* (Plan for the Improvement of Public Education) in which he emphasized that public instruction should give much attention to morality. A reader of Fourier, Rivail was sensitive to the goals of peaceful social reform inspired by Republican values. He was a member of several learned societies, notably the Royal Society of Arras, which in 1831 awarded him a prize for his essay on the question "Which system of study is most in harmony with the needs of our times?" Fascinated with science, he was for many years secretary of the Phrenological Society of Paris and took part in the activities of the Society of Magnetism, leading investigations into the phenomena of somnambulism. In 1832 he married Amélie Boudet, a schoolteacher who shared his passion for education. However, in 1835 they had to close the school because of financial difficulties. Rivail, who subsequently taught at the Lévy-Alvarès School, continued to publish teaching manuals, including the *Catéchisme grammatical de la langue française* (Grammatical Catechism of the French Language), published in 1848. Most of his works were adopted by the University and brought him sufficient income to live comfortably.

Kardec had established a reputation as a sensible educator when, in 1854, he heard about the spiritualist practice of "table-turning". According to his biographers he remained skeptical at first, but the following year, having attended a few séances, he turned to experimenting himself. He joined a group of friends who were communicating with the spirits in the manner imported from the United States, typtology (a spiritualist technique of communicating with spirits by means of rapping with various codes, arranged for the purpose). The group recognized the dramatist Victorien Sardou

as their best medium, and Camille Flammarion soon became active in the séances as well. Rivail confidentially received some fifty notebooks of written “communications” obtained within the group a few months earlier; they included several thousand messages dealing with a great variety of subjects. From 1856 on, he worked on categorizing and ordering the material in these notebooks, which seemed to him to contain a coherent teaching. A spirit then revealed to him one of his previous lives: he had been a Druid in Gaul, and his name had been Allan Kardec. Rivail now definitively assumed this identity as his own.

During the course of new séances, Kardec questioned the spirits in view of perfecting what he considered their doctrine. His group would prepare the questions; and the mediums would take down the messages dictated by the spirits. Soon aided by “the spirit of Truth”, Kardec then transcribed it all at home in his apartment on Rue des Martyrs. The “spirit of Truth” now revealed his mission to him: to establish spiritism and propagate the doctrine delivered during the séances. In 1857, Kardec published *Le livre des esprits* (The Spirits’ Book), which was an instantaneous success. Reprinted several times in about a decade, it came to be recognized as the bible of communication with the hereafter. A practical, moral, and spiritual guide, it contained many messages supposed to have come from the famous departed: Socrates, Plato, and St. → Augustine, but also → Swedenborg and other philosophers, as well as scholars and poets.

This was the starting point of a new religion, called spiritism, and organized by Kardec as a universal school. In 1861, he wrote the code of conduct for mediums, *The Mediums’ Book*, which established a typology of spirits’ modes of communication with humans (e.g. writing mediums, clairaudient ones, others who “embody” the spirits and lend them the use of their voices and faces, and so on). Despite the general outcry that these practices provoked in Catholic circles, Kardec continued to spread the doctrine. In a few years, almost one hundred spiritist centers sprang up, about fifteen of them in Lyons. Many who had lost their social position, their roots, or their loved ones, or were suffering from illness, came to adopt this new religion in which the belief in spirits went along with a quest for “proofs”: for Kardec saw spiritism as a scientific religion, with a calling to critically study mediumistic “phenomena”. In 1858, he founded the *Revue Spirite* in Paris, which contained exchanges of testimonies and articles about the study of such phenomena.

Kardec developed a “pedagogy of suffering”,

according to which the soul keeps evolving even after death, following a cycle of reincarnations. Progress for him was the eternal law of humanity, and his fundamental values were Work and Reason. Within spiritist circles Kardec opened libraries, established fellowship funds, and organized collections for the needy. His spiritist associations were open to women and even children; they were devoted to prayer for the dead and dispensing free magnetic therapies. Kardec wished them to be meeting-places for people belonging to all social strata, including the working classes as well as the gentry. Rejecting the inevitability of evil and the idea of degeneration, he fought against child labor. Spiritism thus took on new dimensions by getting associated with social causes such as educational reform and the improvement of the position of the proletariat. In a century when the Christian socialists identified the proletariat with the suffering Christ, spiritism encouraged a working class Messianism. An anti-clerical social reformer, Kardec wanted to reconcile faith and reason: ‘It is not enough to believe’, he said, ‘one has to understand’.

Kardec’s spiritism has enjoyed much success abroad, traveling even as far as Asia (notably to Viet-Nam, where it gave birth to the “Cao daist” movement). However, it is first and foremost in Brazil that it has become a full-fledged religion, extremely active and well-represented today in the middle classes. Its influence, as a syncretic development, on Afro-Brazilian religions (Candomble, Umbanda) greatly fascinates contemporary ethnographers. In other countries of Latin America, new forms of spiritism are currently developing in the direction of neo-shamanism. Such developments demonstrate the continuing international vitality of Kardec’s spiritist movement.

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**Kerner, Justinus Andreas Christian,**  
 \* 18.9.1786 Ludwigsburg, † 21.2.1862  
 Weinsberg

German Romantic poet and writer, physician, and early investigator of occult phenomena. Born as the sixth and youngest child of a county commissioner and civil servant, Kerner was originally trained for a business career. At the age of twelve he was healed of a nervous ailment by the practitioner of → animal magnetism Eberhard Gmelin (1751-1809): his first contact with a method of treatment he would himself practice in his later medical career. From 1804 to 1808 he studied medicine in Tübingen, where he got involved in a circle of poets and began to write poems himself. After completing his studies he traveled to Hamburg, where he worked in a hospital run by his brother and expanded his contacts in literary circles. In 1809 he went on to Vienna, where he met Friedrich Schlegel and Ludwig van Beethoven. Having returned to his native Württemberg in 1810, he worked as a physician in several villages, until being appointed in January 1819 as town physician of Weinsberg, where he would remain for the rest of his life. His house in Weinsberg, built in 1822 and nowadays a museum devoted to his life and work, became a major meeting place for poets and thinkers. On top of the hill “Weibertreu” near Weinsberg one can still find the signatures of major Romantic poets and philosophers written on the walls of the ruins.

In Kerner’s literary work – notably his story “Die Heimatlosen” (The Homeless) – one finds many traces of the theosophically-oriented *Naturphilosophie* typical of German → Romanticism, including a strong interest in the “occult phenomena” associated with the “Nightside of Nature”. Of major importance for Kerner’s development in this regard were → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling’s *Theorie der Geister-Kunde* and → Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert’s *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, both published in 1808. Kerner, who had been fascinated by stories about spirits and ghosts from an early age, read the first book while still a student in Tübingen and the second in the summer of 1812, and his later work as an investigator of the occult is decisively influenced by them.

Kerner’s daily practice as a physician brought him in contact with the medical condition associated with “somnambulism”, which was frequent in Württemberg. Somnambulatory patients – mostly women – typically suffered from severe cramps and sweats, accompanied by a variety of trance states in which they saw ghosts and visions, displayed

extreme sensitivity to certain external influences (such as e.g. the presence of cats, iron nails, music), made clairvoyant predictions and prescriptions for (self-)healing, and were the focus of sometimes spectacular “paranormal” phenomena. Sometimes they also developed complex and highly individual linguistic and numerological systems (“inner language”; “inner arithmetic”). In studying such phenomena, and interpreting them as manifestations of the “magical” power of Nature, Kerner was fighting a battle on two fronts. Against traditional religious supernaturalism he emphasized that somnambulatory powers were not “miraculous” but entirely natural; but against the new natural science he emphasized that the hidden, occult forces of nature could not be understood from the merely rationalist perspective of ‘those who, enclosed in the isolating glass tablet (tabula vitrea) of their skull, have no idea of a sympathy of things and a higher spiritual life’ (Kerner 1824, VI). In all his writings about “occult phenomena”, Kerner’s goal was to provide “empirical facts” that might undermine the ideologies of Enlightenment rationalists and adherents of mechanistic science, and prove the truth of an “enchanted” spiritual worldview on pantheist foundations. → Animal magnetism was central to that project, and Kerner was in fact the first author to make a systematic attempt at investigating Franz Anton Mesmer’s life and documents.

In 1824 Kerner published his first book on occult phenomena: *Geschichte zweyer Somnambulen* (History of Two Somnambules). It was later overshadowed by his famous book on the Seeress of Prevorst, but is actually a very interesting case study of two young girls from Weinsberg who were successfully treated by Kerner. The first patient, Christiane Käßlinger (the second is known only as Caroline St.), is particularly interesting not only because of her lively visions of heaven and hell (reminiscent of → Swedenborg) but also because she later became a religious writer in her own right, with a book that she claimed was “dictated” to her from a spiritual source (*Beschreibungen über das Wesen der Gottheit, der menschlichen Natur und der christlichen Religion* [Descriptions about the Essence of the Deity, Human Nature and the Christian Religion], Kronstadt: Römer & Kammer, 1881).

Two years later (November 1826), Kerner was introduced to the somnambulatory patient who would inspire his most famous book: Friederike Hauffe (1801-1829), later known as “the Seeress of Prevorst”. Hauffe arrived in Weinsberg as a very sick patient, but during the last three years of her life she came to assume the public role of an inspired

visionary whose trances allowed her to be in daily contact with the spiritual world and its inhabitants. Among those who visited her sickbed were such great names as → F. von Baader, J. von Görres, J.K. Passavant, → F.W.J. Schelling, F. Schleiermacher, G.H. von Schubert, and D.F. Strauss. Once having given up the hope of curing her, Kerner felt free to concentrate on studying her symptoms and supranormal abilities; and the result was published in the year of her death. *Die Seherin von Prevorst* is one of the earliest attempts at an empirical study of paranormal phenomena, but is also interesting for its philosophy of illness and bodily desintegration as a condition necessary for experiencing spiritual realities.

In the following years, Kerner's focus of interest came to include the phenomenon of possession. In his *Geschichten Besessener neuerer Zeit* (Stories of recent possession cases, 1834) he describes several cases of spirit possession, concentrating on the case of Magdalena Grombach, "the girl of Orlach". Grombach was possessed by a "black man" who claimed to be the spirit of a medieval monk. The spirit could not find eternal rest because he had seduced and murdered a number of women, whose bodies now lied buried under the foundations of Grombach's family house. He wanted Magdalena's father to break down the house, find the skeletons, and give them a Christian burial. This was finally done, and human bones were actually discovered; after the reburial, the possession came to an end.

Cases like these, and stories of ghosts and hauntings generally, kept fascinating Kerner until the end of his life. This interest led him to publish two successive journals, both of which are of great importance for the early history of psychical research and Romantic → *Naturphilosophie* in the German domain: the *Blätter aus Prevorst* (1831-1833) and *Magikon* (1840-1853). Apart from Kerner himself, they contain contributions by e.g. the philosopher Adolph Karl August von Eschenmayer (1768-1852; also responsible for many of the theoretical discussions in *Die Seherin von Prevorst*), → Johann Friedrich von Meyer (1772-1849), and Franz von Baader.

As a late reflection of Kerner's fascination with the "Nightside of Nature" we have his series of *Kleksographien*, which date from the 1850s but were published only in 1890. These bizarre symmetrical shapes were created by folding a piece of paper over an inkblot, and may have influenced Hermann Rorschach's psychological tests (1921). To Kerner's imagination they suggested the shapes of spirits from the Hades (the protestant version of purgatory, first introduced by Jung-Stilling and fur-

ther developed by von Meyer) and from hell, and by adding extra pencilstrokes he indeed turned them into weird demonic or semi-demonic figures. They were accompanied by poems that reflected Kerner's increasing preoccupation with death and the afterlife. Kerner died of the flu in 1862. By that time, his book about Friederike Hauffe had already been translated into English (by Catherine Crowe, 1845), and his works enjoyed increasingly popularity in the decades before and after 1900.

Justinus Kerner, *Kerners Werke: Auswahl in sechs Teilen* (Raimund Pissin, ed.), 2 vols., Berlin, etc.: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co (contains "Bilderbuch aus meiner Knabenzeit", "Reiseschatten", "Die Seherin von Prevorst", "Die Heimatlosen", "Kleksographien", some small prose pieces, and selected poems) ♦ *Geschichte zweyer Sonnambülen: Nebst einigen andern Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Gebiete der magischen Heilkunde und der Psychologie*, Karlsruhe: Gottlieb Braun, 1824 ♦ *Geschichten Besessener neuerer Zeit: Beobachtungen aus dem Gebiete kakodämonisch-magnetischer Erscheinungen . . . nebst Reflexionen von C.A. Eschenmayer über Besessenheit*, Stuttgart: J. Wachendorf, 1834 ♦ *Eine Erscheinung aus dem Nachtgebiete der Natur, durch eine Reihe von Zeugen gerichtlich Bestätigt und den Naturforschern zum Bedenken mitgeteilt*, Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1836 ♦ *Die sonnambulen Tische: Zur Geschichte und Erklärung dieser Erscheinung*, Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1853 ♦ *Franz Anton Mesmer aus Schwaben: Entdecker des thierischen Magnetismus*, Frankfurt: Literarische Anstalt, 1856 ♦ *Blätter aus Prevorst: Originalien und Lesefrüchte für Freunde des innern Lebens, mitgeteilt von dem Herausgeber der Seherin von Prevorst*, Karlsruhe: Gottlieb Braun, 1831-1833 ♦ *Magikon: Archiv für Beobachtungen aus dem Gebiete der Geisterkunde und des magnetischen und magischen Lebens, nebst andern Zugaben für Freunde des Innern*, Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1840, 1842, 1846, 1850, 1853.

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*Seherin von Prevorst*, Innsbruck: Resch, 1983 ♦ idem, “Die Seherin von Prevorst (1801-1829), Ihr Leben und ihre Verbindung zur Stadt Löwenstein”, in: K.-H. Dähn (ed.), *700 Jahre Stadt Löwenstein*, Weinsberg, 1987 ♦ Heinz Schott & Stadt Weinsberg (eds.), *Justinus Kerner: Jubiläumsband zum 200. Geburtstag*, Weinsberg: Nachrichtenblatt der Stadt Weinsberg, 1990 ♦ Heinrich Straumann, *Justinus Kerner und der Okkultismus in der deutschen Romantik*, Horgen-Zürich/Leipzig: Münster-Presse, 1928.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

**Ketton, Robert of** → Robert of Chester

**Khunrath, Heinrich** (ps.: Ricenus Thrasibulus), \* 1560 Leipzig, † 1605 Leipzig or Dresden

Physician and alchemist, “Philo-Theosophus” and theo-alchemical author. After graduating as Dr. med. at the the University of Basle (1588), Khunrath initially made a living as the physician of the Bohemian magnate Wilhelm von Rosenberg in Bohemia (1591), then chiefly in North and Central Germany, namely Berlin (1601), Magdeburg (1603) and Gera (1604). He became acquainted with → John Dee (at Bremen in 1589) and Johann Grasse (at Hamburg in 1596), corresponded with Johann Arndt and counted Count Albrecht VII von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (Thüringia) among his patients.

Apart from his doctoral dissertation (*De signatura rerum naturalium*, Basle 1588), an edition of Zebel (Prague 1592) and a treatise *Von . . . Curation Tartari* (ed. Johann Thurnmützer, Hof 1611) Khunrath wrote numerous alchemical works (among them autographs neglected by scholarship). Khunrath’s work best known today is his *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae solius verae*, which first appeared in an abridged version (n.p. 1595), then in an unabridged one, posthumously published by Erasmus Wolfart (Hanau 1609). Thanks to its complex illustrated plates, drawn by Jan Vredeman de Vries and engraved by Paul van der Doort, this work occupies a special place in alchemical literature [→ Alchemy]. It is erratic testimony of the early period of alchemical and theosophical literature in the tradition later represented by the author of *Wasserstein der Weisen* (1619), Johann Philipp Maullius, → Georg von Welling or → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger. The work is characterised by the theo-alchemical principle that a symbolical counterpart and a natural, incarnate image of the supernatural and spiritual panacea

(Jesus Christ) may be glimpsed in the alchemical panacea (*Lapis philosophorum*). Khunrath’s chemical Christianity found its most striking expression in one of the *Amphitheatrum* engravings, which shows an alchemist praying in a laboratory-cum-atory. The singular character of the *Amphitheatrum* rests on an intricate mixture of various teachings, which Khunrath derived from the Bible, → alchemy, Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → magic, medicine and history. Khunrath’s associative manner of linking the most varied traditions results in ambiguous and obscure texts and sequences of images, which lead into both spiritual and natural realms, serving as edification for the heterodox pious as well as textbooks for alchemists with an understanding of allegory.

The *Amphitheatrum* was highly regarded among the early Rosicrucians [→ Rosicrucianism] (Johann Friedrich Jung, Benedictus Figulus, → Johann Valentin Andreae) and provoked an international uproar, discernible by its censure by the university theologian Claude Griset (Paris 1625). While Khunrath’s other works were reprinted into the 18th century, the *Amphitheatrum* was not republished after its edition at Frankfurt am Main in 1653. However, it has remained a treasured text among alchemically inclined pietists, theosophers, and the nature-mystical followers of → Paracelsus and → Boehme in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially as a commentary by Johann Arndt on four *Amphitheatrum* plates was in circulation. Khunrath was branded by German Enlightenment writers as a ‘madman acting in defiance of healthy reason’ and a ‘philosophical fiend’ (Adelung, 1787). The *Amphitheatrum* found many commentators, however, in the wake of the occult revival in France around 1900 (→ Eliphas Lévi, → Stanislas de Guaita, → Papus, Marc Haven), and translators as well (É. Grillot de Givry). It ranks as one of the most important and authoritative works of occult, theosophical and alchemical literature among 20th-century esotericists. Khunrath appears as a literary figure in Umberto Eco’s *Foucault’s Pendulum* (1988).

Manuscripts. Dresden, Landesbibliothek, Ms. J. 345, Bl. 854r-v: *Sigillum Hermetis* (Hamburg, December 1596, to Johann Grasse) ♦ Halle, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 14 A 12/T1. 1 and 2: *Consilium philosophicum*; *Consilium philosophicum practicum* (autograph) ♦ Rudolstadt, Staatsarchiv, Ms. A XVI 4g Nr. 16 (Four letters to Count Albrecht VII von Schwarzburg; autographs).

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Frankfurt am Main, 1708 edition with an introduction by Elmar R. Gruber), Graz, 1990 ♦ *Bericht vom philosophischen Athanor*, Magdeburg, 1597 ♦ *Magnesia catholica philosophorum*, Magdeburg, 1599 ♦ *Symbolum physico-chymicum*, n.p., 1598; idem (German version) Hamburg, 1598 ♦ *De igne magorum*, Straßburg, 1608.

Translations of the *Amphitheatrum* (Hanau, 1609) and reprints of the plates: *Amphithéâtre de l'éternelle sapience*, trans. É. Grillot de Givry, Paris, 1898; idem, Paris, 1900; idem, Milan, 1975 ♦ *Amphithéâtre de la sagesse éternelle* (with commentaries by Papus and Marc Haven), Paris, 1906; idem, Lyon, 1946 ♦ *Anfiteatro della Saggazza Eterna*, Rome, 1973 ♦ *The Amphitheatre Engravings of Heinrich Khunrath* (Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks Series 7), ed. Adam McLean, trans. Patricia Tahil, A. McLean, Edinburgh, 1981 (with commentaries by Johann Arndt, St. de Guaita, J.B. Craven) ♦ *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae: Schauplatz der ewig allein wahren Weisheit*, Teil I: Faksimile-Ausgabe des Erstdrucks von [Hamburg] 1595 und des zweiten und letzten Drucks Hanau 1609, mit einer Einleitung, einer Bibliographie der Drucke und Handschriften Khunraths, sowie Namenregister und Konkordanz der beiden Ausgaben von Carlos Gilly; Teil II: Transkription einer aus dem 18. Jahrhundert stammenden deutschen Übersetzung des *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae*, mit einer Einleitung von Anja Hallacker und Hans-Peter Neumann (Clavis Pansophiae, Bd. 6/Tle. 1-2), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2004.

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*Lexikon einer hermetischen Wissenschaft*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 1988, 194-196 ♦ Ralf Töllner, *Der unendliche Kommentar: Untersuchungen zu vier ausgewählten Kupferstichen aus Heinrich Khunraths "Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae Solius Verae" (Hanau 1609)* (Wissenschaftliche Beiträge aus europäischen Hochschulen, Reihe 09: Kulturgeschichte, Bd. 3), Ammersbek: Verlag an der Lottbek, 1991.

JOACHIM TELLE

**Kingsford, Anna Bonus, \* 16.9.1846  
Stratford (Essex), † 22.2.1888 London**

Christian occultist [→ occult / occultism] and animal rights activist. Anna Kingsford's father, John Bonus, was a wealthy city merchant of Italian descent; her mother had a combined German and Irish ancestry. Anna was the youngest of a family of twelve children. Since her health left much to be desired – she suffered from asthma – she spent much of her childhood in her father's library, where she read the classics and books on religion and mythology. Already as a child she was reputed to have psychic gifts and claimed to have kinship with fairies who visited her during her sleep. She liked writing: at the age of nine she published a poem in a religious journal, and at thirteen she published her first book, *Beatrice: A Tale of the Early Christians*. Around that time, Annie, as she used to be called, was sent to a "finishing school" at Brighton. Back home, she continued to write stories.

When she was sixteen, her father died, leaving his daughter a small annual income. Her cousin, Reverend Algernon Godfrey Kingsford, an Anglican clergyman, proposed to her, and they got engaged. Being involved at this time in the debate about women's rights, linked to the issue of the position of married women, she asked her cousin to promise her she could keep her freedom and her own money after marriage. He agreed, and in 1867 they did marry. Notwithstanding, after two days Anna panicked, having realized that she was unable to meet her husband's expectations. She returned to her mother's house, where she stayed until the birth of her daughter, Eadith. But she also discovered she did not feel like raising a child, and left hers in the care of her mother. In 1870 she became a Roman Catholic and was bestowed the name Anna Mary Magdalen Maria Johanna. From 1868 to 1870 she wrote stories in the *Penny Post*.

Kingsford did not want her life to be restricted to the private sphere, as was expected of mothers. Wishing to play a public role, she purchased and edited the periodical *Lady's Own Paper*, in which

she strenuously supported feminism, vegetarianism, and the anti-vivisection movement. Throughout her life, love for animals would be a major theme, always closely linked to feminism, religion and spirituality. For her, animals stood for Christ-like goodness, purity and innocence. She personally identified with them, and claimed she loved them more than children. Anyone hurting these almost holy creatures was evil and a servant of Satan, if not Satan himself. Cruelty to animals deserved to be punished; and whoever was guilty of this worst of all crimes should be destroyed, for being as immoral as those who had crucified Christ. Kingsford thus entered upon a vigorous crusade against the supreme evil of vivisection. Having realized that writing articles was not sufficient, she went as far as offering her own body to the most important physiologists of her time; they could perform their medical experiments on her, in exchange for liberation of the animals in their laboratories. Since her offer was not taken seriously, she decided to fight the practice on an intellectual level, arguing that the prevailing materialistic, positivistic and male-dominated medical science should be transformed into a genuine spiritual art of healing. In 1873 she went to Paris to study medicine, since in England women could not qualify as doctors at the time. Her goal was to prove that it was possible to take an M.D. (Medical Degree) without sacrificing animals.

During her stay in Paris, from 1874 on she lived together with her “twin soul”, Edward Maitland (1824-1897), author of a novel titled *By and By: an Historical Romance of the Future* (1873). He was a widower and a distant relative of Anna’s husband, who did not object to his wife’s friendship (a platonic one, for that matter). In 1880 Kingsford took her M.D. degree, with a doctoral thesis which was published in English in 1881; it was titled *The Perfect in Diet*, and dealt with vegetarianism and health. Together with Maitland, she then returned to England, where she practiced as a physician in London, and had mostly women among her clients.

Kingsford’s friendship with Maitland became more and more important to her, and it was in collaboration with him that she developed her religious and spiritual ideas, and began to explore Theosophy. Kingsford was attracted to the → Theosophical Society because she was looking for a religion that combined → mysticism and science, a blend she had not found in the Roman Catholic Church. In September 1882 Kingsford and Maitland both joined the Theosophical Society, and in the same year they wrote and published their book *The Perfect Way, or the Finding of Christ*. It pres-

ents itself as a defense of the idea of → reincarnation and karma, but is primarily a Christian esoteric work – unlike most theosophical publications, which drew rather on Hinduism and/or Buddhism. Like → H.P. Blavatsky, Kingsford claimed that her writings were inspired by higher entities. The relationship between Kingsford, the young and beautiful seer, and the aristocratic grand old lady of Theosophy was tinged with coldness and punctuated by squabbles. But even more than Blavatsky, Alfred P. Sinnett, another prominent member of the Theosophical Society, became a strong opponent of Kingsford. Not surprisingly, given his anti-Christian orientation and his focus on Eastern Wisdom, he wrote a harshly critical review of *The Perfect Way*.

On January 7, 1883, Anna was elected President, and Maitland Vice-President, of the British Lodge of the Theosophical Society (renamed by Kingsford as “London Lodge of the Theosophical Society”), a position which they held until April 6, 1884. Indeed, over that short period Kingsford and Maitland had become more and more worried about the Theosophical Society’s move away from western Hermetic traditions and towards “Eastern occult teachings”. After a heated conflict, and a failed attempt at mediation by → Henry Steel Olcott and (allegedly) Mahatma Koot Hoomi, Kingsford and Maitland resigned from the London Lodge of the T.S. On May 9, 1884, they founded the Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies], devoted to the study of Platonism, → Gnosticism and → Hermeticism; they did so with the help of → W.W. Westcott and → S.L. Mac-Gregor Mathers, who would later, in 1888, found the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The same year, Kingsford and Maitland edited extracts from the hermetic writings, under the title *The Virgin of the World*. Maitland’s prefatory essay, “The Hermetic System and the Significance of its Present Revival”, displays their strongly western esoteric leanings and belongs to their most interesting texts.

The purpose of the Hermetic Society, Kingsford claimed, was to investigate the nature and constitution of the human being, and to present a system of thought, along with a rule of life, which would enable everyone to develop his/her higher intellectual and spiritual potentialities. She stated that mysticism is science based on reason, and Christianity is one of the most important mystery religions, not least because it teaches that truth is only accessible through the illumination by the Divine Spirit dwelling within each human being’s own soul. Part of this wisdom was revealed to Anna by her spiritual guides (or “illuminations”, as she

called them), whom only she was able to see and hear, often during her sleep. Drawing upon the messages she thus received, she lectured on ancient philosophy, hermetic gnosis, Zoroastrianism, Osirisism, Judaism and Christianity.

Kingsford's reliance on such spiritual guidance eventually resulted in a disastrous end to her life. The guides told her that she had been chosen to be the savior of animals; and Kingsford came to believe that she was able, by magical means, to harm and kill the medical scientists and physiologists who were experimenting on animals – Paul Bert, Claude Bernard and Louis Pasteur in particular. She set out devoting much of her time to the task of killing these men by the power of her thought. And since Bert and Bernard actually died around that time, she was confident she had succeeded. In 1887 she went to Paris in order to concentrate her efforts on Pasteur, in the belief that physical proximity would make her efforts more effective. But the many hours she spent in the rain near the Pasteur Institute in Paris caused her to catch a cold which developed into pulmonary consumption. An attempt at recovering at the Riviera proved fruitless and she returned to London, where she died in 1888, with Edward Maitland at her bedside. In her last hour she admitted being smitten with remorse about the murders she believed she had committed.

Maitland has authored a voluminous biography of Kingsford, which he set out writing at the beginning of the 1890s and whose final version in two big volumes (*Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*) appeared in 1913, along with an illuminating preface by Samuel H. Hart. This book contains a wealth of information not on Kingsford only, but more generally on the occultist movement in the second half of the 19th century.

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*Lit.*: Joy Dixon, *Divine feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*, Baltimore/London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001, 29-30, 165-166, 238 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, 245, 333-346, 362, 368 ♦ Aniela Jaffé, *Religiöser Wahn und schwarze Magie: Das tragische Leben der Anna Kingsford*, Bonz: Fellbach, 1980; repr. Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag, 2003 ♦ Edward Maitland, *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work* (1895), 3rd ed., London, 1913 (2 vols.); repr. Kessinger, 2003.

AMANDA KLUVELD

**Kirchberger, Niklaus Anton, Baron**  
von Liebisdorf, \* 13.1.1739 Bern,  
† 27.9.1799 Bern

Member of the Grand Council of Bern from 1776 until his death and simultaneously officer in the Swiss army. Member of several academic societies and Government Committees. Well-read in classical and contemporary philosophy and literature, in science (mostly agriculture), and particularly in spirituality and western esoteric traditions. Theosophical essays of his, notably on → Jacob Boehme, originally meant for publication, are no longer extant but documented by mention made in his letters. Apart from a historical discourse on the civic courage displayed by the Swiss people (1771) and a treatise on the use of gypsum (plaster) in agriculture (1771), he did not publish anything. His notoriety is due mainly to his correspondence and to his role of go-between in the illuminist milieu.

For some time Kirchberger was a friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), with whom he exchanged letters (1762/65), and of the Swiss “femme de lettres” Julie Bondeli (1731-1778) whose spiritual-literary circle flourished in the 1760s and 1770s. In 1779 he got acquainted with → Goethe. Around 1764 began a long friendship with → Johann Caspar Lavater. Kirchberger never met → Karl von Eckartshausen nor → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, but the bulk of his correspondence is with these two theosophers – from 1790 with the former and from 1792 with the latter, and in both cases continuing until Kirchberger's death. Among other Illuminists, Kirchberger was also on friendly terms with Louis de Divonne (1765-1838), → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling and some disciples

of → Cagliostro, such as Jacob Sarasin (1742-1802) and his friends.

Some of the first testimonies of Kirchberger's interest in spirituality and esotericism (which go back as early as 1764), are exchanges of ideas with Johann Caspar Lavater on topics such as → animal magnetism, physiognomy, and the state of the soul after death. Indeed throughout his life he would prove to be a man of an inquisitive turn of mind, conversant with the facts and phenomena of animal magnetism, and more generally with all kinds of spiritual manifestations which at that time of mystery-mongering were engaging attention in Europe. But at the same time, he was on the lookout for clues to the nature of their underlying laws. This is why, in the 1780s, he gradually moved away from Lavater and increasingly turned his attention to → theosophy. He fell under the spell of Boehme and steeped himself in the works of theosophers such as → John Pordage, → Jane Leade and → Johann Georg Gichtel.

His most arresting theosophic writings, often blended with arithmosophic [→ Number Symbolism] and millenarian speculations, are centered on the Divine Sophia. This strong emphasis brings him closer to the Christianity of the Orthodox Church than a standard adherence to Protestantism would have it. These writings sometimes have an aroma of quietism – he was an avid reader of Mme Guyon (1648-1717) too. Indeed, while formally belonging to the Reformed Church, he really considered himself a Christian of the so-called “inner Church”, a most common trait in people with theosophic leanings, along with that of political and religious tolerance. Characteristic in this respect are his activities in championing political tolerance, while remaining sturdily engaged in combating the radically anti-religious wing of the *Aufklärung*.

In his later years he experienced spiritual illuminations. Of these he has left us some brief but powerful accounts, which he gave in his commentaries to his extensive readings. In these descriptions he appears to stand in the wake of Boehme but they do not present any the less a certain originality. On account of his epistolary activity and his gift for bringing kindred souls into contact with one another, Kirchberger gained the honour of being hailed as a catalyst in the theosophic milieu of his time. He has remained one of the most attractive figures of the Illuminist current.

Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin & Niklaus Anton Kirchberger, *Correspondance inédite* (L. Schauer & A. Chuquet, eds.), Paris: Dentu, & Amsterdam: Van Backenes, 1862; English edition: *Mystical Philosophy and Spiritual Manifestation* (Edward Burton Penny, trans.),

Exeter: William Roberts, 1863; reprinted as *Correspondence between Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and Kirchberger, Baron de Liebisdorf*, Pasadena/Covina CA: Theosophical University Press, 1949 ♦ Robert Amadou, “Correspondance (inédite) de Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin avec Nicolas-Antoine Kirchberger et François-Victor Effinger (1798-1800)”, *L'initiation (Cahier de Documentation Esotérique Traditionnelle)* 34:3 (1960), 119-127; 35:1 (1961), 35-44; 35:2 (1961), 50-59.

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

### Kircher, Athanasius, \* 2.5.1602 Geisa/Röhn, † 27.11.1680 Rome

Kircher was one of the great universal scholars of the 17th century. His life is well documented in early biographies. His comprehensive education began with his theologian father's homeschooling in music, Latin, geography and mathematics. From his tenth year, Kircher attended a series of Jesuit schools, firstly in Fulda, where he learnt Hebrew from a rabbi, then in Mainz. In 1618 he entered the Jesuit order as a novice in Paderborn, where he chiefly studied philosophy and physics. Owing to the Thirty Years War, he continued his studies in 1621-1622 at Cologne. Following the completion of his studies, Kircher worked as a teacher of Greek language and literature, initially at the Jesuit college in Coblenz, then at the “Humaniora” in Heiligenstadt, and finally teaching mechanics at the Aschaffenburg court of the Elector of Mainz, for whom he also conducted cartographical surveys. In 1625 Kircher began the prescribed four-year study of theology at the Mainz college, where he simultaneously acted as professor of Greek. After his consecration as priest in 1628, and a third probationary year as a Jesuit in Speyer, he was appointed professor of ethics, mathematics, Hebrew and Syriac at Würzburg in 1629. His simultaneous application to be a missionary to China – his first choice – was unsuccessful. Two years later the Jesuits had to flee Würzburg due to the advance of Swedish troops. Travelling via Mainz, Speyer und Lyon, Kircher reached Avignon where he taught the same subjects at the local Jesuit college, while pursuing scientific researches in astronomy and mathematics. Here he met his most important patrons, the Provençal astronomer Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc and Cardinal Francesco Barberini. These two also ensured that in 1633 Kircher was not called to succeed Kepler as Court Mathematician at Vienna but



was appointed professor at the Collegium Romanum, founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1551. Kircher taught mathematics, physics and oriental studies at Rome, which he would not leave for the rest of his life, save for an extended stay on Malta in 1637 and shorter journeys (as to Florence in 1659). From here he corresponded with scholars throughout Europe – some 763 correspondents are known – and received numerous visits. After eight years Kircher was relieved of his teaching duties and could henceforth devote himself entirely to his researches and collections, though more often with commissions from spiritual and secular lords rather than independently.

Kircher developed his claim to polyhistorical knowledge in numerous and versatile writings, publishing a total of 32 Latin folios, mostly extensive and richly illustrated. These works range from the natural sciences (mathematics, magnetism, astronomy, acoustics, optics, medicine) through the cultural history of mankind (with reference to such monuments as Noah's Ark or the Tower of Babel), geography and geology, to philological and etymological works (the decipherment of hieroglyphs, translation of Syrian and Coptic texts, Kabbalah). The diversity of these works is unified by a pansophical logic, whereby everything in the world and therefore all departments of knowledge are related to each other. In this respect, Kircher was influenced by, among others, → Ramon Llull's concept of a combinatory *Scientia generalis*, which he displayed in his *Ars magna sciendi sive combinatoria* (1669/71). This pansophic initiative, on which Kircher's correspondent Leibniz was also working since his dissertation *De arte combinatoria* (1666), consists in the construction of a totality of knowledge by relating a specific number of basic components according to combinatory and analogical principles. This cosmological and encyclopaedic logic rests on the assumption that everything is linked to everything (*omnia in omnibus*) according to the principles of the unity of disparates (*concordia discors*) and the chain of things (*catena rerum*). The polymathic diversity of Kircher's works must be understood as an inclusive project within the encyclopaedic spirit of the Baroque. This Baroque scholarship is typified by Kircher's use of theoretical and applied forms of knowledge, alongside their speculative and empirical, rational and esoteric counterparts. In consequence, Kircher's stance with respect to esoteric sciences remains ambivalent. All attempts to recruit him for or against an esoteric viewpoint are in vain. On the one hand, Kircher appears critical towards those 16th-century sciences which understood nature as con-

stituted by a magical relation between the "lower" and "higher" realms, especially → alchemy, Paracelsian medicine (e.g. → Paracelsus and → Fludd) and → magic (e.g. → Agrippa von Nettesheim). On the other hand, he describes in his works a series of esoteric sciences and traditions. He furthermore bases his pansophy as a prelude to modern science and technology on a theological concept of nature with evident esoteric presuppositions such as the cosmological connection of all things.

Magnetism was an early field of Kircher's scientific enquiry. His first publication, composed in Würzburg, *Ars magnesia* (1631), investigates the "nature", "powers" and "effects" of the magnet (*de effectibus magnetis*) in an empirical and speculative manner, following William Gilbert's *De magnetete* (1600) und Niccolo Cabaeo's *Philosophia magnetica* (1629). Kircher recognises in the magnet a universal principle of inorganic and organic nature, comparable to → Marsilio Ficino's *magia naturalis*, a bipolar duality of attraction and repulsion. According to Kircher, all things and creatures are subject to this principle, and so he investigates the universal effect of the magnetism of the earth, the planets and the sun, the elements, plants and creatures (Kircher already speaks of *magnetismus animalium* [→ Animal Magnetism] like Franz Anton Mesmer at the end of the 18th century), and its application in medicine, → music and love. Kircher thereby relates the universal effect of magnetism to God, whom he understands as the magnet of all things. God holds everything together in harmony through his magnetic power. On the basis of this theological and speculative view, Kircher achieved by experimental means a series of practical results and applications, for example in geomagnetism.

Kircher wrote further books on magnetism, such as *Magnes sive de arte magnetica* (1641, 1643, 1654) and *Magneticum naturae regnum* (1667), and extended his method to optics (*Ars magna lucis et umbrae*, 1646), acoustics and music (*Musurgia universalis*, 1650; *Phonurgia nova*, 1673). In the field of optics, he identified the bipolar principle in the duality of light and shadow and in the doctrine of colours and rays, whereby the principle of reflection (described in his "Catoptrics") acquired a central importance. Here too Kircher achieved numerous applications, notably in astronomy and microscopy, by developing instruments such as the telescope, microscope and magic lantern. Kircher's works on acoustics and music ran along similar lines in his identification of the bipolar principle of universal harmony with the relationship of consonance and dissonance. By means of a mathematical



cosmology based on numerical relations, witness his work *Arithmologia* (1665), Kircher saw musical harmony realised on three planes: the heavenly plane of *musica coelestis*, the terrestrial of *musica mundana* and the technical of *musica instrumentalis*. Accordingly, Kircher described the Creation as a world organ upon which God plays as upon an instrument, an idea previously advanced by Kepler. Again, Kircher found practical applications in this field, such as the development of auditory and communication devices, hearing aids, musical instruments and not least a renowned composition machine, which he presented to Duke August of Wolfenbüttel.

A second field of scholarly research opened up for Kircher after he encountered a manuscript on Egyptian hieroglyphics at Speyer in 1628. He was particularly encouraged by Peiresc and Barberini to attempt the decipherment of hieroglyphics. His first written works on this subject were *Prodromus coptus sive Aegyptiacus* (1636) and *Lingua Aegyptiaca restituta* (1643). When Pope Innocent X decided to erect an obelisk in the famous fountain of the Piazza Navona, Kircher was engaged as a consultant, which gave a fresh impetus to his decipherment of hieroglyphics. The results were his works *Obeliscus Pamphili* (1650) and more importantly, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* in four volumes (1652-1654), a comprehensive account of the arts, sciences, culture, religion and language of ancient Egypt with comparative appendices on other oriental cultures such as the Jewish and Chinese. Long before Jean François Champollion's decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822, but rather in the spirit of Iamblichus' *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* or Marsilio Ficino's und → Giordano Bruno's mythologisation of Egyptian wisdom into a primordial wisdom, Kircher understood the hieroglyphs as encoded symbols or signs which concealed hidden mysteries, as 'enigmatic chimera of an ancient wisdom' (*Oedipus Aegyptiacus*). On this premise, Kircher first attempted to decipher the hieroglyphs in their relation to the Coptic and Greek alphabets. *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* develops a comparative linguistics, involving Hebrew, Syrian and Chinese among other languages. From the perspective of subsequent Egyptology, Kircher laboured under the fundamental error of interpreting the hieroglyphs as natural signs and thereby as symbols, rather than as phonetic values. Kircher's interest in the hieroglyphs must be understood as a function of his pansophic quest, which led him to see in them a primordial universal language, from which all later languages and cultures derived.

This explains why *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* was concerned with much more than the decipherment of hieroglyphs. Its four volumes attempt a complete presentation of all so-called "Oriental wisdoms". The title of the first volume mentions, besides Egyptian wisdom, also Phoenician theology, Chaldaean → astrology, Hebrew Kabbalah, Persian magic, Pythagorean mathematics, Greek theosophy, Arab alchemy, and latin philology. The title of the second volume reiterates this comprehensive project of an "Encyclopaedia Aegyptiorum" as an account of all "ancient Oriental wisdoms", that is of the "Veterum Hebraeorum, Chaldaeorum, Aegyptiorum, Graecorum". It is no coincidence that Hebrew wisdom is the first topic and clarifies Kircher's understanding of the Kabbalah, to which he devotes an extensive chapter in this volume of *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, and later in *Arithmologia* (1665). Kircher thereby not only entered the hermeneutical tradition of Renaissance Christian Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III] but also transcended the 16th-century Jesuit interpretation of the Kabbalah, in which his student, colleague and friend Kaspar Schott would follow him in *Technica curiosa* (1664). Like his Jesuit predecessors, Kircher displayed ambivalence towards Jewish mysticism, dismissing its magical elements as superstition, and emphasising its theological and mystical elements as positive aspects. Kircher recognised a close relationship between the hieroglyphs and the Hebrew characters, as understood in the Kabbalah. This led him to conjecture that "Hebrew wisdom" preceded "Egyptian wisdom", and was absorbed by the Egyptians: 'This Kabbalah was initially taken over by the first Egyptian patriarchs. Just as the Hebrews used letters and names, so the latter made concealed references by various transformations of animals . . . Just as the first kabbalists expressed themselves in a concealed and symbolical fashion through letters, the Egyptians cultivated this art through hieroglyphic pictures'. Kircher understood the Hebrew letters as coded symbols, whose mysteries must be decoded. For this purpose, the Kabbalah offered three decoding procedures: 1) *Gematria* (the calculation of the numerical value of the letters); 2) *Notarikon* (understanding the words as a secret script or shorthand); 3) *Temurah* (the combination of letters). These were allegorical and exegetical procedures for 'penetrating the hidden mysteries of Holy Scripture' (*in Sacra Scriptura arcana latentia*). Kircher devoted most attention to the combination of letters, specifically because this corresponded to the Lullian method of universal knowledge. What

Kircher here established as a kabbalistic procedure, he would later develop as an encyclopaedic method in *Ars magna sciendi* (1669). Already by using the Kabbalah, he demonstrated the speculative construction of a universal language through the combination of the 22 Hebrew characters. Kircher calculated 1.124.000.727.777.607.680.000 possible permutations and explained this number as the sum not only of all possible words, but as the sum of all things, and thus the aggregate of knowledge: 'As many creatures are created by God, as there are combinations of these 22 letters'. In Kircher's view the Kabbalah was a model for his polyglot and encyclopaedic projects, as in *Polygraphia* (1663) and especially *Ars magna sciendi* (1669). In this work the *ars combinatoria* is extended into a method of *scientia universalis*, an encyclopaedia of all arts and sciences (*artium et scientiarum encyclopaedia*). With its combinatory method, the Kabbalah recognises the elementary, hidden design of the world, the *mundus combinatus*. But by then, Kircher was no longer operating with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but with an artificial alphabet of  $3 \times 9 (= 27)$  elements, derived from Llull's nine *dignitates*, whose combination yielded the totality of knowledge.

Kircher's works on magnetism, hieroglyphics and Kabbalah clearly show how he blended esoteric and theological thought with practical and technical questions into an encyclopaedic plan. This integrative approach also characterises Kircher's astronomical, geographical and geological works, for instance *Itinerarium exstaticum* (1656/57 and 1671) and *Mundus subterraneus* (1665). Scientific knowledge about the solar system as well as the earth and its interior (botany, zoology, geography, mining engineering, geology, mineralogy, vulcanism etc) are based on theological and speculative premises. They are also presented by means of a narrative fiction: in *Itinerarium exstaticum* Kircher (as Theodidactus) is conducted by the angel Cosmiel in a dream across the solar system. Here Kircher follows Tycho Brahe in presenting a geocentric world-picture, which he defends with ostensibly scientific arguments against Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler. According to Kircher, all the divine powers of the universe have condensed in the planet Earth. The interior of the earth consists of water and fire; Kircher abseiled into the crater of Vesuvius in 1638, in order to confirm the flaming and fluid condition of the interior. Inspired by imaginary travel accounts, he held that the earth's interior was inhabited by salamander-like creatures. Alongside these speculative and fabulous ideas, Kircher also

reached progressive, scientific conclusions, such as the increase of the earth's temperature towards its centre.

Kircher realised his polymathic endeavour not only through his large folio books, but also through an extensive collection of natural specimens and cultural artefacts, the Museum Kircherianum of the Collegium Romanum – thereby following a Baroque tradition in the presentation of knowledge. It is principally composed of Alphonso Donnini's collection of antiquities, donated in 1651, excavated Egyptian artefacts from the collection of Peiresc (partly illustrated in *Obeliscus pampilius*) as well as Chinese exhibits, donated by the China missionary Martino Martin and which, together with travel accounts, enabled Kircher to write a book on China (*China illustrata*, 1667) without having visited the country himself. Kircher became curator of this museum, which he expanded with gifts from Jesuit brothers all over the world and with instruments he himself had devised. The Museum Kircherianum became famous throughout Europe, not least thanks to Kircher's guided tours. In 1915 its contents were dispersed to other museums in Rome.

A complete index of Kircher's books can be found in Gerhard Dünnhaupt, *Personalbibliographien zu den Drucken des Barock*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, Stuttgart, 1991, 2326-2350 ♦ Hieronymus Ambrosius Langenmantel, *Fasciculus epistolarum ad. R.P. Athanasii Kircheri*, Augsburg, 1684 ♦ *Selbstbiographie des P.A.K. aus der Gesellschaft Jesu*, Trans. N. Seng, Fulda, 1901.

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*Athanasius Kircher SJ: Master of a Hundred Arts, 1602-1680* (Studia Kircheriana, Bd. 1), Wiesbaden, Rome: Edizioni del Mondo, 1974 ♦ François Secret, "Les jésuites et le kabbalisme chrétien", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 20 (1958), 542-555.

ANDREAS B. KILCHER

**Knorr von Rosenroth, Christian,**  
 \* 15/16.7.1636 Alt-Raudten/Schlesien,  
 † 4/8.5.1689 Groß-Albershof bei  
 Sulzbach

Knorr von Rosenroth studied theology, philosophy, medicine, classical and modern languages at the University of Leipzig, from 1655 to 1660. In 1659 he joined the "Deutschgesinnte Genossenschaft" of Philipp von Zesen (1619-1689). From 1663 to 1666 he made an educational journey through the Netherlands, France, and England. In April 1663 he enrolled at the University of Leiden as a student of theology, and was later in Amsterdam and England, returning to Germany in 1666. From 1667 onwards he lived in Sulzbach, near Nuremberg, where he entered the service of the Pfalzgraf Christian August (1622-1708). He remained there until his death, working on numerous works of natural philosophy and theology (e.g. *Erklärung über die Gesichter der Offenbarung S. Johannis*, 1670) and translations (e.g. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, 1667; Giovanni Battista della Porta, *Magia Naturalis*, 1680; and Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica*, 1680). From Sulzbach he corresponded with many important European savants: in Germany these included the Orientalist Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633-1705) and the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), and in England, the philosopher → Henry More (1614-1687), the Hebraist John Lightfoot (1602-1675), and the Quaker George Keith (circa 1639-1716).

Knorr von Rosenroth's stay in Amsterdam was the decisive event for his intellectual biography. He made there a number of important acquaintances who set him on his decades-long investigation of → alchemy, nature-mysticism, and the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. This formed the basis for his major work, *Kabbala Denudata* (2 vols., 1677-1684, hereafter *KD*). In Amsterdam he began by meeting many Jewish and Christian experts on Kabbalah. There is a tradition that Knorr von Rosenroth studied Kabbalah with, among others, the Marranos Thomas de Pinedo (1614-1679) and Isaac de Rocamora (1601-1684), as well as with Meir Stern († 1679), the Chief Rabbi first of Fulda,

then of Amsterdam, and that with their help he collected the manuscripts and printed works that constituted the *KD*. Amsterdam was not only an important center for printing and marketing the literature of the so-called Lurianic Kabbalah, which arose in Palestine in the 16th century and whose main exponents were Isaak Luria (1534-72) and his pupil Chaiim Vital (1542-1620), but also a center of information on Sabbatianism, the messianic movement of 1665/66 that was based on this type of Kabbalah. Sabbatai Zwi (1626-76) was recognized as the Messiah by this movement, which was also taken up enthusiastically in Amsterdam's circles of Christian millennarianists. Knorr von Rosenroth was certainly in contact with the Chiliasist Petrus Serrarius (1600-1669), the most prominent of the Christian Sabbatians, who proclaimed the new Messiah in Holland and England.

Knorr von Rosenroth was probably still in Amsterdam when he met → Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614-1689), the son of the Paracelsian physician → Joan Baptista van Helmont (1579-1644), whose *Artzney-Kunst* Knorr von Rosenroth translated in 1683. Van Helmont introduced Knorr von Rosenroth in 1667 to Christian August in Sulzbach, and was the most important collaborator on the project of the *KD*, writing as its last part *Adumbratio kabbalae christianae* (1684). As early as 1667, their common interest in the Kabbalah led to the *Natur-Alphabet der Heiligen Sprache* (1667), an introduction to a language for the dumb derived from Kabbala, to which Knorr von Rosenroth wrote the Introduction. It was not by chance that the philo-Semitic Pfalzgraf Christian August, a convert to Catholicism in 1655, summoned to his court first a Catholic with Quaker leanings (Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont), and then a Lutheran Hebraist (Knorr von Rosenroth), making the latter a privy counselor and chancery director. It is clear from the project of the *KD* that the Kabbalah was seen, in contrast to confessional differences, as a mythical primordial and foundational doctrine that equally embraced the Jews and the Christian sects; the Jewish Kabbalists had always known it, but, as Knorr von Rosenroth complains, it was 'until now almost completely ignored by the Christians'. As a document from the Jewish-Christian era and therefore as *prisca theologia*, the Kabbalah's "restitution" was to override all confessional divisions and establish the harmony of religions.

The *KD* is not simply a book, but rather the title of an entire library of Kabbalistic literature, which includes texts as different as a lexicon of basic Kabbalistic concepts, translations from both older and

current literature of the Hebrew Kabbalah, and documents of a contemporary debate over this literature from the Christian theological point of view. Knorr von Rosenroth's understanding of the concept of Kabbalah rested especially on the *Sefer ha-Sohar* (Book of Splendor). It has a central role in the "library" of the *KD*, even to such an extent that the first volume of the work is subtitled "apparatus in libri sohar", and the second volume "restitutio libri sohar". With his concentration on the *Sohar*, Knorr von Rosenroth reached beyond the Christian Kabbalists of the Renaissance – from → Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) to Johannes Pistorius (1546-1608) – and made a direct connection with the type of Kabbalah whose literature he had acquired in Amsterdam: the Lurianic and Sabbatian Kabbalah. In these texts, Knorr von Rosenroth found the *Sohar* sanctified as the mythical "Urtext" of the Kabbala, for instance in Chaiim Vital's *Ez Chaiim*, or in *Emek ha-Melech* (Valley of the King, printed in Amsterdam, 1648) by Naphtali Bacharach (first half of the 17th century), which are copiously cited or translated in *KD*. For Knorr von Rosenroth and van Helmont, the *Sohar* was equally the Urtext of the Christian religion. Not unconnected with Knorr von Rosenroth's plan for the restitution of the *Sohar* was the printing of the entire Hebrew text in 1684: a significant philological enterprise which Knorr von Rosenroth completed together with Jewish scholars.

Many of the texts in *KD* have played a large role in the philosophy and esotericism of the 18th and 19th centuries. In philosophy, it was especially *Sha'ar ha-Shamaiim* (Gate of Heaven) by Abraham Cohen Herreras (circa 1570-1635/39), translated by Knorr von Rosenroth, that was drawn into the debate over Spinoza's pantheism. In esotericism, among other things the three *Sohar* extracts translated in *KD* (*Sifra de-Zniuta* [Book of the Concealed], *Idra Rabba* [Great Assembly], and *Idra Zuta* [Lesser Assembly]) were translated by → MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918) and published in 1887 under the title *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, playing a major role in esoteric → Freemasonry. The same applies to the remarkable alchemical treatise *Esch mezarref* (Purifying Fire), a combination of the Kabbalistic doctrine of the Sefirot with → alchemy and → astrology, whose Hebrew original is lost and which only survives in the Latin quotations in *KD*. The text was translated from this source into English in 1714 'by a lover of Philaletes', and reappeared to play a role in the esoteric Freemasonic circle around → William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925), who republished the translation in 1894.

"Vorwort", in: *Kurtzer Entwurff des Eigentlichen Natur-Alphabets der Heiligen Sprache*, Sulzbach, 1667 ♦ *Kabbala denudata*, vol. 1, Sulzbach, 1677; vol. 2, Frankfurt a. M., 1684 (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1998).

*Lit.*: Kurt Salecker, *Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689)*, Leipzig: Meyer & Müller, 1931 ♦ Andreas Kilcher, "Lexikographische Konstruktion der Kabbala: Die Loci communes cabbalistici der Kabbala denudata", *Morgen-Glantz: Zeitschrift der Knorr von Rosenroth Gesellschaft* 7 (1997), 67-125 ♦ Allison Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the 17th Century*, Leiden: Brill, 1999 ♦ Andreas Kilcher, "Synopse zu Knorr von Rosenroths Kabbala denudata", *Morgen-Glantz: Zeitschrift der Knorr von Rosenroth Gesellschaft* 10 (2000), 201-220.

ANDREAS B. KILCHER

**Komenski, Jan Amos** → Comenius, Jan Amos

**Krebs, Niklaus** → Cusa, Nicholas of

**Kremmerz, Giuliano** (ps. of **Ciro Formisano**), \* 8.4.1861 Portici (Naples, Italy), † 7.4.1930 Beausoleil (France)

Ciro Formisano was born in Portici, near Naples, in 1861. While working as a high school teacher and left-wing journalist, he became involved in the important occult [→ occult / occultism] and Martinist [→ Martinism: Second Period] underground of Naples and was befriended by the older occult teacher Giustiniano Lebano (1832-1909). Through Lebano, Formisano then met Leone Caetani (1869-1935), a well-known scholar of Islam and a member of the Italian parliament, who was also the leader of a quasi-masonic Egyptian Order, and a neo-pagan critic of Christianity.

After travels in France and elsewhere, Formisano became a full-time occult teacher in 1896, under the pseudonym of Giuliano Kremmerz. He also edited the occult magazines *Il mondo segreto* (The Secret World, 1897-98), *La Medicina Ermetica* (The Hermetic Medicine, 1899-1900); and later *Commentarium* (1910-1911). In 1896 Kremmerz established an occult order of his own, known as the Fraternity of Miriam (or Myriam), and placed it initially under the authority of Caetani's Egyptian Order, and later (after Caetani broke with Kremmerz and left Italy for Canada) of other mysterious "Egyptian" secret Masters, whose actual existence has never been proved. While the



Fraternity ostensibly devoted itself exclusively to a system of magical healing (“Isis magic”), its inner circle was also instructed in a different system of “Osiris magic”.

Divisions within Kremmerz’s school started during his own lifetime; he withdrew gradually from public teaching in the 1910s and, disappointed with his disciples whom he still occasionally met, passed the last two decades of his life firstly on the Italian Riviera, and later in Beausoleil, France. A dozen contemporary rival organizations still claim Kremmerz’s heritage.

Most of Kremmerz’s writings were published posthumously. There are no quarrels about his “Isis magic”, a magical healing system which identifies the Virgin Mary with the Minerva Medica and other healing goddesses. Spirit, according to Isis magic, is divine and immortal; all human problems come from matter, and can only be solved when spirit again becomes independent from it. Kremmerz was familiar with → New Thought and Christian Science, and his denial of matter echoed the latter, while the use of magnetic healing techniques was drawn largely from the former. He added an occult explanation of illness, however, derived from his mentor Lebano, claiming that a plethora of malicious spirits and demons steal from humans the vital fluid which is essential for their health. Putting together the power of several initiates in a magical brotherhood, as well as invoking angels, benevolent spirits and gods, is regarded as essential if the fluid stolen by the dark forces is to be recovered.

What exactly “Osiris magic” was is less clear. Documents have been circulating privately for decades, and some were published in the 1970s and 1990s within the framework of the ongoing quarrels between rival groups claiming Kremmerz’s heritage. Other groups have denied that these texts represent Kremmerz’s original teachings, and the present status of scholarly research does not allow for a precise reconstruction of what he taught on these matters. If one believes the texts published and the practice of most (although not all) contemporary groups claiming some sort of “apostolic succession” from Kremmerz’s immediate disciples, “Osiris magic” includes two branches, “avatar magic” and a technique of internal alchemy known as “separation”.

“Avatar magic” teaches how to substitute one soul for another in the same human body. “Separation” teaches how to separate and purify the solar body from the other three human elements (physical, astral, and mental). In order to achieve the “separation”, a number of sex magic operations

(centering on a whole system of spermatophagy) have to be performed at dates carefully selected according to an astrological chart and preceded by periods of strict fasting.

Although such techniques (and their endless variations in contemporary groups) may appear paradoxical, in the systems based on Kremmerz’s thinking (unlike the → Aleister Crowley counterparts) there is no libertinism. In fact, the strictest chastity is required between one “operation” and the other, and the need to consider astrological conditions makes the performance of the “operations” a not too frequent event. The aim of these lifetime efforts is, ultimately, to achieve true immortality. An immortal soul, according to Kremmerz, is not granted to everybody, but can only be painfully achieved by applying appropriate techniques.

*La Scienza dei Magi*, 3 + 1 vols. (Ugo Danilo Cisaria, ed.), Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1974-1976 ♦ *Il Mondo Segreto*, 1896-1899 (2 vols.), repr. Viareggio: Rebis, 1985 ♦ *La Medicina Ermetica*, 1899-1900, repr. Florence: Nardini, 1983 ♦ *Commentarium*, 1910-1911 (2 vols.), repr. Firenze: Nardini, 1983 ♦ Giuliano Kremmerz (but see text on questioned authorship), *Corpus philosophorum totius magiae* (3 vols.), Milan: Edizioni Agape, 1974-1975 ♦ Vittorio Fincati, *Lo sputo della luna: Documenti sulla magia sessuale*, vols. 3, 4 and 5, Libreria Editrice “Lecture S . . . consigliate” (sic): Bassano del Grappa (Vicenza), 1998-1999.

*Lit.*: Jah-Hel, *La Pietra Angolare Miriamica: Storia documentata della Fratellanza di Miriam di Giuliano Kremmerz*, Viareggio: Rebis, 1989 ♦ Massimo Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago*, Milan: Sugar Co., 1980, 301-308 ♦ idem, “De l’hypertrophie de la filiation: Le milieu kremmerzien en Italie”, *ARIES* (Association pour la Recherche et l’Information sur l’Ésotérisme), *Symboles et Mythes dans les mouvements initiatiques et ésotériques (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles): Filiations et emprunts*, Paris: Arché – La Table d’Émeraude, 1999, 148-156.

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

**Labrunie, Gérard** → Nerval, Gérard de

**Lacuria, Abbé Paul-François-Gaspard**, \* 6.1.1806 Lyon (Rhône), † 3.3.1890 Oullins (Rhône)

The third of six children of a couple of goldsmithery and jewelry workers, Paul was educated at the seminary of Oullins. He enrolled in 1826, in the company of Charles Ozanam (1804-1888?), at the moment when death struck the majority of his family. After teaching in the “experimental” colleges of Saint-Nizier and Oullins, near Lyon, of



which Lacuria was co-founder, he was ordained priest in 1836. While at the seminary, whose discipline he found irksome, the future priest was enthused by Lamennais' (1782-1854) project for reforming the Church, and was one of the chief supporters in Lyon of liberal Catholicism. Through the agency of his brother Louis, a painter, he tried to obtain drawings by Ingres (1780-1867) for the journal *L'Avenir*, founded in 1830. The experience of this journal was decisive in forming Abbé Lacuria's social philosophy, aspiring to unite God and liberty within modern societies; he was also influenced by the first socialists, Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and Fourier (1772-1838), who had tried to restore the lost unity of society in union with the spiritual life. The responsible behavior of the Lyon workers during the revolution of 1831 confirmed Lacuria in his choices. He dreamed of a social body kept in equilibrium by the inner regeneration of its members, and thenceforth began the writing of his life's work, *Les harmonies de l'Être exprimées par les nombres* (The Harmonies of Being expressed by Numbers). As the title indicates, it is the analogies suggested by the symbolic relationships between the three first numbers in the Trinity that form the basis for a real understanding of the cosmos, made perceptible through the corresponding geometrical figures (circle, ellipse, cone), thus allowing a bridge to be built between science (the laws of mathematical progression) and faith (the revelation of the Trinity). Lacuria's approach moved, in particular, towards the inverse analogy of the Greek Fathers' "apophatic" theology. The subtitle further reveals his intentions: 'the laws of ontology, psychology, ethics, aesthetics, and physics, explained through one another and reduced to a single principle'. The work, presented in 1844 under the pseudonym of "Abbé Gaspard", was quite poorly received by the clerical world to which it was addressed. Two years later the College of Oullins was dissolved, and the second edition of *Harmonies . . .*, signed P. F. G. Lacuria, appeared in 1847 from the Comptoir des Imprimeurs in Paris. Here the Abbé settled, making a scant living from lessons but surrounded by a circle of Lyonnais artists and thinkers, among whom the dominant personality was the painter Chenavard (1808-1895). A few years after the death of the "new Pythagoras", René Philipon (1869-1936), who published the collection "Bibliothèque Rosicrucienne" with Chacornac, recognized in a photograph of Lacuria an old man who had appeared to him in a dream. Philipon obtained a manuscript of *Harmonies . . .* which the Abbé had corrected over the years in response to criticisms, and published it in

1899. Lacuria's appearance, like an ancient sage with a long white beard, inspired a lithograph of Odilon Redon (1840-1916), *Le Liseur*.

*Les harmonies de l'Être exprimées par les nombres: Les lois de l'ontologie, de la psychologie, de l'éthique, de l'esthétique et de la physique expliquées les unes par les autres et ramenées à un seul principe*, Paris: Comptoir des imprimeurs, 1847, 2 vols.; new ed. by René Philipon, Paris: Chacornac, 1899.

*Lit.*: Robert Amadou (ed.), "L'abbé Paul Lacuria", *Atlantis* nos. 314, 315, May-June, July-Aug. 1981 ♦ Jean-Pierre Brach, *La symbolique des nombres*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994, 113-114 ♦ Franck P. Bowman, *Le Christ romantique*, Droz, 1973, 214-217 ♦ Raymond Christoflour, *Prophètes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris: La Colombe, 1954, 67-91 no. 317, Nov.-Dec. 1981 ♦ Marie-France James, *Esotérisme, occultisme, Franc-Maçonnerie et christianisme aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1981.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Lanz, Adolf Josef** → Lanz von Liebenfels, Jörg

**Lanz von Liebenfels, Jörg** (Adolf Josef Lanz), \* 19.7.1874 Vienna, † 22.4.1954 Vienna

Cistercian monk, journalist and author, creator of a racial-esoteric doctrine known as → Ariosophy, and founder of the Ordo Novi Templi (ONT), a Christian gnostic order based on a cult of Aryan race. Born Adolf Josef Lanz, the son of a Viennese schoolmaster, he developed a fascination for religious and chivalrous orders at an early age. In 1893 he entered the noviciate at Heiligenkreuz Abbey near Vienna as Frater Georg. In 1897 he took solemn vows, and in 1898 he became seminary teacher. From 1894 to 1899 he published numerous articles on the history of the abbey and the Cistercian order. Lanz interpreted a tombstone relief showing a nobleman treading upon a beast as an allegory of the dualistic struggle of good and evil and developed heterodox ideas concerning the bestial origin of evil. In 1899 he left the abbey and abandoned the noviciate. From 1900 to 1905 he published polemical writings against the Jesuit influence in the Catholic church; he took up contact with nationalist Pan-German and Social Darwinist circles (cf. contributions to Theodor Fritsch's *Hammer* and Ludwig Woltmann's *Politisch-Anthropologische Revue*); he undertook studies and published journal articles on anthropology,

archaeology and ancient history relating to the Aryan race. In 1902 he assumed a doctoral title and hyphenated "Liebenfels" (a noble Swiss family) to his name (later, in 1910, Lanz adopted the style "Lanz von Liebenfels").

In 1905, Lanz combined his theological training with the new life sciences to articulate his religious doctrine of "theozoology". This variety of euhemerism held that the ancestors of the Aryan race were gods. As earlier, superior forms of life (*Theozoa*), these god-men were quite distinct from the race of beast-men (*Anthropozoa*), descended from a pygmy called Adam. The Fall consisted in the miscegenation of these god-men with the beast-men, leading to the atrophy of their marvellous powers and the development of the mixed races of historical times. Lanz attributed all sin and suffering in the world to this racial interbreeding, allegedly institutionalized in bestial sex-cults in the ancient world. He claimed that Christ, an Aryan god-man, had come to proclaim the cult of pure race but was opposed by racial inferiors resisting the revival of the cult of racial purity. Lanz von Liebenfels saw the Arian heresy as the original racial doctrine of Christianity and declared that Wulfila's Gothic Bible contained the key to "Ario-Christianity". He further claimed that the history of the medieval Church recorded the struggle of reformers (chiefly the monastic and military orders of Benedictines, Cistercians, Templars and Teutonic Knights) to revive the cult, while the modern world traced the political triumph of racial inferiors. Lanz von Liebenfels claimed that a universal program of segregation, eugenic selection and genocide could restore the Aryans to their original divine status. He also borrowed esoteric racial ideas from *The Secret Doctrine* of → Helena Blavatsky, incorporating them in his own dualist interpretation of holy scripture: *Bibeldokumente I-III* (1907-1908). This exegesis is later elaborated in his monumental fifteen-volume *Bibliomystikon* (1930-1935).

Lanz von Liebenfels launched his own magazine *Ostara* (1905-1918), as a "racial-economic" magazine to apply anthropological findings in order to combat the revolt of inferiors and protect the noble European race. Addressing the ascendancy of subject nationalities in the Habsburg empire, *Ostara* opposed liberalism and parliamentary government, and championed male rights against women's emancipation. Already in 1900 Lanz von Liebenfels had founded his own religious order, the *Ordo Novi Templi* (ONT), to propagate his racial religion based on this gnostic dualism between the blond Aryan-Germanic races of divine origin and

the dark races of bestial origin. The ONT adopted Cistercian forms of liturgy, dress and hierarchy and was open to all males subject to Aryan racial qualification. Its purpose was to act as a mutual benefit society for racially conscious Austrian Germans, promote Aryan beauty and healthy lifestyles, and encourage rural and overseas colonisation. In 1907 Lanz von Liebenfels acquired Burg Werfenstein, a picturesque castle on the River Danube near Grein, Upper Austria, as the archpriory of the order. Before the outbreak of the First World War, members were drawn from the armed forces, civil service and professions.

Lanz von Liebenfels elaborated a full ONT liturgy with an order rule, order of service, hymns, prayers and psalms for his racial religion of "Ario-Christianity". Divine office and mass were held at Werfenstein, and wealthy followers founded new ONT houses. On 9.2.1914, a second ONT priory was founded at Hollenberg near Aachen. In 1918, Lanz von Liebenfels moved to Hungary; in 1919 he was twice captured by communist insurgents but escaped with his life; and in 1921 he was deported from Germany. On 15.10.1925 he acquired the Marienkamp-Szt. Balázs ONT archpriory near Lake Balaton with the aid of Hungarian ONT brothers. On 31.12.1927 he founded the Staufien ONT priory at Dietfurt near Sigmaringen; on 8.11.1928 the Hertesburg ONT presbytery near Prerow, Germany on the Baltic coast; on 4.9.1937 the Szt. Kereszt ONT presbytery near Pilisszentkereszt in northern Hungary; and on 4.9.1938 the Petena ONT archpriory near Waging in Bavaria was founded by Georg Hauerstein junior. The order received some 300-400 brothers from its foundation until the 1930s.

Lanz von Liebenfels assimilated many esoteric ideas into his manichaeic-dualist interpretation of Christianity, coining the term Ariosophy for his doctrine by 1915. He was attracted to the Monism of Ernst Haeckel and speculated on the esoteric tradition of → *Naturphilosophie*, describing the neo-Platonic world-soul and its manifestation as energy in all matter. Lanz von Liebenfels saw Aryan blood as a metaphysical force, whose ennoblement could be assisted by eugenic breeding and the ONT sacraments. During the First World War, he used → astrology and millenarian prophecy (Joachim of Fiore) to predict the outcome of the war. During the 1920s he adopted astrological ideas (Platonic year) to periodize history: from 480-1210 society was ruled by spiritual and chivalrous orders; the rise of the masses characterized the period 1210-1920 with the spread of towns, capitalism, democracy, nationalism and communism; the next period

1920-2640 would witness the revival of hierarchies. Lanz von Liebenfels hailed the right-wing dictatorships in Spain, Italy and Hungary during the 1920s as precursors of this global transformation.

By 1925 Lanz von Liebenfels summarized Ariosophy as a doctrine of “pan-psyhic” energy, identical with God, which animated the whole universe but found its highest manifestation in the blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryan. Ariosophy used such esoteric sciences as palmistry, astrology, heraldry, name-kabbalism and numerology to study the spiritual and physical differences between the “blonds” and “darks”. Borrowing ideas of → Guido von List, Lanz von Liebenfels regarded coats of arms and names as symbolic hieroglyphs recording the karma of Aryan families through the centuries. Between 1925 and 1933 Lanz von Liebenfels collaborated with the publisher Herbert Reichstein (1892-1944) to present Ariosophy as a popular occult science of racial characterology and personal divination. Reichstein’s monthly periodical *Zeitschrift für Menschenkenntnis und Menschen-schicksal* (later *Ariosophie*) published articles by a wide circle of German occultists, including Ernst Issberner-Haldane (1886-1966), a Berlin palmist; Frodi Ingolfson Wehrmann (1889-1945), an astrologer; Robert H. Brotz, a graphologist; Rudolf John Gorsleben (1883-1930), the author of books on “Aryan mysteries”; and Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch (1883-?), an anti-Semitic and antimasonic conspiracy theorist. This publishing activity was supported by courses, public lectures and summer schools, while Lanz von Liebenfels retained the spiritual leadership of the ONT, and reissued a new series of *Ostara* magazine from 1927 to 1931 (including a new, serialized edition of *Theozoologie*). From 1933, Lanz von Liebenfels published a major series of pamphlets (*Ariomantische Bücherei*, *Luzerner Briefe*, *Briefe an meine Freunde*), intended only for ONT circulation. His historical survey of “ario-Christian” mysticism attempted to recruit many major figures in the esoteric tradition, including → Hildegard of Bingen, Gertrude the Great, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, Meister Eckhart, Jan van Ruysbroeck, Thomas à Kempis, → Jacob Boehme, Angelus Silesius, Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, → Emanuel Swedenborg, J.B. Kerning, Carl von Reichenbach, → Eliphas Lévi and Helena Blavatsky. Lanz von Liebenfels also dedicated a special study to the Austrian medium and Christian visionary → Jakob Lorber (1800-1864).

Initially enthusiastic at Hitler’s seizure of power in Germany, Lanz von Liebenfels was soon disappointed by the plebeian and demagogic aspects of

National Socialism. He continued writing his liturgical and doctrinal books for the ONT, first in Hungary, then in Switzerland, returning by 1938 to Austria where he remained throughout the Second World War. With the suppression of religious sects during the Third Reich, the ONT was dissolved. From 1947 to 1952 Lanz von Liebenfels resumed limited ONT activity and publishing, receiving the sacraments of the Catholic church before his death in 1954.

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*Lit.*: Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab*, Vienna: Hermann Böhlau, 1985 ♦ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology. The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935*, New York: New York University Press, 2004 ♦ Ekkehard Hieronimus, *Lanz von Liebenfels: Eine Bibliographie*, Toppenstedt: Uwe Berg, 1991 ♦ Rudolf J. Mund, *Jörg Lanz v. Liebenfels und der Neue Templar Orden*, Stuttgart: Rudolf Arnold Spieth, 1976.

NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE

**Lavater, Johann Caspar**, \* 15.11.1741  
Zürich, † 2.1.1801 Zürich

A Swiss Lutheran minister and theologian, Lavater is mostly known as the founder of the “modern” science of physiognomy. As a poet he acquired some notoriety by his *Schweizer Lieder* (1767). A prolific author, he wrote nearly 130 works (mostly religious books, sermons, canticles, a diary, and Christian handbooks with moral advice). His correspondence amounts to more than 11,000 letters exchanged with people belonging to practically all social milieus, from simple workers up to sovereigns in Europe (most of that correspondence is accessible at the Zentralbibliothek of Zurich). He was, among other people of great fame, a friend of → Goethe, who contributed a

chapter on the skulls of animals to his book on physiognomy (see further below). Lavater had a taste for religious polemics. He took up contact with enlightened thinkers of all kinds, without any distinction of religious or intellectual tendencies – pietists, Moravian Brothers, rationalists, mystics, Illuminists, theosophers – but he refused to be counted as a member of any movement, school or sectarian association. Because of his eclecticism, his interest in science and religion, and his search for a synthesis between faith and reason, Lavater can be considered a representative of the cultural cosmopolitanism typical of the 18th century. He contributed more than anyone else in his period to the diffusion of a kind of Christian → mysticism strongly tinged with theosophy. As a matter of fact, he can be considered one of the main popularizers of the general movement known as → Illuminism.

Lavater's faith, blended with → pietism and tolerance towards other confessions, put Christ in the foreground as the archetype of humankind and Mediator between God and Man. That emphasis gave rise to an uncompromising Christ-centered conception of mankind. Although a Protestant, he had some Catholic leanings and was oftentimes suspected by people of his Church of practicing a kind of crypto-catholicism. His ideas about the unity of the cosmos and his belief in universal symbolism brought him close to the Christian theosophers. Preoccupied with messianic expectations, he envisaged the millenium as a theological reality and awaited the manifestation of a mystical Christianity which would present itself as an "inner Church". Lavater's apologetics, his proselytism, and his militant Christosophy, oftentimes caused him to become estranged from his friends – including Goethe.

Like many of his contemporaries, Lavater was eager for miracles, strongly interested in theurgy and felt a loathing for mere abstract speculation. He was always prone to complement his pietistic Christianity with mystical elements. Convinced that the human soul had a power of precognition and divination, he also frequented some thaumaturgists of the time like Johann Joseph Gassner, Graf Joseph von Thun, Karl von Hessen-Kassel and – not least – → Cagliostro, whom he met two or three times in Strasbourg, between 1781 and 1783.

Around 1784, Lavater became interested in the → animal magnetism of Franz Anton Mesmer. He exchanged ideas on this topic with his friend → Kirchberger and many other people. In Lavater's opinion, magnetism was closely linked to the "sixth sense" with which the prophets of the Old Testament had been endowed. Lavater himself suc-

cessfully cured his wife by means of magnetism. He went as far as to believe in the possibility of a magnetic rapport with God Himself.

In 1793 Lavater came under the influence of the Illuminists of the so-called "Northern School" of Copenhagen (in particular of their leader Prince Karl von Hessen-Kassel), who practised a form of Christian theurgy. That year he went to Copenhagen and took part in their practices. Under their influence, he even became for some time inclined to believe in metempsychosis [→ Reincarnation]. His interest in all kinds of spiritual manifestations and materialisations of the spiritual increased over the years. For example, he believed that the Apostle John had never died, and during the year 1794 Lavater thought that John might possibly visit him in Zurich, which caused him to become the victim of some impostors (like Rudolf Hermann).

In Strasburg, where he was invited by Cagliostro in 1781, at the same occasion he got in touch with → Freemasonry, thereby becoming acquainted with a number of freemasons (of Strasburg and elsewhere) with strong esoteric leanings, such as → Willermoz and → Saltzmann. Freemasonry contributed to opening him up to a great number of other theosophers outside the pale of Freemasonry proper, such as → Jung-Stilling, → Eckartshausen, Kirchberger, → Saint-Martin, and to the works of → Swedenborg. His brother Diethhelm, and by the same token he himself, albeit indirectly, participated as an observer in the Convent of Wilhelmsbad (1782), aimed at defining the aims and organization of European Freemasonry. But he never joined any lodge, because the very principle of a secret society seemed to him to be incompatible with the principles of Christianity as he saw them. And it is not surprising that he took up arms against the Bavarian → Illuminaten of Adam Weishaupt as soon as he became aware of what their actual plans were all about.

Among the most successful works of Lavater is his series of essays entitled *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit* (Prospects for Eternity; 1768-1778), in which he tried to foray into the mysteries of the destiny of mankind and of afterdeath life. His most famous one, a presentation of and a plea for the science of physiognomy, is *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (Physiognomic Fragments, to foster Knowledge and Love of Human Beings; 1775-1778). The art of judging the human character and of foretelling a person's fate from the features of the face had long been part and parcel of the so-called occult sciences. In accord with the idea of → correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm,



physiognomy is based upon the idea that the very material form of any being is already, in itself, a “language”: the expression of what this being is in its innermost core. The *Physiognomische Fragmente* assured Lavater an ever growing European audience. For him it was not just a psychological tool, but also a kind of hymn to God’s glory, because correspondences as he understood them were necessarily reflective of a universal web in which God, man and nature intertwine. Not surprisingly, that work came in for its share of criticism from people (e.g. the psychologist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg) prone to see in Lavater merely a kind of magician or visionary with a free-wheeling imagination.

When Zürich was invaded by the French, Lavater was arrested and deported to Basel. Upon his return to Zürich, he was wounded by a bullet shot by a drunken French soldier and died after nearly two years of suffering. Such a death stirred a vivid emotion all over Europe. Even after his lifetime, Lavater remained a source of fascination for his contemporaries, enemies and friends, opponents and admirers alike; and he remains one of the most attractive figures of Illuminism.

*Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntniss und Menschenliebe* (illustrated), Leipzig/Winterthur: Weidmann/H. Steiner, 1775-1778; Among several new ed., see the German one by Christoph Siegrist, Stuttgart: Reclam (Universal-Bibliothek, 150-155), 1984, and the reprint (Frankfurt/Main, 1991), of the original ed.; First complete translation into English: London, 1790-1798 ♦ William Tegg published several epitomes of Lavater’s works under the title: *Physiognomy; or, the Corresponding Analogy Between the Conformation of the Features and the Ruling Passions . . .*, 1865 and 1867 (287 pages and 7 plates); For details on the English editions see John Graham, “Lavater’s Physiognomy in England”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961), 561-572; For a complete listing, his “Lavater’s Physiognomy: a checklist”, in: *Bibliographic Society of America* 55 (1961), 297 ♦ *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit, in Briefen an Herrn Joh. Georg Zimmermann, königl. Großbritannischen Leibarzt in Hannover*, Zurich: Orell, Geßner, und Comp., 1768-1778; Part 1, 1768 (contains the plan for all 25 letters, and also Letters nos. I-X); Part 2, 1769 (contains Letters XI & XII); Part 3, 1773 (contains Letters XIII-XXV); Part 4, 1778 (contains Supplements, Notes and Corrections to the first three volumes) ♦ *Nathanaël. Oder, die eben so gewisse, als unerweisliche Göttlichkeit des Christenthums. Für Nathanaële, Das ist, Für Menschen, mit geradem, gesundem, ruhigem, Truglosem Wahrheits-sinn*, Zurich/Winterthur/Basel: H. Steiner und Comp., 1786.

Lit.: Ernst Benz, “Swedenborg und Lavater”, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 57 (1938), 153-216 ♦

Ursula Cafilisch-Schnetzler, “Lavater’s *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit* in Briefen an Johann Georg Zimmermann”, in: Helmut Hozhey and Simone Zurbuchen (eds.), *Alte Löcher – neue Blicke; Zürich im 18. Jahrhundert: Aussen- und Innenperspektive*, Zurich, 1998, 203-216 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Kirchberger et l’Illuminisme du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (International Archives of the History of Ideas 16), Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1966 (Lavater’s name appears almost on every page) ♦ idem, “Johann Caspar Lavater, Charles de Hesse et l’Ecole du Nord”, in: A. Faivre, *Mystiques, théosophes et Illuminés au siècle des Lumières* (Studien und Materialien zur Geschichte der Philosophie 20), Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1976, 175-190 ♦ Olivier Guinaudeau, *Jean-Gaspard Lavater: Etudes sur sa vie et sa pensée jusqu’en 1786*, Paris: F. Alcan, 1924 ♦ Christian Janetzky, “Lavater’s magischer Glaube”, in: *Abhandlungen zur Deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Franz Muncker zum 60. Geburtstage), Munich, 1916, 65-82 ♦ Anne-Marie Jaton, *Entre le “réalisme” et la “voyance”: Lavater et la littérature française*, Pisa: Università degli Studi di Pisa, 1984 ♦ eadem, *Johann Caspar Lavater: Philosoph-Gottesmann-Schöpfer der Physiognomik*, Zurich: Schweizer Verlagshaus, 1988 ♦ Gisèle Marie, *Les Fragments de Johann Caspar Lavater et leur place dans l’histoire de la physiognomonie*, Diss. University of Bordeaux III, 1986 (unpublished) ♦ Mary L. Sloman, *Genie des Herzens: Die Lebensgeschichte Johann Caspar Lavaters*, Zurich & Leipzig: Morgartenverlag, 1939 ♦ Auguste Viatte, *Les sources occultes du Romantisme: Illuminisme – Théosophie, 1770-1820*, Paris: H. Champion, 1928, vol. 1, Chapter “Le premier vulgarisateur: Lavater”, 153-180 (see also index of names for many other references to L. in both vols.) ♦ Rolf Christian Zimmermann, *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe*, 2 vols., Munich: W. Fink, 1979 (vol. 2), 213-214.

GISÈLE MARIE

Law, William, \* 1686 King’s Cliffe,  
† 9.4.1761 King’s Cliffe

Law was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow in 1711. His personal history is somewhat parallel to that of → John Pordage. Like Pordage, Law refused to take the oath of allegiance to, in Law’s case, King George I in 1714, making him a Nonjuror, forcing him to resign his college position, and disallowing him other public positions as well. Law then lived in Putney, near London, at the home of Edward Gibbon from 1727 to 1737, where he tutored the historian Gibbon’s father. In about 1740, Law moved back to King’s Cliffe, where until his death in 1761 he lived a celibate and quiet life shared with Hester Gibbon, the historian’s aunt, and Mrs. Hutcheson, a rich, pious widow. His later years were spent studying → Boehme and writing in relative seclusion.



Law's community, at King's Cliffe, was renowned for its generous charity. Law and an anonymous patron established a poorhouse for young girls, teaching them to read, knit, sew, study the Bible, and attend church; they gave clothes, money, and food to the poor through almshouses they established. Mrs Hutcheson had a substantial income, but she and Law gave away all but a tenth of their income to the poor. They all led an abstemious life, with prayers morning, noon, and night, Law himself arising at five a.m., and spending much of his day reading in his large library of mystical authors, writing, and praying.

Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728) was referred to by Caroline Spurgeon as the most influential religious text of the 18th century, and does not reveal any trace of theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy]. Law discovered Boehme between 1733 and 1736, and studied Dionysius Andreas Freher's works from 1737 onward, but did not publicly acknowledge their influence on him. Consequently, as C.A. Muses points out, most scholars have ignored the influence of Freher on Law; this includes Stephen Hobhouse, in whose anthology of Law's selected writings Freher's name does not even appear in the index. But Law himself did not ever cite Freher, and probably would not have cited Boehme himself openly (even though some of his works are chiefly paraphrasings of Boehme's works) if he had not been publicly accused of plagiarism by a Dr. Trapp. Only after this charge did Law openly refer to Boehme.

Scholars have commonly repeated that Law is England's greatest interpreter of Boehme, but in fact Law is simply England's most well-known Boehmean author. Without doubt, Britain's greatest Boehmean is Pordage, whose work is both more complex and more extensive. But Law is a fine stylist, whose devotional writings are at once eloquent and simple. Of course, Boehme himself had an eloquent and simply devotional side, manifested in such works as *Christosophia: The Way to Christ*. Yet as anyone knows who has tried to make his way through some of Boehme's more cosmological writing, his work can be extraordinarily dense and difficult. These deeper aspects of theosophy are by and large missing from Law's work.

Still, Law was influenced by theosophy. Boehme was given on occasion to the dialogue form, whose antecedents are found in works like those of → Giordano Bruno, earlier in → John Scotus Eriugena, earlier still in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and earlier still in the works of Plato. In his most Boehmean later works, like *The Spirit of Love*,

Law likewise uses the dialogue form, developing his theses through conversations between Theophilus, a master theosopher, Theogones, and Eusebius. It is in these dialogues that we find references to 'Behmen' as the 'chosen instrument of God'.

In fact, *The Spirit of Love* largely consists in explication of theosophical premises. Law, through the mouth of Theophilus, explains the seven spirits of God, the nature of wrath, evil, the fall of man and Lucifer, redemption, and numerous other topics. Although sometimes awkward in phrasing, and never possessing the scope of Pordage's works, Law's dialogues demonstrate how deeply he had gone into theosophy.

His later works also demonstrate Law's correspondences with the Philadelphians. While Law does not quite directly teach the doctrine of *apocatastasis* like → Jane Lead, Law does insist that in God Himself, there is neither wrath nor any anger at all. God is pure, boundless love. Wrath only came into being when Lucifer fell and created nature fell into materiality; and so 'God can no more begin to have any wrath, rage, or anger in Himself after nature and creature are in a fallen state than He could have been infinite wrath and boundless rage everywhere and from all eternity' (*Spirit*, 392). Wrath is simply a result of fallen creatures being separated from the Divine will to love. Thus – and this point is critical – all creation, good or evil, exists 'to turn temporal evil into eternal good', for through creation 'the supernatural Deity wills and seeks the restoration of fallen nature and creature to their first perfection' (*Spirit*, 429). Elsewhere, Law's prose seems very close to Pordage's writing on eternal nature, and suggests that Law and Pordage were much more akin than Law would publicly acknowledge.

It is true that Law was a Boehmean theosopher, but his theosophy was so shorn of references to its antecedents that it was not nearly so threatening to more conventional Christians as the extraordinary revelations of Pordage or Lead. Thus it is not surprising to find that Charles Williams could write of Law's works that they form 'perhaps one of the best statements of the pure Christian religion that have ever been issued', and Rufus Jones could term Law a "saint" and a "prophet". One is hard pressed to find praise like this for the visionaries Pordage or Lead.

Law's later works perched between a broader audience and the theosophy that he was interpreting to that audience. They form an introduction to the theosophical tradition, and if they do not reflect the visionary insights of a Pordage, or the extraor-

inary breadth of Boehme's books, still his aphoristic gift, and his ability to make theosophical insights accessible to many earn him a place in the history of theosophy.

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ARTHUR VERSLUIS

**Lazzarelli, Lodovico**, \* 4.2.1447 San Severino, † 23.6.1500 San Severino

Italian humanist, poet, Christian hermetist, and pioneer of Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III]. Lazzarelli was born the youngest son of a physician, Alessandro Lazzarelli, in San Severino. His father died soon after his birth, and his mother moved with her children to Campli, where Lodovico began his studies under a certain Cristoforo da Montone. Introduced by the latter to a typical humanist curriculum, he turned out to be a talented and ambitious child, with an early calling for poetry. A poem about the battle of San Flaviano, as early as 1460, is said to have been received with admiration by members of the victorious party, King Ferdinand I of Aragon (known as Ferrante) and Alessandro Sforza: somehow the Lazzarelli family must have had access to these high political circles. From an early age, Lazzarelli found employment as a private tutor in the households of various wealthy families. From Atri, where he taught the eldest son of Matteo di Capua, he moved on to the household of the bishop of Teramo, Giovanni Antonio (Giannantonio) Campano. This well-known orator, poet and philosopher seems to have been an important formative influence on Lazzarelli's poetic development. From Teramo Lazzarelli moved on to Venice, which would remain his main place of residence for several years. Here he perfected his Latin and Greek under the humanist Giorgio Merula, and got acquainted with the poet Elisio Calenzio.

The year 1468 marks Lazzarelli's maturation as a poet, as shown by his "Hymn to Prometheus" and an heroic poem about a tournament in Padua, that earned him considerable fame. In the same year occurred one of the highlights of his life, when he was given an audience by the Emperor Frederick III, who was in Italy to visit Pope Paul II. He recited an oration in praise of poetry, and the Emperor decided to crown him with laurels. To the end of his life, Lazzarelli and his family would remain proud of his status as "Poet Laureate". In the following years Lazzarelli kept devoting himself to orations and poetry, including a work called *De gentiliū deorum imaginibus* (On the images of the heathen gods) inspired by the Tarocchi of Mantegna, but also to the study of theology and astronomy. At one point – the precise year is unclear – he appears to have moved from Venice to Camerino, where he joined the household of the city's ruler, Giulio Cesare da Varano, as tutor of his nephew Fabrizio. In Pioraca, where the Varano family resided for

some time to escape the plague, Lazzarelli began what would become his most important poetic work: the *Fasti christiani religionis* (The holy days of the Christian religion). Conceived as a Christian counterpart to Ovid's *Fasti*, it is a large chronicle of the feasts of the liturgical year, prefaced by an account of the life and passion of Christ and the early history of the Church.

Probably in 1473 Lazzarelli briefly entered the service of Lorenzo Zane, future Patriarch of Antioch, and accompanied him to Rome. Here he joined Pomponio Leto's reformed Roman Academy: a club of humanists enchanted with the cultural splendor of ancient Rome, who had been persecuted under Pope Paul II but now enjoyed the protection of the ruling Pope, Sixtus IV. In this congenial atmosphere Lazzarelli continued working on his *Fasti*. He claimed to have completed it in 1480, but in fact the manuscript evidence shows that he was still working on it between 1482 and 1484, and many further corrections were added up to a period as late as 1495. This is important because the *Fasti* contain a few explicit references to the → Hermetic literature; they are most plausibly explained as late additions, reflecting his discovery of the Hermetic writings in 1481 or 1482.

It is in 1481 that Lazzarelli met the strange apocalyptic prophet → Giovanni da Correggio (ca. 1451?-after 1503): an event that proved decisive for the rest of his life. While the cardinals were gathering for a consistory meeting, Correggio appeared on the stairs of the papal palace, proclaiming the apocalypse and calling for repentance. Lazzarelli was among the bystanders, and was deeply impressed: he writes how, in response to Correggio's call, he 'left the Parnassian hills and everything else, and right away followed him to Mount Zion – the first of his pupils'. It has often been assumed that Lazzarelli's conversion from profane poetry to divine wisdom – elsewhere referred to as a turn 'from the Helicon to Mount Zion' – meant a conversion to hermetism. However, there is no evidence that Correggio's Christian-apocalyptic message already contained hermetic elements in 1481; it is more likely that his pupil Lazzarelli, with his superior humanistic culture, first introduced the prophet to the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*.

In 1482 Lazzarelli produced a beautiful manuscript containing the complete "philosophical" hermetica in Latin, and offered it as a gift to his beloved teacher. Its first part contained → Marsilio Ficino's *Pimander* (1471), that is to say, *Corpus Hermeticum* I-XIV. The second part contained the *Asclepius*. The third part contained a Latin

translation of the remaining three tracts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (nowadays known as C.H. XVI-XVIII), which Lazzarelli had discovered in a manuscript different from the one used by Ficino, and which had not been translated into Latin before. All three translations were preceded by dedicatory prefaces (the second in the form of a poem). These texts show how deep an impression the hermetic writings had made on Lazzarelli, who addresses Correggio as Hermes Trismegistus's spiritual son, and concludes that since Correggio is his spiritual father, he himself is therefore Hermes's "grandson". Lazzarelli's translation of C.H. XVI-XVIII, referred to by him as the "Diffinitiones Asclepii", remained in Correggio's possession until 1501, when the prophet was received by king Louis XII of France and gave Lazzarelli's hermetic manuscript away as a gift to an ambassador. At the same occasion Correggio met → Symphorien Champier, who published the "Diffinitiones Asclepii" in 1507.

A manuscript "Epistola Enoch", anonymous but certainly written by Lazzarelli, contains a detailed account of Correggio's sensational public appearance in Rome on Palm Sunday 1484, when he entered the city dressed like Christ and seated on a white ass. The prophet's message and presentation was now permeated by hermetic references: he called himself "Mercurio" and God's or Jesus's chosen servant Pimander. Although the "Epistola Enoch" makes no mention of it, it is probably at this occasion that Correggio was arrested and thrown into prison, and Lazzarelli must have been among the friends with whom he is said to have escaped.

Almost nothing is known about Lazzarelli's movements in the following years. In 1486 he fell ill and returned to his family in San Severino. It is probably from there that he moved on to Naples, where he was employed for some time by Francesco Colucci as tutor of his younger cousin Angelo. He managed to get an audience with king Ferrante and present him with a copy of his *Fasti*; but the king seems to have shown little interest. Around this same time Lazzarelli must have given the final redaction to one of his best known poems, the "Opusculum de Bombyce". The central part gives a matter-of-fact description of the cultivation of silkworms; but in the opening and closing sections, the transformation of the silkworm is discussed as an image of how the soul may imitate Christ in achieving immortality by a process of palingenetic regeneration. In an embryonic form the poem foreshadows several teachings that would come to full development in Lazzarelli's most important hermetic work, the *Crater Hermetis*.

It is probably during his years in Naples that Lazzarelli began to gain some reputation as an exorcist who could heal the sick by casting out demons. He was convinced that, thanks to Correggio, he had been regenerated and reborn as a “true man”; and the power of exorcism was implied by this new spiritual status. Lazzarelli’s concept of spiritual regeneration is described in his most important hermetic work, called “A Dialogue on the Supreme Dignity of Man, entitled the Way of Christ and the Mixing-Bowl of Hermes”. Mostly referred to as the *Crater Hermetis*, and written probably between 1492 and 1494, it is one of the purest examples of hermetic-Christian syncretism known to us. The *Crater* is closely modeled on the authentic hermetic dialogues, but Lazzarelli casts himself in the role of the hermetic teacher, and his pupils are king Ferrante himself and his Secretary of State, the well-known poet Giovanni Pontano. There is no evidence that either of the two ever read the *Crater*, or became aware of the role they played in it.

At the very beginning of the *Crater* we find a unique and extremely bold assertion: the great being Poimandres, who appears to Hermes in a vision described in C.H. I, was no one else but Christ himself, who would later incarnate in Jesus. Poimandres-Christ has now taken residence in Lazzarelli and has illumined his mind. Under that authority he is about to explain to his pupils the nature of true felicity, which can only be obtained by self-knowledge. Partly in response to questions by Ferrante and Pontano, Lazzarelli embarks on an allegorical exegesis of various biblical passages (he discusses the true meaning of the paradise trees, the women in Proverbs, the “daughters of men”, and the Fall). During the course of the discussion, which is full of implicit and explicit references to the hermetic writings, the pupils are gradually moved to a state of ecstasy, until they are ready for the final revelation of the great mystery. Very remarkably, this mystery is explained with reference to the most controversial passages of the entire hermetic literature: the so-called “god-making” passages in the *Asclepius*, about the animation of statues (23-24, 37-38). Precisely in this most unlikely of all places – their idolatrous nature had been a matter of concern for Christians since → Augustine – the deepest secret is to be found. Lazzarelli implicitly admits that Hermes Trismegistus did lapse into idolatry because, as a pagan living before the Incarnation, he could not but misconstrue the message that Poimandres/Christ revealed to him. The Egyptians attracted souls into their statues because they did not know how to create them themselves. The *Christian* hermetist, how-

ever, is able to attain perfect knowledge of God, and thereby participates even in God’s “fertility”, that is to say, in his very powers of creation. As a result, he can create souls. Lazzarelli explains this hermetic mystery of soul-creating not only with reference to the *Asclepius* but also by means of an allegorical interpretation of a Jewish prescription for creating a golem or artificial man. The passage is taken from Eleazar of Worms’ commentary on the *Sefer Yetzirah*, which Lazzarelli probably found in one of the writings of → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s Jewish teacher Yohanan Alemanno. There is abundant reason to assume (although there is no direct and conclusive evidence) that the whole of Lazzarelli’s central doctrine of “making souls” is derived from similar doctrines found in the kabbalistic school of Abraham Abulafia, transmitted to Lazzarelli by mediation of Alemanno. It is from this perspective that he must have seen the god-making passages of the *Asclepius* in a new light. Lazzarelli’s integration of Jewish kabbalistic elements in a Christian-hermetic treatise makes him into one of the earliest pioneers of Christian kabbalah after Pico della Mirandola.

Contrary to what has been argued by earlier generations of scholars, Lazzarelli’s doctrine contains no trace of → magic, astral or otherwise. He is concerned with a process of spiritual transformation by means of which man can attain true self-knowledge and be reunited with God. The doctrine is remarkably original in several respects, particularly in the way it handles the notoriously problematic question of hermetic idolatry. In line with the *prisca theologia* tradition, Lazzarelli presents Hermes Trismegistus as divinely inspired; but unlike other Christian hermetists, he confronts Hermes’ idolatry head-on by suggesting that his ability to understand the revelation was limited by the fact that he was and remained a pagan living before the Incarnation. Only Christians can really understand the hermetic message and achieve true spiritual regeneration. Although Giovanni “Mercurio” da Correggio is never mentioned in the *Crater*, he is clearly present behind the scenes as the culmination of a progressive hermetic-Christian development: having first inspired Hermes as Poimandres, the second person of the trinity then incarnated as Christ, and now he has returned as Correggio, who had entered Rome as the “Hermetic Christ”.

The spiritual philosophy of the *Crater* is certainly the center of Lazzarelli’s Christian hermetism, but by 1495 his interests seem to have expanded to include alchemy. In this year he met an otherwise unknown Burgundian alchemist,



Johannes Rigaud de Branchiis, who was believed to have produced the elixir of life and who became his teacher. Several texts by Lazzarelli reflect this new course of study, most importantly a transcription of Petrus Bonus' *Pretiosa Margarita Novella* with an attached epigram, and a transcription of pseudo-Lullian materials preceded by an introduction, referred to as the "Vade Mecum". Lazzarelli found in pseudo-Lull the concept of a general transformation and restoration of man and the cosmos, and some references to special divine revelations and initiatory bonds between master and disciple; it was therefore natural for him to see these alchemical texts as on a continuum with the philosophy of the *Crater*. Like the later Correggio, who likewise developed an interest in alchemy, Lazzarelli seems to have believed that a universal alchemical remedy might convert the enemies of the Catholic faith to Christianity and thus promote the return of the golden age.

Early in 1494 Lazzarelli left Naples, which was in a state of political instability and unrest following the death of king Ferrante in January. He may have gone to Rome, and from there to Correggio's home town Bologna, and possibly wandered further up north. But he eventually returned to San Severino. Filippo Lazzarelli, in his biography of his brother, emphasizes his exemplary piety and saintliness during the last years of his life: Lodovico was 'wholly dissolved into spirit' and 'always thought and spoke of God'. He seems to have continued curing the sick by casting out demons, and correctly foresaw the death of his older brother Gerolamo and himself in a dream. Lazzarelli died of pleurisy at the age of fifty-three. His body lies buried in the church of San Lorenzo in his place of birth.

Lazzarelli is important as the first Latin translator of the three final tractates of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, as one of the earliest and purest examples of Christian hermeticism, and as a pioneer of Christian kabbalah. His influence during his lifetime remained limited: only the "Epistola Enoch" and the "Opusculum de Bombyce" made it into print. In 1505 → Lefèvre d'Étaples included an abridged and sanitized version of the *Crater* in his important edition of the authentic philosophical hermetica, and Gabriel du Preau published a French translation in 1549. We know that the *Crater* had an impact on → Cornelius Agrippa, but neither this nor later lines of influence have been studied in any detail. It remains that the *Crater Hermetis* is one of the pearls of Renaissance hermetic literature, commanding respect for the beauty of its formal

structure and presentation, and intriguing by the originality and occasional brilliance of its ideas.

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WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

**Lead(e), Jane, \* 1623 Norfolk,  
† 19.8.1704 London**

Lead was born as Jane Ward in – according to her own account – a reasonably wealthy upper-class family. She and her family lived a good life, and she received a fine education. When she was fifteen, on a Christmas eve, she was dancing and celebrating with her family and friends, but heard a voice that told her ‘Cease from this, I have another Dance to lead thee in, for this is Vanity’. For three years she lived in melancholy isolation, occasionally reading books and almost always staying apart from people; despite the counsel of her father, Schildknapp Ward, and a chaplain, she felt the sins of the world upon her, and believed that because she had once told a lie, she would not be allowed into the New Jerusalem. But at the age of eighteen, she ‘was so richly favoured by her dear and blessed Mediator, as to receive at that time the Seal of her Absolution and Assurance, in a manner very special, there being presented to her in a Vision, the form of a Pardon with a Seal to it’ (Thune, 68-69).

Soon after this time, she went to London, chiefly in order to find a religious context for and deepening of her visionary experience. But although she attended numerous meetings, she was disappointed until she met a Dr Crisp, a well known clergyman who had been ousted from his pastorate in Brinkworth in 1642, and had come to London just at the time Lead was there. He was able to resolve all her doubts and give her a much clearer understanding of what had happened to her; but unfortunately he died in February, 1643.

When she became interested in marrying one of her religiously inclined friends in London, who apparently was not of her social class, her parents brought her back to Norfolk in an attempt to marry her off properly, which she refused, since she did not want to marry merely for earthly reasons. At twenty, she married William Lead, a merchant, with whom she lived happily for twenty-seven more years. With him she had four daughters, two of whom died, and two of whom reached maturity and themselves were married. Apparently she and her husband shared spiritual concerns.

But in February, 1670, her husband died, and the man to whom his money was entrusted absconded with it, leaving Lead destitute. What could have been a catastrophe, however, she regarded as in

another sense her good fortune, for like → Gichtel and many other theologians, she took this as a sign that she should throw herself wholly on the mercy of God.

Lead had met → John Pordage as early as 1663, a meeting about which she wrote in her preface to his *Theologia Mystica*, and at which she was profoundly impressed by what she saw as his spiritual ‘anointing’. She soon became a member of his circle, but it was not until after her husband’s death that she was able to devote herself wholly to theology. She and Pordage eventually lived in the same house, along with several others, the better to devote themselves to prayer and mutual religious understanding. During this time, while Lead slowly assumed leadership of the group, Pordage wrote his most important works.

After Pordage’s death in 1681, the responsibility for continuing their theological work fell to Lead. By 1683, she had had one of his more important treatises published, as well as some of her own, including *The Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking* (1681) and *The Revelation of Revelations* (1683). Upon reading the latter book, a wealthy widow offered her and her group the use of her home for their meetings, an arrangement that lasted until her death, at which the group was forced to find another place to meet nearer to London. By 1692, however, the theological circle had diminished, and it languished only until 1694.

As Lead’s name and works began to circulate in Germany and the Netherlands, they became known to Francis Lee, who was to play an important role in making her name more widely known. Born in 1660, this brilliant young man had been fellow of St Johns College, Oxford, but had to leave because he refused to swear allegiance to the new king. Having left the college, he first worked as a tutor to several noblemen, but eventually travelled to Italy, where in Padua he took his medical degree, and practiced medicine in Venice for two years. Returning to England via the Netherlands, he was given a copy of *The Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking* and was deeply impressed. Lee returned to England and, with two unnamed ‘students of divinity’, met with Lead herself, acting as interpreter for the others. Lee realized the extraordinary significance of this elderly woman and her ‘loose papers . . . occasionally penned for her own private memory’. Due to his help as a scholar and amanuensis to Lead, her group, known as the Philadelphians, became more public and hence more controversial, abandoning the seclusion that Pordage’s circle had enjoyed. At the turn of the 17th century, the Philadelphians even attempted a rapprochement

with the Continental theosophers, but this effort came to nothing.

Lead's health had been weak since 1700, when she already had premonitions of her impending death. Indeed, in 1702, she wrote "A Living Funeral Testimony"; and although by the spring of 1704 she felt somewhat better, she was stricken again by fever and severe pain, and this continued until her death in the same year. Her painful and protracted death was taken as a sign by Gichtel and others that some of her doctrines were false, and she was suffering because of them – but however one interprets such difficulties, it seems that she endured her trial with a patient, graceful, and illuminated countenance.

Lead's funeral oration was given by Richard Roach, who later – after receiving a vision of her appearing from Heaven like a globe of light – assumed leadership of the Philadelphian society itself. But under Roach's leadership, the society took on a distinctly more private aspect. The society returned to essentially what it had been under Pordage: a small circle meeting at Baldwin Gardens, where the Philadelphians had met in 1697 before going public.

The late 1690s were the period of greatest activity for the Philadelphian society, since not only did the society publish its monthly periodical *Theosophical Transactions*, but Lead and Lee published many of Lead's most important works as well. Lead's writings are visionary and prophetic, with a millennialist inclination. Nearly all of her work consists in accounts of visionary experiences; in this respect, she was much more explicit than → Boehme or even Pordage. While Boehme exhorts his readers in *Christosophia* to "woo" Sophia, Lead outlines her visionary encounters with Sophia in such works as *The Laws of Paradise*. She strongly believed that she was the prophetic vehicle chosen to reveal a new spiritual era for humanity, and saw herself as a prophet through whom God spoke, chiefly through visions.

Gichtel was skeptical of Lead's visionary emphasis, and eventually rejected her adherence to universal restoration, or apocatastasis, for which she is perhaps best known. Among the Church Fathers, Origen upheld this doctrine very early in the Christian era, and such noted Christian writers as → Johannes Scottus Eriugena in the 9th century A.D. also concluded that universal restoration – the doctrine that ultimately all creatures created by God are destined for spiritual restoration and salvation – was only reasonable. Initially, Lead did not countenance the doctrine of universal restoration: in her *A Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message*

she wrote that 'albeit I had heard of such a Notion, I did altogether disregard it; and would not entertain any belief concerning such a latitude as this, that should extend so far, as to recover the whole lapsed Creation, till I had an apparent Vision opened unto me'. While admitting that Boehme's work did not directly refer to apocatastasis or universal restoration, she eventually came to hold that her own revelation represented a gift of grace special to her own era and that such an exceptional revelation was not yet to be revealed through Boehme himself. It was to be kept for a later generation – her own. In fact, Lead's doctrine of apocatastasis seems to derive from a very powerful illumination, and an overwhelming sense of divine compassion. It seems that her experience of light at that occasion was so strong that there was no longer any place in it for evil or demons. In *The Enochian Walks with God* (1694) she writes of how wonderful is the 'Everlasting-Age that shall swallow up all those ages wherein sin and death have reigned, with all those miserable effects that have been ever since the creation of this world'. She also writes prophetically in words attributed to God Himself: 'I will make all things new, the End shall return to its original-primary-being, let none grudge that the grace of God of this latitude is, as to make a complete restoration; for as there was neither sin, nor centre to it, so it must be again, when the hour of God's judgment shall come'. The doctrine of *apocatastasis* assumes a precise equivalence between the prior harmony and unity in God before creation, and the restoration *after* time of the fundamental harmony that the Fall of man rent asunder.

In brief, then, Lead is an important theosophic figure. Her work does not have the scope or encyclopedic nature of Pordage's, but she left behind a substantial legacy not only by having been instrumental in the development of the Philadelphian Society, but also by having published many visionary theosophic treatises and having introduced the doctrine of universal restoration. While not influential on subsequent mainstream religious or literary figures, Lead's work was rediscovered by a handful of evangelical Christians in the Southern United States during the late 20th century and republished in pamphlet form during this period as prophetic works. Major discussions of her work are found in Gibbons (1996), Hutin (1960), Thune (1948), and Versluis (1999).

*Ark of Faith*, London, 1696 ♦ *Ascent to the Mount of Vision*, London, 1699 ♦ *Enochian Walks with God*, London: Edwards, 1694 ♦ *A Fountain of Gardens: or,*

*A Spiritual Diary of the Wonderful Experiences of a Christian Soul, under the Conduct of the Heavenly Wisdom; Continued for the Year MDCLXXVIII*, London, 1700 ♦ *Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking*, London, 1681 ♦ *Laws of Paradise*, London, 1695 ♦ *A Message to the Philadelphian Society*, London, 1696/1698 ♦ *Messenger of an Universal Peace*, London, 1698 ♦ *Revelation of Revelations*, London, 1683 ♦ *The Signs of the Times*, London, 1699 ♦ *Tree of Faith*, London, 1696.

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ARTHUR VERSLUIS

### Leadbeater, Charles Webster,

\* 16.2.1854 Stockport (England),

† 1.3.1934 Perth (Australia)

Prime ideologue of the → Theosophical Society following the death of → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and author of over 40 Theosophical books, many of which have remained in print. Second Presiding Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church and 33° Co-Mason. Introduced adventist expectation into the Theosophical Society in the figure of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), acknowledged by Leadbeater as the 'Vehicle for the Coming of the World-Teacher'.

Born in Stockport, England, Leadbeater was ordained to the Anglican priesthood before encountering Theosophy in 1883. He soon left his curacy and travelled to the Society's headquarters on the Adyar river near Madras, India. Soon thereafter, Leadbeater began to assert he was in contact with several of the same Theosophical Masters whose beneficence had originally been bestowed upon Blavatsky. Leadbeater claimed that his ardu-

ous apprenticeship under the Masters had resulted in a series of initiations which had opened his psychic faculties and proffered upon him supranormal insight. At this time Leadbeater also began to engineer for himself a rather fanciful history, and encouraged the belief that he had been born in 1847 – the same year as → Annie Besant, the second President of the Theosophical Society and his lifelong supporter.

Leadbeater's clairvoyantly-generated revelations extended the synoptic template of Blavatskian Theosophy by removing its reliance on textual hermeneutics. As a consequence Leadbeater felt capable of applying his "astral perception" to previously non-Theosophical domains, a task sanctioned by his close professional partnership with Besant. Together, Leadbeater and Besant traced the past lives of Society members, mapped the rise and fall of continents, explored the geography of space, and investigated the atomic and sub-atomic worlds – all by means of applied clairvoyance. For Leadbeater, clairvoyance did not supplant the deductions of empirical science, but perfected them, for the psychic adept had planes of perception available to him beyond the ken of the mundane scientist.

Leadbeater's rise to prominence within the Society during the late 1890s led to the departure of several disaffected members who resented the changes made to the Blavatskian ethos. This problem was compounded in 1906 when Leadbeater was accused by several Society members of having encouraged their boys in habits of sexual "self-abuse". Leadbeater admitted the truth of the allegations, even suggesting he may have provided "indicative action", but argued the practice was permissible on occult grounds. Such allegations were to be brought against Leadbeater for much of the remainder of his career.

From 1909 Leadbeater began to assert that a young Brahmin boy from the Adyar estate, Jiddu Krishnamurti, was to be the physical "Vehicle" for the World-Teacher, a highly-evolved entity otherwise known as the Bodhisattva Maitreya or Christ. The World-Teacher, whose province in the Great White Brotherhood (of Masters) was "Minister of Education and Religion", was to return to Earth in order to inculcate a new age of spiritualized theurgy. The era of the Seventh Ray to be ushered in by the World-Teacher would see the replacement of outmoded piety with an energized occultism, capable of bringing about a self-actualized evolutionism. Indeed, one of the first signs of the new era would be the emergence of a new racial type: the denizens of the "sixth sub-race".

To encourage this great evolutionary leap, Leadbeater incorporated three projects into his rather idiosyncratic Theosophical millenarianism. The first was Universal Co-Freemasonry which had been inaugurated in France in the 1890s. The English section, under Besant's governance, soon became an arm of the Theosophical Society with Leadbeater enshrined as its primary apologist and ritualist. Leadbeater averred that Co-Masonic initiations, under the provenance of "the Master the Count [de → Saint Germain]", were innately efficacious in conferring elevated evolutionary status, and would prepare the ground for the Coming. Leadbeater's second project, the Order of the Star in the East, was instigated in 1911 as a propagandistic tool for the dissemination of information relating to the imminent Coming, and boasted an international membership in the tens of thousands. The third project, the Liberal Catholic Church (henceforth LCC), allowed Leadbeater to combine adventism with his passions for clairvoyance and Christian ceremonial. A fellow Theosophist, James Ingall Wedgwood (1883-1951), had in 1913 secured priestly ordination from an *episcopus vagans*, Arnold Harris Mathew (1852-1919), whose episcopal orders derived from the Utrecht Union of Old Catholics. After a break with Mathew, Wedgwood and other Theosophists inaugurated their own Church, the LCC, premised on thoroughly Theosophical principles. Leadbeater, following his LCC episcopal consecration in 1916, wrote extensively for the new body. According to him, the Lord Maitreya or World-Teacher (not to be confused with the Master Jesus who was another figure altogether) had particular oversight of the LCC, and employed the power it generated through sacramental rites to assist in the inauguration of the "New Age" which would finally dawn with his overshadowing of the young Krishnamurti.

Leadbeater's preparations for the Coming were compromised when, in 1929, Krishnamurti closed down the Order of the Star in the East and disavowed his quasi-messianic rôle, leading to a mass attrition in membership of the Society. Nevertheless, Leadbeater continued resolutely in his occult training of Theosophical youth (particularly at The Manor in Sydney, Australia) and in inaugurating new theurgic enterprises. He promoted the existence of a previously unknown member of the Theosophical Masters hierarchy, the World Mother, and installed a quasi-priesthood in her service: "the Seven Virgins of Java". His last endeavour, the Egyptian Rite of the Ancient Mysteries, was the logical culmination of his Theosophical career as it promised guaranteed entry – *via* initiation –

into the Great White Brotherhood itself. Leadbeater died in Perth, Australia, on 1 March 1934.

Leadbeater's influence on 20th century occultism has been immense. Aside from popularizing such notions as the aura and the chakras, his abiding contribution has been to sanction the occultist belief that the meta-empirical domain is governed entirely by physical laws. Thus, according to Leadbeater's clairvoyant vision, the dynamics of divine power are only comprehensible in terms germane to physics and engineering: the Christian eucharistic service, for instance, is nothing other than 'the construction and utilization of a magnificent machine for the liberation of force' (*Science*, 16). So, too, the Coming could be humanly engineered through the rites of various theurgic enterprises, each designed to assist in potentiating the elevation of Krishnamurti to the status of World-Teacher. Leadbeater's rationalistic exegesis of theurgy is thus a prime example of occultism's reassessment of esotericism in the light of modern scientific and secular paradigms.

Annie Besant & C.W. Leadbeater, *Man: Whence, How and Whither: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigation*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1913 ♦ idem, *Occult Chemistry: Clairvoyant Observations on the Chemical Elements*, Adyar: "Theosophist" Office, 1908 ♦ C.W. Leadbeater, *Clairvoyance*, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1899 ♦ idem, *The Masters and the Path*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925 ♦ idem, *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1926 ♦ idem, *The Science of the Sacraments* (1920), 2nd ed., Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1929 ♦ idem, *How Theosophy Came To Me*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1930.

*Lit.*: Brendan French, "The Theosophical Masters: An Investigation into the Conceptual Domains of H.P. Blavatsky and C.W. Leadbeater", 2 vols., Ph.D thesis, Department of Religion Studies, University of Sydney, 2000 ♦ Gregory Tillett, *The Elder Brother: A biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater*, London: Routledge, 1982.

BRENDAN FRENCH

Leene, Jan → Rijckenborgh, Jan van

Le Fèvre de La Boderie, Guy, \* 9.8.1541 Falaise, † 10.6.1598 Falaise

Le Fèvre received his education in Caen, then in Paris, where he learned Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac. He became a disciple of → Guillaume Postel and a familiar of the duke of Alençon, brother of Henri III. His first important work was a Latin version of



the Syriac New Testament, made in 1560 (Antwerp: Plantin 1571). In view of the interest that this work had raised, in 1568 Le Fèvre was invited by Arius Montanus to assist in the production of the Antwerp Polyglot. He went to Antwerp with his brother Nicolas who was also an Orientalist. Into his famous *Biblia Polyglotta*, he inserted a *Dictionarium syro-chaldaicum*. In 1571, he published *L'Encyclye des secrets de l'Eternité*: a long poem of Roman Catholic apologetics, with references to → Neoplatonism and Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III]. In 1572 he returned to France where he was appointed as secretary and interpreter in the service of the Duke of Alençon. This position brought him into contact with men like Baïf, Dorat, Ronsard, Vauquelin de La Fresnaye, etc.

Between 1578 and 1582 new translations followed: of three treatises by → Ficino (*De la Religion chrestienne, Discours de l'honneste amour, Trois livres de la vie*), of two by → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (*De la dignité de l'homme, Commentaire sur la chanson d'amour de Jérôme Benivieni*), of one by Cicero (*De la nature des dieux*) and of one by → Francesco Giorgi da Veneto (*L'Harmonie du monde*). This latter translation was instrumental in spreading Giorgi's book (originally published in Latin as *De Harmonia Mundi*, 1525), one of the most important ones in Renaissance esotericism. In the same volume is also the translation, made by Le Fèvre's brother Nicolas, of Pico's *Heptaplus*. In 1578, Le Fèvre published several *Hymnes ecclésiastiques* and *La Galliade*, a long poem (8384 alexandrine lines) divided in five "cercles". It is more than likely that Le Fèvre was a member of the Family of Love. He spent the last fifteen years of his life in Falaise, busying himself with new publications of his works.

In *L'Encyclye* and *La Galliade*, his main personal poems, Le Fèvre devoted himself mainly to a project of Christian apologetics which draws its arguments not only from the theologians (→ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, → Augustine, Eusebius of Cesarea, Lactantius) and the neoplatonic current [→ Neoplatonism] (already made famous by Ficino and Pico), but also from the *prisca theologia* [→ Tradition], which he understood as a corpus comprised of writings by → Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Cesarea (esp. texts attributed to Pythagoras, Orpheus, → Zoroaster and Plato) and from the kabbalah. In addition to the works of commentators – such as Bahya ben Asher (end of 13th cent.) concerning the Jews, → Pietro Galatino (c. 1460-1540), → Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) and Paul Rici († 1541) concerning the Christians – Le Fèvre owned a Latin

translation of the *Zohar* and read this treatise in the first edition issued in Mantua in 1558. In *La Galliade*, he develops a political vision based on a mystical conception of history. This epic poem is a kind of spiritual history of the French nation. Le Fèvre claims that the Nordic bards of ancient Gaul, under their King Bardus, were the fountainhead of all arts and philosophy, and especially of the knowledge of cosmic harmony. Much later, that tradition was supposedly passed on to Orpheus and Plato. Placing himself in the tradition of Annius of Viterbo (ca. 1432-1502), Le Fèvre's purpose was to reveal God's plans concerning the Gallic people, elected to be the pinnacle of the human adventure and eventually to return to the East, the origin of the *translatio imperii et studii* (passed on, after the Hebrews, by the way of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Italians). Le Fèvre compared himself to David and Orpheus, and considered himself a poet as well as a priest. His political, apologetical and theological concepts are based upon a poetic theology with mystical ambitions.

*Diverses Meslanges poetiques* (Rosanna Gorris, ed.), Geneve: Droz, 1993 ♦ *La Galliade* (François Roudaut, ed.), Paris: Klincksieck, 1993 ♦ *L'Encyclye* (François Roudaut, ed.), Paris: Champion, forthcoming.

*Lit.*: François Secret, *L'Esotérisme de Guy Le Fèvre de La Boderie*, Genève: Droz, 1969 ♦ François Roudaut, *Le Point centrique: Contribution à l'étude de Guy Le Fèvre de La Boderie*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1992 ♦ G.A. Sivan, *Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie and his Epic History of Gaul: The Biblical, Rabbinic and Kabbalistic Foundations of a French Renaissance Legend*, unpublished.

FRANÇOIS ROUDAUT

**Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques** (Jacobus Faber Stapulensis), \* ca. 1455 Étaples, † 1536 Nérac

French theologian and humanist. Having completed his studies in Paris, he lectured in philosophy there. He visited Italy three times: in 1491-1492 (during which trip he met with → Ficino and → Pico della Mirandola), in 1499-1500, and in 1507. From 1507 on, Lefèvre was in the service of his maecenas Guillaume Briçonnet Junior. Because of religious repression by the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne, he spent some years in Meaux (1521-1526), where his maecenas had become Bishop ("Cercle de Meaux"). From 1526-1530, he was in the service of François I in Paris, and from 1530 on, he served Margaret of Navarra at Nérac.

Lefèvre's first published works of the 1490s



already display the two major currents underlying his work: as a Christian-humanist, he was concerned with the Classics and with the Bible but, unlike Erasmus, he also showed great interest for the Hermetica and → mysticism. From 1492 a series of editions of existing Latin translations of Aristotle appeared, which he supplied with his own commentaries. Later he turned his interest to the Bible: his *Quincuplex Psalterium* (1509 and 1513) and *S. Pauli Epistolae* (1512 and 1515) contain, besides the traditional Latin versions, a new translation emended by Lefèvre, again with extensive commentaries. As a philologist, Lefèvre is a forerunner of Erasmus (the latter's edition of the New Testament came out in 1516); like the humanist from Rotterdam, he judged the word of God to be the basis of existence, although it appears from his commentaries that, unlike Erasmus, he read the Bible from a mystical perspective. Theology for him is not a *scientia* but a *sapientia*. Influenced by the *Devotio Moderna*, he showed himself an advocate of a reformation of religious life and of the dissemination of the Bible in the vernacular; but like Erasmus, this precursor of the Reformation did not break with Rome, not even after having been attacked by the Sorbonne because of his translations of parts of the Bible in Latin and in French, and because of his commentaries.

The Hermetic-mystical current in Lefèvre's work is strongly influenced by Ficino, Pico and → Nicholas of Cusa. He published the *Corpus Hermeticum* in Ficino's translation (1494 and 1505, sixth and ninth editions resp.), adding the *Asclepius* in the edition of 1505 together with a contemporary text (→ Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis*, in which Hermetic texts are interpreted in a Christian sense). In his own commentary, attributed to Ficino well into the 20th century, he added "lapsus Hermetis" ("an error of Hermes") in the margin next to the famous passage in the *Asclepius* about the animation of statues. → Augustine had already condemned this passage; and apparently, Lefèvre the humanist and admirer of Hermetic philosophy was here being censored by Lefèvre the Christian and follower of the *Devotio Moderna*. Furthermore, in his comments Lefèvre continually points to the parallels between the works of → Hermes Trismegistus and the Bible: he condones the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*, renders Hermes acceptable to Christianity, and presents him as a pagan prophet of the Christian revelation – thus placing himself in the tradition (going back to the first centuries of the Christian Church) which considered the Hermetic writings to be part of the divine revelation. Lefèvre, who – like others inter-

ested in Hermetic philosophy – called Hermes 'the most ancient theologian', advocated a moderate, Christian variant of Hermetic philosophy.

The step towards mysticism was taken by means of editions of Latin translations of → Llull (1499, 1505 and 1516) and of → pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita (1498-1499 and 1515), to whom Ficino had drawn his attention. In the latter's works, to which he gave the title *Theologia vivificans* (life-giving theology) and whose authorship he did not doubt, he saw a source of early Christianity. Where Luther rejected Dionysius for 'thinking like a Platonist rather than a Christian', Lefèvre put these works, which he calls 'highly sacred' and 'highly divine', immediately after the Bible in importance. Furthermore, Lefèvre produced – sometimes in collaboration with his pupil Josse Clichthove – a series of Latin editions of medieval mystics, occasionally supplied with a commentary. Often these are *editiones principes*; among them one finds the works of Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor (1506, 1510, 1517), Jean Mombaer (1510), Johannes Ruusbroec (1512) and three female mystics: → Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Hackeborn and Elisabeth of Schönau (1513). Ruusbroec's *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* (originally written in Dutch) was the first work by the Brussels mystic ever to be printed. In his "Introduction", Lefèvre defends Ruusbroec's work against the criticism of Jean Gerson, who rejected the idea of a mystical union between man and God. The edition of the *Opera omnia* of Nicolas of Cusa (1514) is in line with these proclivities; Lefèvre followed Cusa's idea that man is a human god (related to 'the human is a mortal god', in *Corpus Hermeticum* X). Also related to Cusa, whom he venerated, is Lefèvre's notion that unknowing (*ignorantia*) must be esteemed above knowing (*scientia*).

Lefèvre's lasting importance lies with his editions of texts and his accompanying commentaries and prefatory epistles. He did, however, write one hermetically coloured text: *De magia naturali*. This work, composed ca. 1493 (that is just after his first trip to Italy and under the obvious influence of both Ficino and Pico), contains as yet insufficiently studied speculations on → astrology, kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → alchemy and Pythagorean → number symbolism. However, Lefèvre never published this text, and his own personal interests soon veered away from natural → magic.

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FRANS A. JANSSEN

Lévi, Éliphas (ps. of Alphonse Louis Constant), \* 8.2.1810 Paris,  
 † 31.5.1875 Paris

The founder, and one of the most influential authors, of French occultism. The son of an artisan of the Saint-Sulpice quarter of Paris, and having lost his father at an early age, Constant was admitted to the seminary on a scholarship, his mother hoping to give him access to a good social position through the Catholic Church. His education at Saint-Sulpice deeply affected him, notably the teaching of the Abbé Frère-Colonna (1776-1858), a specialist of → animal magnetism and author of a synthetic history of mankind based on a cyclical concept of time. After Constant had been ordained deacon, his ordination to the priesthood was deferred in 1836 because of a love affair with a cataphumen, Adèle Allenbach, which caused his

mother to die of chagrin. Despite a difficult interview with the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Affre (1793-1848), Constant did not definitively break with the ecclesiastic institution. The young deacon was employed first as a supervisor at the Collège de Juilly, then by the Bishop of Beauvais, who had him paint a fresco in a chapel, and finally as a preacher in the parishes around the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes.

During a retreat in 1839, Constant discovered the writings of Madame Guyon (1648-1717), which initiated him into feminine → mysticism. Returning to the capital, he developed a taste for salon journalism, writing reports on *Les belles femmes de Paris* (The beautiful women of Paris). At the same time he also began to attend circles of socialist revolutionaries, especially inspired by the ideas of Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and feminist militants. Among his relations of this period we may mention Alphonse Esquiros (1810-1874) and Flora Tristan (1803-1844, the grandmother of Gauguin), who saved him from despair after his personal crisis of 1836. This first, tumultuous period of his life concluded with the abandonment of a pregnant fiancée, followed by his marriage with a young girl, Noémie Cadiot (1832-1888; she would become a sculptress, then a writer under the name of Claude Vignon). Constant was, however, able to transform his weakness for the daughters of Eve into mystical flights of inspiration, paying exalted devotion to the Virgin Mary. In *Le rosier de mai ou la guirlande de Marie* (The rose-bush of May or Mary's garland), presented as a commentary on the Litanies of the Virgin, the sufferings of woman in soul and body are described to the point of eroticism: Mary, crowned with thorns and with pierced hands, is crucified like her son. But the linkages between Constant's life, his mystical aspirations, and his revolutionary hopes appeared most clearly in the partly autobiographical work *L'Assomption de la femme* (The assumption of woman). He claims here to have discovered at Solesmes, through reading *Spiridion* by George Sand (1804-1876) and texts of Madame Guyon, the mystical meaning of the sufferings of the people since the Terror and the revolutionary wars. His search for the meaning of history and his expectation of the Kingdom of God are blended in an ultimate revelation, concerning the advent of the Era of Woman: ". . . she comes to us all wounded and bleeding from the undeserved treatment she has endured for us; she appears as once did Christ . . ., and they say to us: "Behold the woman . . .! Oh, poor victim of the world! Consummate your divine sacrifice, die on the cross! You will be resurrected in glory".

The figure of the Virgin Mary, as co-redemptrix by “assimilation” to the life of Christ and his sacrifice, played a central role in Constant’s mind; as mother of humanity, she herself was identified with the woman of the end of time. Constant’s *La Mère de Dieu* (The mother of God), three years later, takes up the same themes, with a vision of the dying Christ entrusting humanity, represented by St. John, to his mother. The words ‘Behold your son’ are interpreted as ‘sealing the prophecy’, being addressed to a St. John understood as an ‘initiate’ into the mysteries of the sacred heart of Jesus and the ‘most sacred heart of Mary’. Since then, it has taken eighteen centuries to “engender” humanity. Although mankind is not yet ‘initiated into the secrets of the mother’s love’ – secrets which concern the coming of the Holy Spirit – we are now close to the time of the final revelation which will ‘consummate humanity in God’ (note that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated in 1854). In this regard, Constant was a representative of popular Romantic and post-Romantic culture, fed by an apocryphal literature that modeled Mary’s life after that of Jesus.

The first phase of Constant’s life and career concluded with *L’Evangile du peuple* (The gospel of the people, 1840) and *La Bible de la liberté* (The bible of liberty, 1841). The latter book earned him a prison sentence, in company with Esquiros and a famous priest, Félicité de Lamennais (1782-1854). It is probably around this period that he developed an interest for esoteric authors of the past, such as → Swedenborg, → Postel, and → Agrippa. Shortly before the Revolution of 1848 he published the notes of his friend Flora Tristan, which he had collected: *L’émancipation de la femme ou le testament de la paria* (The emancipation of woman, or the pariah’s testament, 1846). Finally, the Abbé Migne (1800-1875) took him on as a collaborator for the *Dictionnaire de littérature chrétienne* (Dictionary of Christian literature, 1851: vol. 7 of Migne’s gigantic *Nouvelle encyclopédie théologique* [New theological encyclopedia]).

Constant was active in the revolutionary clubs of the period, and together with Esquiros published a revolutionary journal, *Le Montagne de la fraternité* (The mountain of brotherhood). But he was discouraged by the electoral defeat of April 1848 and by the failure of the European revolutions shortly after. Compounded by trouble in his private life, with the departure of Noémie, this precipitated his transformation into a magus and founding father of “occultism” [→ occult / occultism]. In this process an important role was also played by his acquaintance with the Polish scientist and poly-

math → Hoëne Wronski, who thought he had discovered a universal key for the understanding of all physical and metaphysical mysteries. The expectation of an impending apocalypse was eventually replaced in Constant’s work by the proclamation of a gnosis based on ‘the harmony of the world’, but nonetheless explained within a historical framework. Thinking in terms of the parallel functions of the Assumption and the Ascension, Constant now proclaimed the birth of a new consciousness, fashioned by a new knowledge. Occultism, for him, provided the key to the hidden meaning of the Scriptures at a time when the sciences seemed to be stuck in the impasse of materialism.

From this point on he ceased signing as “Abbé Constant” and began to publish, under the name of Eliphaz Lévi Zahed (supposedly the translation of his name into Hebrew), his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (Dogma and ritual of high magic, 1856). Claiming the status of a positive science, Lévi’s occultism presented itself as the vast spectacle of a hidden universal history, unfolding in parallel to the history described by the new historical criticism. It was based on the theory of the occult sciences expounded by the learned archivist Ferdinand Denis (1798-1890) between 1830 and 1840. These sciences were supposedly subject to the same criteria of rationality that applied to mainstream science, but had been covered by a veil of symbolism or allegory because, having been discovered too early in history, they had not been understood by the majority and had thus experienced opposition, if not downright persecution. They had been transmitted under the veil of → secrecy, initiation being required for gaining access to this exclusive magical knowledge which contained the synthesis of past human knowledge in the form of disciplines as different as the → Tarot, → alchemy, and the Kabbalah. The Enlightenment, in Lévi’s view, had made the mistake of placing its faith in reason alone while ignoring these fruits of ancient experience.

The new magus became a Freemason, even though in *Le catéchisme de la paix* (The catechism of peace, posthumous edition 1896) he had expressed reservations about → Freemasonry and had described it as a society in decay that merely ‘claimed to have mysteries’. The domain of individual inner experience, however, always seems to have remained more important to him than allegiance to external organizations. A crucial experience took place during an “initiatic voyage” to London, in July 1854. Lévi, invited by a friend of → Edward Bulwer-Lytton, reports to have evoked the shade of Apollonius of Tyana through the power of

the “pantagramme” (see his *Dogme et rituel*, chapter on “Necromancy”). If one credits the statements of → Arthur E. Waite, based on memories confided to him by Madame Gebhardt, a German occultist who had been looking after Lévi during his last years, this evocation was in fact only one of many that were practiced by him during his later life. According to this testimony, Lévi had always been the beneficiary of visions, another example of which may be the apparition of a mysterious monk during his retreat at Solesmes.

Lévi's understanding of Kabbalah is based on speculations on the Tetragram, the name of Mary in Hebrew, and the relation of the number two to unity. But his sources were always second-hand; his knowledge of Hebrew was limited to a few rudiments (he even confused the letters of the alphabet); and most of his proofs rested on the mere accumulation of witnesses, just as in the Catholic traditionalism of the Romantic era. This is also the approach characteristic of his *L'Histoire de la magie* (History of magic, 1860). Even his speculations on numbers, which might seem particularly suited for rational expression, took the shape in *La clef des grands mystères* (Key to the great mysteries, 1861) of a ‘prophetic theology of numbers’ [→ Number Symbolism]. His eschatological and progressivist vision finally deferred the proclamation of the new era, after the fashion of → Joseph de Maistre, and applied Joachim da Fiore's (ca. 1132-ca. 1202) exegeses on the Second Coming to the 19th century. The important role accorded by him to the “femme-peuple” (woman-people, associated with the Holy Spirit or with a fourth person of the Trinity), in view of the coming reign of the “celestial dove”, enjoyed considerable success in the wake of the Marian devotion then dominating Catholic religious sentiments and the reaction against bourgeois and masculine society that had already inspired the Saint-Simonians in the 1830s. Lévi's influence on the spiritualist feminism of the last quarter of the 19th century is noteworthy, and he was considered a master by the occultists of the fin de siècle, both in France and in England, where → Waite, his main English translator, spread his influence widely. He was also a respected name in masonic circles, notably in the United States through the intermediary of Albert Pike (1809-1891), who plagiarized him. Finally, it must be noted that his influence went well beyond the restricted circles of occultism and fin-de-siècle spiritualism, and reached, perhaps in a more discreet way, literary figures as famous and respected as Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). More generally, the French symbolist

movement found in Lévi's writings a treasure trove of images and poetic inspiration. Lévi's works have been regularly reprinted to the present day.

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JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Lewis, Harvey Spencer**, \* 25.II.1883  
Frenchtown (New Jersey), † 2.8.1939,  
San Jose (California)

Of both Welsh and German descent, Lewis was raised in Protestantism. Gifted with a fertile imagination and motivated by a boundless ambition, he devoted most of his life to promoting various Rosicrucian societies [→ Rosicrucianism].

Having accompanied his father in 1909 on a business trip to France, he devised a first legend. Perhaps influenced by the “Society of the Tower” in Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship), but more probably in reference to the Tower of Olympus in the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, he imagined a meeting with a venerable hierophant living in an old dungeon in Toulouse. This hierophant had initiated him into the Ordo Rosae Crucis, had him participate in an *Illuminati* meeting and put him in charge of spreading the Rosy Cross in America. This Order, which according to Lewis was ‘the most powerful organization in the world’, had allegedly counted kings of France and emperors of Germany among its members, and several kings of England had been its Grand Masters. The jurisdiction of Aquitaine had been created by Charlemagne, and → Martinès de Pasqually has supposedly been part of it in the 18th century.

Another version has Lewis benefit from numerous reincarnations that would explain his great esoteric knowledge, and claims that, under the cover of a psychoanalytic practice in New York, he had reassembled the members of a Society of Rosicrucian Studies, some of whom had been initiated in France between 1900 and 1909. In 1905, Lewis had supposedly been named Supreme Dignitary of the Ordo Rosae Crucis.

In fact, a Rosicrucian society did not appear in America until 1915, and it included only very few people. It was at this time, according to Lewis, that the denomination Ancient and Mystical Ordo Rosae Crucis (AMORC) had been chosen. In May 1915, this first active Rosicrucian lodge met in New York. During the sessions, Lewis is said to have revealed unprecedented knowledge in physics,

chemistry, psychology, biology, and so on. Moreover, to increase his prestige, he affirmed that The Grand Council of the Ordre Rose Croix of France had named him supreme dignitary of the Order for North America. The document that he produced to this effect, strangely entitled *Pronunziamento*, was soon followed by other texts. These stated that the Order went back to pharaoh Tutmosis III, that is, to the 16th century BCE, and that in 1916 Memphis was the world center of AMORC, while another document dating from the same year had the supreme chief of the Order residing in Tibet.

In 1918, Lewis gave rise to questioning and doubt among the members of his organization when he issued gold bonds for the construction of a Rosicrucian temple in New York. Lewis was put under examination for misappropriation of funds, but charges against him were soon dropped due to lack of evidence, and the legend continued to follow its course. He was presented as the one chosen to reveal that Christian Rosenkreutz’s coffin had been transported, at the end of the 17th century, to the Pacific coast of the United States, to a secret location, known to Lewis, who had supposedly discovered the intact body of the founder of the Society.

Lewis then set himself up in San Francisco where, through the subsidies of a rich executive and the support of an Episcopalian pastor, he organized the Pristine Church of Rosicruciae of which he made himself bishop, and where he ordained priests, organized a Rosicrucian liturgy, and set up a university as well as a radio transmitter. As for AMORC, Lewis had himself proclaimed its Emperor for North America, and he mentioned the existence of foreign branches in Egypt, India, France, and Germany. Influenced by the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, to which → A.E. Waite seems to have given a strong impetus, Lewis was also very interested in the Societas Rosicruciana In Anglia (S.R.I.A.) founded in 1866 and reserved for Master Masons. This European brotherhood incited Sylvester Gould to constitute in 1908 a Societas Rosicruciana In America, and at his death in 1909, Lewis instituted himself as his spiritual heir. He also called himself “Illustrious Knight (Templar) of the Order of Kadosch, and Companion of the Holy Grail”. This title corresponded to the VI<sup>o</sup> grade of the → Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), which appeared in 1912, its Grand Masters being → Aleister Crowley in England and Theodor Reuss in Germany. Always in search of new titles, Lewis had himself admitted in 1920 to The Great White Brotherhood Lodge of Buddhist and Tibetan inspiration. Having proclaimed himself “Emperor Rex



of the AMORC throughout the World”, he established the seat of his association in San Jose, California.

Toward 1930, Lewis felt a desire to return to sources in Germany, where the Rosicrucian myth had appeared toward 1610. Once again, he displayed his fertile imagination in composing a new *Fama Fraternitatis* and writing: ‘The C.R.C. of Germany, that was so famous in the 17th century, was one of the descendants of the first C.R.C. and . . . our Emperor in America has . . . received a direct transfusion of his blood’. In 1934, Lewis participated in the creation, in Brussels, of the *Federatio Universalis Dirigens Ordines Societasque Initiationis (FUDOSI)* that gave new momentum to AMORC in America. Lewis had research laboratories built in San Jose in the Rosicrucian Park of California, thus tending to materialize an ideal city aligned with the utopian ideas of → Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis. After a tour through Egypt and various European countries, Harvey Spencer Lewis died in 1939 in his vast Californian foundation.

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ROLAND EDIGHOFFER

## List, Guido Karl Anton (von),

\* 5.10.1848 Vienna, † 17.5.1919 Berlin

Journalist, novelist, dramatist and folklorist with emphasis on Germanic mythology, religion and prehistory. List was associated with the Austrian Pan-German movement and *völkisch* nationalism at Vienna from 1890. In 1878 he married Helene Förster-Peters († 1890), and in 1899 Anna Wittek. While temporarily blind in 1902, List had an illumination concerning the secret meaning of the runes, which led him to assimilate esoteric ideas from 1903 on. List was the first writer to combine German nationalism with Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society], → Freemasonry and occultism [→ occult / occultism] in his studies of ancient

Aryan religion. In 1908 he founded the List Society in Vienna, supported by many prominent German nationalists and Theosophists, to sponsor his Ario-Germanic researches into the priesthood of the ancient Germans and its secret heritage. In 1911 he founded the Hoher Armanen-Orden (HAO), a modern revival of the ancient Armanist priesthood. Between 1908 and 1914 appeared a major series of Ario-Germanic research publications. List exerted influence on the secret, quasi-masonic nationalist Germanenorden (founded 1912), a forerunner of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party. He was a major inspiration for studies of occult nationalist heritage among followers of → Ariosophy. Weakened by wartime shortages, List died in Berlin while travelling to recuperate on an estate in North Germany.

The son of a Vienna leather-goods dealer, List early developed a love of nature and the Austrian countryside. From 1877 List devoted himself to freelance journalism, writing articles for German nationalist newspapers on localities and landscape coloured by a pagan interpretation of place-names, folklore and legends, later anthologised in his book *Deutsch-mythologische Landschaftsbilder* (1891). List achieved modest acclaim as a nationalist author with his two-volume historical novel *Carnuntum* (1888). The novel takes as its background the attack of the local Germanic tribes of the Quadi and Marcomanni against the Roman legionary town of Carnuntum near Vienna in 375, regarded by List as the prelude to the sack of Rome. This nationalist mythology recommended List to the Austrian Pan-German movement of Ritter Georg von Schönerer (1842-1921), which was agitated by the Slav challenge to German dominance in the multi-national Austrian state. During the 1890s List wrote two further historical novels and hundreds of articles on Germanic folklore and tradition for *Ostdeutsche Rundschau*, a leading Pan-German journal. He became a literary celebrity in this milieu with plays and epics devoted to ancient German mythology, performed at festivals of various Pan-German and *völkisch* organizations.

List’s interest in Germanic prehistory focused especially on the religious culture and spirituality of ancient Germany. Following his discovery of the secret meaning of the runes during an eleven-month period of blindness (cataracts) in 1902, List’s writings increasingly embraced the esoteric tradition. He assimilated the ideas of → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society, meanwhile established in Germany and Austria, to reconstruct the esoteric doctrine of his ancient Germanic priesthood. *Das Geheimnis der Runen* (1908) interpreted the runes in the light of a religion of

self-knowledge, magical powers, racial purity, the immortality of the soul and → reincarnation. The Wotanist priesthood, about which he had lectured as early as 1892, was transformed into an exalted gnostic elite of initiates called the *Armanenschaft*. *Die Rita der Ario-Germanen* (1908) and *Die Bilderschrift der Ario-Germanen* (1910) recapitulated substantial parts of an emanationist cosmogony according to Theosophy, including the unmanifest and manifest deities, the three Logoi and ensuing “rounds” of fire, air, water and earth, with the Ario-Germans representing the fifth and current dominant race in the present “round”. List identified the runes, swastika and other glyphs as ancient Aryan symbols.

List also used the materials of the Western esoteric tradition in order to posit the existence of the *Armanenschaft* governing an ancient theocracy in the Germanic world and its occult survival up until the present. He claimed the lodge hierarchy and ritual of Freemasonry (List was a freemason for a time as a young man) was the model for initiation into the ancient guilds of the *Armanenschaft*. Once suppressed by Christianity, the ancient initiate gnosis had been passed on secretly through medieval guilds of skalds, heralds and masons, and officers of the Holy Vehm, a system of imperial courts. These cryptic survivals explained why Armanist gnosis could be deciphered in Minnesang poetry, coats-of-arms, Gothic architecture, and legal antiquities. List also found widespread evidence of the Armanist gnosis in prehistoric sites, place-names, local customs, legends and folk-tales throughout Austria. List recruited the Renaissance neoplatonists → Pico della Mirandola, → Giordano Bruno, → Johannes Trithemius, → Johannes Reuchlin and → Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim as heirs and transmitters of the secret Armanist tradition. He considered the Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] as an Armanist heritage, which the persecuted Germanic priests had entrusted to the Jews for safe-keeping at the beginning of the Christian era. → Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry and its combination with Templarism [→ Neo-Templar Movement] were further adduced by List as Armanist survivals in the hostile Christian era.

In 1905 the wealthy industrialist Friedrich Wannieck, his son Friedrich Oskar Wannieck, → Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels and some fifty other individuals proposed the founding of a List Society at Vienna to sponsor the publication of List’s researches on ancient Ario-Germanic culture and its occult survival. Members included Karl Lueger, the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, numerous representatives of German nationalist organizations in the

German Reich and Habsburg Austria, and leading German Theosophists, including → Franz Hartmann, Hugo Göring, Arthur Weber and General Blasius von Schemua. In 1911 List founded the Hoher Armanen-Orden (HAO) as a secret inner order of the List Society. Its structure was modelled on the ten-grade Kabbalistic Tree of Life used by Rosicrucian and quasi-masonic orders in the 18th and 19th centuries. Members of the List Society were instrumental in introducing List’s ideas to the Reichshammerbund and the Germanenorden, radical nationalist secret societies in the German Reich before 1914, whose influence ultimately carried through to the early National Socialist (Nazi) Party. List’s ideas of a secret occult national heritage were taken up by other writers involved in Ariosophy during the 1920s and 1930s.

*Carnuntum: Historischer Roman aus dem 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, 2 vols., Berlin: G. Grote, 1888 ♦ *Deutsch-mythologische Landschaftsbilder*, Berlin: Hans Lüstenöder, 1891 ♦ *Walküren-Weihe: Epische Dichtung*, Brno: Verlag “Deutsches Haus”, 1895 ♦ *Pipara, die Germanin in Cäsarenpurpur*, 2 vols., Leipzig: Aug. Schulze, 1895 ♦ *Das Geheimnis der Runen*, Berlin: Paul Zillmann, 1908 ♦ *Die Armanenschaft der Ario-Germanen*, 2 vols., Leipzig: C.F. Steinacker, 1908, 1911 ♦ *Die Rita der Ario-Germanen*, Leipzig: C.F. Steinacker, 1908 ♦ *Die Namen der Völkerstämme Germaniens und deren Deutung*, Leipzig: C.F. Steinacker, 1909 ♦ *Die Religion der Ario-Germanen in ihrer Esoterik und Exoterik*, Zurich: Th. Schröter, 1910 ♦ *Die Bilderschrift der Ario-Germanen*, Leipzig: C.F. Steinacker, 1910 ♦ *Der Übergang vom Wuotanstum zum Christentum*, Zurich: Th. Schröter, 1911 ♦ *Die Ursprache der Ario-Germanen und ihre Mysteriensprache*, Leipzig: C.F. Steinacker, 1914.

*Lit.*: Johannes Balzli, *Guido v. List: Der Wiederentdecker uralter arischer Weisheit*, Leipzig: L.A. Kittler, 1917 ♦ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology. The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935*, New York: New York University Press, 2004.

NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE

**Llull, Ramon (Raymundus Lullus),**

\* ca. 1232/3 Palma de Mallorca,

† ca. 1316 Tunis or Palma

Only two or three years before Llull’s birth, his father, a member of the urban patriciate of Barcelona, had come to Mallorca as part of the army with which James I of Aragon conquered the island from the Muslims. Llull thus grew up in a multicultural society, with a large Muslim popula-

tion (comprising perhaps a third of the entire population) and an important Jewish minority. At the age of thirty a repeated vision of the crucified Christ induced him to abandon his family and courtly life to dedicate himself to the propagation of the faith. This decision was followed by nine years of preparation, during which he studied languages – Latin and Arabic – and the basic university subjects of his day – theology, philosophy, law, and medicine. Almost all of this he seems to have done on his own; the exception being Arabic, which he learned with the help of a slave. At the end of this period he wrote two works: an adaptation of al-Ghazzali's logic, and the immense *Llibre de contemplació / Liber contemplationis magnus* (The Book of Contemplation). Then, in what is calculated as the year 1274, he had a divine illumination in which he was given 'the form and method' for writing a book 'against the errors of the unbelievers'. The illumination was therefore one of method, not of content, and it permitted him to organize the mass of material he had presented in the *Book of Contemplation* in a more formalized system which he called his Art. In a rush of fervor, he wrote the *Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem*, which embodied this system; and this was followed by several commentaries on it, along with applications to theology, philosophy, law and medicine, as well as his most successful apologetic work, the *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis / Liber de gentili et tribus sapientibus* (The Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men). He also, during this first period, wrote a didactic novel, *Blaquerna*, which contains his most famous mystical work, the *Llibre d'amic e amat / Liber de amico et amato* (The Book of the Lover and the Beloved). In 1283 he wrote the *Ars demonstrativa*, a minor reformulation of his system aimed at greater order and clarity of presentation; and this work he likewise accompanied by commentaries and applications. Four years later he made his first trip outside the Kingdom of Mallorca, first to the Papal court in Rome, and then to Paris. But as a result of an unhappy teaching experience in the latter city, where the unusual nature of his Art seems to have caused serious problems, he reformed his system drastically in the *Ars inventiva veritatis* (1290). Establishing his base in Montpellier, in the ensuing years he journeyed to Rome (1292), Genoa and then Tunis (1293), Naples (1294, where he finished a new version of the Art, the *Tabula general / Tabula generalis*), Rome again (1295; where he wrote the *Desconhort* and the *Arbre de ciència / Arbor scientiae* [The Tree of Science]), Paris again (1297-1299; where he wrote the *Arbre de filosofia d'amor /*

*Arbor philosophiae amoris* [The Tree of the Philosophy of Love], as well as treatises on astronomy and geometry), Cyprus (1301-1302; where he wrote the *Rhetorica nova*), Bougie – in present-day Algeria – where he was stoned by angry crowds and imprisoned for six months (1306), and Pisa, after a shipwreck on the return journey (1307-1308, where he finished the crowning work of the Art, the *Ars generalis ultima*, along with its abbreviated version, the *Ars Brevis*). This was followed by his last stay in Paris (1309-1311), where he finally received official university approval of his Art, and dictated an account of his life, the *Vita coetania*. Next he went to the Council of Vienne (1311), where some of his projects for language schools for missionaries received ecclesiastical approval. At the age of approximately eighty, Llull returned to Mallorca (1311-1312), where he wrote a cycle of 182 sermons, then he went on to Sicily (1313-1314), where he unsuccessfully tried to interest Frederick III in his missionary projects, and finally to Tunis again (1314-1315). In December of this last year he wrote his last works, and he probably died at the beginning of 1316 in Tunis, on the voyage home, or in Palma upon returning. The idea that he was stoned to death is a pious legend propagated to help his canonization as a martyr. He is buried in the church of Saint Francis in Palma.

Llull's Art, on which his thought centers and to which he constantly refers his readers, is a generative system based on a small set of concepts acceptable to all three religions – one God who has a series of positive attributes (He is good, great, eternal, etc.), the three Augustinian powers of the soul (memory, intellect, and will), and the world picture inherited from Greek science (four elements, seven planets, etc.). He then sets out rules and methods for combining and comparing these concepts so as to be able to produce demonstrations (see below). The foundational concepts and relational methods of his Art were almost always presented with graphical methods in the form of wheels and charts. This unusual system permitted him to produce proofs of the Articles of the Faith, which he hoped might be capable of persuading Muslims and Jews without taking away the *meritum fidei* (a point which had to be taken into account, in order to avoid ecclesiastical censure). The inventive nature of his Art made it suitable to tackling all kinds of other topics as well, making it into "a science general to sciences", as Llull proclaims at the beginning of the *Ars generalis ultima*. This aspect of the Art permitted him to reformulate other sciences of his time – such as logic, metaphysics,

rhetoric, etc. – in terms of the system of the Art. By writing works with titles such as *Logica nova*, *Metaphysica nova*, *Rhetorica nova*, *Tractatus novus de astronomia*, *Liber de geometria nova*, and so on, he was proclaiming his intention of providing alternative methods in all these fields.

Lull's hope of disarming ecclesiastical – and especially Dominican – opposition proved over-optimistic. Sixty years after his death, in 1376, the Church censured his works; and in 1390 the Parisian Faculty of Theology prohibited the teaching of his doctrines. These condemnations as well as the fact that the Art was presented explicitly as an alternative system of knowledge, made Lull attractive to what nowadays would be called alternative intellectual movements. The very generality of the Art made it applicable to fields which its author had never envisaged, or even to some which he had condemned. For example, while Lull had rejected → alchemy, some of his followers argued that this had been only a device to throw his pursuers off the scent. Moreover due to the strange visual aspect of the Art, with its charts and wheels, it seems to have struck some as involving magical procedures [→ magic]. Such misperceptions of Lull's system are demonstrated, for example, by the fact that only three years after his death, in 1319, part of the testimony brought against the Franciscan spiritual Bernard Délicieux, in his trial for allegedly having attempted to poison the pope, was that in his possession was found a book of Lull's containing the *Tabula generalis* along with other equally suspicious works. In 1356 another Franciscan spiritual, John of Rupescissa [→ Jean de Roquetaillade], who was also an alchemist, inquired whether 'the bearded philosopher, as he is called in Paris, that is to say Ramon Llull of Mallorca, who, although he was a layman and almost unlettered, had arrived at the summit of philosophy' might not be the new Minerva whom the oracle had predicted would come to 'reveal his science and secrets confirmed by art'.

Very soon after this event of 1356, alchemical works written in Lull's name began to circulate. What started as a trickle, by the 16th century became a flood, with the number of pseudo-Lullian alchemical works (published mostly in German lands) far outweighing the number of genuine works. Moreover, in the late 15th century there appeared a pseudo-lullian work called *De auditu cabbalístico*, pretending to adapt the Art to the Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], in accord with → Pico della Mirandola's suggestions about the existence of similarities between that science and

the *ars Raymundi*. These various currents were brought together by the Strasbourg publisher, Lazarus Zetzner. He not only published, in 1598, an anthology of Lull's works, along with the *De auditu cabbalística*, together with commentaries by → Agrippa von Nettesheim and → Giordano Bruno, which was to have wide circulation (it was reprinted in 1609, 1617, and 1651), but he also published four pseudo-Lullian alchemical works in his famous *Theatrum chemicum*, and two others in a little anthology of 1616. As representative of this vision of our author, it is worth noting that → Isaac Newton's library contained eight volumes of Lull, one of the *Ars generalis ultima*, one of the Zetzner edition, and six of the spurious alchemical works.

Of Lull's approximately 265 works, the principal collected editions are, in Latin: *Raimundi Lulli Opera Latina* (Friedrich Stegmüller et al., eds.), Palma, 1959-1967, and Turnhout, 1978- (in course of publication; 29 vols. so far appeared) ♦ *Raimundus Lullus, Opera. Reprint of the Strasbourg 1651 edition* (2 vols.), Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996 ♦ In Catalan: *Obres de Ramon Lull* (Salvador Galmés, ed.; 21 vols.) Palma: Comissió Editora Lulliana, 1906-1950 ♦ *Nova edició de les obres de Ramon Lull*, Palma: Patronat Ramon Lull, 1991- (in course of publication; 6 vols. appeared so far) ♦ Translated anthologies: *Selected Works of Ramon Llull (1232-1316)* (Anthony Bonner, trans.; 2 vols.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985 ♦ An abbreviated version of this anthology, with a new translation of the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* by Eve Bonner, appeared as *Doctor Illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993 ♦ Lulle, *L'Arbre de Philosophie d'Amour, Le Livre de l'Ami et de l'Aimé, et Choix de textes philosophiques et mystiques* (Louis Sala-Molins, trans.), Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967.

*Lit.*: For a general overview and bibliography of earlier studies, see Lola Badia & Anthony Bonner, *Vida, pensamiento y obra literaria*, Barcelona: Sirmio Quaderns Crema, 1993 ♦ To this should be added Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Topica universalis: Eine Modellgeschichte humanistischer und barocker Wissenschaft*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983 ♦ Further information can be found in the journal *Estudios Lulianos*, Palma, 1957-1990, renamed *Studia Lulliana*, Palma, 1991- ♦ Important for an understanding of Lull's relation to the Kabbalah is Harvey J. Hames, *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2000 ♦ For pseudo-Lullian alchemy, the fundamental work is Michela Pereira, *The Alchemical Corpus Attributed to Raymond Lull*, London: The Warburg Institute, 1989.



**Lopukhin** (also Lopuchin, or Lopushin), Ivan Vladimirovich, \* 24.2.1756 Retjashi (Orel, Russia), † 22.6.1816 Retjashi

After a short military career in the Russian army, Lopukhin retired as early as 1782 with the rank of colonel. He was appointed at the Criminal Court of Moscow, becoming its President in 1785, and served in the military criminal courts under Katherine II, Paul I (who made him a State Secretary and Senator), and Alexander I. Socially and politically, he is remembered as a philanthropist – first, for his activities in creating and organizing institutions fostering education, such as schools for children, and second, for his efforts to mitigate the cruelties of Russian legislation. His behaviour after having been deputized in 1801 by the Imperial government to gather information concerning the Dukhobor religious sect (founded by the peasant Siluan Kolesnikov) is characteristic: he contributed to alleviating the sanctions the government had imposed on the members of this revival movement. After investigating their cruel persecution, he successfully petitioned Alexander I on their behalf, arranging for a place where they could settle apart from the Orthodox Russians.

Although interested in → Freemasonry from very early on, Lopukhin did not enter the Order until 1782, upon retiring from the army. More of a theoretician in theosophical and mystical speculations than a Brother really devoted to rituals, he was at first not keenly interested in practising higher grades. Beginning in 1784, however, he did begin to be interested in the latter, and from that time on he became a very active Mason. Two reasons can be adduced to account for his new attitude toward the initiatory practices. First, 1784 had been a critical year in European Freemasonry, and Lopukhin thought he might play a positive role in the movement's reorganisation. Second, the masonic Order of the Gold- und Rosenkruz (Gold and Rosy Cross, or G.R.C.), i.e. of the so-called Neorosicrucians [→ Rosicrucianism], whose philosophy he shared, was gaining a foothold in Russia, which had just been declared the VIIIth Province of the Obedience called Strict Observance. The main seat of the Strict Observance was Berlin. Lopukhin had hardly entered the G.R.C. when, by decision of the Grand Superiors of the latter, he became himself a kind of hidden, albeit most important, Superior or "Observer" of both his Russian and Berliner Brethren. Furthermore, Lopukhin was trusted enough to be appointed as director of the Russian G.R.C.

archives, a position that he kept nearly until his death. In addition, he created specific rituals. These were, for the most part, adaptations from the already very complex rituals within the degrees of the G.R.C. At the end of 1785, Katharina II decided to conduct inquiries on Freemasonry, particularly with respect to its degree of congruence with Orthodoxy. This resulted in a period of hardship for Russian Freemasons, but things took a turn for the better under the reign of Paul I, and even more so (after 1801) under the sovereignty of Alexander I, with whom Lopukhin was in close contact.

The importance of Neorosicrucianism in Lopukhin's activities and thought is to be understood within the broader context of his esoteric leanings, to which his personal life bears witness. For example, he bestowed the name "Jung Island" (after → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling's name) on the island in a pond near Moscow, on which he laid out a garden congenial to his tastes. Visitors could see a cross with Masonic symbols and other allegories reminiscent of those of → Jacob Boehme. Near the pond Lopukhin had erected two monuments, one in honor of → Karl von Eckartshausen, the other – more unexpectedly – dedicated to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. There was also an urn of marmor dedicated to Fénelon, adorned with portraits of Madame Guyon and Rousseau. On one wall of the garden one could read a Rosicrucian inscription. Such choices corresponded to Lopukhin's preference for esoteric philosophic speculation rather than practical → "magic". With regard to the latter, he was interested only in → alchemy, which he studied both theoretically and practically; a choice that was congruent with the general orientation of the European Neorosicrucians.

Closely linked to these interests and activities were his editorial ones. In 1783 he created a Lopuchin Free Press, designed to publish Masonic, alchemical, mystical and theosophical books, mostly in Russian. → N.I. Novikov had created a similar Press in 1779. In 1784, both companies gave birth to the Typographical Society, co-directed by Lopukhin along with Nicholas Novikov, A.M. Kutuzov, and I.P. Turgieneiv. In 1791 all three Presses were closed by an edict of Katharina II, but in the meantime they had published a great number of books. Lopukhin himself had edited works like J.A. Starck's *Apologie der Freimaurerei* (1784); Kutosov's Russian translation of a book on → Paracelsus (also 1784); a translation by P. Strachov of → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin's *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité* (1785); and a translation of →



Khunrath's *Amphitheatrum* (1786). During just the years 1779-1784, the editorial output of Lopukhin, Novikov, and their close associates represents nearly 30% of all books published in Russia between 1779 and 1792.

Lopukhin was not only important as a translator and publisher who spread mystical and hermetic literature. He also wrote works of his own. A prevailing purpose runs through most of them, which consists in trying to link together the Church (mainly the Orthodox one), to Freemasonry, as well as the service due to Russia. Such a trait differentiates Lopukhin's Neorosicrucian circle from Western European Freemasonry, which was more cosmopolitan in character and not as prone to see in the history of mankind and of Freemasonry mere chapters of the history of the Church. In collaboration with Prince N. Repnin, he wrote a little book in French, *Les Fruits de la Grâce* (The fruits of grace; 1790), in which he equated the religious Freemasons with the true Christians. This was followed, in 1790 and 1800, by two writings of his in Russian, a *Moral Catechism for the True Freemasons* and *The Spiritual Knight or Seeker after the Truth*. From 1807 to 1816 he collaborated with *The Messenger of Zion*, founded in 1806 by his friend and Masonic Brother A.F. Labsin. This monthly journal in Russian dealt with a variety of Jewish, mystical, and theosophical themes. Lopukhin's book of memoirs (*Zapiskee*), first published in 1809, is not the least important work that he produced.

From 1783 to 1791 he worked at what was to become his most famous book. Titled *Some Characteristics of the Interior Church . . .* (in Russian, first ed. 1798), it went through several translations and new editions. Rather short (ca. 140 pages), this compendium is written in an attractive style, and easy to read. On the surface it seems to be no more than a collection of his Christian meditations, but actually it is more than that: the meditations are linked to a specific notion, the "interior Church", on the one hand, and to theosophical considerations, on the other. "Interior Church" is a notion and a term of which Lopukhin seems to have been the first proponent. Regarding this idea, Lopukhin drew part of his inspiration from a German Christian Neorosicrucian, → Christian August Haugwitz, who had never used the term but had claimed in his book *Hirten-Brief an die wahren und ächten Freimäurer alten Systems* (Leipzig, 1785) that 'the main purpose of Freemasonry is the very purpose of True Christianity'. Lopukhin often quoted Haugwitz in other works of his, and made *Hirten-*

*Brief* compulsory reading for the Russian and Berliner Neorosicrucians in his charge.

In Lopukhinian parlance, "interior Church" does not only designate the fact that basic commonalities invisibly unite all "true Christians" with one another, independently from any one Church in particular. Much more specifically, in *Some Characteristics* as in many of his other works, it means that Christian Freemasonry, understood as a theosophically oriented organization, is the genuine preserver of a tradition that the historical Christian Churches do not entirely possess. Among the traditional churches, Lopukhin gave priority to the Orthodox Church. But he also advocated the necessity of grafting Freemasonry (at least his theosophically oriented version of it) onto the Orthodox Church. The result of that transplant would be a very specific new Church, the "interior" one, which Lopukhin felt committed to bringing into existence. Such an endeavour is rather original not only in the history of Freemasonry, but also in the history of → Christian Theosophy, since for all their mystical leanings, the theosophers (Boehme, Saint-Martin, etc.) had never spoken of an "interior Church", nor proposed such a synthesis of Church, theosophy, and initiatory organization.

In *Some Characteristics*, Lopukhin is lavish in advice and specific prescriptions toward achieving one's own personal "regeneration". Although the idea of being born again is very common among Quietists, Pietists [→ Pietism], Protestant separatists, etc., the theme is interwoven here with many speculations of a theosophical kind. He claims to teach 'the knowledge that true Theosophy and the contemplation of Nature provide'. Regeneration of Man and Nature must go together. Man's duty is to discover the incarnated Word within creatures. Lopukhin deals, therefore, with such themes as the narrative of the Fall, the tripartition of Man (body, soul, spirit), and the relation between Sophia and the "material prima". Many of these reflections are visibly inspired by his readings of Johannes Arndt, Jacob Boehme, Karl von Eckartshausen, and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin.

Lopukhin's book strongly influenced Eckartshausen's own most famous work *Die Wolke über dem Heiligthum* (The Cloud upon the Sanctuary, 1802). Eckartshausen, however, understands "interior Church" in a sense that is different from Lopukhin's perspective. For Eckartshausen, the expression means both the image of God present within Man and a true, eternally preserved Christianity that is never really at home within the visible Churches. For Lopukhin the interior Church is,

at bottom, the ideal of a Christian Freemasonry organized in a Church-like form. Nevertheless, when Eckartshausen read the first French edition of *Some Characteristics* (1801), he saw in it a ‘precious book full of the true wisdom’ and exchanged several letters with Lopukhin on this topic. Eckartshausen had decided to translate the book into German, but he died (1802) too early to carry out that task – which would soon after be undertaken and completed by the German J.L. Ewald. Almost at the same time the enthused Jung-Stilling, one of Lopukhin’s idols, decided to make German and Latin translations, which he probably never finished.

It would seem that the attempt of Lopukhin and his Neorosicrucian circle at synthesizing Freemasonry into a kind of ecclesial organization without breaking from official Orthodoxy had never been made before, and also that it was hardly continued after Lopukhin’s death. Neither did Lopukhin’s program of linking Freemasonry to religious practice contribute to alleviating the ever-growing conflict between European Freemasonry and Churches in 19th century Russia, let alone the rest of Europe. With regard to Lopukhin’s works in general, their influence outside Russia hardly went beyond translations of *Some Characteristics*, generally read without a proper understanding of that book’s specific context. But within Russia, the reception of his *oeuvre* has a history that continues through the whole of that century. It had a strong impact (Danilov 256-271) upon the Masonic writings of Alexei S. Chomiakov, the literary works of the Russian romantics W.A. Schukowsky and Alexander Pushkin, and the historical studies of N.M. Karamzin. Moreover, the notion of “interior Church” as a program conducted by the Russian Neorosicrucians in the Masonic circle around Lopukhin is one of the origins of the religious thought of modern Russians like the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev and of reformers like L.N. Tolstoi. But as early as the beginning of the 19th century and even more so later, the term “interior Church” took on several divergent meanings. Eventually it fell into oblivion.

For a more detailed bibliography of Lopukhin’s works, see Danilov 24-27, 282-283 ♦ Lopukhin in collaboration with Prince N. Repnin, *Les fruits de la grace, ou Les Opuscules spirituels de deux F-M du vrai système . . .*, Moscow or Sankt-Petersburg, 1790; Reprint: Moscow: University Press, 1805 (several reprints) ♦ *Catéchisme moral pour les vrais F[rancs] M[açons]*, 5790 [= 1790], also titled: *L’exposition abrégée du caractère et des devoirs du vrai chrétien*, in: Russian (Moscow) and French, s.l. [Moscow] 1790; in:

Russian, Moscow 5791 [ca. 1798]. New ed. in: *Chevalier spirituel* [1800?], and in: *Quelques traits . . .* (cf. further below), ed. 1810, 111-144 ♦ *Niekatoriee tcher-tee o vnutriennei tsierkvie, e iedinom putee ectennee e o razletchir putiar zablywdienia e gibieei, c’prioivokupleiniem Kratkogo izobragienia kathciecv e doljoctiei ectinnovo kristianenia . . .*, Moscow: Imperial Typography, 1798; Saint-Petersburg, 1801; Saint-Petersburg, 1816 ♦ French eds.: *Quelques traits de l’Eglise Intérieure, de l’unique chemin, qui mène à la vérité, et des diverses routes, qui conduisent à l’erreur et à la perdition . . .*, translated by Charles Auriat de Vatay, with an allegorical chart by the author (already extant in the 1798 ed., and reproduced in the subsequent ones), Saint-Petersburg, 1798 and 1799; Paris, 1801; Moscow, 1801; Moscow: N.S. Vsevolojssky, 1810 (with an additional “Notice historique”). Reprints: of the 1810 ed. (Marc Haven, ed.): Lyon: Amis de la Vérité, 1901; Les Amitiés Spirituelles (Collection Sedir): Paris, 1929; Paris, 1973 ♦ German ed.: “Einige Züge der inneren Kirche . . .”, translated by J.L. Ewald, in *Christliche Monatsschrift* 1803-1804, reprinted in 1809 as offprint. English ed.: *Some Characteristics of the Interior Church of the Path which Leads to Truth and of the Different Ways which Lead to Error and Perdition: To which is added an Abridged Table of the Characters and Duties of a Christian*, translated from the French by D.H.S. Nicholson, with an introduction by Arthur Edward Waite, London: The Theosophical Publishing Society . . ., 1912 ♦ *Zapiskee iz niekatorir obstoiatelstv jizni e slujbe . . . Lopuchina . . .*, s.l. 1809; s.l. 1829; Moscow, 1860; London: Trübner and Cy, A.I. Herzen, 1860; s.l., 1884, 1914.

*Lit.*: Andrei G. Danilov, *Ivan Lopuchin, Erneuerer der russischen Freimaurerei: Seine Lehre von der Inneren Kirche als eigenständiger Beitrag zum Lehrgebäude der freimaurerischen Mystik* (Quellen und Forschungen zur europäischen Ethnologie, XXIII), Dettelbach: J.R. Röhl, 2000 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1969, 150-153, 621-623.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

Lorber, Jakob, \* 22.7.1800 Kanischa,  
† 24.8.1864 Graz

Musician and teacher. Received revelations through the “Inner Word”, which continue to attract readers today, and are translated into an increasing number of languages. They have become a model for other *Neuoffenbarungen* (new revelations) in the German-speaking world.

Lorber was born in a village of Lower Styria, not far from Maribor (today in Slovenia). At an early age he developed musical gifts and learned to play various instruments. He decided to study for becoming a school teacher, and for some time also considered training for the priesthood, while

continuing to cultivate his musical skills. In 1824, he moved to the city of Graz, where he would spend most of his life. After some time, he gave up his studies and found a position as a house teacher in a family. Lorber had the privilege of meeting the famous violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) during the latter's successful stay in Vienna in 1828, and even took a few violin lessons with him; throughout Lorber's life, Paganini would remain his musical ideal. In 1829 Lorber resumed his training for becoming a school teacher, and he received his diploma; but he gave up the prospect of a teaching career after his first application for a position was turned down in 1830. From then on, he devoted all his energies to music; among other things, he composed pieces in a decidedly Romanic style.

Lorber had read works by → Boehme, → Jung-Stilling and → Justinus Kerner, as well as some writings of → Swedenborg then available in German. He also used to read the Bible, but not on a daily basis. In addition, he had a strong interest for astronomy. On March 15, 1840, on the point of leaving for Trieste, where he had been offered a position at the opera, he had his initial spiritual experience. Early in the morning, while still lying in bed, he heard a voice close to his heart telling him: 'Get up, take your pen and write down!' He obeyed and undertook to write what was dictated to him. Those first pages eventually developed into a three volume work published under the title *Die Haushaltung Gottes* (The Household of God), which deals with the origins of mankind in a much more detailed way than the Biblical book of Genesis. Since then, Lorber continued to devote much time to writing down the revelations dictated to him. From 1844 to 1846, however, he joined his two brothers who had called him to assist them in their business in Carinthia; and in 1857 he spent a few months on a tour with two other musicians. Otherwise, in order to earn his livelihood, he continued to devote part of his time to teaching music.

Eight volumes of revelations received by Lorber were published during his lifetime. Two short works were first published by Kerner in 1851, after one of Lorber's friends had sent to him some of the musician's writings. In 1852, three books were published in Stuttgart, but *Die Jugend Jesu* (The Childhood of Jesus) was confiscated and destroyed. Nevertheless, Lorber's works (which he did not consider his own, but saw as dictations received from the Lord) did not attract much interest at this time. Lorber passed away in 1864, before he was able to finish *Das Große Evangelium Johannes*; the final (eleventh) volume would later

be dictated to Leopold Engel (1858-1931). Similar to Swedenborg, Lorber never broke with the Church in which he had been born, and he received the last sacraments from a Roman Catholic priest.

Catalogues of Lorber's works divide them into five main categories: (1) *Das Große Evangelium Johannes* claims to be a much more detailed explanation of Jesus' life and teachings, directly dictated by Christ himself; (2) *Die Haushaltung Gottes* offers a presentation, much more detailed than the first chapters of the Bible, of the origins of mankind up to the flood; (3) several works, like *Die Jugend Jesu* (supposedly the *Gospel of James*), the *Briefwechsel Jesu mit Abgarus Ukkama in Edessa* or *Paulus' Brief an die Gemeinde in Laodizea*, are allegedly the restitution through the Inner Word of original, subsequently lost writings of Primitive Christianity; (4) there are several works about the created universe, including revelations regarding the planets (not unlike Swedenborg's *Earths in the Universe*); (5) works about the hereafter, in which Lorber describes what happens to people after they have passed away (again not unlike Swedenborg, although the way Lorber claimed to have received the information is quite different: he does not report having personally explored the spiritual world).

According to these teachings, the material world is the result of Lucifer's fall and has emerged through a process of progressive densification. It is a school of purification for the lost spirits on their way of returning to God. Once this world had become mature enough to receive the highest revelation of God's love, God himself came as Jesus Christ. Lorber's revelations accept the doctrine of the Trinity, but not as three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three aspects of God, all three united in Christ (again like Swedenborg). Jesus taught the fundamental law of love in order to allow human beings to evolve toward true children of God. Usually a human soul lives only one life on earth: after physical death, one's journey continues in the spheres of the hereafter, where the majority of the deceased are received into the great Middle Kingdom between Heaven and Hell. God does not condemn anybody: everybody judges him- or herself. There is no such thing as eternal damnation: everybody will return to God (*apocatastasis*). Millenarian beliefs are also present in Lorber's message.

Although Lorber's admirers claim that he had only superficial knowledge of Swedenborg's writings as well as of the writings of other authors already mentioned, one cannot help noticing similarities on several points. Therefore it is not surprising that today there is much contact between

Swedenborgian and Lorberian audiences in German-speaking countries. Lorber's readers never created a separate church, but there are Lorberian associations or study circles and – most important – a publishing house (“Lorber Verlag” in Bietigheim, Württemberg), which has been printing Lorber's volumes in German for many decades. A Lorber Society (“Lorber Gesellschaft” in Hausham, Upper Bavaria) is quite active in spreading teachings received by Lorber not only in German-speaking countries, but increasingly in other parts of the world as well. Lorber has become a prototype for a number of subsequent new revelations through the Inner Word.

Lorber's books mentioned in this entry as well as most of the other ones continue to be reprinted in German by Lorber Verlag, Bietigheim; several of the books are available in other languages as well (including English). – Several musical works of Lorber were recorded for the first time in 1990: *Kompositionen von Jakob Lorber*, CD K-CL 9001.

*Lit.*: Karl G. Ritter von Leitner, *Jakob Lorber, der Schreibknecht Gottes*, 6th ed., Bietigheim: Lorber Verlag, n.d. ♦ Kurt Eggenstein, *Der Prophet Jakob Lorber verkündet bevorstehende Katastrophen und das Wahre Christentum*, Bietigheim: Lorber Verlag, 1979 ♦ Rainer Uhlmann, *So sprach der Herr zu mir . . . Einführung in das prophetische Werk Jakob Lorders*, Bietigheim-Bissingen: Lorber Verlag, 1987 ♦ Kurt Hutten, *Seher, Grübler, Enthusiasten: Das Buch der traditionellen Sekten und religiösen Sonderbewegungen*, 12th ed., Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1982, 583-606 ♦ Helmut Obst, *Apostel und Propheten der Neuzeit: Gründer christlicher Religionsgemeinschaften des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 4th ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000, 232-265 ♦ Matthias Pöhlmann, *Lorber-Bewegung: Durch Jenseitswissen zum Heil?*, Konstanz: Friedrich Bahn Verlag, 1994.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MAYER

Loup, Yvon le → Sédir, Paul

Lullus, Raymundus → Llull, Ramon

Lytton Bulwer, Edward George  
→ Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George

## Macrohistory

1. INTRODUCTION 2. ANCIENT Gnostic MYTH-HISTORY 3. OTHER RELATED MYTH-HISTORIES OF LATE ANTIQUITY 4. MEDIAEVAL BACKGROUND TO MACROHISTORIES IN WESTERN ESOTERICISM

5. PATTERNS OF EARLY MODERN WESTERN ESOTERIC MACROHISTORY 6. FROM ROMANTICISM TO THE PRESENT 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Macrohistory is the representation of history as a whole, “in the mind's eye”. It comprises all general(ized) visions of human destiny, whether as great stages or a procession of cycles through time, as an overall progress or regress, or as an encasement of the known order between determinative primordial events and some extraordinary eschaton. Macrohistory encompasses but is not limited to metahistory (the past explained by such metaphysical principles as providence or nature) nor to ambitious historiographical projects (a Gibbon tracing Rome's long decline, for instance, or a Toynbee paralleling the contours of many civilizations). Macrohistory must also take in any broad prospectus of change that is decidedly imaginal, or highly speculative. Indeed, when any such envisagement of “the whole past” is palpably mythic in character one can refer to “myth-history”, or mythological [macro-]history, and when it is imbedded in a cosmology one may talk of a “cosmo-historical” picturing.

In → gnosticism and Western esotericism there lies a common concern to unlock the mystery of time, and present a truer account of humanity's purpose in the cosmos than the narrations of outward events in popularly approved history-writing. Together, gnostic and esoteric macrohistories present radically alternative reviews of the past, because they seek to locate and bring to attention overlooked (*prima facie* concealed) events and patterns, and disclose outworkings of truth across the ages not noticed in “establishment” or standard historiographical exercises. These unusual options allow imaginal, oneiric, mythic or “myth-like” features, bearing some comparison to the symbolic images of great transformations in apocalyptic literature (as well as more mainstream histories later affected by it). And if gnostics and Western esotericists did in their different ways appropriate convenient schemata of history (Creation to cosmic Resolution, for example, recurring Ages or catastrophic punctuations, and great figures as markers of periods), they worked with their own characteristic macro-vision nonetheless. They envisaged a descent of being from the divine into the material world, and then disclosed the process by which ascent back to the true Source could occur – in what may be called a cosmic looping or the fundamental U-curve of time. What happens to each

human, through the descent of spirits and/or souls into matter, reflects microcosmically what transpires in a total cosmic process (or all-embracing *mythos*). As shall be shown, too, it is very typical of Western esoteric histories that the past is read in terms of bearers of the same deep wisdom through the ages – the wisdom that teaches the un- and in-folding of the divine. These histories also often connect with theories of → correspondences in which all things originate in one and all things in turn flow and return to one.

Such envisagements of cosmic process and temporal Moments can be interpreted as reacting to unsatisfying yet more widely received *Weltanschauungen*. Because the comforts of enshrouding myth seemed threatened by new impetuses of historical thinking in Antiquity, and because further processes of de-mythicization and computed time occurred later on in the West (especially from early modern times), gnostic and esoteric reactions often appear to hark back to mythic foundations to resecure the satisfying effect of an awesome primordium that explains all time, or for the comforts of a “recurring sameness”. Hence distinct concentrations on the great preface to history that we find in “classic” → gnosticism or with such a key Western esoterist as → Jacob Boehme. Hence also interest in great stages of history or in lost (even supra-material) civilizations long preceding ours [e.g. → Steiner; Churchward; → Cayce]. Certainly gnosticizing and esoteric approaches to temporality resist ordinary chronicling, focus on mystical meanings to event sequences, and in modern times their protagonists despise naturalistic interpretations and cannot imagine the truth of history being so banal as to be what outwardly (or in the common-or-garden sense “actually”) happened. Such reactivity called for the different, virtually para[llel]-histories of Western esoterics who wrote of inner relations and journeys of the soul that corresponded with the way the whole cosmos unravelled *ab profundis*. Theirs had to be an overall story, of a “golden” (even secret-associated) thread holding everything together, without deferring to stereotypical forms of documentation (such as biographies, or accounts of wars and other particular socio-economic changes).

## 2. ANCIENT GNOSTIC MYTH-HISTORY

In ancient gnosticisms, it is well known, historical facts were utterly subordinated to cosmologic ones. The key strategy of those disclosing *gnôsis* was to uncover the prefatorial cosmic events before

the aberration of our world occurred, so that the true knowers on earth could get back to the original Perfection after death. In this light some scholars hold that one purpose of the gnostics was to “deny history”, maintaining that wisdom was only found in the eternal, never the changeable. As a foil to this view, however, one should appreciate, if the Christian Gnostic codices of Nag Hammadi are a good indication, that the story of Christ as discloser of the divine mystery on earth had to be placed in the scheme of things.

During the first three centuries C.E. accounts of who the Christ was, and what he said and did, were increasingly received and interpreted by those who had not shared the Jewish historiographical inheritance. In late Hellenistic times, however, any engagement in history was not expected from participants in formal religious cults, or from initiates in the mysteries or schools of wisdom. Myths were carefully relayed, and the correct sequencing of rites made known, yet the “truth” was so projected as eternal, that history – a matter for elite specialization – was almost always foreign to it. Outside Judaism, indeed, efforts at developing a sense of historical time-depth were not integral to public knowledge. In this light, then, early Christian missionaries have been said to be the “evangelists of history”, because they purveyed the history of Israel to put the coming of the Messiah into context. This new pressure for historicity, however, seeped in unevenly across various cultures. In the case of the ancient Gnostic Christians (of non-Jewish quarters in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean), the ancient Hebrew past was lacking in immediate connection to the new salvific message. It is arguable that this disjunction arose because the Old Testament Jehovah, already foreign among Gentiles, was imaged by the Gnostics as an alien deity, responsible for an undesirable material creation. On the other hand, approaches to history in ancient gnostic sources may be read as “unacculturated”, by writers not seeing the point of a factual “baggage” unrelated to their contexts; and so it makes as much sense to infer that the past was *unconsciously* mythicized in them as to maintain it was deliberately spurned.

Paramount in Christian-influenced gnostic views is the *mythos* of Christ as the cosmic Redeemer, who is sent out of the Depths of the Ultimate to compensate for the mistakes of the lower aeonic or archontic powers (as illustrated by the arrogant Sophia in the Valentinian system) and the evil conditions of matter they spawned. However, while there is an interest in Christ (who usually takes only



the guise of the man Jesus), gnostic literature is strikingly lacking in references to Old Testament history. Where some attention is actually given, the key personages dominating the scene are from the primeval history of Genesis 1-11 – Adam and Eve, Seth, and Noah. Admittedly there is an interesting line of figures – running from Adam as far as John the Baptist – presented in *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII.62-3); and in other Sethian [→ Sethians] treatises we find tripartite stages of salvation. There are three “missions” of the divine Barbelo – to enlighten Adam; impart the saving “seed” to Seth so as to help Noah during the Flood; and to appear in the resurrected Christ to reveal “Sethian macrohistory” as a saving revelation (*Apocr. Ion.*, NHC II.30); and we find that three attempts by the “ignorant creator” Sakla to enslave Seth’s seed – in Adam’s time, at the Flood, and at the time of “the reign of fire and brimstone” – are foiled by divine luminaries (*Apoc. Adam.*; *Evang. Aeg.*). But these interests, which are more concerned with archetypes than with historicity in any case, do not show up in other Sethian texts. They constitute an exception in classic Gnosticism as a whole, considering that single allusions to such “greats” of Israel as Abraham, David, Elijah, etc. are very scattered and somewhat vacuous. Such highlighted primal persons as Adam, Eve and Seth, moreover, become more decidedly mythicized into an *Urzeit* than they already were, interpretations of them deviating from traditional readings. In “Ophite” [→ Ophites] gnoseology, for instance, the serpent is the true God’s agent of secret wisdom to subvert the errors of the matter-engendering Demiurge (*Test. Verit.*, NHC IX, 45; 47-8), and thus the standard Judaeo-Christian deprecations of the primal pair’s disobedience, and the memorializing of the Israelite past coming after them, are taken as illusory. In *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II), the true “spiritual” Adam and Eve escape the Fall faced by their material counterparts (115-8), a view reflecting other ancient gnostic works treating Adam[as] as a cosmic Anthropos, one prototypical of terrestrial mortals to come and far more crucial than any corporeal human for one’s cosmic destiny.

There is little sense of time depth in the treatment of all these figures; they function as archetypes enclosing the mythic plenum that surrounds present temporality rather than being agents in a history. Insofar as classic gnostics narrate a cosmic slide towards unwanted conditions of *hylê*, however, they describe stages, a process, and thus implicitly temporal alterations, and they have to face up to temporality when humans are consid-

ered. Christ has to penetrate the mundane level of time in order to speak the salvific words of *gnôsis*. Here we may speak of the gnostic Moment as a myth-history, for Christ’s descent is followed by his ascent; and the “spirituals”, those who know he bears the truth because sparks of the Divine have remained in them, will follow him up to their true Home, while having to name and bypass the formidable Powers in an upward passage between bodily existence and heavenly Destination. The Jewish inheritance of a detailed history between a (deviantly read) Beginning and such a redemptive End served no clear purpose.

Ancient gnostic teaching was *esoterikos* in its own right because it stressed inner knowledge which was not preached publicly (cf., e.g., Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 6.36), and often imparted as a set of cosmic secrets (in books entitled apocrypha, cf. also *Ev. Thom.*, Log. 62). Such suggestions of *mysterion* could be readily connected with acclaimedly “ancient” arcana, especially those of Egypt, with its age-old monuments, hieroglyphs and priestly lore.

→ Hermetism lent to Gnosticism and other theosophical trajectories a mytho-historical awareness of great if vague time depth, and intimated that lost primordial truth, older than the well known philosophers, could be reclaimed in the future. Notice how the Hermetic treatise *Asclepius* laments over the loss of Egypt’s old mirroring of eternity [24-5]), yet looks to its revitalization in a new *Gnôsis* and magical reanimating of idols (23; 26; 37). Gnostics also sometimes shared an interest in schools highlighting such a recondite sage as Pythagoras (*apud* Hippolytus, 1.2), who was supposed to have accessed archaic, veiled truths from Chaldaic, Egyptian or Orphic sources (e.g., Plutarch, *De Isid. et Osir.* 354D-E). Notions of a *fons sapientiae* was readily associated with the myth of the perfect (and even reappearing) Golden Age or with belief in the return of the Great (astro-nomic) Year (e.g., Cicero, *Somn. Scip.* 7.24; Constantine, *Orat. ad Sanct.*). It was an obligation felt by learned Hellenistic Jews (such as Philo and Josephus), and Christian apologists after them (e.g., Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea), to dispute exaggerated claims of the pagans that their philosophies had long-distant pasts, and to stress instead the temporal primacy of → Moses over Plato and any of his Gentile predecessors. Various Gentile seers, however, such as → Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus and Plato, were taken by different Christians as imparters of truth about the one true God outside Israel’s fold (e.g., Justin,

*Apol.* 59-60; pseud.-Justin, *De monarch.* 2; Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 7.15).

### 3. OTHER RELATED MYTH-HISTORIES OF LATE ANTIQUITY

The content of these Hellenistic debates was to sow seeds for later macrohistories of preserved wisdom in early modern esoteric writing. However, in these later developments notions from the Semitic environment gave historical time-depth an increasing importance – through positing “formularized” chains. Among the Samaritans, whose scriptural canon stopped at Joshua, there developed the notion of a *shalshaloth* (or chain) of prophets, from Adam, through Noah and Moses, to Eleazar and Phineas (*Mem. Marq.*, 1.9). The Mandaean [→ Mandaeans] version of Gnostic thinking also reveals the stringing of such significant figures, Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, and the three *Nuraithas* being precursory to John the Baptist as Bearer of Light, but Abraham, Moses and Jesus serving *Ruah* (Spirit), a dangerous force opposing good (see *Ginza Rba*). The Jewish-Christian → Elchasai taught that Jesus recurrently took human form whenever he wished (Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Gal., prolog.*), and → Mani, a Mesopotamian Elchasiite by birth (not an Indo-European Persian), introduced the concept of the recurrent messengers/apostles. After a sacred lineage running from Seth to Shem via Enoch (*Lib. gigant.*), the same teaching reached from east to west through the messengers Zarathustra [→ Zoroaster], Buddha, the Prophets, and Jesus, and the last messenger being Mani himself (*Kephala*. 1). Mani’s Syrian near-contemporary Bardesanes actually came to wed Gnostic emanationism to a grand macrohistorical framework – of six thousand-year periods that made up a Great Year astrally (*Coniunct. astr.*).

Some of these incipiently macrohistorical insights seem absorbed by Islam (*Qur’an*, e.g., 2.285), which emerged as a tradition also stressing truth’s temporal priority. Quite apart from the recognition of a not-so-fallen Adam as prophet, much attention is given in the Muslim Holy Book to Abraham, “grandfather” of the Arabs (cf. Gen. 16-17), a true submitter to Allah before the Mosaic law (*Qur.*, e.g., 3.77-9, cf. NT Rom. 4), and a man with mysterious connections to the pious wisdom of the Sabaeans around Haran (*Qur.* 5.73, yet cf. Gen. 11-12; Isa. 45:14). Insofar as these chains of figures in late antique paganism, marginal Semitic and unorthodox thought serve to resist the triumphal expansion of Christianity in the Romano-Hellenistic world during the first six centuries C.E., they

take on the aspect of the esoteric in disclosing the “alternative” (“neglected-if-true”) trajectory of revealed teachings. They were alternative to frameworks of long periods and millennia that paid greater homage to Biblical chronology in mainstream ecclesiastical macrohistory. Both to bolster Biblical veracity and encourage ahistorical societies to acquire a sense of time depth, standardized frameworks of Ages (from Adam, to Noah, to Moses, to David, to the Exile, to Jesus, to the present) held sway in orthodox Christianity, these stages usually represented hexamerally as a “Great Week”. Intriguingly, this model derived from the 2nd-century Epistle of [pseudo-]Barnabas (15.3-8), whose author was perhaps the first to maintain that the Old Testament should be interpreted esoterically. Islam, becoming itself a new “religious establishment” in the course of time, also adopted a model of successive periods marked by prophets warning of the Judgement (as first suggested by the sextad Adam, Idris [Enoch], Noah, Abraham, Moses, Mary in the *Qur’an* 19.30, 53, 57-9), as well as teaching the waxing and waning of great civilizations. In reaction, the last known late antique expression of Gnosticism, that of the Ophite-looking Yezidis, almost inevitably came to incorporate a dissident macrohistory: Allah created the world but was not its guardian, for it was the angel Melek Tâ’ûs instead who was lord over seven thousand-year periods, or “vessels”, until the End.

The fact that all such chains of disclosures tend towards finality links them to ancient apocalypses, highly symbolic and usually “underground” tracts that “revealed secrets” about the way time was proceeding on the grandest scale. At their very creation, significantly, such apocalypses were already alternativist and esoteric in character for depending on myth-historical orientations that countered established political rules and their legitimating histories. These macrohistorical frames were typically set up in terms of Ages, the election of unusual figures (who, like Enoch, Baruch or Daniel are enabled to foresee eventualities in time), and the sequence of world monarchies (cf. Dan. 10-12). A consummation arrives at the last with a final judgement or cosmic *dénouement*. This eschatological component or sense of time revolving into God’s hands has Jewish, Samaritan, late-Babylonian, Christian and Sassanian expressions, and also appears in Islam. In the course of time, these original impetuses of ideological resistance, as in rabbinic Judaism and ecclesiastical Christianity, were absorbed into orthodoxies, with new counter-cultural recastings of them nonetheless sprouting as a result. Whatever their context, one substantive

aspect in these orthodoxies has important implications for both gnosticisms and Western esotericism: this is the motif of a great cosmic Moment from Creation, through human eventualities, back to Re-Creation. As a conceptual structure this is analogous to the descent and ascent of the gnostic cosmic Redeemer out of and back into the primordium.

#### 4. MEDIAEVAL BACKGROUND TO MACROHISTORIES IN WESTERN ESOTERICISM

Macrohistories of the Western esoteric tradition have a mediaeval, not only an ancient background. Their forms cannot be explained without attention to adjustments made to ancient gnosticisms and apocalypticism within mediaeval Islam, Jewry and Byzantium.

In Islamic gnoseology and Jewish Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] we find speculation concerning emanations from the Divine that result in the material Creation, but in these cases materiality is now being honoured as good (rather than marred, even evil, as in “classic” gnosticisms). In the spiritual praxis of Jews and Muslims, moreover, the realization of God’s presence in bodily existence was (and remains) a necessary, *acceptable* part of the Moment that points the devout back toward God. Plotinus had already advised contemplation of the emanations of the One in their downward course to the beauty of the physical world, with purified souls then ascending back to the Divine One (and Neoplatonists [→ Neoplatonism], although they wrote of the soul’s possible entrapment in untold cosmic cycles [e.g., Plotinus, *Enn.* iv.9], poured scorn on those ancient gnostic speculations that denigrated matter out of hand). In what we may call “*neo-gnostic*” (or theosophic) developments within mediaeval Islamic and Jewish speculation, a macrocosmic process of emanation and reabsorption gave a positive place to the whole human course of things on earth in its grand looping. In spiritual life the macrocosmic unfolding paralleled microcosmic experience and praxis – the divine descent into the soul, the (re)discovery of the soul’s true celestial origins, and responses to the One who draws all thing back to Himself. By extension human history in its broadest purport also mirrored the divine purposes.

In Shiite and related systems – as with Imami (“Twelver”) gnosticism (mainly of Persia), Isma’ilism and Druzism (both originating in the 11th century Fatimid Egypt of Caliph Al-Hâkim) – the emanations from Allah (such as Intelligence, Light, Word, Wisdom, Soul) are connected to chains of spiritual leadership affecting terrestrial affairs, to

express divine providence in the macrocosm before all eventualities are gathered up into God at the End. The Imamis and Isma’ilis locate this leadership in chains of imams, starting from ‘Ali as first Caliph (according to Shia ideology). This imamology, expressed as a continuation of the divine work beyond that of the primal emanations and the prophets, is a macrohistorical frame of reference – what → Henri Corbin calls a “para-history”, or template by which all time can be comprehended. The leadership is conceived as inner and spiritual (even in special occultation, as the Persian Twelvers hold), and acts as a foil against the claimed externalities of Sunni Islam, whose Caliphs and “external histories” are rejected.

Again, alongside formal Muslim theological categorization of the six major prophets (cf. *Qur.* 19; 21-2), there arose Sufi speculation about the lineage of the wise, based on “the law of [the antediluvian] Idris” (Ukhnûkh; Enoch, cf. *Qur.* 19.57) as distinct from that of Muhammad (thus the 12th century Ibn al-‘Arabî, *Fusûs al-Hikâm*). The claimed rôle of Idris, as founder of the arts, sciences and wisdom, allowed for the accommodation of philosophy, and thus the use of non-Arab teachers, as proper to religion. Since prophets appeared periodically, so could these other propagators of wisdom, the Sabaeans, Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras (Fithaghûras – as founder of philosophy, → alchemy, numerology [→ Number Symbolism] and → music [Anon., *Chrysis epê*; Ibn al-Sid, *Kitab*]), Plato and Aristotle. At times Zarathustra (Zoroaster) received respect as a monotheist and seer (and one whom Aristotle, popular in mediaeval Islamic philosophy, had extolled as Plato’s long-distant prefigurement. The sense of a theosophic current running over a long time, with Egyptian, Orphic and Babylonian mysteries lying behind Pythagoras and unveiled by Plato, is clearest in the work of Ibn Sinâ (early 11th century).

Over and above macrohistories demarcated with reference to “leading lights”, complex theories of Ages (great stages or cycles) made their appearance in the mediaeval Middle East – in Druzism of the Levant, in a Persian Zoroastrianism that survived Islamization, even in Kabbalistic Judaism. These schemae show that Indo-European cosmo-historical ideas comparable to Indian *kalpa* theory was persisting in spite of Islam.

The Druzes kept to themselves a secret, anti-Islamic tradition about a huge stretch of aeons covering 343 million years from the Cosmic Perfection, via a slow degeneration, toward a cataclysmic End. Complex patterns of → reincarnation occurred through each aeon (*d’âhr*) to allow for the

interplay of the Light and Shadow of the divine Truth, and time enough for each soul's choices. The present Age is formally expressed both hexamerally and as increasing deterioration, with its line of those "revealing the outward religious message" – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and the culminating figure of the Fatimid 'Al-Hâkim (who warns of and "inaugurates" the Grand Resurrection). Behind creation and history, however, are the five *hudûd* (Christ and the Four Evangelists) whose continual presence is reflected in a lineage of 159 Masters (*sadatnas*). These Masters have their pre-historical places in the emanation process but they later manifest in alternating cycles of occultation and of personal human forms – Hermes, Orpheus, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus being crucial among them. The final state involves a return to the primal sense of the divine immediacy, and a condition of complete religious de-institutionalization (in which the *shari'ah*, for instance, would be abolished) (esp. Taqiyiedî'in Abdulghaffâr, *Majrâ z-Zamân*, and *Kitâb almogat Waldawâir*). With their views kept inaccessible to the public gaze until 1985, the Druze vision has been most responsible for associating the esoteric with secrecy.

In the tradition of → Zoroaster (who has no place in Druze models), we find another countervailing macrohistorical paradigm preserved, that of four tri-millennial Ages from Creation to the General Resurrection (cf. *Bundabishn*). 10th century north Iranian Shiite Abû Hâtîm Râzî (*Kitâb A'lâm al-Obowwat*) was even prepared to accommodate Zoroastrian proclivities in his vision of a grand cosmic cycle (*dawr a'zam*). It coupled a cosmic devolution downwards (via a universal pre-historical Adam) to the terrestrial order and then a rising back again through periodic resurrections in angelic orders to the final home of the true spiritual knowers. This takes place over seven Ages, each with its Enunciator, and all monitored by the one occult archangelic Imam. As for developing Jewish Kabbalism, speculations about the cosmologic emanations out of the Infinite (*En-Sof*), contemplated in divine numbers and letters, were eventually supplemented by models of great Ages, decreasing in length over time like the Indian *yugas*, each being numerologically weighted, and the whole process tending towards the need for a messianic fulfilment (*Sef. ha-Temuna*) and a Great Peace (as in Maimonides, *Hil. Melach U'milch*. 12.1).

Certain Byzantine schools possessed affinities with these Middle Eastern visualizations. Although ascetics had a virtual monopoly over what was *esoterikon*, *gnostikon*, *mustikon* and *aporrêton* (secret), or over the whole practised spirituality of

the inner being, not all relevant speculative activity was so sociologically confined. The connection of Plato and a Gentile lineage of the wise was quite a common fixture in Byzantine philosophy and spirituality, through knowledge of Proclus, and the pious fiction that → Dionysius the Areopagite's cosmic hierarchism hailed from New Testament times (when it was actually designed to take a leaf out of Proclus' Neoplatonic frames of reference in the Pagan-Christian debates of the 5th century). Byzantine eschatologists, moreover, generally took earthly time as running down, yet towards Christ's Second Coming, the Resurrection and consummate Kingdom of God, final events that were most often conceived as terrestrial. The Kingdom's everlasting peace, which some saw prefigured by a chosen emperor, was to be the fulfilment of both the empire and the divine liturgy (with its angelic music).

These currents of thought only touched Latin Christendom in pockets – in Spain and the western Mediterranean. After more than a millennium of Christian history, however, and the dominance of four world monarchy and hexameral Great Week age theory, an alternative macrohistorical envisagement appeared in the West. Calabrian Cistercian monk Joachim of Fiore (or Joachim of Flora, † 1202) innovatively reconstrued the whole temporal order into three great Stages – of the Father (the Old Testament events), the Son (Christ and the time of the Church), and the Holy Spirit (the emergent time of contemplation, perfection, and the dismantling of ecclesiastical structures, soon to be realized terrestrially while still bearing eschatological import). In this picturing Jesus now came to be placed in the centre of historical time, and, most significantly, the model was one of humanity's spiritual progress.

Joachim travelled through Byzantine territory and the Near East and his writing reflects a reactivity toward macrohistorical cross-currents at the time. His triadic procession recalls the "economic" Trinitarianism of Marcellus of Ancyra, who saw Creation expressing the sequential activity of Father, Son, and Spirit (and whose orthodoxy was conceded by the Western church in 340). Joachim's stages have (imam-like) Enunciators – Isaiah (and king Uzziah) in the Age of the Father heralding Christ, for example, and Benedict in the Age of the Son fore-announcing the *ordo contemplativus* – reminiscent of Middle Eastern speculations, The Age of the Holy Spirit, devoid of typical apocalyptic trials, looks much more like a Maimonidean Great Peace or Druze *Endzeit* of de-institutionalization (*Concord. Nov. Vet. Test.* II) than a crowning empire. We can note here a comparable cosmic

processionalism involving history with mediaeval Balkan neo-Manichaeism, the Bogomiles [→ Bogomilism] believing themselves especially left on earth with the Holy Spirit, to escape matter in ethereal bodies at death. If Joachim creatively responded to an arena of competing macrohistories, however, his innovation lies in an optimism that surpassed both the Western resignation toward human vicissitudes through the ages and notions of general degeneration favoured in the East.

For projecting a great spiritual Stage without ecclesiastical structures Joachim's theology came under official (post-mortem) criticism in 1215 (at a time when his beliefs would be unfairly associated with heresies of the western "Manichees" [→ Catharism] in southern France). Thereafter his method of marking time's mysteries was deployed, elaborated upon, and readjusted by the "alternative" tradition of the Spiritual Franciscans (*Fraticelli*), who criticized the wealth of the visible Church. Joachimism became more pessimistic and catastrophist, and affected by hopes in some last and "spiritual" emperor (e.g., Charlemagne *redivivus*). Overall, though, an accentuation of mystically-charged symbols, a special interest in crucial reincarnations (Elijah as John the Baptist), and the quest to unlock the mysteries of time and the Apocalypse make the inspirations of Joachim(ism) very appealing to modern Western esotericists.

Other special expressions of macrohistorical interest in the mediaeval arena may be mentioned to complete the background. The understanding that Noah was the first inheritor of the moral truths held in common by the traditions discussed above, and that the effect of his teaching had lasted so long in human affairs (see Gen. 9:8-9; *Qur.* 71; *Bab. Talm.*, *Sanhed.* 56a-b), suggested the need to persist with *rapprochement* through the years – and ply a subterranean, "non-establishment" route – because these monotheistic groups had to deal with each other. Coming into this story are → Ramon Llull from the Baleiric Isles, with dialogical methods (*Lib. Gent.*), and the mobile Knights Templar, who evoked an ideal of the temple at Jerusalem as if it were the mysterious centre-piece of both time and space (an approach in "conversation" with Jewish messianic hopes and Druze speculative ideas about Solomon). Old notions of the "Zodiacal Man", that conceive the human being not only as a mini-cosmos or geography (see the Naassenes; Macrobius) but as reflecting temporal phases that could be charted astrologically (see → Al-Kindi and Ma'ashar), were passed down among the alchemists, scholastics and courtiers of the mediaeval West. These concerns, and the the general pictures

of temporality that went with them, were to be absorbed and reinvented in different ways as a more distinctly Western esoteric *aire de famille* that intensified through modern times.

## 5. PATTERNS OF EARLY MODERN

### WESTERN ESOTERIC MACROHISTORY

Modern Western esotericists have dealt with this large inheritance in different, if related ways. To make sense of the complex material, a general chronological sequencing of the main patterns is to be preferred here.

Italian high Renaissance thinkers are well known for their interest in an ancient stream of wisdom. Stimulating this was the fact that newly accessed Greek texts of Plato came with the *Corpus Hermeticum* [→ Hermetic Literature] and the *Oracula Chaldaïca* virtually attached to them, in an arrangement fostered by such Byzantines as Michael Psellos and Gemistus Plethon (with the latter innovatively, if incorrectly, ascribing the Oracles to Zoroaster). When the founder of the Florentine Academy → Marsilio Ficino translated and expounded Plato (1462-1484), he justified his attentions by writing of six "ancient (*prisici*) doctors in religion" that reflected the influence of Moses among the Gentiles (e.g., *Theol. Platon.* 17.1). The six were placed in a *strict succession* or direct line of transmission running (after Moses) from Zoroaster, through Hermes, Orpheus, Aglaophemus (cf. Iamblichus. *Vit. Pythag.* 146) and Pythagoras, to Plato. Plato, already taken to acknowledge Orpheus and Pythagoras as his own heralds (cf., *Phaed.*; *Resp.* 363C-364E; 600A-B), was thus heir to a long tradition of truth, and one with Biblical foundations. Ficino's associate → Pico della Mirandola added to the *prisca theologia* the Kabbalah, which he saw as Christian mysteries delivered to the few in the wilderness at the time of Torah long before the Incarnation (*Homin. dign.* [1486]). While this step could be taken as a supplement to the succession model, however (so that not long after → Johann Reuchlin was also linking Pythagorean and kabbalistic insights), Pico potentially broke open the "biographical chain". The "perennial fountain" of truth might be accessed *not in one line but at various points* – in the ideals of Solon the legislator, even in the Qur'an, Muslim philosophy and mediaeval scholastics –, a view recalling → Nicolaus of Cusa, who, made a cardinal 40 years earlier, had been in search for a universal religion that gathered up all essential truths shared between the Bible and Gentiles.

Thus, while the *imago* of a special (macro-)history of extra-Biblical founts of divine disclosures



famously crystallized in the Renaissance, it could be taken in quite different directions. It could be added to, filled out in terms of world history; and interpreted further in terms of veiled mysteries. Thus French Renaissance Kabbalist → Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie added the ancient Druids to the lineage, and, after Plato, “Dionysius-St. Deny” (the Areopagite); he took the ancient theologians to have geographical responsibilities – Zoroaster bearing truth to the Bactrians, Hermes to Egypt, Orpheus to Thrace, Pythagoras to Magna Graecia, the Druids to Gaul – but all deliberately veiled “the secret sciences” in obscurity (*Galliade*). As with Pico, there are chronological breaks in the sequencing, and for this reason we can talk more of “stepping stones” or recurrent instantiations of Wisdom’s expressions through time.

The most famous Renaissance exponent of this “pagan trajectory of Truth” was bishop Agostino Steuco, whose book on the “perennial philosophy” was published in 1540. But Steuco set the *prisca theologi* in a wider history of both continuity and degradation from a “golden time”. A single Truth, or a single Wisdom, has been constantly available to all periods, but not equally accessed; in the first Adamic period it was known perfectly and immediately; then in the second it dissipates and loses unity; and finally in the third it falls forgotten and obscured (and thus in need of such seers as Hermes and Orpheus, whom Steuco believed to have a partial understanding of the Trinity; *De peren. philos.*, esp. I,1-2). Here the classical model of a Golden Age (and later ones of baser metals) has some effect (cf. Hesiod, *Erga*), yet, unlike some Renaissance thinkers, Steuco does not imagine the Age of Gold returning and is the very opposite of a theorist of progress.

Honouring pagan philosophy in this interpretative mode was risky (Pico and Steuco, for two, ran into trouble with the religious establishment), and thus one may speak already here of a developing alternativist approach to history. Steuco, indeed, as with some Hermetists (such as Hannibal Rosselli) before him, took the adventurous step of placing Hermes chronologically prior to Moses, even if only slightly, and at one point gave Hermes equal status to Moses in passing down the truth of monotheism (*Per. philos.* IV,1). This opened up the possibility of the “stepping-stones” of truth independently of Mosaic foundations, indeed in disconnection from the Incarnation (because Ficino, Pico, Steuco and their like all read *prisca theologia* as pointing towards Christ and the Christian revelation). Something left hanging in Steuco’s idiom, moreover, was the prospect of a genuine

restoration of the “the true philosophy” in contemporary times.

The strikingly dissident voice of the wandering Neapolitan → Giordano Bruno took up these implications in the 1580s. He deployed the pagan lineage of truth to justify his idiosyncratic, pantheistic-looking cosmology. Appealing to Atomists (e.g., Democritus) and other pre-Socratics (e.g., Heraclitus), he taught that humans constantly “come and go, pass and repass” in an unprecedentedly wide universe, amid mutations with no apparent Beginning or End (*Cena*, V). Bruno’s macrocosmos, animated by a vast host of “intelligible beings”, and with matter possessing its own principles of movement, operated in complex correspondence with human purposes and affairs. An intellectual genealogy of the wise was claimed to have transmitted this world-picture down through the ages – from a Golden time in Egypt and Chaldaea, through the Persian Zoroaster, the Indian gymnosophists, the Thracian Orpheus, the Greek pre-Socratics, and the Latin (atomistic) Lucretius. It was based on a *prisca theologia* as old as Moses, found in the divinely inspired Hermes, who was concerned with the animations of matter (including theurgy). To cap off this history, Bruno took the Hermetic vision to be heliocentric, so that his own time was witnessing a *decisive restoration* of Egyptianism, with what had been veiled over many ages now re-establishing itself at last with the new heliocentric cosmology of Copernicus.

Significantly, key features of pagan metaphysics glossed by preceding perennialists as non-Christian lapses into uncertainty are now taken very seriously in Bruno’s macrohistory. The cosmos is eternal and animated by the divine; souls have pre-existence, immortality and undergo metempsychosis (although for Bruno only in terms of constant rearrangements of cosmic components, as taught by the Atomists and Heraclitus). Thus the universal Truth is no longer distinctly Christian, nor does the perennial philosophy obviously point to Christ. Most of Bruno’s chief concerns were admittedly already found among his predecessors – considering Ficino’s belief in astrological influences and his interest in the soul’s immortality and spiritual magic shared with Pico. Bruno’s speculations about cosmic correspondences, further, have their background in mediaeval alchemy and more recent Renaissance mystical philosophies of nature (e.g., → Paracelsus). But the perennialist macrohistory is disengaged from normative theology, made more “alternativist”, and more associated with an occult thread of Knowledge.

Aside from Bruno’s version of it (which received

a very temporary revival during the 1720s in John Toland's anti-Newtonian physics), the idea of *philosophia perennis* was widely aired up until the Enlightenment period. → Leibniz deferred to it in upholding the unity of truth and a "philosophy of concord". As we shall see, this perennialist mode was transformed almost beyond recognition in the world of "secret societies", but it was revived in the 20th century (when of course the rich variegations of the world's religious life were better known). A cluster of intellectuals calling themselves "traditionalists" (→ Frithjof Schuon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Titus Burckhardt, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, etc., who were all affected by Sufism), took the *philosophia perennis* as the inner wisdom lying at the heart of outwardly divergent religions. They distinguished themselves from such "perennialists" as Aldous Huxley, however, by insisting on greater attention to the particulars in each tradition.

None of the afore-mentioned Renaissance macrohistories assume an overall progress in history (as distinct from recurrence or regress). The prospect of a reabsorption of history's changeable terrestrialities back into the Eternal (as we have spotted them in earlier non-Western currents) remained present – with Ficino describing the cosmic process of Beginning (Beauty), Emanation (Love) and Returning (Pleasure) as a "circle" (*Comm. Symp.* 2.2) – but this U-curve was disengaged from the newly favoured "macrohistory of the Ancient Theology". Possibilities for a vision of progress (and a reconjunction of major schemae) are provided in the West through the difficult mystical writings of → Jakob Boehme, who pitched his theologically innovative insights against literalist and institutionalist tendencies in the Reformation (making him suspect among German Lutherans by 1620). There are difficulties in reading Boehme macrohistorically, although we can affirm that he taught a processional cosmology. For out of the impenetrable *Ungrund* (Groundlessness, cf. *En-Sof*), the creation arises from wrath (the Father), light and love (the Son), and expands (with the nurturing Holy Spirit as Matrix, and an unfolding of its tendencies and forms through seven emanation-looking *Quellgeister* or fountain-spirits). The sense of necessary materialization is strongly present in this vision (even though souls have to experience the terrible immanence of hell and darkness along with love and light), and, in a neo-gnostic Moment, humanity's possible complete regeneration into the primordial selfless state "within God" is contemplated. In all this, though, where is history to be placed? Boehme conceives all phenomal existence as a wheeling of reaction and counteraction, but what

of historical affairs? We can only, unfortunately, speak of Bohemian implications.

In his approach to nature, Boehme's illuminations point towards a vision of *progress* (rather than teaching a chain of wisdom, or an overall regress). Indeed, Boehme's complex system of correspondences, revealing how the emergence of vegetative and animal life, not just humans, express the divine Unfolding, was a seedbed for developmentalist and evolutionary theories to come. The term "evolution", however, strictly spiritual in purport, first referred only to the process of humanity's reintegration to make up for the Fall of (the angelic, Androgynous) Adam into the material world (thus the Bohemian → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger). Later, in the hands of Charles Bonnet, all species are seen ascending, in ever-increasing complexity, towards their intended perfection, a view also mediated by Hegel, but soon to be overlooked by the plainly empiricist and "scientific" Charles Darwin and his like. Another implication is the triumph of spirit over letter, and mystical over institutional.

As for history as human affairs, although Boehme avoids reference to it, by using the idioms of the nettle, the rose, and the lily, he apparently alludes to the triadic Joachite framework of macrohistory as a corollary of his Trinitarian cosmogeny (cf. also *Sechs myst. Punc.*). Something of the Joachite "scaffolding" seems assumed in esotericisms inspired by Boehme (as in the the → Christian Theosophy of the Philadelphians and → Karl von Eckartshausen during the 18th century). Despite qualifying stresses on recurrence, it remains discernable in Quakerism (after interaction between "Behmenists" in the 1670s) and in select German Pietists [→ Pietism] such as → Gottfried Arnold. The frame then gets more overtly transmitted under the rubric of "the Last Times of the Third Age" among French *illuminés*, a view affecting → Emanuel Swedenborg very slightly (*Apoc. Revel.* 1766) and directly inspiring → Eliphas Lévi, who by the 1820s was announcing "the Age of the Paraclete" (which became for him a "reign of Light" in which the science of magic would be revealed).

The stronger component of recurrence in Quaker triadic macrohistory, as expounded by George Fox and Isaac Penington, arises through the notion of the golden Edenic age being re-enacted in the middle of time (through Christ) and in the latter days (through the [Society of] Friends). Thus history's three great positive Moments are the Age of the Christian Adam (begun in perfection and almost millennium-long in its timing, cf. Gen. 5:5 on his 930 years); the Days of Jesus, the Second Adam,

and his Apostles; and the present times, when these earlier perfections are beginning to be recovered – by reenactment – as the life of the Spirit is embraced. In contrast, the time of the Old Testament and its post-Adamic times is that of the first covenant, which was *outward*, at least forming the antetype of the covenant lived *inwardly*, with Christ, the early disciples, and now the Friends being imbued with the ‘true Light that lighteth every man’ (AV Jn 1:9) and not fettered by “the Letter” and ecclesiastical institutions. In the Age of the Church, though, between the Apostles’ days and the Moment of the new breakthrough, there is a long period of sad apostasy, whereby Christendom was ‘built up . . . with blood and iniquity’, and religious conformity maintained by fallible ‘doctrines, . . . creeds, and ordinances, and canons, by force of carnal weapons’. This overall view of the past, one can already sense, heralds the claims of an overall progress towards “Enlightenment”, even if the vision was to be radically secularized (cf. Voltaire’s essay *Sur les Quakers*).

By 1700 Gottfried Arnold had combined a synoptic study of history with the Boehmian dream that ‘all creatures will be brought back into that original and blessed oneness . . . of eternal love’ as was meant to pertain in Adam’s time (*Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, vol. 1). Arnold’s outright conclusion, however, is that illumination belongs only to a few genuine believers: history is just a sea of repeated follies and corruptions. The Eternal Light shone brightest in Christ, and brightly in the young Luther and his forerunners, but after each case comes predictable degeneration. Arnold is impelled to draw the subversive conclusion, in fact, that the illumined few might be found among (wrongly imputed) heretics, and cannot even be limited to adherents of the Christian religion. This pessimism, we note, does not issue either in a steady regress or stepping-stone model of wisdom. It stands in stark contrast, too, to late Renaissance (especially earlier 17th century) utopianisms looking to some extraordinary socio-spiritual rebirth.

Some of the dreams of reappropriating neglected wisdom had been decidedly utopic (→ Francis Bacon; → Tommaso Campanella); some proclaimed the disclosure of the truth upon which all affairs rested or could be adjudged (Jean Bodin on the Ten Commandments; Faustus Socinus on Jesus’ special receipt of *arcana* in his lifetime [cf. Jn. 3; 13]). Others invoked the probability of a returning Golden Age. → Johannes Comenius and others at the enigmatic court of → Rudolph II in Prague heralded a great redisclosure of “pansophic”

knowledge. Works by Lutheran → Johann Valentin Andreae in the 1610s triggered off fascination with the abstruse message that the fabulous Christian Rosenkreutz had tapped the mystery of the Ages (being learned in Eastern – especially Arab and Egyptian – wisdom, founding a secret society to study Nature’s hidden things, and imparting an anti-Catholic esoteric Christianity). → Rosicrucianism was early linked to political dreams of a returned Golden Age in the form of a Protestant Holy Roman Emperor Fredererick V Palatine. Most of these figures and developments, we should note, reflect a yearning to transcend prevailing orthodoxies.

The tensions between hopes for some extraordinary breakthrough in knowledge and reaction against orthodoxies show up in the macrohistories of two great scientific minds of the 18th century: → Isaac Newton and → Emanuel Swedenborg. Another figure of interest, (the ostensibly orthodox Catholic) Giambattista Vico, earlier toyed with notion of a transmission of wisdom to explain Latin-Italian learning, and even if he later disposed of this paradigm, his newer ideas came to affect Romantic “historiosophies” of a distinctly esoteric kind. Each of these three has distinctive components in their macrohistorical frameworks.

Newton held that the fundamental principles of all knowledge relevant to our present order were divinely granted to Noah after the Flood. This knowledge springs from the “true religion” of Noah who received seven precepts from God (prohibiting idolatry, blasphemy, fornication, murder and theft; and enjoining care of animals, and the setting up of governments [cf. Talmud, *Sanhredr.*]). In Biblico-Christian terms this religion was expanded in the Mosaic decalogue, reaffirmed by the prophets, distilled by Jesus (love God and your fellow human), used as a guide by the early Church (cf. Acts 15:20, 29), and discreetly embraced by Newton himself as the self-inscribed champion of *vera religio* in the Last Times. But it was relayed to the Gentiles – the Sabaeans, Confucius, the Brahmins (who owed their name to Abraham), and Pythagoras all passing on the Noachian “basics of civilization”. Thus a stepping-stone model of recurrent reinstantiation is suggested, but different from the preveining one of the *philosophia perennis*. The new understanding places a primary stress on the (misunderstood) transmission of moral principles. It also sets great store by Noah (a not unprecedented move, since the Jesuit → Guillaume Postel had voiced a similar prioritization), and put more weight on Jewish and Islamic preconceptions about the custodianship and history of truth (in

Islam Noah and Moses, for instance, carry almost as much weight as Jesus, and it is held, as Newton also did, that there was a “falling away” after each great disclosure of the Light).

Noah’s religion was enmeshed with natural philosophy. Thus Newton’s own work on the spectrum of light was connected back to the post-diluvian rainbow; and mathematics derived from the proportions of the Ark and the cubit unit of measure used for it. Gentiles had their place in mediating this *prisca scientia*. The Phoenicians through Hiram of Tyre, for instance, helped with the building of Jerusalem’s holy temple (using cubits) before even the pyramids were erected; when Orpheus and Chiron the Centaur voyaged as Argonauts (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argon.*), the latter possessed an astronomer’s sphere; when Pythagoras brought mathematics to the Greeks, he also bore the Noachian rules and taught God as Light and Father (cf. Pseudo-Justin mart., *Hort.ad Graec.* 19). The true religion, however, could be terribly corrupted; Egypt was a major culprit, earlier responsible for rampant polytheism, idolatry and magic; and later for gnosticism (including the hermetic philosophy, that was now critically redated to Hellenistic times). Out of Egypt, moreover, there arose the idolatrous Trinitarianism that marred the subsequent history of Christianity. As a Socinian-Arian, Newton’s agenda was to reinstate “true” non-Trinitarian religion and the sacred foundations of science at the same time. His connections with early 18th century → Freemasonry require investigation, for the appeal to a tolerating outlook across the borders of the major monotheisms, and evocations of both Noah’s precepts (as against the seven [pagan] virtues) and the symbolic importance of Solomon’s temple (including Hiram as facilitator) pertain to pre-Andersonian masonic rites.

Swedenborg’s most settled macrohistorical structuring was more formalistic, and links with his rôle as titular founder of the New Church. He favoured a theory of periods that turn out to be more four-than threefold in series – devolving around four “Churches” (thus “Ages”, cf. Dan. 2:31-5). The first and “Most Ancient” is called Adam (thus positing a “Golden” Adamic Age, as Boehmians, Quakers, etc. taught before him, but a celestial one [cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* 1.2]). This is the first appearance of an early etheric stage of history in modern Western esotericism in which the first humans lie outside ordinary earthly conditions. The second, “Ancient” and “Silver” (and first terrestrial) Age is called Noah (with “love of neighbour” being paramount, as Newton had also taught); while the third, brazen age is of the

“Israelite Church”, and the fourth, of iron, the Christian one. The decline is from original innocence and true love to a mere knowledge of natural and literal truth, and is reminiscent of Steuco’s pejorative clothed in a Hesiodic “outer garb”. Since this degeneration fairly screeches for a New Jerusalem or “the New Church” to solve the cosmo-historical problem, however, its downward course amounts in the end to a providential work of redemption: the New Church recovers the Edenic blessings and possibility of a return to the heavens. In the whole temporal process geographical shifts of influence around the points of the compass were detected, beginning in the East and ending with it in a circle. Appropriate worlds of heaven and hell were called into being *en route* as well, so that a “new heaven” is formed for “the simple good” with the arrival of the New Church, and a new hell for the Christian hypocrites (*inter alia* locked in a Trinitarianism that, like Newton, Swedenborg spurned). The future would now only hold “a progression of youth and spring” back towards God, “as it was in heaven”, with the final stage completing a neo-gnostic-looking loop when innumerable angelic, celestial societies constitute the *maximus homo* or “the greatest [cosmic] Man” (esp. *Arc. Cael.*). Considering the first Age, this consummation is highly significant: for the first time in human thought history as such is celestialized at both its beginning and end. Intriguingly, moreover, the esoteric U-curve has woven into it motifs of degeneration, recurrence, progress and millennialism.

The macrohistories of both Newton and Swedenborg hark back to pre-existing structures and modify them. Vico’s model for a “new science” of historical “coursing” and “recoursing”, however, marks a radical breakthrough, being more flexible and dynamic. Human consciousness developed through the Ages of the Gods (with a sense of the divine as immediately present), of Heroes (with great “barbaric” leaders embodying divine, albeit arbitrary power), on to that of Humans (with the triumph of rationality and applied abstract principles). Decline inevitably comes, yet, after a great civilization (such as Rome’s) collapses, affairs then “re-course” via a new barbarism to a still higher level (*Scienza nuova* [esp. 1744 edn.]). Here, despite the strong cyclical element, the suggestion is of history as overall spiraling upwards.

Vico’s modelling subverted the notion of an unchanging Ancient Theology, or a stable “house of wisdom” unaffected by the enormous changes of consciousness he described. Yet, even though his influence on mainstream thought took a long time

coming, his work had an impact on “esotericizing” (especially anti-rationalist, Romantic) thinkers between the 18th and 19th centuries. → Goethe, who had the *New Science* secreted to him while a traveller at Naples (1787), was first in explicitly construing history as ever-widening and higher cycloids. Significantly, he described the whole process as a spiral (*Spirale*), paralleling the human story to processes in plant and zoological life and taking in the idea of necessary decay before new growth was possible. Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, with Goethe its key inspirer, is crucial for a shift from a more static to a “temporalist” view of cosmic unfolding. Instead of the traditional (basically Platonic) conception of “the fullness of creation” and its orders being “perfect and complete unfoldment” from the divine, now there is conceived a ‘programme of nature that is being carried out gradually and exceedingly slowly in the cosmic history’ (A.O. Lovejoy; W. Hanegraaff).

#### 6. FROM ROMANTICISM TO THE PRESENT

In Romantic thought [→ Romanticism] concentrated on the human past, the spiral image informs the works of such French “historiosophists” as → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin in the 1790s and → Pierre-Simon Ballanche in the 1820s. While Saint-Martin is not interested in standard histories he visualizes human progress through recurrent crises, each making greater the possibility of humanity’s reintegration into the divine. The worst known crisis, that of the French Revolution, opens up the epoch of a new *magisme* (a magical participation in the divine creativity) through which humanity can be corporately regenerated. If this group of *hommes-esprit* hinted at Vico’s providential “Age of Humans”, Saint-Martin envisages an apocalyptic “Sabbatic reign” of God (alluding to the Great Week schema) – the utter low-point of the Revolution being interpreted as a proleptic miniature of the Last Judgement, the defeat of the Fall, and the suspension of ordinary time. As for Ballanche, inspired by Boehme, Vico, and more recently by spiritual evolutionist Bonnet, Ballanche maintained that accession to wisdom increased through such great initiators as Noah and Orpheus, and the transmission of their wisdom sets in train a social evolution that can overcome the Fall. Using the Vichian account of Rome’s constitutional developments, Ballanche saw social initiators in “heroic times” to be patrician, but a widening of spiritual maturity comes after the time when the plebeians slowly acquire responsibility (*Palingénésie sociale*, prolog.).

He thus addressed the spiral effect towards democratization so evident in his own day, which makes his esoteric historiosophy politically engaged.

The East, particularly India, had taken on increasing significance in Western speculative thought by the end of the 18th century. It figures in Romantic reactions against rationalistic and mechanistic explanations of the world. With the uncovering, first, of a version of the Upanishads (*Oupnek’hat*), India is proclaimed as the foundation-point of all ancient wisdom in a new, “Oriental” Renaissance (that upgrades the European one, with formerly honoured ancient theologies deriving from this freshly uncovered source). Thus for such savants as Friedrich von Schlegel and → Friedrich von Schelling the now recovered wisdom of India initiates the perennial religion, that (in Schelling’s version) moves to Egypt, Eleusis and then to an esoteric Gospel known to Sts John and Paul. In its inception this unveiling was a matter of public discussion and affected mainstream thought. In the 1810s, according to the macrohistory of Hegel (with its triadic frames affected by Boehmian, Vichian and Romantic impetuses), India preceded the Bible in expressing the first religious and philosophical universalism. By mid-century the titular founder of comparative religion, Friedrich Max Müller, deployed the Indian experience as a coping-stone for explaining religious history more generally – as passing through stages that are natural, then anthropological (or anthropomorphizing), and finally psychological (or theosophic). Texts from Sumer and the ancient Near East had barely surfaced to make any difference. Even when they did, India would remain crucial in distinctly esoteric currents of thought. Freemasonry and the → Theosophical Society are obvious cases in point.

The importance of the initiatic becomes more systematically expressed in 19th century Freemasonry. Thus, in the macrohistory of Albert Pyke (the most celebrated Masonic systematizer in the English-speaking world), the most crucial aspect of history is the transmission of “the exact knowledge of the Initiate”, the great ones being “Masters”. Pyke shows much interest in the general contours of history – the collapse of empires through greed, the overall advancement of freedom (sometimes through revolutions), the temporal priority of symbolic over moral and dogmatic expressions of truth (*Morals and Dogma*, 1871, chs. 3, 23) – but his key interest is in the passing down of the Mysteries. By now public fascinations in comparative religion, including better studied Indian traditions, have had an effect. Thus for Pyke India becomes the new font



of Wisdom, first through “Christna”, then the Buddha, who is described as “the first Masonic Legislator”. In turn the (Jain) Gymnosophists planted the mysteries in Ireland (so generating the round architecture there and affecting the course of Celtic Druidism). In the Middle East the Phoenician cosmogeny, held by Hiram (the true architect of the Solomonic temple) derives from the Sabaeans, who provide the seedbed of Kabbalah that is mediated via Zoroaster. Pythagoras, ‘the great divulger of the philosophy of numbers’, is indeed ‘a Master and Revealer’ for being initiated into the Kabbalah in Judaea and into the Egyptian (essentially Hermetic) mysteries. In masonic circles, these among other special stories were “institutional secrets”, and the symbolic forms used in initiations were viewed as the means of handing down the most ancient signs and symbols through which diverse peoples communicated in their first impetuses to find both common ground and the “divine light”. Thus Pyke’s macrohistory reflects an eclectic garnishing of prior esoteric currents, accommodating *philosophia perennis*, a better-known world of non-Biblical traditions, and Enlightenment concerns for Nature’s laws and its numerological basis (as well as for both progress and revolution).

As for the modern Theosophical movement, it would be impossible to account for its emergence and popularity without this new enthusiasm for non-Western spiritualities, especially those of India. But Theosophy also amounted to a reaction against the threat of de-spiritualizing tendencies in evolutionary thought. From 1859 Darwin based his theory of biological evolution on the purely secular principle of “natural selection”. His Social Darwinian successors (e.g., Spencer, Lubbock, Tylor) construed the whole human journey as a progress from animal-like savagery and primitive ignorance into the graded experiences of different “races”, while the most popular evolutionary cosmologist, Ernst Haeckel, espoused an Epicurean-looking materialism (from 1867).

→ Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of the → Theosophical Society (1875), boldly responded to these contemporary currents with a grand cosmo-(or myth-)history. Her self-conscious systematization of esoterica was presented in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) as a complex “revelation” about cosmic processes – based on lost Akashic records that had been mediated by spirit Masters out of the ether. Whether justifiably or not, Blavatsky put herself in a line of prior seekers – Boehmians, Masons, Swedenborgians, Spiritualists, interpreters of the East – although her disclosures were meant to dis-

til and surpass all former glimmerings in a system of final Truth. Insofar as she garnished many former insights to bolster her position, she was crucial (together with such contemporaries as → Hargrave Jennings) for “inventing” a “grand tradition” of esotericism – an act of macrohistorical reflection in its own right.

In Blavatsky esoteric macrohistory reaches its greatest degree of eclecticism and combinative intricacy. Her own synoptic view of temporal processes combines three major features. It clearly reflects the newer preoccupations with India, for she invoked *kalpa* theory to project endless rounds of cosmic ages and reincarnations. Despite this, though, her primary model still turns out to be a grand U-shaped “[neo-]gnostic Moment” of cosmic becoming through descent and ascent. In the construction of her vision a novel solution to the threat of materialist evolutionism is provided by Root Race theory, or the descending order of increasingly corporealized spiritual beings – from the Lunar Ancestors, through Hyperboreans, Lemurians, Atlanteans, down to the Aryans of the present cycle. As this descent proceeds, it is met by an ascent in the natural biotic order, highest with the Anthropoid Ape, with the phenomenon of “lower races” occurring because Lemurians and Atlanteans mated with them. The law of karma is taught as meting out justice – especially via reincarnations – through countless aeons, but advanced souls pass beyond what is, after all, a necessary materialization, and ascend back to forms of (influential) spirithood above. Key spirit Masters mediate the eternal truth via the religious great ones or “revealers” through the centuries, through Enoch, the “first Son of Man”, at the close of the third (Lemurian) Root Race, for instance, and through Jesus [or Jeshu], who was but the innocent vehicle of *Vâch*, the cosmic “Mystical Voice”, yet a fundamental mediator of Truth, like Krishna and Buddha, for the fifth Race. The eclecticism thus entails a wedding of cosmo-evolutionary history with the history of known human conditions and documentable human (especially spiritual) thoughts. The whole picture of enormous processes and such hidden masters has affinities with the speculations of the Druzes, from whom Blavatsky claimed initiation. *Avatar* theology and emanationist thought among the Hindus (e.g., *Sri Brahm. Samb.* 5) are hardly without their influence, though, and logically her gigantic “Rounds” of time go on unceasingly as in Indic conceptions. Even within the Round we now experience ‘our present continents have, like “Lemuria” and

“Atlantis”, been several times already submerged and had the time to reappear again’ (*Mahatma Letter* 23B [to A. Sinnett]).

Post-Blavatskian macrohistories amount to various kinds of readaptions of, or reactions against, her system (and against her free-floating selectivity procedures, that owe much to Louis Jacolliot). *Inter alia* → Annie Besant and → Alice Bailey show more interest than Blavatsky in the function of nations. For Besant each nation represents a temperamental aspect of the microcosm (India and Ireland possessing a resilience in the face of continual conquest, for example); yet if this recalls ancient astrological notions (Ptolemy, *Tetrabib.* 2.3.), Besant is more interested in the pendulum swing between western and eastern conquests, and in the Masters as “angel-kings” monitoring the nations’ rôles. → Rudolf Steiner, who left Theosophy (in 1913) and founded → Anthroposophy, sought to give back to Christ a centrality that the Blavatskian system disallowed, while he retained and readapted the Root Race theory, and wrote of an instructive “tension between East and West” through history. → René Guénon also reacted against Theosophy, but turned Indian *kalpa* theory into a veritable dogma (though excluding reincarnation). He had an extreme distaste for Western theories of process, especially evolutionism, yet, like Steiner, he drew on cosmological ideas of a necessary materialization even if it brought on a lamentable *Reign of Quantity* (1945) from which the spiritual elite must escape.

The list of neo- and para-theosophic macrohistorical inventions could go on, in a diversifying world of 20th-century esotericisms and “occult” systems. One thinks of → Aleister Crowley’s Ages of the Mother, Father and Child; of → William Butler Yeats (1937) “Vision” of gyrations of history in which will, mask, creative mind, and the body of fate predominate in turns; and of → P.D. Ouspensky’s thesis that *Man’s Possible Evolution* (1950) had declined from a higher spiritual and knowing state. The frequent evaluative displacement of the centrality of Middle Eastern monotheisms derived from a combination of early Theosophy’s preference for Buddhism and the fact that the modern study of comparative religion seemed virtually born from Indology. Thus, in the words of R.W. Hall, “the East” (basically India) was looked to as “the Cradle of all Religion” and “the divine Mysteries” (fairly waiting to become the location of Jesus’ education and death in New Age imaging). The modern attraction of the East for the West was viewed by → Carl Gustav Jung as “a compensation

in the unconscious”, making up for the swamping of religion by science in the collective psyche, and thus obeying an historical law of the conservation of psychic energy.

The → New Age macrohistorical ideas are too many to summarize, but a number of significant developments are worth noting. Common is an interest in cosmic catastrophes resulting in lost civilizations. Thus instead of the modern Theosophical vision of a descent of Root Races from ethereal realms, the focus is more on “secular-scientific” possibilities: that Atlantis, before it was inundated, was the basis for all Edenic myths (going back to Ignatius Donnelly); that a comet hit the earth to produce the Flood and destroy former civilizations (Donnelly, W.C. Beaumont); that the earth shifts sharply on its axis every 7000 years and destroys civilizations (H.A. Brown); that civilization was only made possible by extra- (or intra-)terrestrial visitation (B. le Poer Trench, etc.); and so on.

We may note that the New Age phenomenon of Channeling can entail macrohistorical views. Long-lost truths are believed available to be learnt, then, through the psychic memory of an → Edgar Cayce reaching back to Atlantis; or by adepts who can tap into etheric Masters, show how to reconstruct past lives, or prepare others for a returned Golden Age that the present New Age portends. Sometimes psychics’ contacts appear to be with chains of truth-bearers, reflective of the *philosophia perennis* and comparable frames (as with the Polish psychic Stefan Ossowiecki’s apparitions of Orpheus, Krishna, Buddha, Moses and Muhammad). Already most of the theorists just mentioned had trouble with Blavatskian views about the Masters, who were taken to be the true founders of the great religions and paths of wisdom “behind the scenes” (and who were only contactable by leaders of the Theosophical Society in its “Esoteric Section”). Instead New Age thought favours the competing, more straightforward paradigm that has humanity’s long spiritual journey guided by its actual great spiritual leaders, or those “initiates” into the supreme Truth who founded the known major religious traditions and appeared when meant to on the stepping-stones of time. Such ideas already permeated Eastern Sufi schools and Bahai’ism, before being expressed more systematically in the West by → Edouard Schuré (*Les grands initiés* [1889]). In general terms, Schuré’s picturing, spiced by schools of thought we may call “Traditionalism” (sometimes “Perennialism”) stemming from Coomaraswamy, Guénon, etc., has come to be the most popular one in New Age discourse.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Varied as they may be, all the afore-discussed thinkers from the last two centuries proffered large *specula historiae* that appeared more and more distinctively “esoteric” because their framers now often self-consciously identified with an/the esoteric tradition. In spurning the more commonly accepted ways of reading the past (whether naturalistic, historicist, empiricist), they held the true story to be “missed” by the majority. Their approach here compares with the 20th-century theological distinction between a *Heilsgeschichte* (a salvation history grasped by believers) and “classic” *Historie*, and this is because it derives from traditional ways of understanding long-term temporal changes within spiritually-charged schemata. For esotericists what may be termed “hierohistory” takes absolute precedence over the mundane details typical histories cover (A. Versluis). But theirs is a distinctive preoccupation with “the inner mysteries” of change, not the *mêlée* of outward relations and transient visibilities. They are often connected with a search for a “third cosmos” parallel to microcosm and macrocosm, the final alchemical revelation (Al-Jabir [or Geber], *Summ. perf.*). Eventually, over the last hundred years, it has become an issue for esotericists themselves what the true “whole” history of the esoteric quest might be (Jung, E. Benz, P.A. Riffard, etc.).

To conclude, we may warn that there are many sub-themes in the world of esoteric macrohistory. The rôle of special, apparently marginal “mystery-figures” must first be noted. Consider the strange mythical figure of “Elias Artista”, who was invoked as a hidden Master from Paracelsus’ time, being a kind of saviour figure who could work wonders in the domain of alchemy. Another curiosity is the Count → Saint-Germain, said to be the same person unexpectedly reappearing at times of important esoteric disclosures (especially during the 18th century). This case connects with ideas about the → reincarnation of the same spiritual being in religious “greats” (as with the Theosophic Masters, or the notion of “Melchizedek – Christ – the man who was never born and will never die” (like the mystic Joel Goldsmith), but it has stronger associations with the undreading Dr. Faustus, who was prepared to make a pact with the Devil to attain all-knowledge. In Goethe’s *Faust* (1808-1832), which can be read as a “neo-gnostic” play, this mediaeval malapert becomes a hero: he is redeemed rather than damned for wanting to acquire forbidden knowledge and experiences beyond traditional learning and normative morality.

Such intruders into prohibited places, of course, were to be secularized in exoteric thought. For Friedrich Nietzsche Faustian consciousness suggested a longing for humanity to move *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886); and by his time Prometheus would symbolize that humanity itself, as against any divine gift-bearer, was quite capable of ‘unlocking the sciences, the secret of all memory, . . . and every occult art’ (cf. Aeschylus, *Prom. Desm.* 459-516).

Other sub-themes of interest concern the origin and antiquity of particular esoteric preoccupations. This may be illustrated from the case of → alchemy, traditionally traced to Hermes; and there is a tendency in alchemical writings to reinforce the mysterious aura of its past, with a given author’s avoiding claims of innovation and deliberately attributing his writings to someone greater. Yet again, there is the curious issue as to whether such a figure as Nostradamus (of some interest to esotericists) could have visioned events of future world history from the 16th century on; and there are even stranger questions surrounding the antiquity, ubiquity and “return” of were-wolves and vampires, → witchcraft and sorcery.

*Lit.:* G.W. Trompf, “Macrohistory and Acculturation”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:4 (1989), 621-648 ♦ J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section “Études” 5), Louvain: Peeters, 2001 ♦ Trompf, “From the Esoteric to the Exoteric and Back Again: Themes from Antiquity to Post-Modernity”, in: E. Crangle (ed.), *Esotericism and the Control of Knowledge* (Sydney Studies in Religion 5), Sydney: University of Sydney, 2004, ch. 1 ♦ O. Fröbe-Kapteyn (ed.), *Mensch und Zeit* (Eranos-Jahrbuch 30, [1951]), Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1952 ♦ H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, part 2 ♦ Trompf and A. Kasamine, “The Druze and the Quaker”, *Prudentia*, Spec. suppl. (1981), 187-205 ♦ M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1969 ♦ Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, vol. 1 ♦ P.O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Concepts of Man*, New York: Harper & Row, 1972, ch. 5 ♦ Charles B. Schmitt, “Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966), 505-532 ♦ D.P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, London: Duckworth, 1972 ♦ F.A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991 edn. ♦ R.B. Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988 ♦ A. Versluis, *Wisdom’s Children*, State University of New York Press, 1999, ch. 24 ♦ Trompf, “On Newtonian History”, in: S. Gaukroger (ed.), *The Uses*

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GARRY W. TROMPF

## Magic I: Introduction

When contemporary academics discuss "magic", in most cases the assumptions which guide their understanding of it are variations on a few influential theories. First, there is the "intellectualist" understanding of magic linked to the names of E.B. Tylor and J.G. Frazer. Tylor, in his foundational *Primitive Culture* of 1871, defined magic as based upon 'the error of mistaking ideal analogy for real connexion' (Tylor 1771, I, 116). Tylor's assumption was that primitive man, 'having come to associate in thought those things which he found by experience to be connected in fact, proceeded erroneously to invert this action, and to conclude that association in thought must involve similar connexion in reality. He thus attempted to discover, to foretell, and to cause events by means of processes which we can now see to have only an ideal significance' (o.c., 104-105). It is clear from this definition that, for Tylor, not religion (based on animism, 'the belief in spiritual beings') but science should be the primary reference point for understanding the nature of magic; and this is confirmed by the fact that, throughout his discussions, he used it as synonymous with "occult science". Tylor's description of magic as something unrelated to animism/religion proved impossible to maintain,

however. Although at first he strenuously insisted that magic and religion were 'separate in their nature and origin' (1876, 1), in a large article on magic in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (ignored by all Tylor specialists ever since) he completely reversed his position and admitted that 'a large proportion' of magic actually belonged 'properly to the general theory of religion, inasmuch as their efficacy is ascribed to the intervention of spiritual beings'; other parts of magic, however, depend not on spiritual beings but 'on imagined powers and correspondences in nature' (Tylor 1883, 199; see discussion in Hanegraaff 1998). This about-face was not adopted by J.G. Frazer, who, instead, simplified Tylor's approach into his famous evolutionist triad: "magic" as the earliest and most primitive stage of development, followed by "religion" as a higher level, which is finally superseded by the third and final stage of "science". Magic in Frazer's usage actually means *sympathetic* magic (and therefore excludes spiritual beings), understood along the lines of Tylor's original position; it is based upon magicians' assumption 'that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy', often explained in terms of 'an invisible ether' (Frazer 1951, I, 54). Frazer, furthermore, famously divided magic into "homeopathic (imitative, mimetic)" and "contagious" magic: a distinction that was probably taken straight from Tylor (see 1865, 119ff., 129ff.), who in turn could have found it in → Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (I, 15-16), to which he frequently referred. This is a particularly clear example of how academic theories of magic may have unacknowledged roots in magical currents in Western esotericism.

A second highly influential approach to magic is the "functionalist" one, linked to the names of Marcel Mauss and Emil Durkheim. Mauss in 1902-1903 rejected Frazer's reduction of magic to sympathetic magic only, and concluded that in fact no tenable scholarly theory of magic as yet existed. As an alternative to the "intellectualist" approach focused on ideas, he proposed a functionalist approach focused on ritual action, defining a "magical rite" as 'any rite that is not part of an organized cult: a rite that is private, secret, mysterious, and ultimately tending towards one that is forbidden' (1950, 16). Essentially the same approach was adopted by Durkheim in his famous *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* of 1912. On the basis of circular reasoning of a surprisingly elementary kind (see Hanegraaff 1999, 341-345) he assumed a 'marked repugnance of religion for magic and the hostility of magic to religion in return' and concluded that 'there is something inherently anti-reli-

religious about the maneuvers of the magician' (1912, 59-60). Against this background he defined religious beliefs as shared by, and constitutive of, a social group, referred to as a 'Church'; magicians, in contrast, have merely an individual clientele: 'There is no Church of magic' (1912, 61; emphasis in the original). In brief: religion is a social phenomenon, whereas magic is inherently non-social. Close study of Mauss's original discussion, from which Durkheim's was derived, shows that the assumptions basic to his theory are in fact derived entirely from the traditional categories of Christian heresiology: paranoid perceptions of magic as the practices of the unsocialized "other" are thus adopted, quite uncritically, as the foundation for a purportedly academic study of what magic is all about.

A third approach derives from Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's theory of participation – remarkably, given the fact that this author in fact did not intend it as a theory of magic. Lévy-Bruhl attempted over several decades to come to grips with what he originally called the "pre-logical" thinking or mentality supposedly prominent in "primitive" cultures: instead of a worldview based upon "instrumental causality" (i.e. one that assumes the presence of secondary causes or intervening mechanisms that mediate between causes and effects), typical of modern culture, primitives seemed to have a worldview based upon "participation" (where causes and effects could be seen as associated to the point of identity and consubstantiality, without assuming the presence of intermediary links). Lévy-Bruhl eventually came to recognize that participation constituted a primary and irreducible human constant, present in *any* society, whether primitive or modern. Later authors, most of whom had not carefully read Lévy-Bruhl himself but relied on caricatures of his thinking as found in e.g. Bronislaw Malinowski (1948, 25), assumed that participation and magic were equivalent; as a result, various theories have come into existence that interpret magic as based upon a "different kind of rationality" (see e.g. Robin Horton, and critical overview of the "rationality debate" in Luhrmann 1989, 345-356). There is a certain legitimacy to this, since theoretical frameworks alternative to "instrumental causality" (e.g. non-causal → correspondences on the one hand, and "occult causality" [→ occult/occultism] on the other) are in fact basic to much that has been understood as "magic", at least in Western culture since antiquity and up to the 18th century. Arguably such frameworks can, furthermore, be understood in terms of "participation". The fact that much magic is based upon such

frameworks does not logically imply, however, that those frameworks can in turn be called magic; the fact that such implications have nevertheless been drawn has contributed considerably to confusion about the term "magic".

The theoretical approaches originating in Tylor, Mauss and Lévy-Bruhl have been mixed and combined in various more or less interesting ways; but practically without exception this has been done *within* a general context that is more basic than the theories themselves, and the validity of which has usually remained unexamined: the triad "magic – religion – science", which may be linked mostly to Frazer's name but is in fact implied in some form by almost all participants in the debate about magic. Its point of departure is that "religion" (however defined) is clearly something different from modern science and rationality. That relatively unproblematic distinction once having been made, it is followed by the observation that there exists a certain class of phenomena in human culture and history which are likewise quite clearly different from modern science and rationality, but which somehow do not quite seem to fit the model of "religion" either. This third category is then referred to by a variety of names, the very abundance of which already demonstrates that it is in fact a waste-basket filled with left-overs: "magic", "the occult" (resp. "occultism", "occult science"), "superstition", "mysticism", "esotericism", "the irrational", "primitive thought" (cf. "fetishism", "idolatry"), and so on.

Tacitly assuming such a triad, scholars of religion have usually tended to be in favour of "science and rationality", respectful at least towards "religion", and negative about "magic and the occult". It is important to recognize that the very insistence on distinguishing between the last two categories (religion and magic) does not have its origin in any critical scholarly argumentation but means a simple continuation of the historical usage long known to western Christian culture. Religion meant "true (i.e., theologically correct) Christianity" while magic meant demonic worship and pagan idolatry. The discussion became more complicated since the 12th/13th century, with the emergence of the idea of *magia naturalis*: magic understood as "occult science" based on the hidden (i.e. occult) forces of nature, and therefore easier to legitimate theologically. As a result of this double heritage, with the emergence of modern science since the 17th century *magia naturalis* found itself open to attack from all sides: the protestant Reformation had given a revived sense of urgency to anti-magical arguments, many theological critics failed to be convinced about natural magic being non-demonic



and continued to accuse practitioners and theoreticians of the occult sciences of trafficking with the devil, and they were now joined by modern scientists and philosophers who accused them of obscurantism and irrationality. This last line of attack was taken over by the Enlightenment tradition, adopted by Tylor, and continued by scholars throughout much of the 20th century.

Most academic theories of magic since Tylor have continued to make a sharp distinction between religion and magic, in spite of the fact that this distinction properly belongs to the domain of theological polemics internal to Christianity, and cannot claim any scholarly foundation. The lack of such a foundation has not sufficiently bothered scholars of religion. After a purely theological notion had come to be uncritically adopted, it eventually ended up assuming the role of an unexamined guiding intuition in scholarly discussions: an assumption too basic even to be perceived, and too self-evident to be in need of arguments.

Political and social factors have played a significant role in this process as well, for the perception of “magic” and “the occult” as something sharply different from religion came to play an important role in the colonial enterprise. To the extent that the vestiges of true “religion” were encountered among primitive peoples in the form of “animism”, these could be redeemed and purified by being channeled towards Christianity. For the “magic” of the primitives, however (branded by Tylor [1871, I, 112-113] as a ‘contemptible superstition’ and as ‘one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind’), such redemption was neither wished-for nor needed: it had to be rooted out by education or use of force. In its – ultimately fruitless – attempts to do so, the colonialist missionary enterprise essentially repeated the early Christian missionary attempt to free Europe from pagan superstition. In sum: scholarly theory about magic served as theoretical justification for converting non-European peoples from primitive magic to Christianity and an Enlightened worldview; but this theory itself was merely a reformulation of Christian-theological polemics against paganism.

In the post-colonial period Western scholars have become more sensitive about issues of ethnocentrism and Eurocentric arrogance, but the logical step of discarding the category of “magic” has not been taken. Many authors opt for half-way solutions such as speaking about “magic” while admitting that is a form of “religion”, but without explaining in what then relies its specificity. Others use adjectives such as “magico-religious”, but again without specifying in what respect this category is

different from “religion” pure and simple. A more consistent and historically more fruitful approach would be to start by recognizing the religious pluralism that has in fact always characterized Western culture, and analyze magic as a largely polemical concept that has been used by various religious interest groups either to describe their own religious beliefs and practices or – more frequently – to discredit those of others. If any etic concept of magic is still considered necessary at all, it might be used as the common denominator of ‘a discursive field, in which different Occidental definitions of deluded or illusory beliefs were accompanied by doubts about the extent to which they were deluded, illusory, backward, or irrational’ (Pels 2003, 16).

*Lit.:* Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912), Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1960, 3rd ed. 1994 ♦ J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1900), London: MacMillan & Co, 1951 ♦ Ariel Glucklich, *The End of Magic*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “The Emergence of the Academic Science of Magic: The Occult Philosophy in Tylor and Frazer”, in: Arie L. Molendijk & Peter Pels (eds.), *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill 1998, 253-275 ♦ idem, “Defining Religion in Spite of History”, in: Jan G. Platvoet & Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Contests*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1999, 337-378 ♦ idem, “How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World”, *Religion* 33:4 (2003), 357-380 ♦ Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993 ♦ T.M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*, Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1989 ♦ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (1948), Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1992 ♦ Marcel Mauss, “Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie” (orig. 1902/1903), in: *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris: Quadrige/PUF 1950, 6th ed. 1995 ♦ Peter Pels, “Introduction: Magic and Modernity”, in: Birgit Meyer & Peter Pels (eds.), *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, 1-38 ♦ Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 ♦ Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1990 ♦ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, London: John Murray, 1870 ♦ idem, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, repr. London: John Murray, 1871 ♦ idem, “Ordeals and Oaths”, *MacMillan's Magazine* 34 (1876), 1-11 ♦ idem, “Magic”, in: *Encyclopaedia*

*Britannica*, 9th ed., vol. 15, 199-206 ♦ H.S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion", *Numen* 38:2 (1991), 177-197.

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## Magic II: Antiquity

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### A. HISTORY

#### 1. TERMINOLOGY

The modern term "magic" and its cognates derive, through Latin intermediates (*magia*), from the Greek *magiké*, "the art of the *mágoi*", the Persian priests (*magus* in ancient Persian). The Greeks used this word to designate a ritual practitioner occupied with private rites whose legitimacy was contested and often, at least in later times, marginalised and forbidden. The exact nature of these rites varies and comprises mystery cults (Heraclitus, frg. 14 DK), binding spells (*defixiones*) and certain forms of divination [→ Divinatory Arts]; what mattered more than a specific content was the opposition to legitimate and overt religious practice – magic, that is, was always seen as noxious. Other terms for the practitioners were the Greek *góes* (orig. the "wailer", a specialist for the communication with the dead), whence *goeteía*, "sorcery" (in later texts with a more negative connotation than *mageía*), and, as a specialist, *pharmakeútria*, a "woman using herbs and drugs" (like Medea). Latin equivalents are *saga*, "witch", *veneficus*, "poisoner" and, in later texts, *maleficus*, "evildoer"; a specialist for undoing binding-spells was, in 5th century Athens, an *analútes*, "un-binder". The Near-Eastern association of sorcery expressed in the term *mágos/magus* appears also in the designation of "magicians" as *Chaldaíoi/Chaldaei* (lit. an inhabitant of Chaldaeia, a region in southern Mesopotamia) that appears from Hellenistic times onwards and might have its root in the actual presence of Near Eastern specialists in the Graeco-Roman west.

#### 2. ANCIENT THEORIES

Thus, the general Greek and Roman assumption was that magic originated with the Persians. This

view is as old as the perception of "magic" as something different from other cultic activities; both go back to the late 6th century B.C. The alternative view held by Pindar in the fourth *Pythian Ode* (a. 462 B.C.) was already dated at that time and never became popular: according to his narration, Aphrodite taught erotic magic to Jason in order to seduce Medea. In this mythical account, then, (erotic) magic is understood as a cultural technique that can be taught, like agriculture or writing.

The dominant view in antiquity, however, marginalizes magic much stronger by removing its invention in place and time. It is uniformly said to come from the Persian sage → Zoroaster whom most ancient authors date well before the Trojan War. According to Pliny (*Natural History*, bk. 30), who reports the general opinion but challenges an early date, magic developed out of healing, was very early influenced by → astrology, and was in Persia such a respectable art that Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Plato went to Persia to be taught in it. This reflects an alternative evaluation of barbarian wisdom that makes non-Greeks into retainers of supreme knowledge (Momigliano 1975). From early on, it was debated whether the Persian magoi were philosophers or wizards (in Persian itself, *magús* could have a negative connotation as well). The positive ("ethnographical") reading of the term (from Herodot onwards, with Plato, *Alcibiades Maior* 122b, as the most influential passage and a lost Pseudo-Aristotelian dialogue as its most thorough exposition) competed with the negative ("Greek") understanding (Bidez and Cumont 1938). Another early magical culture was perceived in Judaism, with → Moses as its inventor; this reflects the high esteem Jewish magic enjoyed in Hellenistic and Imperial times. Egypt, on the other hand, was rarely regarded as the origin of magic, despite its indigenous tradition that made Isis into, among other things, a powerful magician and that had in the goddess Hekate a divine exponent of ritual power. Homer makes it the homeland of 'potions, some helpful when mixed, but most harmful' (*Odyssey* 4, 228); later, it is important only in the Graeco-Roman texts that directly fed on the Egyptian tradition, like the work of the Egyptian writing in Greek Bolus of Mendes (first half of the 2nd century B.C.), the Hermetic tradition, especially the *Asclepius* (2nd century A.D.), or the so-called magical papyri (3rd-5th century A.D., with earlier antecedents).

Other ancient theories concerned not the origin of magic but the way it was functioning. The general view, most succinctly presented by Apuleius (*Apologia* 22) was that the magician had superhuman

powers granted to him because he could directly talk to the gods ('*communio loquendi cum dis*'). This puts an emphasis on the power of spells and prayers that goes well beyond the sphere of magic (Baeumer 1984), but is confirmed by the actual rituals and their aim to make the ritual word as durable as possible (see below). This is less rooted in a belief in an inherent power of the ritual word than in the assumption that the magician's direct access to a supreme divinity grants him power over the lesser demons he is using for his purpose. This demonological understanding of magic is the general view of later antiquity as found e.g. both in the Magical Papyri and the actual ritual spells, and it is, in a semiotic theory of speech, the basis for → Augustine's refusal of magic: since the meaning of words is arbitrary and results from an agreement between the speaking parties, magic loses its power when the Christians cancel this agreement between themselves and the demons and thus make language unintelligible to them (*De doctrina Christiana* 2, 36-38 [Markus 1994]). Well before these later theories, Plato formulated in his *Laws* a social and psychological theory of magic that dispensed with any metaphysical entities. Magic, seen only in the widespread reality of binding spells with the help of magical dolls, is a special instance of poisoning (*pharmakeía*), performed both by specialists and by laymen; its use for personal aims results from the moral decay of society, and its success lies in the fear it creates (Plato, *Laws* 11,932f.). Ideally, these fears should be allayed by persuasion, but in the actual state of society, severe punishment of its use was the only possible remedy.

### 3. RITUALS

The main use magic ritual was put to in Graeco-Roman society was for binding spells (*defixiones*). Text of such spells, written on thin sheets of lead, date back to the later 6th century B.C. (Sicily, Southern Italy); in the later 5th century, they begin to be more numerous in mainland Greece as well, especially Athens. The early texts typically invoke divinities of the underworld (Persephone, Hermes Chthonios) and 'dedicate' (*anatithèmi*, Lat. *devo-veo*) or bind down (*katadeo*) to them one or several individuals; the texts were usually rolled or folded together and deposited in graves or wells. From the late 5th century onwards, these lead texts could be accompanied by a statuette of a person whose arms were tied to the back (in an iconography that goes back to Egyptian rituals to keep away enemies from the borders [Ritner 1993]). These statuettes represented the victims of the spell and were often inscribed with their names. Outside Egypt, only

lead statuettes are preserved, while Egyptian graves also preserved some wax statuettes; the use of wax for statuettes and of waxen or wooden tablets or of papyrus for the texts is attested in literature. The texts themselves were often pierced with a nail, and 'nailing down' (*katapassaleo*) is another term for the ritual activity, used in Attic Greek. If the rituals described in the much later Graeco-Egyptian papyri can be used as a guide for these earlier rituals (and the rites seem to show some uniformity and stability), one has to assume that the spells written on the lead tablets were recited at the time they were written and in the place where the tablets then were hidden. The written texts thus preserved the powerful ritual word, and the spell was broken only when the tablet was found and destroyed, as at least one later text and the papyri confirm. The existence of a professional "unbinder", an *analútes*, in 4th-century Athens, however, points to other ritual means of undoing the spell that elude our knowledge, while an oracle from Apollo in Klaros (about 166 AD) prescribes a fire ritual to melt down the waxen magical images that caused a plague (*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 92,1992, 276-78).

Binding spells were used in situations of crisis created by contest and rivalry; they served to defuse an uncertain and therefore frightening situation. They might concern the conquest of an erotic partner (mostly by males, and usually as a spouse rather than for an amorous adventure), victory in court or in an athletic contest, or success over a rival businessman or craftsman. Binding spells against one's adversaries in court were very prominent in 5th and 4th century Athens, but not confined to this place and time; an interesting case concerns a lawsuit brought against a priest of Sarapis in early Hellenistic Delos (Engelmann 1975). During the imperial epoch, athletic spells usually concerned chariot races where the social stakes were very high (see Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 11). While earlier binding spells ordinarily aimed at temporally incapacitating an adversary (which did not exclude accidental death e.g. through a badly administered love potion), the spells from the imperial epoch often threaten the death of their victims. Therefore, the Sullan *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* (82 B.C.) was extended to cover magical attacks as well.

In early Rome, another area of magical action was thought to be the transfer of harvests and crops from one field unto another with the means of spells (*perlicere* or *incantare messes*). The XII tablets provide capital punishment for this form of illegitimate gain, and historians preserve one instance of a trial under this rubric, held in the early

2nd century B.C. (Pliny, *Natural History* 18, 41-43); later, it became a purely literary motif (Virgil, *Bucolics* 8, 99).

During the imperial epoch, private forms of divinations began to become another field whose rituals were thought of as magical (Graf 1996). The Graeco-Egyptian papyri contain many recipes that prescribe rites for the sending of dreams (a private form of divination), for screening (lecanomancy) and, less often, for necromancy. Several laws by the Christian emperors of the 4th century ban divination together with other magical practices (esp. *Codex Theodosianus* 9,16,3-7. 9), and already Apuleius, in his defense against the accusation of magic, mentioned ecstatic divination induced by magical means (Apuleius, *Apologia* 42). This extension of the field of what ancient cultures viewed as magic is less due to the rise of divination outside the official divinatory sanctuaries (there was always informal divination as well, although we lack data to its extent in archaic and classical times) than to the monopoly of the emperor and, in the Christian 4th century, the bishops on access to knowledge about the future (Fögen 1993).

The status of ritual healing (a sphere that modern definitions of magic often subsume under this category) in Greek and Roman culture is less easily determined. Homer is aware of the stanching of blood with the help of spells (*Odyssee* 19,457), but avoids any term that could connect it with magic. The professional doctor, however, who wrote, at about 400 B.C., the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, ascribes the ritual healing of epilepsy to quacks, cathartic priests and sorcerers, turning magic polemically into the opposite of medical science (Lloyd 1979); a similar dichotomy appears, much later, in Apuleius' treatment of epilepsy (*Apology* 48f.). Varro and Pliny report cures with, among other things, the help of spells but refrain from labeling them magical, while the Graeco-Roman papyri contain several recipes for the treatment of otherwise untreatable ailments – headache, toothache, and similar minor problems. Only Christian teaching was confronted with the problem that in some cases healing was a miracle due to divine intervention while other cures, performed by some marginal old woman, were viewed as magic and sorcery.

#### 4. MAGIC AND PHILOSOPHY

While magic, before the imperial epoch, was a straightforward albeit mostly illegitimate type of ritual behaviour, it gained a new dimension in learned speculation and popular imagination of the imperial period. On the one hand, in popular per-

ception the borderline between philosopher, charismatic miracle worker and sorcerer began to break down. In about 158 CE, in his defense against magic, the Platonic philosopher Apuleius carefully tried to establish such a distinction (Apuleius, *Apology*). Some six decennia later, Philostratus gives an account of the 1st century Neo-Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana that deals also with the accusation of magic brought forward against him by Domitian (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*). Such accusations persisted well into a Christianized empire (trial and execution of Boethius in 524 A.D., inter alia because of magic).

The corollary of this perception is the “theological turn” of late antique philosophy, starting with Middle Platonism. Already before that, Neo-Pythagoreanism came close: in 28 B.C., Augustus expelled the Neo-Pythagorean philosopher and magician Anaxilaeus of Larissa (Jerome, *Chronicle*). Taking their clue from Plato's demonology (esp. in the *Phaedrus*), Platonist philosophers constructed a cosmology in which a more and more complex hierarchy of superhuman beings was active; at the same time, the demonological interpretation of magic became all-pervasive. Plotinus, who clearly marked the distance between philosophy and magic (*Enneads* IV, 43), was believed to be able to ward off magical attacks by an adversary with the help of his superior guardian divinity (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 10). Later, Maximus of Ephesus, the teacher of the emperor Julian, protected a pupil against an erotic binding spell (Eunapius, *Life of the Sophists* 6.9), and Proclus, the last head of the Athenian Academy, was believed to have performed weather magic (as had already, about a millennium earlier, Empocles of Acragas) with the help of a traditional magical instrument, the iynx (Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 28).

The decisive step towards blending magical and philosophical traditions was made by the creation of theurgy, as expressed in the *Chaldaean Oracles*; its creators were Julian father (“the Chaldaean”) and son (“the theurgist”) in the later 2nd century A.D. (Johnston 1997). Literally ‘working the divine’, theurgy was a ritual technique that performed the ascent towards the supreme god as the source of pure knowledge (*nous*). Since the ecstatic ascent was sought for by the philosophers (Plotinus was said to have several such experiences), it could have purely cognitive aims, but it also could serve divinatory purposes (an ascent ritual as a means for divination is described in *PGM* IV, the so-called “Mithras Liturgy”). Plotinus' pupil Iamblichus defended theurgy as a philosophical technique against the accusations of his fellow pupil Porphyry



(*On the Mysteries of Egypt*, directed against Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*) and projected it well into the far past of Egypt, and theurgical techniques were used and defended as late as Proclus (*Theologia Platonica* I.29). Together with the praise of Egyptian "magic" in the Hermetic *Asclepius*, this prepared the ground for Renaissance magic.

## B. LITERATURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

With the exception of the so-called "Greek Magical Papyri" from Roman Egypt and texts related to them that all follow an Egyptian tradition of ritual texts, albeit partly in Greek form, Greek and Roman society had no collections of texts that were used in magical rites. Theurgical, astrological and Hermetic texts form separate, although related traditions with some overlaps. This scarcity of texts distinguishes these societies from those of the Near East and Egypt where collections of ritual instructions used in apotropaic rites of magic and comparable contexts played an important role, but it goes together with the lack of written ritual manuals in Greek and in most parts of Roman culture – with the exception of the so-called *Etrusca disciplina*, a Latin version of the corpus of Etruscan religious writing on esp. divinatory and cathartic ritual that was connected with the haruspices (*libri rituales, haruspicini, fulgurales*). There were, however, numerous pseudepigraphical collections of hexametrical texts used in mystery cults and divination (Orphic poetry, oracles of Bakis and of the Sibyls). Among these books, the *Chaldaean Oracles* (*Oracula Chaldaica*) that contained the essence of theurgy can be regarded as belonging to magical literature as well.

### 2. EVIDENCE FOR MAGICAL BOOKS

The existence of magical books is attested through the entire imperial epoch and in many places, especially in the Greek East. When preaching in Ephesus, Paul moved those 'who formerly practised magic' (esp. exorcism) to burn a considerable number of their books (Acts 19, 19). Around 400 A.D., the compiler of the *Sentences of Paul* (*Pauli Sententiae*), a collection of commentaries on earlier laws, states that 'nobody shall possess books about the magical craft (*libros magicae artis*)', lest he risk their public burning, the confiscation of his fortune and exile or death (5, 23, 17). When, in about 490 A.D., Egyptian students at the law school of Beirut dabbled in magic, one of them at least had secret books with 'drawings of perverse demons, barbaric names and harmful . . .

commands' that were said to go back in part to Zoroaster or Ostanes, Persian founders of magic (Zacharias, *Vita Severi*, 61). The authorities had the books burned. The burning of secret books that were viewed as deviant or dangerous has a long history in Roman culture that precedes the Christian emperors. On his accession as pontifex maximus in 13 B.C., Augustus had burnt about 2000 oracular books that rivalled the Sibylline books (Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, 31, 1), and already in 181 B.C., the Senate ordered the burning of (Pythagorean) books by Numa that were found in a grave (Livy, 40, 29) (Speyer 1980).

There is no evidence for magical books before imperial times. Binding spells written on lead tablets, however, go back to the late 6th century B.C. in Sicily and Southern Italy, to the later 5th century B.C. in Athens and other parts of the Greek mainland. These texts are short (often simple lists of names) and in prose, with a stereotypical vocabulary that is specific to the region they come from. Nothing necessitates the assumption that these texts derive from ritual books (as in the case of the much more elaborate and more uniform hexametrical texts on the so-called "Orphic" tablets). Although they were, in part at least, executed by specialists of whose existence Plato knows (*Republic* 364 bd), an oral transmission is more likely, as it is certain for much older texts, e.g. the incantation for stanching blood mentioned in *Odyssey* 19, 457.

### 3. THE POPYRI GRAECAE MAGICAE

The only extant magical books are part of the collection of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Greek Magical Papyri, PGM). The name and the collection are modern; it was edited by Karl Preisendanz (with the help of colleagues) after the First World War (vol. 1: 1928; vol. 2: 1931; vol. 3, with the indexes, fell victim to the Second War). The collection contains, besides the magical books proper (i.e. collections of instructions for magical rituals), magical formularies (i.e. the instruction for one specific rite written on a small scroll or piece of papyrus), and actual applied magical texts written on papyrus or lead [→ Amulets]. Its name is insofar a misnomer as some of the books contain substantial parts written in Egyptian (in demotic script), sometimes with glosses in Old Coptic (Brashear 1995). Since the publication, new texts have been found; some of them have been added in the second edition (1973/74) and the English translation (1986) of PGM, others are collected, with ample commentaries, in the *Supplementum Magicum* (2 vols., 1990 and 1992).



The books in question are large collections of ritual prescriptions, written between the third and the 5th century A.D. The *PGM* edits thirteen books of different length, and about 20 shorter formularies (mostly for one or very few single rites) have been published since then. Six of the books come from the same cache in Egyptian Thebes (the so-called Anastasi cache, after the Alexandrian merchant who bought them in 1828) that contained also two alchemical papyri. They represent a library ‘designed for study rather than for the practical use’ (Fowden 1986) and demonstrate the close relationship between magic, hermetic, and alchemical texts.

The books as well as the short formularies all contain instructions for the performance of rituals, with detailed indications of the necessary ingredients for the rite and its place and time, and with often long accompanying spells (*logos*) and hymns. In the Greek texts, these spoken parts contain also non-Greek parts – either series of vowels and consonants or seemingly abstruse words. These latter are the “barbarian names” that are prominent in descriptions of magical rites: in the performer’s opinion, they represent the true name of a divinity or demon. Often, they sound vaguely Egyptian or Hebrew, and scholars have tried to analyze them with the help of these languages. The results are not always convincing, and it often seems that the authors of the texts themselves aimed at an Egyptian or Hebrew name, but, given their lack of linguistic knowledge, were content with a vague resemblance. Underlying is the theory that Egyptian (and Assyrian) were the oldest human languages and as such very close to the language of the gods, which made the use of Assyrian and Egyptian most welcome and effectful to them (Iamblichus, *Mysteries*, 15). This also explains the occurrence of the name of the Sumerian goddess of the underworld, Ereshkigal, in some texts. The texts are all written in a general prescriptive style; personal names of victims that would have to be written and spoken during the actual performance are replaced by a general reference to ‘NN son/daughter of NN’.

The single papyrus books are not uniform as to their content. Most of them contain a loosely arranged sequence of single, self-contained instructions for a single specific ritual: to acquire a demonic assistant (indispensable for becoming a magician), to obtain divine revelation awake or in a dream, to perform a binding spell, or to make an amulet. Only one papyrus (no. VII, London, British Museum) contains also a significant number of instructions for healing rituals for minor ailments. The books are thus loose collections of instructions

for single rites like the ones preserved in the formularies, assembled over time according to the taste of the single collector. Thus, they shed an important light on the existence and form of earlier magical literature. Once, the source is a ‘holy book’ (*PGM* III, 424) or a book found in Aphrodite’s sanctuary in Aphroditopolis (*PGM* VII, 852). Some texts have the form of letters (e.g. from a certain Nephotes = Nefer-hotep to king Psammetichos, with instructions for ‘procuring a holy power’ and bowl divination, *PGM* IV, 154-285; or from ‘Jeu the Hieroglyphist’ to gain power over the demons, *PGM* V, 96-171). In a few cases, more substantial older texts that have been incorporated into the extant collection are discernible. The most important are:

- the detailed description of a theurgic ascension rite, the so-called “Mithras Liturgy” (*PGM* IV, 475-829, a 4th century book from the Anastasi cache, now in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale);
- an elaborate erotic binding spell, the “Sword of Dardanos” (*PGM* IV, 1716-1870; “sword” refers to a specific type of formula, as in the “Sword of Moses”);
- three versions of a necromantic ritual ascribed to one Pitys the Thessalian (*PGM* IV, 1918-2005; 2006-2125; 2140-2144);
- three version of the *Eighth Book of Moses*, also called *Monas*, with references to a commentary on it, the *Key* (*PGM* XIII, 1-734, another 4th-century book from the Anastasi cache, now in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden).

#### 4. HELLENISTIC ANTECEDENTS

These and other texts preserved in the collections (e.g. the *Diadem of Moses*, *PGM* VI, 619, a 2nd or 3rd century book in the British Museum) shed some light on the vast lost production of ritual instruction in Graeco-Roman Egypt that followed earlier, indigenous examples and might thus go back to Hellenistic times (Smith 1984). The main author whom Greek and Roman sources connect with magical literature is the Egyptian Bolus of Mendes (2nd century B.C.). His *Cheironecta*, written under the name of the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus, is the first compilation of magical material of which we hear (Dickie 1999). Democritus, like Pythagoras and Plato, was thought to have learned secret Egyptian wisdom when traveling in the East, and he is connected with a variety of magical rituals (see the medico-astrological text in *PGM* XII 351-64, the dream ritual *ibid.* VII 795-845, or the entertaining tricks *ibid.* VII 168-85). The book is lost, and its character and influence is debated, but one has to assume considerably more

coherence and a less loose and haphazard form than the one of the extant magical books. A somewhat later author is Anaxilaos of Larisa, magician and Pythagorean who was expelled by Augustus in 28 BC (Jerome, *Chronicle*). He is known as the author of *Paignia*, magical tricks for entertainment rather than “serious” magic, although this dichotomy is not necessarily relevant for an imperial culture where tricks and divination were both performed by market place magicians, and where the magical books of the PGM contain some such tricks as well.

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FRITZ GRAF

## Magic III: Middle Ages

### A. HISTORY

1. EARLY MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MAGIC 2. LATE MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MAGIC: NATURAL PHILOSOPHY 3. MORE LATE MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS: RITUAL MAGIC

### B. LITERATURE

1. GENERAL DIVISIONS 2. CHANGES OVER TIME 3. TRANSMISSION AND SURVIVAL 4. GENRES (A. DIVINATION B. EXPERIMENTS, BOOKS OF SECRETS, AND RECIPES C. CHARMS D. ASTROLOGICAL OR ASTRAL MAGIC E. RITUAL MAGIC)

### A. HISTORY

While “magic” was used as a term of opprobrium from antiquity, by the later middle ages it begins to be possible for intellectuals to argue in a limited fashion for the positive benefits of some types of theory and practice that are connected to the idea of magic (though the word “magic” might still be avoided by some writers interested in

praxis, and negative uses of the word continued as before). In what follows we will trace the basic contours of the anti-magical arguments of the early middle ages and outline the intellectual developments that led to the beginning of the positivization of certain ideas connected to magic in the 12th and 13th centuries.

It should be taken as axiomatic that in any era alongside any positivized view of magic there will be found negative views, and that positive and negative views, varyingly configured, can coexist in the same time period, the same social circles, and even in the same person. Thus in the early modern period, when arguments for positivized forms of magic were more common than they had been before, the condemnation of magic (as “maleficium”) was also harsher than it had been before: in the writings of the Abbot → Trithemius both poles of the opposition are voiced with equal rhetorical extremity, and the *Malleus Maleficarum* itself is careful to define forms of “natural magic” not counted as → witchcraft. In outlining the “positivization” of magic in the later middle ages, we will thus be describing the recasting of an old problem, not its elimination. If the voice of condemnation is often the loudest voice heard, the intellectual climate in the later middle ages nevertheless undergoes an alteration in its attitude to magic on a deeper level, recuperating from Arabic and Hebrew sources some of the bases on which the syntheses of magic with philosophy and theology are constructed in the early modern period.

### I. EARLY MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MAGIC

For the Christian middle ages the primary touchstones of anti-magical argument were the writings of the Church Fathers, particularly Tertullian and → Augustine. In early patristic writings anti-magical polemic is typically connected to invective against paganism. It may be noted that these condemnations of paganism had a strong intellectualist bias, and Patristic writers could often be seen carving out a space for the admirable aspects of pagan literature and philosophy while taking to task pagan ritual practices described in the same texts. The primary concern of the Christian writers in this period was less over the continuance of pagan religion as such than over the possibility of heterodoxy, manifested as worry that unacceptable forms of “pagan” practice might be introduced or adapted into Christian contexts, or taint texts that Christians were likely to read and take seriously. This worry was not without foundation, since alongside these attempts to purify Christianity of

“pagan” superstition, there is evident a considerable syncretism of ritual practice (of the sort manifested e.g. in the Coptic texts collected in Meyer & Smith), not comforting to the Christian theologian because it introduced the names of Christ, apostles and saints into charms, spells, and → amulets.

Augustine was perhaps the most powerful early exponent of anti-magical ideas, and while many loci in his writings get drawn into discussions of magic by later writers, two have particular importance for the present discussion. In *De civitate Dei*, Book X, Augustine makes an extended attack on theurgy, condemning it as no better than a disguised form of necromancy. His argument upholds Neoplatonic thought [→ Neoplatonism] in general as the form of pagan wisdom closest to the divine truth of Christianity, but he takes to task Porphyry’s vacillation on the topic of theurgy, shoring up anti-theurgic portions of Porphyry’s writings with his own arguments and ultimately objecting to theurgy as inconsistent with both Christian practice and Neoplatonic thought. In the *De doctrina christiana* Augustine similarly concerns himself with the discernment of truth in pagan literature. A discussion of the need for Christian education in pagan philosophy (on the principle that wherever the truth is manifest, it is God’s) leads to the topic of superstition; under this heading he eschews magic, → astrology, the use of ligatures in medicine, and a detailed list of superstitious practices. Magic is linked to idolatry and demonolatry through sign theory: because of its use of ambiguously directed voluntary signs, which demons may manipulate and use to deceive humans, magic may be seen as a kind of language which humans and demons have in common. This locus became an important touchstone for later writers right through the early modern period, not only for distinguishing what constituted a superstitious or magical practice for the purpose of condemning it, but also in distinguishing what constituted “natural” magic (a concept alien to Augustine himself) from the demonic kind which involved voluntary signs.

Other treatments of magic condemn it in a way that is more colorful, literary and mythic. Early medieval encyclopedic texts, whose discussions of magic mostly derive with variations from the entry on *Magi* in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636), are in accord that magic arts were delivered to human beings by bad angels; their first human exponent is → Zoroaster. Isidore’s entry on “magi” includes a catalogue of magical arts which would remain a standard topos in medieval writings long after many of the practices listed had ceased to be used or had changed meaning: these

include necromancy, hydromancy, pyromancy, aeromancy, geomancy, various other methods of classical divination [→ Divinatory Arts], and astrology. Isidore's list is compiled from a variety of classical writers (Virgil, Lucan, Varro), as well as the Bible and Patristic sources; he quotes Augustine's prohibition on the use of ligatures in medicine, equating the effect of such ligatures, as Augustine does, but more literally, with demonic activity. On the whole his negative view of magic tends to concretize and mythologize much that remained metaphorical, theoretical and abstract in Augustine's writing.

Other sources for the condemnation of magic include legal tracts and penitentials which manifest a more immediate concern for folk practices continuing through this period. These add little to the theoretical grounds either for the suppression and exclusion of practices identified as magical, or for the inclusion of certain specific forms of magic as lawful, though it has been argued by Valerie Flint that many such practices were in fact deliberately adopted and adapted, made over into a "Christian magic" without which the Church could not successfully have competed with pagan religions. However, the adoptions of new forms of ritual were not defended as "magic" by their Christian exponents and there is as yet no basis for the use of the term "magic" or its cognates in the positivized sense implicit in the notion of "natural magic".

## 2. LATE MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MAGIC: NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

Riding in on the wave of Latin translations of Arabic philosophy in the 12th and 13th centuries came a number of texts with a magical orientation, including works of astrology, → alchemy, and image magic. Connected to the interest in these areas there also appeared classifications or schemes of learning, likewise deriving from Arabic sources, which tentatively included magical arts among the standard divisions of knowledge. Dominic Gundisalvus (fl. mid-12th century) composed a work, *De divisione scienciarum*, where the subdivision of physics (drawn from Alfarabi [?-950], whose works he translated) includes judicial astrology, medicine, natural necromancy, image magic, agriculture, navigation, alchemy, and optics. This attempt to include magical arts among legitimate sciences hardly went unopposed; in the same time period, Hugh of St. Victor (?-1142) wrote about magic only to exclude it vehemently from the domain of legitimate knowledge as a type of false knowledge.

Despite the opposition of Hugh of St Victor and

other theologians to the idea that any type of magic should be included in the curriculum of legitimate learning, the influence of Arabic treatises in natural philosophy provided an entry point for the locution "natural magic" into learned discourse. There is evident, in this period, a more subtle attention to distinctions between individual practices that might once simply have been classified as magical (and illicit) without qualification. → Michael Scot divided astrology and magic into permissible and impermissible categories, as did the author of the *Speculum Astronomiae*, focusing on specific texts in circulation and drawing careful distinctions between them, defending as licit a few types of image magic and geomancy, which seemed to work only by occult natural powers. Albertus Magnus, → Roger Bacon, and others express concern over the fact that the large number of demonic or corrupt works in circulation might have caused some authorities to accuse other books of containing illicit demonic magic as well, while in fact they contain legitimate and useful natural knowledge – an argument which is already a kind of rhetorical set-piece, and emerges in many early modern apologies for magic as well. Even the more conservatively Augustinian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), in the process of condemning talismanic magic in general in the *Summa contra gentiles* (III, 105), makes an allowance for figures which may acquire power from the stars, provided that they do not include letters or characters. In his ban on characters he shows a concern for the strictures against demonic communication laid out in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*; but in his allowance for artificial forms without writing on them he shows both a heightened sensitivity to the idea of stellar influence and a looser notion of what might constitute a sign than Augustine does.

In fact there were close connections between the developing interest in astrological theory and the loosened notion of what might (or might not) constitute a sign. The treatise *De radiis stellarum* by the Arabic philosopher → Al-Kindi, widely circulated in Latin translation from the 13th century on, exercised a strong though mostly unacknowledged influence on the ideas of what constituted natural magic. Al-Kindi argued that words as well as characters and images were infused with the power of the stars just as all other natural and artificial objects were. For most late-medieval readers there were philosophical difficulties in countenancing the claims for verbal power made by Al-Kindi because of the very direct connection drawn by him between the power and meaning of words and signs, which fell afoul of Augustine in one direction

and Aristotle in another. However the idea that words or sounds might nevertheless carry occult virtue had support in other branches of philosophy. Roger Bacon himself argues for the power of words (without at any point mentioning Al-Kindi's treatise, though he is clearly familiar with it), relying on ideas current in medicine, optics and more reputable branches of astrology to buttress his statements.

Though the notion that words and characters might have a "natural" power was always carefully qualified in the most philosophically rigorous texts, by the end of the 14th century the number of practices that might be included relatively unproblematically under the heading "natural magic" had grown considerably larger. In the late 14th century *Confessio Amantis* of John Gower (ca. 1330-1408) the four divinatory modes listed in Isidore's catalogue as hydromancy, pyromancy, aeromancy and geomancy, are classified as "natural" and acceptable, although all of these had been excluded from legitimate knowledge by Hugh of St Victor and, of the four, only geomancy had been given limited acceptance as "natural" by Albertus Magnus. This loosening and expanding of ideas that might fall into the category "natural magic" was in part due to the increasing popularity and vernacular dissemination of books like the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets*, which were never theologically questionable in the same way that the *De radiis* was, but relied implicitly on related ideas of astral influence, → correspondences, and the power of human intention, and became a frequent resource of popular writers and encyclopedists. In the late 14th century "magic" was more heatedly condemned than ever, but a quantity of esoteric knowledge had now become mainstream.

### 3. MORE LATE MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS: RITUAL MAGIC

In addition to the expansion of ideas categorized as natural magic, the later middle ages saw an increased circulation of texts of ritual magic. These included both experiments in which demons were summoned and bound, and rituals of a *prima facie* more credibly Christian character like the *Ars notoria* and the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, relying on the invocation of angels and other divine entities. Some of these show filiations with Hebrew texts like the *Liber Rasiel* and probably derive from Jewish paradigms (as argued by Kieckhefer [1998]); others show an array of Arabic Neoplatonic and Hermetic strands [→ Hermetic Literature]. Clearly no type of ritual involving overt conjuring or invocation of spirits had any hope of

being included in the medieval category of "natural" magic. Nevertheless, ritual magic texts had a strong influence (though again largely unacknowledged) on the developing idea of what magic was.

It must be remembered that the strong concern with the *distinction* of licit from illicit books and of occult natural powers from demons so evident in texts like the *Speculum Astronomiae* is largely a result of the fact that the texts under examination made no such distinctions themselves. "Necromantic" books might contain a broad variety of experiments shading in one direction into innocuous astrological magic and in the other into technical recipes or party tricks. Ritual texts of all types might open with claims that they transmitted divine secrets, the ancient wisdom of Hermes, or angelic knowledge; or they might introduce injunctions to purity and secrecy suggesting the possibility of corruption of their contents by demonic agency or human carelessness. These topoi are echoed in the suspicion of philosophers that some of these texts contained legitimate knowledge and that they were sometimes condemned without reason. Indeed the widespread condemnation of many practices, texts, and individuals which became increasingly common through the 13th and 14th centuries (often with motives that were clearly political or self-serving), had the effect of making individuals more reliant on their own judgment in spiritual matters than they might otherwise have been. A combination of factors thus conspired to make the copying and use of such texts, and the discernment of their natural, divine and demonic elements, very much a matter of individual judgement.

In angelic magic, perhaps, we come closest to the kind of radical positivization of magic characteristic of early modern texts, though without any attempt to justify the operations in them as "natural." In the proem to the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, magic is defended against the libelous charges of bishops and prelates, whom the author suggests have been diabolically inspired. But what is meant by "magic" here has nothing to do with occult natural power, but rather with the magician's power of binding and loosing spirits. Defending magic as a high and ancient wisdom, the writer of the *Sworn Book* argues that spirits are constrained only by clean men, not wicked ones. In the theurgic operations of the *Ars notoria* by contrast the word "magic" is not used at all; though the work is widely characterized as sorcerous by theologians, it represents itself as a set of holy prayers delivered to Solomon by an angel allowing the user to obtain infused knowledge of the liberal arts, philosophy



and theology. In the *Liber visionum* of John of Morigny (fl. 1304-1318), we are able to trace some of the ambiguities of the medieval operator's perspective on this text. John describes a developing relation to the *Ars notoria*; he begins by accepting the view articulated by the text itself that the prayers are holy and without danger of any sin but through a series of visions comes to see that the text has been corrupted by demons. Recognizing that the knowledge the *Ars notoria* claims to transmit is nevertheless necessary for salvation, John sets out to recuperate its divine aspects in a new art, the *Liber visionum*, which is delivered to him at his request by the Virgin Mary. The *Liber visionum* characterizes itself as magical no more than the *Ars notoria* does, but it may be noted that within its prayers even the exceptive (or magical) arts are transmitted by the Cherubim in the penultimate part of the ritual for the deliverance of philosophy. What is made explicit in the *Sworn Book* is implicit here too: the magic arts in their purified form represent not merely innocuous natural knowledge, but a holy wisdom whose earthly form only has been corrupted.

While the radical positivization of magical ideas found in texts like the *Sworn Book* could hardly be expected to find orthodox acceptance, the very fact that ritual magic texts exist in numerous manuscript copies constitutes evidence that the late medieval idea of magic had come some distance from the tightly restricted Augustinian definition. Though there was as yet no grand unified theory drawing together the varied strands of positivized magic (of the sort → Agrippa and others were later to provide), the essential elements for such a synthesis were already in place. By the 14th century there is a generally more open acknowledgment of the importance of astrological theory and the system of → correspondences based in it (in formal natural philosophy as well as more arcane sources); there is increasing acknowledgment and acceptance of the existence of a variety of forms of natural magic (as well as increased argument over what these consist of); and there is an evident increase in experimentation with theurgic practices, as well as theories and technologies involving hierarchies of angels, demons, planetary spirits and the like. It is against this background that the subsequent emergence of the large scale magical syntheses in the early modern period must be seen.

## B. LITERATURE

Medieval magical literature was the product of authors with some level of book learning. In large measure it was preserved and transmitted in

monastic or clerical contexts, although courts and universities were also important centres of transmission. Much of it was written in Latin rather than vernacular languages until the 15th century when an increasingly literate laity began to transmit it as well. In principle it was a practical literature to bring about physical effects or to acquire otherwise hidden information. In various ways, medieval magical literature blended traditions and beliefs native to the Latin West with those imported from Arabic, Jewish, and a variety of other ancient sources.

### 1. GENERAL DIVISIONS

In the literature of magic, a workable division can be made between magical texts assumed to draw on natural forces (usually astrological), and those deriving magical efficacy from ritual acts or the numinous power of Christian faith. In general scribes were interested in one or the other, and the two groups of texts tended to be transmitted in different ways. Within these two categories a wide spectrum of texts may be found, running from those deemed acceptable by some intellectual authorities to those well outside the bounds of legitimacy by almost any standard. For example, amongst the more inoffensive ritual magical practices are charms which employ standard ritual acts such as the reciting of the Lord's Prayer for the cure of toothaches or the staunching of blood. At the other extreme, necromantic manuals claim the power to control demonic forces through the use of rituals developed from liturgical sources, particularly exorcism. Texts recording the occult properties of stones or animals and their uses stood at one end of the spectrum of natural magic. At the other, texts like the *Liber lune* or *Picatrix* justified a range of practices highly suspect in Christian terms such as the carving of images, incantation, and suffumigation as natural. This latter group and the notion of natural magic became very significant with the influx of the corpus of Arabic learning.

### 2. CHANGES OVER TIME

The Latin West inherited a rich tradition of magical literature from antiquity as well as from native, non-Christian sources. But the most significant producer of a written literature was the church itself, not least because, prior to the 12th century, the major centres of learning were religious institutions, principally monasteries. The surviving literature from the 4th through the 12th century is substantially more limited than material dating from the later middle ages. Although this is partially related to the lower survival rate of manu-

scripts and a relatively smaller learned community, it may also be that prior to the influx of Arabic material the body of magical literature was, even in relative terms, smaller. Charms may be frequently found in manuscripts dating to before the 12th century. They commonly employ Christian formulae for the cure of a variety of ailments. Prognostic devices also commonly occur. Continuity with the magic of the ancient world may be most simply demonstrated by the continued appearance of the SATOR AREPO magic square.

Magical literature was profoundly influenced by the influx of learning in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Arabic philosophical and astrological corpus provided a theoretical framework well suited to justifying numerous forms of magical practice. It also contained a significant magical literature most of which claimed to function through astrological mechanisms. Although the literature of necromancy (the manipulation of demonic forces through exorcism-like practices) can only be dated to the period after the 12th century, its close relation to the liturgy suggests that the practice has its roots as much in the Latin West as in the rich confluence of Arabic, Jewish, and Christian traditions in such centres as Toledo. Divinatory practices and prognostics also pre-date the Arabic influx as do texts recording the occult properties of stones or creatures, although both of these forms were also supplemented by comparable Arabic literature.

### 3. TRANSMISSION AND SURVIVAL

The survival of a magical literature depended in large measure upon the survival of the manuscripts in which it was transmitted. The principal institutional centres of transmission were universities (particularly medical faculties), the lower levels of the secular church, and monasteries. The professions commonly responsible for manuscript copies of magic texts were lower level clerics, monks, and medical practitioners. This had two principal results. First, the perspective of magical texts tended to be learned and frequently religious. Second, proscriptive literature and the central intellectual currents of the day profoundly influenced the manner in which texts were authored, presented on the page, translated, edited, and transmitted (for specific examples see the individual genres below). Magical learning was also preserved in non-magical settings. Encyclopaedic literature sometimes incorporated sections of magical texts as examples of natural wonders. Finally, the spread of literacy in the later middle ages also meant that a growing portion of magical literature, especially

recipes, charms, and prognostics were preserved by secular and non-academic scribes in vernacular texts such as commonplace books.

Magical manuscripts were also vulnerable to destruction on the one hand because they could be regarded as theologically problematic and on the other because they were often cheaply and hastily prepared and hence evidently of small value to anyone besides their immediate owners. The surviving pool of evidence for medieval magical literature was shaped by these forces, and so to reconstruct the original contours of medieval literature, we must know why manuscripts survived. Some no doubt were passed from one occult practitioner to another; the institutions where such practitioners tended to cluster were thus very important. But the likelihood of a manuscript surviving purely by this means (i.e. an unbroken chain of students and teachers) is infinitesimally small and other reasons account for all known survivals. Most magical texts were short and made up only a small part of the larger codices which contained them. Their survival thus depended more upon the general (and usually more legitimate) contents of the codex which contained them. Larger texts, such as works of ritual magic, tended to survive by being collected by bibliophiles or in large libraries. They might also survive purely by accident, as novelties, or in rare cases as fine manuscripts. In general however – and particularly in the case of ritual magic – the original number of magical manuscripts was much higher than the numbers of surviving manuscripts suggest.

### 4. GENRES

Subtypes of magical literature defy precise classification. However, workable divisions may be derived from the treatment of magical texts within the medieval library or book. As such these divisions should not be understood as deriving from the technical features of the magic they contain, but rather as akin to a literary genre with certain common forms, interests, contexts, and emphases.

A. *Divination*. All types of divination typically employ some form of randomization of form or symbol, subsequently interpreted in order to discover hidden information of a specific kind. As a result divination crosses over with a great number of magical genres (e.g. where ritual or astrological magic seek specific kinds of information). It is also one of the most common forms of medieval magical literature. If a magical text does not contain divinatory techniques, a work of divination may often be found among the other texts which accompany it in a codex.

Although terms for divination or diviners (e.g. *sortes* or *sortilegi*) were frequently used to describe all forms of magic, divinatory practices tended to be condemned less often and less severely in theological sources. Among the more significant forms of medieval divination are chiromancy, spatulamancy, oneiromancy, and geomancy: chiromancy examined lines on the palm, spatulamancy employed the shoulder blade of sheep, oneiromancy sought to interpret dreams, and geomancy associated randomized patterns in points or stones and associated them with astrological principles. A range of prognostic devices employing charts, moving wheels, and other textual devices were also common, especially those used for medical purposes. Some of the techniques such as the casting of nativities, various forms of medical prognostics, and even techniques for determining the location of stolen goods employed astrological principles. Finally, many of the practices of ritual magic involving demons or angels could also be regarded as divinatory in the sense that they sought information rather than a concrete magical effect. In this context, the most common techniques were the pursuit of dream visions or the use of a young boy as a medium.

B. *Experiments, Books of Secrets, and Recipes.* Books of experiments, secrets, and recipes may be said to occupy a position on the fringes of magical practice in the sense that much of their contents are devoted to practical matters such as the making of ink or beer. The terms *experimenta* and *secreta* were used to describe processes with a marvellous or magical effect; the term *recipe* is simply the first word in instructions for making some kind of concoction. At the same time, the authors and scribes of this literature considered the contents, which include a significant amount of magical material, as a coherent set of practices. Magical features might include means of determining the fidelity of a spouse with a magnet, magical tricks, medical talismans, or even demonic or angelic magic. They also reflected certain characteristics of magical texts such as the aura of secrecy they invoke. These texts are in large measure instructional manuals. A typical experiment, recipe, or secret would be expressed in a single paragraph and a typical collection could consist of anywhere from a dozen to hundreds of these. Since scribes freely deleted and added information the contents of this literature tended to be relatively fluid although in some cases, such as the *Secretum secretorum*, a textual tradition may be traced. A large proportion were written or translated into the vernacular.

C. *Charms.* Charms are perhaps the most ubiquitous genre of magical literature. They are also the

shortest. Usually occupying only a few lines of text, these formulae populate margins, pastedowns, and blank spaces of medieval manuscripts. They commonly employ Christian words of power, prayers, or gesture against illness and injury.

D. *Astrological or Astral Magic.* This form of magic may be attributed almost entirely to the influx of Arabic sources in the 12th and 13th centuries. The principle that astrological influences could be manipulated through the use of physical objects was a standard part of Arabic astrological and medical literature. As a result the accompanying texts of astrological magic came to be regarded as a potentially legitimate portion of natural philosophy. Arabic astrological magic usually employed rings or talismans to focus or direct astrological influences for certain kinds of effects. The magical object, whose material was related to the desired influence (e.g. Sun-gold, Mars-Copper, etc.), was to be prepared under the correct astrological conditions, often with accompanying ritual practices, prayers, or suffumigations. In some circumstances a planetary deity would be invoked.

As they were transmitted to a Christian context, the ritual features tended to be muted, transformed into Christian forms, or removed. The *Speculum Astronomiae* usually attributed to Albertus Magnus, for example, condemned all but two texts of astrological image magic as clearly containing demonic elements: the use of invocations, suffumigations, and astral deities. By far the most commonly copied versions were those, such as Thabit ibn Qurra's *De imaginibus*, in which these kinds of elements were removed. At the same time, although in much smaller numbers, other texts such as the *Picatrix* or *Liber lune* were copied including all of these more dubious elements. Yet even these more dubious texts tended to be regarded as related to astrology and natural philosophy by their scribes and collectors.

E. *Ritual Magic.* Texts of ritual magic rely principally upon Christian religious texts and practice for their structure and justification. Drawing heavily upon the bible and liturgical sources (in particular exorcism), their practices elaborate assumptions commonplace in the Judaeo-Christian tradition: the possibility of mystical enlightenment, the power of ritual action, prayer and moral purity, and the accessibility of angels and demons. Charms might thus be considered a form of ritual magic, but the term is generally used to designate much longer texts and ones considered far more problematic in theological terms. Common sub-categorizations are angelic, astral, theurgic, and demonic magic. Yet these terms must be used with caution

since collections of ritual magic practices compiled by single individuals frequently combine these elements. Ritual magic collections tend to take on two forms, magic which almost entirely involves angelic powers (e.g. *Ars notoria*, *Liber sacer*, and *Liber Rasielis*) and magic which involves demonic and angelic powers, usually referred to as necromancy (i.e., *necromantia* or *nigromantia*).

Necromantic manuals typically focus on the conjuring and deploying of demons for purposes ranging from the manipulation of people for sexual purposes, to treasure hunting, to the acquisition of general knowledge. The power of the operator derives from strict religious discipline (at least during the magical exercises), including abstinence, prayer, confession, communication, and penance. Ritual performances, also derived from the liturgy, are understood to have inherent power as well. The operations, loosely based upon exorcism, summon and bind demons through the power of the duly prepared Christian operator and his invocation of Christ or God, often identified by a long series of mystical names. Common also are the use of suffumigations, magical equipment such as rings, magical images or circles, and ritual gesture. The time of operation might be restricted to certain days, hours, or astrological and atmospheric conditions. Necromantic texts also commonly include petitions (as opposed to demands) for angelic assistance in discerning truth or for direct illumination. This angelic magic is a common enough part of the literature to be regarded as one of its inherent features. Astrological magic, sometimes reworked to include binding rituals, sometimes entirely innocent of demonic or angelic forces may also be sometimes found in these collections. Characterized by a high level of textual fluidity, necromantic collections were rarely copied as a whole but were usually compilations of extracts from other manuals, adaptations from liturgical or magical sources, and new material written by the collector.

Angelic powers occupy a central position in the other major form of ritual magic from the later middle ages. The most significant medieval text is the notary art, which claims to provide a method for acquiring spiritual or intellectual gifts from the Holy Spirit through angelic intermediaries. A related text, the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, claims to provide a twenty-eight day ritual which will result in no less than the beatific vision. How the gifts may be infused or the visions take place is not always clear, although both waking and dream visions are common contexts. These manuals rely on a combination of ascetic and religious observances, prayer, and in the case of the notary art,

contemplative exercises using complex figures (*notae*) or common devotional images. In general, the prayers directly address God, although they may also address individual members of the trinity, Mary, Angels, or the Saints. They are also so orthodox in flavour that manuscripts of the notary art have been mistaken for prayer formularies. Although the texts seem to imply an automatic response, they assiduously maintain the supplicatory status of the operator.

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## Magic IV: Renaissance-17th Century

1. INTRODUCTION 2. DEIFICATIO  
3. THE NATURAL WAY 4. THE MAIN  
TEXTBOOKS 5. THE MAGIC OF  
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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The contribution of the early modern period to the perception of "magic" consists essentially of a number of more or less famous attempts at theorizing and systematizing it; indeed, it may well be asserted that one of the tasks assumed by Renaissance philosophy has been that of providing western culture with a hitherto absent "general theory of magic". But the business of picking up and combining the various existing threads of magical traditions, besides being no easy task, obviously

implied that they had already acquired some degree of acceptance. It must be realized, however, that even during the *acme* of Humanism, the measured acceptance enjoyed by magic never turned to overall legitimacy, as readily shown by the choice examples of Simon de Phares being condemned by the Sorbonne (1494; an event likely to have deterred → Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples from publishing his *De magia naturali*), or of → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1487) and → Marsilio Ficino (1489), each hastily composing an *Apologia* in order to atone for their explicit recourse to, and positivization of, magic.

On the whole, the distinction between natural and ritual magic (seldom so neatly outlined in the texts themselves) was still countenanced by most Renaissance philosophers and *magi*, even though the elaboration of a synthetic approach had, in many cases, the not-so-paradoxical effect of partially blurring the basic differences that were assumed to exist between them.

With respect to natural magic, essentially the ancient *topos* (which eventually goes back to Aristotle) of a complementary opposition between Art and Nature remains at the root of a conception of magical action as consisting of strictly natural operations, in which human industry has the role of a steward, merely assisting the occult [→ occult / occultism] natural powers, which it helps combine, harmonize and interweave. Needless to say, such views necessarily imply the theories of cosmic and human analogy, of universal signs and → correspondences, and of astral influences which are at the basis of (antique and) medieval “natural philosophy”. The debate, hotly pursued during the entire Renaissance, over the exact nature and *modus operandi* of astrological influences [→ astrology], and consequently over the magical ones as well, and the consequences of such a debate on contemporary discussions of causality, is significant not only in determining the epistemological status of magic *per se*; these discussions were also central to humanistic conceptions of “nature” and ontology, both of them bearing on contemporary logic and philosophy of knowledge.

Something similar can be said about ritual magic, which was considered a highly questionable endeavour but one that nevertheless raised important issues. Among them are the intrinsic nature of the beings invoked (demons and/or angels, or “divine” entities), and their link to (and dominion over) the celestial spheres and varied natural substances/elements; the “evocative” power of language and its theological assessment; the impact of moral intention(s) on the practical efficiency of

knowledge; and the status of the human → imagination and the faculties of the soul (both cosmic and individual).

Thus, considered from an overall perspective, the study of magic in the early modern period entails scrutinizing the multiple interactions of natural philosophy with theology and anthropology, seen against the general background of the christianization of neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism], hermetic [→ Hermetism], Jewish [→ Jewish Influences] and arabic doctrines and symbolic practices.

## 2. DEIFICATIO

Even though it has been held (rightly, in our opinion) that magic, like astrology or → alchemy, does not so much depend on any single philosophical framework, as that it mainly functions according to a certain world picture (*vision du monde*) and, for this reason, can in fact be subjected to a variety of theoretical approaches, it has been vindicated by Renaissance thinkers from several philosophical perspectives. Most important and influential is, of course, that of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), which P. Zambelli has shown to be consistently grounded in Plato's doctrine of “participation”, ever since the Florentine's 1469 commentary to the *Symposium*. In a fashion roughly similar to the later stoic *sympatheia*, “platonic love” is here taken to represent the universal bond which exists between all parts of the living cosmos, and makes it an organic being; magic has its foundation in the resulting universal pattern of mutual attraction and repulsion. The “wholeness” and unity of the universal structure is understood as the expression, on a larger scale, of that of the human body; moreover, to complete the classic analogy, both man and the universe are endowed with an animating soul, which ensures the presence of life in them, and serves as ontological intermediary between man and the higher, intellectual (angelic) principles, which in turn are in contact with the divine sphere.

Thus, the ficinian *spiritus*, considered either on the astral or human level (both aspects being of course hierarchically related), mediates between rational soul and body and is fundamental in linking them and maintaining their ontological cohesion. Taking into account the dual side of this immaterial entity (which is more bodily than the soul, but more soul-like than the body), a connection is readily established with astrology, and also with the various kinds of planetary spirits, angels or demons populating (ever since the *Epinomis*) the celestial spheres, as well as the terrestrial elements. Quite obviously, such a connection makes it



difficult to draw the line between what purportedly pertains to “natural” and to ritual magic respectively, and the more so since Ficino blends a medical with a “spiritual” purpose in his *De vita coelitus comparanda* (1489). To a strictly metaphysical process of deification, sought through the assumed power of intellectual contemplation to induce an actual transformation in man, are associated magical traditions about how to carry out the soul’s ascension (and/or healing), making use of the complete hierarchy of cosmological intermediaries. One must note that *both* these approaches (the first philosophico-theological, the second “theurgic”) have “pagan” as well as Christian antecedents, all of them present and blended in various ways in Ficino’s presentation. Ficino’s relatively novel combination of a metaphysics of light (divine, solar, angelic and intellectual) and of knowledge, on the one hand, with the influence of celestial spheres and spirits, astral powers and the world soul, as well as human souls, on the other (not to mention his references to artefacts such as talismans and invocations), would exert a durable influence on almost all notable later Renaissance *magi*, such as → Agrippa, → Dee, → Bruno and → Campanella.

Following the impetus of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Renaissance magic furthermore comes to be closely associated (at times even identified) with kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. If Pico relates magic and astrology, assigning to the first the practice of handling both heavenly and terrestrial powers (*virtutes*), nowhere does he attempt to lay out a comprehensive or synthetic exposition of magic as such, although he stresses the licit character of “natural magic” as the ‘practical’ and ‘most noble part of *scientia naturalis*’ (*Concl. Mag.* [II s.], 1-4). To the underlying idea, referred to above, of magic as essentially an illustration of Art complementing the work of Nature, “wedding” heaven and earth by uniting and actualizing their potential virtues (*ibid.*, 5 & 10-11, 13), he adds that magical efficiency is in any case dependent on the addition, to the *operatio magica* proper, of an *opus cabalæ* (*ibid.*, 15). In several passages of the so-called *Discourse on the Dignity of Man* and of his *Apology*, Pico in turn equates kabbalah (at least according to some of the manifold understandings of it that are to be found in his works) with the science of the powers of celestial bodies, with the superior part of “natural magic”, with the metaphysics of intelligible and angelic forms, and with a theology of the Godhead, but wavers (except in the last case) as regards its divine (revealed) or merely human status. Thus covering not only astrology and magic as

parts of natural philosophy, but the angelic realm as well – and notwithstanding the unsystematic nature of Pico’s *exposé* –, such a conception of kabbalah ran the risk of again blurring the borderline between ritual and natural magic; and the more so since the use and efficacy of *voces et verba in magico opere* were explicitly advocated (*Concl. Mag.*, 19-22), although Pico referred to the *vox Dei* as their ultimate source.

This performative power of words and names is central to the theories of Christian kabbalists preoccupied with magic, such as Pico and his follower → Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), who relies heavily on the *vis verborum* imparted by God’s Word to the angels and to the Hebrew language. Man is supposed to dominate sublunary nature, and be reunited with Christ, essentially through the correct enunciation of the angelic and divine names, which all ultimately derive from the supernal *Logos*. In Reuchlin’s 1494 *De verbo mirifico*, this particular form of Christian theurgy is presented as heavily dependent on the union of natures in the Incarnation, on the eternal presence of God’s Word within man and on the miracle-working, almighty pentagrammatic name of Jesus, which holds power over the whole creation. In his 1517 *De arte cabalistica*, however, a notable shift occurs, by which the theurgic (“sonic”) use of names is assigned a role heavily subordinate to a type of intellectualistic, inner approach to the contemplative ascent and *deificatio* of the mind (akin to what we already found in Ficino, who of course did not ignore this question of the “essential” derivation of “divine names”, which he compared either to the animation of the body by the soul [*Theol. plat.* X, 7], or to that of the hermetic statues [*In Cratylum*]).

It is only in a later context that kabbalah (“gabalía”) will come to be understood as almost synonymous with magic and/or alchemy, mainstays of “nature mysticism” within Paracelsian [→ Paracelsianism] and Rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism] discourses. For instance, the anonymous commentary (traditionally ascribed to J. Arndt [1555-1621], and published in 1602) on the four engravings illustrating the original edition (1595) of → Heinrich Khunrath’s famous *Amphitheatrum æternæ sapientiæ*, equates magic and kabbalah with, respectively, natural and supernatural or angelic light.

Akin in many respects to those outlined above, the magical efforts of the benedictine abbot → J. Trithemius were essentially concerned with providing a positive defense of magic, as a spiritually commendable branch of Christian theology. Instructed by his master, Libanius Gallus (himself an

avowed former student of *ars notoria*), to imitate Pico in closely discriminating between natural and demonic types of magical achievements, the learned abbot also blends greek and kabbalistic materials (which he owed to Reuchlin) into his overall theory of magic. Here again, kabbalah is related to the angelic realm; and the network of heavenly and terrestrial correspondences, which it governs through the active power of words, is universally accounted for by the combined resources of astrology, → number symbolism, alchemy and “natural” magic. Concurrently, true magic is endowed with an illuminative virtue, which brings about internal transformation(s) within the human soul, in narrow correlation to its external effects on the world. Arising out of faith, allied with virtue, knowledge and love ensure – apart from real wonder-working – the magical cleansing and ascent of the *mens* towards occult wisdom, and its reunification with the Trinity.

Contradictory statements by Trithemius make it difficult to decide whether cryptography, another of his major pursuits, was actually supposed to be based upon “natural” or angelic mediation; but it is certain that his treatises on the subject (the famous *Steganographia* and *Polygraphia*, both posthumously printed) helped foster the later, abusive conflation of the same topic with magic and kabbalah.

On the matter of demonology, to which he devoted many works, our abbot stood firmly by the position of 15th century inquisitorial textbooks, such as the famous *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486). His uncompromising rejection of demonic magic is in fact perfectly consistent with his determined Christianization of magical practices, either in the theurgical or in the theological and contemplative slant. Demons are believed to be capable of manipulating the hidden and manifest forces and elements of nature, so well indeed that their power may appear nothing short of miraculous to the unwary, whereas it is actually confined within the intrinsic boundaries of nature (which, none the less, are beyond the scope of ordinary human knowledge). But even though Trithemius is clearly dependent, as we have seen, on the “Italian tradition” of the Renaissance magical revival, the bold and imaginative distinctions introduced by Ficino between “personal” demons (who are assumed to intentionally respond to characters and invocations), and “impersonal” spirits (drawn to objects and substances by a purely ontological *connexio* and, as such, of licit intercourse), are likely to have seemed suspicious to the benedictine monk, and to

his propensity to equate magic with a particular variety of Christian mysticism.

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, who actually visited Trithemius in his Würzburg cloister in 1509 and, the following year, dedicated to him the first draft of his famous *De occulta philosophia* (printed in 1533), unsurprisingly belongs to the same current. Drawing, too, on Pico and Ficino, Agrippa adds to these sources the writings of several major Christian kabbalists, such as Reuchlin (on whose *De verbo* he publicly lectured in the same year 1509), → Francesco Giorgio, and P. Rici (?-1541). Several of these writers he even downright plagiarized in his encyclopedic compilation, explicitly laid out according to a threefold division of the art in “natural”, “celestial” and “ceremonial”, obviously correlated with the three classic hierarchical realms – terrestrial, astral, angelic. More in the nature of a philosophical and symbolic recapitulation than a practical manual, despite its early-gained reputation, Agrippa’s systematization mainly aims at presenting magic in general as subservient to “evangelical” imperatives and to the power of Christ, and as a mystic ladder for the soul *en route* towards divine transformation. External, more common branches of learning are subsumed under the central, “inner” light of sanctified occult knowledge, which supposedly commands all others in a manner very much in line with Pico’s perspective: mastery “within oneself” over the network of cosmic sympathies/antipathies and correspondences, eventually exteriorized as the linking of heaven and earth, is the true mystic accomplishment of magical studies.

### 3. THE NATURAL WAY

The idea of a specific “light of nature” was given wide circulation by → Paracelsus, as an intermediary between the divine sphere and the human soul, where the “signatures” (his own brand of correspondences) are mirrored and examined. For Paracelsus, magic reaches above human reason and experience and guides them, tapping, through a God-given revelation, the occult powers hidden by the creator in the “book of nature”. Duly purified by moral virtue(s), study and empirical field-work, the soul is simultaneously carried upwards and rendered capable of manifesting its illumination in actual practice, whether medical, astrological or otherwise. Underlined is also the important complementarity between the natural and divine planes: by revealing the hidden influences at work within nature, the *magus* operates “naturally” what the saint effects “spiritually” (through God’s

agency), so that the organic intermediary between the Godhead and the universe, as its living “expression”, is in fact man and his soul. Such conceptions would later become mainstays of the paracelsian current(s), and more precisely of the variegated mixture of prophetism, → Christian theosophy, eschatology, alchemy, nature mysticism, magic and kabbalah aptly christened, by Carlos Gilly, *Theophrastia sancta*.

However, partly under the influence of the so-called “school of Padua” (from → Peter of Abano [?-1315] to Pomponazzi [1462-1524] and others), these views of magic and natural philosophy were gradually confronted with an increasing “naturalization” of Western thought, in which a strong revival of aristotelian physics played a major role, as a means of eschewing, as much as feasible, a theological bias in the study of nature. According to such perspectives, the stress was henceforth put on the notion of strictly natural causes, among which prevail, in peripatetic philosophy, the celestial influences on the sublunar realm. If, thus, terrestrial phenomena and changes are essentially due to the movements of heavenly spheres, “immaterial” explanations of them – in terms of demonic agency, *spiritus* or angelic rulers à la Trithemius – become expendable. Magical or otherwise, theories about nature must first be grounded within nature itself; and as a result, the doctrinal frames applied to magic bear the brunt of an important epistemological revisitation. It is not so much the intrinsic value of magic *per se* which is being questioned, but the description and analysis of its workings. Correlatively, more interest is also devoted to its links with technical recipes and the practical procedures of different craftmanships, and with the quantitative (and not just the symbolical) side of mathematics.

In this respect as well as in others, the English scientist and *magus* John Dee (1527-1608) is a case in point. If he concurs with most of the above-mentioned authors (whose works were all comprised in his famous library) in viewing magic, in its higher form (referred to as *archemastrie*), as the supreme synthesis of intellectual activity and as a spiritual vehicle for achieving proximity with God, he also upholds most branches of mundane knowledge as valuable inroads for inquiry into the mysteries of nature. Natural philosophy, for him, comprises under its umbrella astrology and alchemy, cryptography and kabbalah, and even the communication with angels. Desperate to find truth, divine and/or natural, and – by his own admission – disappointed even with occult learning, he turned to “scrying” and angelic invocations, in the hope of

reaping superior insights from such an exalted source. His approach presents few original magical features and is most anxious to only have dealings with “good angels”; but by being essentially concerned with the search for a higher, truly operative knowledge, it also partakes, up to a point, of the progressive “naturalization” of magic, typical of the second half of the 16th century. Defusing, in fact, its “religious”, spiritual or demonic garb(s), magic is increasingly perceived as just another tool for obtaining knowledge (mostly of the “natural” kind), almost on a par with other, apparently more commonplace methods of learning.

This aspect of magic is not absent either in → Giordano Bruno’s use of it, although his goals are also religious and reformatory. Ranging from simple collections of extracts from earlier magical literature (*De magia mathematica*), to more extensive and original discussions, blended with considerations about mathematics, kabbalah, geometrical seals and the art of memory [→ Mnemonics] (*De umbris idearum*, 1582; *De monade*, 1591), his texts aim at laying the foundations for an ambitious religious and epistemological reform, of partly hermetic inspiration, in a complex and novel synthesis of metaphysics and cosmology. Here also, magic is but one of the strands of a vast system of learning, which aims at expanding the *magus’* intellectual and practical powers to the dimensions of an ever-changing universe, using the active imagination as a lever for the communication between individual soul and matter.

#### 4. THE MAIN TEXTBOOKS

The printed production of magical treatises in the late 15th and during the 16th centuries was quite important, yet in no way did it lessen (in fact, it even increased somehow) the habit of fabricating, for private use, manuscript copies or digests of previously published (as well as unpublished) material. As confirmed by Frank Klaassen’s researches (Klaassen 2003), Renaissance interest in magic did not turn away from the main forms it had assumed in medieval times – contrary to what was suggested by certain earlier scholars, according to whom the “enlightened” Humanists considered them as degraded practices, worthy only of contempt. On the contrary, it would seem, from Klaassen’s parallel scrutiny of printed matter and manuscript collections, that the traditions of medieval ritual magic continued to flower with renewed fervour well into the 16th century, having in the process gradually assimilated most of those pertaining to talismanic/astral magic. One may

remark in passing that the progressive shift (already noted by Klaassen), within late medieval ritual magic, towards inner illumination and the quest for divine revelation(s), is in fact perfectly consistent with the rather “mystical”, interiorized attitude to magic exhibited by most of our Renaissance practitioners (yet, they could already find some support for this in the *Picatrix*).

The continued favour, indeed the prestige, awarded to the (latin) *Picatrix* during the Renaissance clearly testifies to the penetration of medieval magic into the humanist era. However, the constant mingling, within the text itself, of considerations pertaining to natural purposes, talismanic images, astral magic and spirit invocations, seems a warning against the possible temptation of overemphasizing the distinction between so-called “image magic” and its ritual counterpart. Somewhat later on in the Renaissance, some degree of blending between magical genres is often found in texts (and manuscripts) belonging to the *Clavis Solomonis* family (and also to the *Almadel* one); such a blending may, hypothetically, be interpreted as reflecting a ritualization of previous astral/talismanic images into diagrams, geometrical figures and seals adapted to angelic/demonic magic. The obvious Jewish origin of some of their components contributed to the growing assimilation of magic to kabbalah (and vice versa), as did the earlier latin versions of *Sefer Raziel*, which mainly deal with angelic invocations and insist on the importance of magical names and hierarchies.

Ficino’s *De vita cœlitus comparanda* is, of course, essentially concerned with astral magic, and with drawing down celestial influences (stellar, zodiacal, planetary) into images and natural substances, so that the human soul and body may receive spiritual and medical care from heaven. The tract is mainly philosophical, indeed it is partly a loose commentary on some Plotinian doctrines, lacking in any sort of practical details.

About Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia*, not much needs to be added here to what has already been stated above, except for the important fact that its mainly “theoretical” and symbolic character probably accounts for the frequent addition to it, in numerous late 16th- and 17th-century editions (from 1567 on), of a spurious “4th book”, which purports to lay out more practical instructions about ceremonial magic (consecration of instruments, names, shapes and characters of good and evil spirits, strong biblical overtones). Along with other, similar materials allegedly excerpted from Peter of Abano (who in fact did not believe in the very existence of spirits or demons!), Gerard of

Cremona, or Trithemius (sometimes one even finds an *ars notoria!*), this pseudo-4th book certainly influenced later magical belief and experimentation, up to 19th- and 20th-century occultism, and undoubtedly enhanced Agrippa’s posthumous (and thoroughly undeserved) reputation as a nefarious necromancer.

Among these additions to the *De occulta philosophia* is also sometimes found the *Arbatel, de magia veterum* (1st ed. 1575), a widely read, succinct exposition of angelic magic in the form of nine series of seven “aphorisms”, in which natural wisdom is presented as an image of the divine one, which is in turn equated with *vera magia*; it features quite an amount of general spiritual counseling, as well as interesting reflections about the natural abilities of the individual *magus* being dependent on predestination much more than on actual learning and practice of his art. Divine grace, allied to commendable ethics on the practitioner’s part, lead the heavenly (or elemental) creatures to reveal the contents, both visible and invisible, of the entire universe. Of course, to some extent such a “spiritualized” approach to magic represents an extreme case; in any case, it did not prevent this tract from being frequently lauded in later literature, even though its practical side is conspicuously restricted to a description of the *characteres* of the seven “governors” or planetary angels.

Many more such *characteres* (and much less preaching) are to be found in the spurious *Archidoxis magica* attributed to Paracelsus. Famous not least because of its supposed author, this *exposé* of natural and angelic magic was, again, influential even in modern occultism (having been translated into several vernacular languages).

##### 5. THE MAGIC OF QUANTITY

The gradual substitution, within Western natural philosophy and cosmology during the late 16th and the 17th centuries, of a metaphysical paradigm by a mathematical one, by no means led to the elimination of magic. As with the influential Giambattista della Porta (1538-1615), (natural) magic becomes the practical part of natural philosophy. Such an assertion may well remind us of Pico (see his statements referred to above), but even though Porta’s *Magia Naturalis* (1558; enlarged ed. 1589) largely retains the conceptual framework of Pico or Agrippa, as Paola Zambelli has demonstrated, its scope and intent are somewhat different. The magician’s ambition is no longer solely to assist and perfect the work of nature, by resorting to mainly qualitative and symbolic elements and procedures; rather, through the parallel (at first still

rather tentative) use of applied mathematics and “technique”, his aim is also to analyze and try to imitate natural processes.

Although at one time he dabbled – mainly for political reasons – in astrology and angelic invocations, the dominican → Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) mainly emphasized the natural side of magic in his complex philosophy of nature, illustrated for instance by mechanics, which he calls “real artificial magic”; its practical effects, he thinks, are conveyed by physical contact and/or a “structural sympathy” (as with the magnet and steel), but cannot influence the human soul. As in Porta’s case, notable is his upholding of a dual perspective on magic, for the angelic side of which he is indebted to Ficino.

A similar attitude is present in → Robert Fludd, for whom the knowledge of the *magus* and his own brand of “experimentalism” are in fact rooted in the same worldview, based on a unified conception of theology, philosophy, science and medicine, within a christian neoplatonic frame; and – *mutatis mutandis*, of course – in the great jesuitic encyclopedies of → Athanasius Kircher and K. Schott (1606-1666), where magic finds itself equated with mechanical devices, optics, and magnetism.

Within this evolution, the stress is henceforth on the practical usefulness of magic: its relevance for the investigation of natural forces. It is in this respect that a → Francis Bacon retains it, as the science pertaining to the concrete application of the loosely defined “forms” which constitute one of the objects of metaphysics (P. Rossi). Even though the power of the imagination and of the individual *spiritus* are still preserved as well, in fact we are dealing with a novel, more strictly rational and utilitarian conception of causality, in which cause and effect must be contiguous and proportionate to each other.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As is well-known, the advent of “modern science” in the 17th century tends to gradually mechanize the image of nature and mathematize the language and methods of philosophical investigation. If natural causes may still appear derivative or secondary, they nonetheless come to be considered as constituting the proper framework and limitation of scientific inquiry, whereas the study of the primary or “divine” causes is seen as pertaining only to theology. Nature is known inasmuch as its functionalities are under scrutiny, and is thus reduced to the field of human activity. Structural comparisons and affinities, elucidated by quantitative and logical procedures, tend to replace the

traditional explanations of natural interactions, which rested on the doctrine of universal sympathy and correspondences. Simultaneously, the idea of an organic universe, central to the earlier magical approach, loses its relevance insofar as its structure is no longer perceived as an image of man and as the material expression of its living essence. In other words, natural knowledge is progressively separated from ontology, just as natural causes are no longer understood as transcending their effects but as homogenous with them, if not in direct physical contact with them. Such changes ended up disrupting the underlying theory, inherited from antiquity, of the unicity of nature, embracing all its levels (including angels and man) and extending in a universal continuity (ontological and epistemological) up to the divine sphere.

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## Magic V: 18th-20th Century

1. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND MAGIC
2. STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMATION AND THE SECULARIZATION OF MAGIC
3. MAGIC AS AN ENCHANTED WORLDVIEW
4. MAGIC AS ANCIENT TRADITION, AS SCIENCE, AND AS KNOWLEDGE
5. RITUAL MAGIC AND PSYCHOLOGIZATION
6. ATTEMPTS AT RE-ENCHANTMENT

### 1. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND MAGIC

The 18th century inherited a variety of traditional notions concerning magic; but to a large

extent the philosophical, theological, cosmological and social frameworks within which those notions had once been at home were no longer self-evident, and they became progressively less so during the 19th and 20th centuries. This has not caused magic to continue merely as a stale and archaic “survival” doomed to extinction, as suggested by E.B. Tylor in the 1870s and as has long been assumed by many scholars under the sway of the secularization thesis; but it did mean that magic was forced to adapt to new worldviews and was thereby transformed into new, modernized or “secularized” forms.

The notion of *magia* as the religious wisdom of the ancients, traditionally linked to the name of → Zoroaster, still finds a strong echo in the article about magic in Diderot & d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772; vol. IX, 852-854), strongly influenced by De Saint-André’s *Lettres au sujet de la magie* (1725). “Divine magic” is described as ‘nothing else but that special knowledge of the plans and the perspectives of the sovereign wisdom such as God gracefully reveals to feeble men animated by his spirit – that supernatural power he grants them to predict the future, to perform miracles, & to read, so to speak, the hearts of those with whom they have dealings’. Such gifts must once have existed, according to the *Encyclopédie*, but one may doubt whether they still do. This general idea of magic as a supreme religious wisdom of the ancients has survived up to the present day, albeit without the explicit theistic trappings, even though the notion of *prisca theologia* [→ Tradition] on which it had originally been founded had been under attack since the 16th and increasingly the 17th century.

The notion of magic as “*magia naturalis*” based strictly on the working of secondary causes – which had emerged in the high middle ages and had been given a high profile by Renaissance defenders of magic, not least in view of the necessity to legitimize the practice as non-demonic (see below) – had evolved during the 17th century into increasingly “naturalist” directions, so that the distinction between magic and science could at times become quite hazy. This notion is recognized by the *Encyclopédie* as well, as ‘a somewhat more profound study of nature, and of the admirable secrets discovered there’. Natural magic is praised as having been highly advantageous to humanity, as witnessed by many examples in physics, astronomy, medicine, agriculture, navigation, mechanics, even eloquence; and it seems to be associated mostly with mechanical “marvels” produced by natural means. But the conflict between traditional philosophical and cosmological frameworks, on the one hand, and those of the new science and rational

philosophies, on the other, is evident in the fact that large parts of *magia naturalis* are transferred in the *Encyclopédie* article to a third, negative category called “supernatural magic”. The result of ignorance and a lack of philosophy, it is nothing but a ‘confused mass of principles that are obscure, uncertain and undemonstrated, and of largely arbitrary and puerile practices, the inefficacy of which follows from the very nature of things’. A primary example is → Agrippa’s celestial magic, based upon the ‘ridiculous system’ of → astrology. Such traditional notions of natural magic, too, have had an interesting development from the 18th century to the present, in the context of new kinds of occult philosophy that rejected the worldviews suggested by mainstream science as too limited, but saw magic as a “higher science” based upon knowledge of the “occult forces”.

And finally, there is the traditional notion of magic as based upon contact with intelligent beings, notably demons or angels. This one likewise survived into the 18th century and on through the 19th and 20th, but increasingly divorced from Christian contexts. The *Encyclopédie* discusses it with reference to Agrippa’s “ceremonial magic”, described as the most odious of all the vain sciences. This detestable practice consists in evocations of demons, pacts with infernal spirits, pretended procedures for harming one’s enemies and the production of evil and malicious effects; and it falls into several subcategories, including kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], sorcery, incantations, necromancy, discovery of hidden treasures and great secrets, divination [→ Divinatory arts], the gift of prophecy, healing by mysterious practices, and participation in the witch’s sabbath. Fortunately, Philosophy has now finally opened the eyes of humanity about ‘these humiliating chimaeras’ of superstition. Such typical Enlightenment rhetoric did not succeed, however, in deterring quite some contemporaries and their successors from engaging in such practices, and developing worldviews devised to accommodate → “intermediary beings” together with new scientific (notably psychological) perspectives.

## 2. STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMATION AND THE SECULARIZATION OF MAGIC

The article in the *Encyclopédie* (which defines “magic” as an ‘occult science or art that teaches how to do things that seem beyond human power’) may be seen as a touchstone for analyzing the complex destiny of magic since the Enlightenment. The uneasy cohabitation, fraught with confusion and conflict, between the three main notions of magic

distinguished above (magic as “ancient wisdom”, as an applied philosophy of nature, and as an art based upon contact with intermediary beings) goes back to medieval times, flows into the 18th century, and has continued to the present day. However, defenders and practitioners of magic in pre- and post-Enlightenment periods operated under very different social and cultural conditions, with far-reaching implications for how they came to understand magic.

Renaissance defenders of magic were forced to try and legitimate their beliefs and practices by convincing not only real and potential critics, but themselves as well, that magic – or at least *their* magic – worked on the basis of natural laws and principles (→ correspondences, sympathies and antipathies, signatures, occult qualities in nature etc.), and did not rely on the help of demons. To do so was extremely difficult – in fact, it was impossible. The very nature of their underlying cosmologies tended to assign a certain degree of personal agency to e.g. the stars and planets, which could therefore be suspected by critics of being demons in disguise; demons, of course, were notorious for deceiving human beings by appearing as angels of light, so that any reference to the assistance of divine angels was a dangerous strategy that might backfire any moment; the very notion of magic as the religious wisdom of the ancients did not sit very well, to say the least, with the concept of a religiously neutral *magia naturalis*; and finally, the notion of magic as the “ancient worship of the gods” brought up the obvious question whether those pagan gods worshiped by e.g. Zoroaster or Hermes Trismegistus had not in fact been demons as well.

Defenders and practitioners of magic in pre-Enlightenment periods were operating, in short, in a religious context where the existence and active agency of non-human intermediary beings was generally accepted by all parties. This situation changed as a result of the “disenchantment of the world” since the 18th century. If contemporary magicians are sometimes still accused of contact with demonic beings, the criticism comes from evangelical or fundamentalist Christians who have inherited traditional perceptions of magic as pagan worship and idolatry; but although magicians may be forced to defend themselves against attacks from this side, this no longer requires them to *legitimate* their practice in terms of a worldview of generally accepted claims. This is different when it comes to suspicions of criminal activity (notably ritual abuse) linked to popular confusions between magic and → satanism (Hanegraaff 1995); but although such associations have their historical basis in early modern notions of → witchcraft as

based upon a combination of magic and the worship of (really existing) demonic beings, magicians now merely have to legitimate their practices as not including criminal acts – whether or not they believe to be in contact with “higher beings”, and whether those beings are angels or demons, is not a concern of any court of law.

In either case, magicians have to legitimate themselves as non-demonic or as non-criminal only if and when they happen to find themselves under accusation. Far more crucial, however, is how they legitimate the very practice of magic *to themselves*: for this is something that no modern or contemporary magician can avoid doing, and it is in this respect that magicians find themselves in a position structurally similar to that of their early modern predecessors. Renaissance magi like Ficino or Agrippa were Christians who believed in the metaphysical existence of evil; contemporary magicians, in contrast, are living in a secular society and tend to believe in science and psychology. This latter situation is the result of gradual and complex historical and social processes that have their roots already in early modernity and carried on far into the 19th and 20th centuries; but although sharp dividing lines do not exist in history, it is certainly in the period that saw the Enlightenment and the French revolution that the balance began to shift decisively from an earlier culture of “accepted claims” to a new one.

The strategies of legitimation by means of which contemporary magicians “make sense” of magic in a disenchanted world have been analyzed exhaustively in a groundbreaking study by Tanya Luhrmann (1989; cf. Hanegraaff 2003, 369–371), culminating in her theory of “interpretive drift”, which explains what happens during the process of being trained as a specialist in occultist magic. Crucial to modern and contemporary strategies for the legitimation of magic is the concept of a separate-but-connected “magical plane”, seen as parallel to the mundane plane of every-day existence but existing on a different level of reality, and that can be accessed by means of the → imagination. On this plane, the things of the imagination are believed to be as real as tables and chairs are real in the everyday world. Somewhat similar to the relation between a computer programming language and the texts or pictures that it conjures on the screen, magicians believe that by “working” on the level of the imagination, it is possible to influence events in the everyday world. The crucial point here is that processes of secularization and disenchantment, although real on the mundane plane, simply have no bearing on the magical plane, and hence do not

affect the credibility of magic. As observed by Luhrmann (1989, 276), the purpose of the concept ‘lies in keeping unhappy bedfellows apart’. The dissipation of mystery in the “disenchanted” reality of everyday life, where the imagination has no power, is thus compensated for by a separate magical world of the reified imagination, where the rules of science and rationality do not apply. This makes it possible for modern and contemporary magicians to “live in two worlds”: they can function like any other well-adapted citizen within the disenchanted reality of everyday life, ruled by canons of science and logic, but in their private lives they partake in an additional enchanted reality, ruled by the very different logic of ritual and the imagination. This compensatory function is somewhat similar to the “escape” offered by the creation of “imaginary worlds” in e.g. contemporary virtual reality and roleplaying games; but contrary to the latter, it is taken with full seriousness as a religious worldview.

The transformation of magic since the 18th century – inevitable for adherents and practitioners in order to preserve the legitimacy of magical practice in the context of new, secularized realities – can be traced on the level of theory as well as practice. In a pre-Enlightenment context where the world was believed to have been created by God, symbolic correspondences and signatures were seen as objectively present signs that could be deciphered by man so as to discover their magical uses; in post-Enlightenment contexts predicated on an autonomous rather than divinely created natural world, and particularly under the influence of modern psychology, correspondences have come to be seen in the 20th century as conventional and individualized tools for training the creative imagination. Likewise, concepts of *spiritus* as intermediary between the mortal body and the immortal soul (and therefore not material; see e.g. Ficino or Agrippa) have made place for concepts of “subtle matter” intermediary between psyche and matter. And although magicians believe that it can have real effects in the world, magic has been interpreted increasingly as a series of psychological techniques for learning how to use the hidden forces of the psyche and exalting individual consciousness to (ideally) a level of god-like omnipotence.

### 3. MAGIC AS AN ENCHANTED WORLDVIEW

Tracing the history of magic from the 18th century to the present is considerably complicated by problems of terminology. In pre-Enlightenment contexts the term magic was still understood rela-

tively clearly as referring to either one of the three categories distinguished above (or combinations of them); but in the context – essentially created by the Enlightenment in the wake of the scientific revolution – of an increasing polarization between “religion” and “science”, it has progressively become a mere label for a conceptual wastebasket filled with anything that did not seem to fit those alternatives (e.g. while natural magic might be seen as closer to science, it was not “real” science but something tainted with superstition; demonic worship was closer to religion, but it was “false” religion; and from the perspective of scientific progress, ancient wisdom could only be an outdated and superseded pseudo-wisdom). In other words, “magic” has come to be conflated with equally vaguely used concepts such as e.g. “the occult” (resp. “occultism”, “occult science”), “superstition”, “mysticism”, “esotericism”, “the irrational”, “primitive thought” (cf. “fetishism”, “idolatry”), and so on.

To further complicate matters, this was done not only by the detractors of magic, but by defenders as well. Thus, for example, → Georg von Welling’s famous *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum* (first ed. 1719) has a theosophical content [→ Christian Theosophy] but contains nothing about magic or kabbalah; and the term magic became quite prominent in the context of pre-Romantic and Romantic → *Naturphilosophie*, where it came to stand for theosophical worldviews based upon → animal magnetism and the “theology of electricity” (see e.g. → Oetinger’s *Magia Naturalis* [1765], discussed in Faivre 1996, 181–217). We are dealing here with conscious and deliberate reactions against what has rightly been called the “disenchantment of the world” under the impact of the rise of materialist and mechanistic worldviews: “magic” now means the opinion that the world cannot be reduced to impersonal processes of instrumental causality, because it is in fact held together by mysterious occult forces and → correspondences (the former being conceptualized as an invisible medium between causes and effects, resulting in what may be called “occult causality”, whereas the latter does not strictly require causality at all but may be seen in terms of a pre-established harmony). It should be noted that this is in fact a *new* meaning of “magic”, which could not possibly have existed in earlier periods, precisely because it is elaborated in reaction to the “disenchantment of the world”. “Magic” now comes to be used, innovatively, as a rhetorical term that stands for the entirety of the traditional worldviews of Western → esotericism, whose very founda-

tions are now under decisive attack. The “form of thought” on which these worldviews were based has been famously defined by Antoine Faivre in terms that are all-revealing in this respect: correspondences, living nature, imagination/mediations, and transmutation (Faivre 1994, 10–15). The first three of these in particular (arguably even the fourth one) all stand for the very things that were logically incompatible with the new scientific perspectives, which replaced non-causal correspondences by instrumental causality, an organic worldview by a mechanistic one, and the neoplatonic multi-leveled cosmos by one that should be reducible to only matter in motion.

This does not mean that an overview of “magic” from the 18th century to the present is synonymous with an overview of Western esotericism in that period. For although “magic” has become largely equivalent to such an enchanted worldview in the *rhetoric* of many esoteric currents (and their critics) since the Enlightenment, frequently these currents *in fact* no longer exemplify the worldviews they purport to defend. The profoundest irony of the history of Western esotericism is that its 19th and 20th-century representatives are largely so deeply influenced by the very worldviews to which they object, that what they present as enchanted alternatives turn out to be in fact *products* of the secularization process.

The kind of “holistic” worldview consistently based on correspondences, living nature and imagination/mediations did flourish, however, in pre-Romantic theosophical and illuminist currents (see notably Viatte 1979) and is basic to the very phenomenon of → Romanticism as such (see Hanegraaff 1998). It is explicitly referred to as “magic” by e.g. → Justinus Kerner (see notably his journal *Magikon*) and → Novalis, with his concept of “magical idealism”. As a worldview it continued to find its adherents after the Romantic period, but although the term “magic” is relatively frequent in such contexts, it could of course be referred to by other names as well. A notable example is → Carl Gustav Jung, whose concept of “synchronicity” (explicitly presented as an alternative to a worldview of instrumental causality) is rooted in Western esoteric and more specifically German Romantic/Naturphilosophical traditions, restated by him in psychological terminology.

#### 4. MAGIC AS ANCIENT TRADITION, AS SCIENCE, AND AS KNOWLEDGE

All magical currents since the 18th century have been influenced by the emergence of this new usage of magic as a rhetorical concept equivalent to an

“enchanted” worldview, and polemically opposed (whether explicitly or implicitly) against processes of disenchantment. This is perhaps most clear in the case of those authors who continued the traditional understanding of magic as “the wisdom of the ancients” and who, exemplifying the new historicist focus typical of the 19th century, began to present grand narratives of its development from the earliest times to the present. To the extent that “magic” is understood as equivalent to an “enchanted” worldview as such, such narratives tend to be in fact attempts at writing the history of Western esotericism. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that one of the major representatives of this trend, → Eliphas Lévi, was also one of the most important early popularizers of the term “esotericism”. Lévi’s *Histoire de la magie* (1859) is in fact a history – confused and ill-founded though it may be – of Western esotericism as perceived by an author deeply influenced by Romanticism. The case is much less clear with another major representative, → H.P. Blavatsky. In her works she certainly sees magic as equivalent to the “secret doctrine” that was already known to the ancients, but she tends to prefer other labels, such as “occultism” and “theosophy”, over that of “magic”. For the second half of the 19th century and throughout the 20th, it has remained the case that attempts at writing the history of Western esotericism tend to freely use various terms from the “conceptual wastebasket” referred to earlier (e.g. histories of “magic and the occult”, “mystery and magic”, “magic and mysticism” and so on).

The traditional understanding of magic as an applied philosophy of nature (*magia naturalis*) was attractive, for obvious reasons, to authors with an agenda of fighting against the dominance of the new philosophical and scientific worldviews. In these discussion as well, it was inevitable that magic would come to be treated as largely equivalent to Western esotericism, albeit with a strong emphasis on the “occult sciences”. One result was that the latter were no longer seen as subdivided into → astrology, → alchemy and magic; rather, it increasingly tends to be “magic” that is used as the umbrella term, so that alchemy and astrology become manifestations of magic (in fact: of an integrated magical or “enchanted” worldview, also referred to as “occult philosophy”). The rhetorical opposition “science or magic” has remained an extremely popular topos in alternative and esoteric literature throughout the 19th and 20th centuries: the popular quest for a unification of science and religion often results in “magic” being presented as the synthesis between both. Again, the term

“occult philosophy” may be used as a synonym, and the term “occult science” makes the point even more explicitly. A major representative of this approach is, again, H.P. Blavatsky, whose vehement polemics against modern science are particularly prominent in the first volume (“science”) of her *Isis Unveiled* of 1877.

Before moving on to the third traditional category (contact with intermediary beings) it should be added that, already in authors like Eliphas Lévi (and increasingly in the magic of e.g. the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, → Aleister Crowley or → Dion Fortune) magic becomes associated with “kabbalah” [→ Jewish Influences V] to such an extent that the two tend to be used as equivalents as well. As a result, magic can come to be associated to a large extent with the intellectual exercise of using “kabbalistic” tables of correspondences as a universal tool for interpreting things and events in the world. This means that the magician is considered the person who “knows”: he perceives the real pattern of hidden connections and the fundamental laws that underly reality, which of course also makes it possible for him to act more effectively and apply these laws and connections for achieving his ends.

##### 5. RITUAL MAGIC AND PSYCHOLOGIZATION

Interestingly, as far as the three main traditional currents are concerned, the understanding of magic as based on rituals that enable contact and communication with “intermediary beings” seems to have emerged as the most prominent one in magical currents since the 18th century. Thus the theurgy practiced in illuminist sects like, notably, → Martinès de Pasqually’s → Ordre des Elus Coëns was focused on “manifestations” of higher intelligences, in the context of a worldview swarming with angelic and demonic beings; Eliphas Lévi famously claimed to have evoked the spirit of Apollonius of Tyana in London; and the system of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn has a crucial background in the medieval grimoires studied by → MacGregor Mathers, resulting notably in his editions of *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)* (1889) and *The Book of the Secret Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage* (1898). Although never part of the official teachings of the Golden Dawn, they have exerted a very strong influence on the tradition, and the same goes for the “Enochian magic” based upon → John Dee’s conjurations of angels. All these are examples of ritual magic: a current that flourished already in the middle ages (see → Magic III) and was continued into the



Renaissance by e.g. → Trithemius, Agrippa, and Dee. We are dealing here not with hostile perceptions of magic as demon-worship, but with texts and authors who are themselves involved in, or at least are positive about, ritual invocations of intermediary beings within a private religious setting.

If one asks oneself why it is that the members of the Golden Dawn and similar magical orders put so much time and effort in their elaborate rituals and initiations, one explanation certainly has to do with the psychological satisfaction provided by ritual as such. While advancing from one degree to the next, the adept is introduced to new and progressively “deeper” knowledge (the initiations require much study of various occult symbolical systems), and can interpret this process as marking his own inner, spiritual development towards a superior gnosis. In fact, the single most important innovation in magic since the late 19th century is its increasing understanding as, essentially, a series of spiritual techniques for “self-development”. This phenomenon is inseparable from the emergence of psychology (academic as well as popular) during the same period: the new interpretation of magic in terms of spiritual self-development inevitably turned magic into an applied psychology. This is demonstrated most clearly by how the invocation of intermediary beings, traditionally central to ritual magic, has come to be interpreted. Mathers’ edition of the Abra-Melin rituals highlight the importance of the “knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel” as a major goal of ritual praxis; but already in the early decades of the 20th century, and possibly earlier, many magicians no longer understood this Holy Guardian Angel as an independent metaphysical entity but, rather, as the operator’s own “higher self”. To be sure, this interpretation is contested, with e.g. Aleister Crowley reverting to a more traditional perspective later in his career; but there can be no doubt that for a large part – probably the majority – of modern magicians, the goal of magic is personal spiritual development.

The same, we should add, can be said – although in a different context and starting from different foundations – about another, somewhat less widely influential but significant current of modern magic: the one that is linked to the name of → Julius Evola (see Hakl 2001). Evola and this “Gruppo di Ur” are important for modern magic not only for their *Introduzione alla Magia quale Scienza dell’Io* (orig. 1927–1929, published in 1955 and 1971), but also for their involvement in yet another significant 19th/20th century innovation, likewise focused on “personal spiritual development”: sex-

ual magic. An esoteric interest in, indeed worship of, the male and female “generative powers” can be traced back as far as the 18th century (Godwin 1994), and led various occultist authors – notably → P.B. Randolph – to explore the connections between sex and spirituality. An understanding of magic as based on working with “sexual energies” (often referring, with or without justification, to tantric influences) became basic to e.g. Theodor Reuss and → Aleister Crowley, their → Ordo Templi Orientis, and offshoots such as the → Fraternitas Saturni. Likewise it is important in Italian magical circles, with authors such as → Kremmerz or Evola (*The Metaphysics of Sex*, 1958).

#### 6. ATTEMPTS AT RE-ENCHANTMENT

The psychologization of magic as a practice of spiritual development is likewise central to how it functions within the rapidly growing cultic milieu referred to as → Neopaganism, itself heavily influenced by ritual magic in the Golden Dawn tradition (understood here as including influential authors such as Crowley and Fortune), and interacting or overlapping in a complex way with the → New Age movement. The psychologization of ritual magic as a tool for spiritual self-development is prominently visible here, but additional characteristics give it a special place in the development of magic since the Enlightenment. Different from the ritual magic in the Golden Dawn tradition, neopagan magic is a very strong example of what was highlighted above as a new development since the 18th century: the understanding of magic as equivalent with an “enchanted worldview”, defined by its very opposition to the disenchanted world implied by mainstream science. Neopaganism is grounded in a Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, espousing a holistic worldview of correspondences, organicism and “many levels of reality”. But under the impact of popular psychology, neopagans tend to take a very pragmatic attitude towards the question of whether those levels, and the “entities” (gods, goddesses, angels etc.) by which they are inhabited, exist only in the mind or “in reality”. In line with assumptions typical of New Age thinking generally, it is doubted whether such dualisms are helpful at all: if mind and matter are intimately interrelated, it becomes difficult and perhaps pointless to distinguish the invocation of “higher beings” from exploring the contents of the psyche (whether personal or collective). Such opinions illustrate, perhaps clearer than anything else, the gulf that yawns between ancient, medieval and early modern notions of magic, on the one hand, and their modern and contemporary counterparts, on the other.

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## Magical Instruments

There is little evidence of magical instruments from the Middle Ages, owing to the prohibitions by the doctrinal authorities of those centuries. The testimonies are indirect and derive from works of Greco-Roman paganism and medieval Arab culture that passed sporadically into medieval Latin literature. Thus the available sources are preponderantly classical and Renaissance; in the Middle Ages they were obscured, known only through

citations of forbidden texts. They re-emerged in the Renaissance when the most important manual of medieval magic, *Picatrix*, hitherto almost unknown, resumed circulation. In general, magical instruments may be classified under two types: (1) As tools for operations such as spells, invocations, and divinations; (2) As objects for protection, such as sigils and → amulets.

*Tools for magical operations.* Since Antiquity, a magical instrument has often been associated in its application with the presence of herbal concoctions, endowed with particular powers which have been revealed by a god or a magus. Circe was considered to be the initiator of this magical practice: she touched some of Ulysses’ companions with her magic wand, whilst he defended himself from her thanks to an antidote made from a magic herb, secretly revealed to him by a hidden god. The magic wand is considered the instrument of command *par excellence*, and the methods of its construction are always minutely described. Usually it is made from a young hazel tree, whose branch has been cut with a single stroke while murmuring a formula of invocation. Other tools for making magical invocations are the dagger, associated with the planet Mars because it is an offensive weapon, and the sword, also associated with Mars but considered a defensive weapon. In order to function, these instruments must be consecrated according to various rituals which confer on them the charge of energy necessary for accomplishing the magical operations decreed by the magus. The use of a magical instrument therefore does not take place in isolation, but is connected with ceremonies, *formulae*, potions and unguents taken from animals or even from human bones, together with invocations and litanies. The first description of magical objects is found in Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* (also known as *Metamorphoses*), III, 21–28, when Pamphile transforms herself into an owl. There is a small box containing jars of ointment with which Pamphile smears her entire body, and an oil lamp with which she speaks secretly, by means of which the spell works.

In the tradition of Egyptian magic there are many indications of magical practices with relevant objects, especially to do with love-spells: laurel branches for burning, and red wool wound around the container of the love-potion or philter are the principal ingredients. A detailed description of them can be found in the *Idylls* or *The Enchanters* (2) of Theocritus. The philters must be prepared while the full moon is shining and under the protection of Hecate; one must repeat nine four-line strophes, sighing (*sussurrus magicus*) three times, and one must whirl a bull-roarer of wood or metal,

whose low vibrations protect the magus' operation. Certain animals are also used in love-magic, such as the salamander, killed in the instant of copulation, whose tail, worn as an amulet, is meant to favour erotic activities.

Beside the salamander, there are certain animals, particularly the fish and the cat, whose parts or whole bodies were considered instruments for powerful spells. A magical ointment that was very effective in love-magic was obtained from fish (Apuleius was accused of its use: see his *Apologia*, III, 25-27). Cats, represented as living or dead, were considered as very powerful instruments for obtaining the object of one's desire, as in certain Egyptian magical practices (see the *Greek Magical Papyri*, 3, 1-25), or the spell described in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The belief in cats' fear of water probably derives from the tradition, described in the *Magical Papyri* (*loc. cit.*), of drowning a cat in water: in that moment Osiris, the god with a cat's face, must be invoked to realize the magus' desire.

These magical techniques were transmitted through the ages in the practices of love-magic and in death-spells (*facturae*, from *facturus*, that which will happen in the future), described in certain medieval treatises or compilations that are still unpublished and are known as *Experimenta*. These spells are performed through various operations. For love-spells it is most important to make a simulacrum (a wax or clay doll, or a statuette representing the subject to be compelled or destroyed), in which should be placed a little heart of copper, bound with a metal thread. The various manuals of love-magic describe the other paraphernalia needed for the spell, such as magical herbs corresponding to the astrological sign of the subject and object, a red candle, and so on. *Picatrix*, the most important magical grimoire of the 11th-13th centuries, states that the chains of love are efficacious under the influence of special astrological images or figures, especially the moon in good aspect with Venus. The good or bad configurations, invoked through *formulae* of spells and incense, are considered most potent instruments in love-magic.

Astrological images, characters engraved on pebbles, crystals, gems, and precious stones are essential tools in the necromantic magic described in *Picatrix* and developed over later centuries by → Agrippa, → Paracelsus, and → Trithemius, right up to the present day. Agrippa in *De occulta philosophia* (I, 40, 159) repeats these practices from *Picatrix* and calls them *ligamenta*. He also gives an interesting classification of the tools by which the spell of *ligamentum* or *vinculum* is achieved, devel-

oping the themes of *Picatrix*'s medieval Hermetic magic.

Both stones and plants are considered magical instruments, following the different classes that depend on various planetary and astral influences. Plants and stones are primarily distinguished according to the seven planets: sun: diamond, yellow sapphire, gold, topaz; moon: crystal, selenite, silver; Mars: ruby, garnet, hematite, iron, magnetite; Venus: emerald, beryl, chrysolite, copper, lapis lazuli; Jupiter: blue sapphire, chalcedony, tin; Saturn: amethyst, pearl, onyx, obsidian, lead; Mercury: opal, orange sapphire, coral, electrum. A magical use is attributed to every stone. The diamond, for example, is considered a protection against the evil eye, and said to favor lucid dreams and purify the thoughts.

The magic mirror is of the highest importance in the whole magical tradition. It is used for spells, evocations of spirits of the dead, invocations of demons and necromantic operations – the latter understood as divinatory operations for foretelling the future by means of communication with the dead via the mirror. In the *Picatrix*, necromancy has a broader significance than solely the evocation of the dead: it is considered to be the noblest kind of wisdom, and consists of a great variety of magical operations, both terrestrial and celestial, aimed at uniting the operator with the universal divine spirit (I, II, p.5). The evocation of the dead by means of the mirror is only one particular technique of necromancy (the name of which derives from *necros*, understood on the one hand as “dead”, and on the other as something “black” and obscure).

All the tools mentioned hitherto are absolutely indispensable for necromancy. However, according to the *Picatrix*, the mirror is the primary magical instrument by virtue of its special nature: it is particularly disposed to receiving (reflecting) the magical operation, of which it is the root (*radix*) (I, IV, 32, p.14). In particular, it is a magical attribute of the planetary divinities, such as the two luminaries sun and moon, which are imprisoned in the mirror without impoverishment of their light (III, VII, p. 113). Burning-glasses also possess special virtues: they can repel storms and dominate winds, men, and demons, and have special powers in the pharmacopia (*Picatrix*, IV, 7). More specifically, the mirror is not only a tool of magical operations, but also of real divination, which may be natural, i.e., employing natural mirrors such as water (used in Antiquity in vases and basins) which is stared at by a child in trance, or air (clouds, vapors). Metals, too, can be used as divinatory mirrors, as in the bronze, gold, or silver shields of warriors. The

sun itself can even serve as a mirror, while the reflected moon represents the most excellent of celestial mirrors.

In the work of → Peter of Abano called *Lucidator dubitabilium astronomiae* is found a famous classification of divination *per specula*, which Peter knew through the transmission of the *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* by Varro (116-127 CE). In the first chapter he condemns all the magical arts and books on magic known in his time. Mirrors come under the practice that he classifies as “exterior divination” or aeromancy. Such operations can be done during the night, using any type of mirror. This magical practice was condemned in the notorious Bull *Super illius specula* of John XXII (Avignon, 1326-1327), in which all operations and evocations *per specula* are condemned. The mirror is also an instrument for evoking the dead, the living, angels, or demons, by means of formulae and ceremonies during which compound substances are burned. In *Picatrix* (VI, VII) there is a useful recipe for constructing the magic mirror, which must be of gold or silver and decorated by engravings of the figures of the seven planets, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the names of certain special constellations. This magic mirror confers on whoever uses it immense powers of command. A different recipe for making a mirror of evocation appears in the *Grimorium verum*, a Hebrew manual of magic, which teaches how to make the mirror of Solomon, through which it is possible to evoke the angel Anael during the new moon: he will appear in the guise of a young child. → Michael Scot (12th-13th century) also speaks of the evocation of the demon Floraget in the mirror. And Luther believed in the existence of the mirror of Mercury, which supposedly made certain false images appear, all works of the Devil.

Another type of divination and magical evocation, connected with the optical phenomena of mirrors, is crystallo-mancy. This is a very ancient practice in which originally a special stone was used: the beryl, transparent and in different colors, from bright green to bright blue, yellow, and white. One variety of transparent green beryl is the emerald. In modern times, these stones have been replaced by crystal balls made from transparent glass. → Nicholas of Cusa writes of the powers of the beryl in *De berillo*. He who looks through it, says Nicholas, will succeed in seeing invisible realities with the naked eye, and all the arcane and secret mysteries. In ancient times, divination by means of mirrors was considered a type of oracular activity, through which the god or the demon spoke.

One magical instrument, finally, used through the centuries up to the present day is the horn of coral or some other material: in Italy it is thought to protect against the evil eye. In the Middle Ages there was talk of the extraordinary power of the ivory horn belonging to the knight Roland, whose sound caused avalanches in the mountains and shook the earth like an earthquake. Some miniatures of the 13th century testify to this tradition. Finally, all the manuals of magic (grimoires), whether black or white, may be considered absolutely extraordinary magical instruments.

*Objects for Protection.* The magical objects used for protection include seals, amulets, talismans, and all the drawings, images, engraved figures and characters which are described in great detail in the occult manuals of magic (grimoires).

The magic circle or Circle of the Art has the function of delimiting a “closed space”, protecting it from external influences and rendering the magus invulnerable within the circle. Among specific instruments are the rings and pentacles that derive from medieval Arab magic: they are figures traced after the numerical value of the Arabic letters, so as to form squares that are influenced by the universal force that protects the person for whom the pentacle has been designed. These are considered magical tools of protection, as are all amulets, which are protective objects that are very easy to prepare. They may be divided into three types, following the material from which they are made: animal, vegetable, and mineral. They often have the form of animals and are colored, perfumed, and prepared under a particular astral configuration which influences the operation. They are considered less efficacious than talismans, because they do not contain occult forces, but work through analogy only. A detailed description of talismanic figures is found in *Picatrix* (IV), which provides a description of the *formulae* and methods of preparation of mixed substances to be burned, according to the seven different images corresponding to the seven planets.

The talisman derives its name perhaps from the Arabic *tilasm*, “magical image”, or from the Greek *telesma*, “religious ritual”. Its basis is the belief in the operative, magical power of the talismanic object, which derives from the idea of the analogical process of correspondence between the talisman and the planets. In this sense, all the sigils that imprison the spirits of the corresponding planets may be considered talismans. A still unpublished text of medieval talismanic magic is the *Liber prestigiorum Abel*, translated into Latin in the 12th century perhaps by Adelard of Bath or → Robert of Chester. In the Middle Ages some treatises called



*De sigillis* were compiled, attributed to → Arnau de Vilanova, which deal with sigils with special therapeutic properties, including those of the twelve zodiac signs, of which Leo and Scorpio were much favored in the Middle Ages (from → Albertus Magnus and → Peter of Abano to → Marsilio Ficino). Invocations of saints and verses of the Psalms are inscribed on these seals, in the metal corresponding to the sign (e.g., in gold for the sign of Leo), and while they are being made, special invocations must be spoken (a typical instruction is e.g. ‘Arise O Lion from the tribe of Judah and hear my judgment, O my God, in my cause; afterwards say the Psalm’), while e.g. on one side is incised “Thael Sanctus Iacobus”, on the other “David alleluia”, and in the center “Heloy Saday”. This particular description refers to the seal of Leo (see description in Arnau de Vilanova, *Sigillum Leonis*, London, Wellcome Library, ms. 560), which is to be worn on the kidneys and is supposed to protect one from renal ailments, menstrual problems, all troubles of the stomach, shoulders and back, and fevers. One of the first works that demonstrates the belief in the medicinal-magical potency of these seals for wearing or hanging on one is *De physicis ligaturis* by Costa ben Luqua, translated by Arnau de Vilanova. In this type of treatise of Christian or Jewish magic, it was commonly supposed that the spirits of saints were captured in the astrological sigils, thus rendering these talismanic instruments effective.

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GRAZIELLA FEDERICI VESCOVINI

### Maier, Count Michael, \* 1569 in the vicinity of Kiel, † 1622 Magdeburg

Alchemist and Rosicrucian apologist, named Count Palatine (*Pfalzgraf*) by Emperor → Rudolf II (1552-1612) and appointed *Medicus und Chymicus von Hauß aus* by Moritz “the Learned” of Hessen-Kassel (1572-1632); known chiefly for his early baroque book of alchemical emblems, the *Atalanta Fugiens*, and for his prominent position in the Rosicrucian affair [→ Rosicrucianism]. The Lutheran Maier gained his Masters degree at Frankfurt an der Oder in 1592 and his doctorate at the University of Basel in 1596; he also underwent medical training at the University of Padua, where he acquired the title of Poet Laureate. An early patron and inspiration for Maier’s pseudo-Egyptianism appears to have been Heinrich Rantzau



(1526-1598), Governor of Schleswig-Holstein. Following a long *peregrinatio academica*, Maier first developed an interest in → alchemy in 1599 whilst in Königsberg, where he witnessed the healing of a chronically ill man through the application of an English iatrochemical remedy. He completed his first alchemical experiment at Easter of 1604 in his hometown in Holstein; at some time in 1608 he moved to Prague, where he became personal physician to Rudolf II and entered the hereditary peerage on September 29, 1609. Prior to Rudolf's usurpation in 1612 Maier left the imperial court and made his way to England, where he became a close acquaintance of Francis Anthony (1550-1623) and defended the Englishman's "drinkable gold" in print; at this time he also made translations of alchemical tracts by Thomas Norton of Bristol and the pseudonymous "Abbot Cremer of Westminster". According to → Elias Ashmole, Maier's entertainment in England 'was too coarse for so deserving a scholar'; in 1616 he returned to Germany and attended a wealthy nobleman by the name of von Riedesel in the environs of Frankfurt am Main. Despite earlier attempts to secure the patronage of Moritz of Hessen-Kassel, Maier gained an extra-mural position at the Hessian court only in mid-1618, and it seems this had been revoked by 1621. Maier died on the return journey to his native Holstein after some fourteen years' absence, apparently from chronic illness.

The majority of Maier's works were printed in the years following his return from England by the Frankfurt publishers Lucas Jennis and Johann Theodor de Bry; according to Maier's testimony many were composed whilst the author was lying ill with the quartan. Maier's varied corpus displays an admixture of late Renaissance humanist learning, pre-Paracelsian iatrochemical conceptions and a heterodox Lutheran → mysticism; a pervasive motif is his alchemical interpretation of the symbolism of Egyptian and Greek mythology, which was definitively formulated in the *Arcana Arcanissima* (1614). Further elaboration on the *prisca sapientia* doctrine appeared in the work that is often considered to be Maier's *magnum opus*, the *Symbola Aureae Mensae* (1617), which traces the lineage of alchemical adepts from twelve nations. An elegant statement of Maier's Hermetic natural philosophy is to be found in the *Septimana Philosophica* (1620); tendencies towards *Reichspatriotismus* and a militant Protestantism are present above all in his *Verum Inventum* (1619); whilst the early *Hymnosophia* (c. 1610) displays overtly gnostic motifs and the alchemical solar mysticism

that was a cornerstone of his Work. The *De Circulo Physico, Quadrato* (1616) deals with the hidden bonds uniting God, the sun, gold and the human heart, and discusses the means of extracting the medicinal kernel lying under the hard shell of gold, whilst the Galenic principles of Maier's physic are extensively illustrated in the *Civitas Corporis Humani* (1621) – a work whose exorbitant claims for the cure of various ills *quasi in una hora* testify to Maier's life-long difficulties with the securing of patronage. The finest example of Maier's skills with Latin verse composition are probably the *Cantilenae Intellectuales* (1622); they also evince the author's neo-Pythagorean sensibilities, as do the fugues written by Maier for his *Atalanta Fugiens* (1617). This latter work of multimedia presents the reader with fifty copperplate emblems from the engraver Matthias Merian, illustrating various alchemical axioms and accompanied by short discourses and the aforementioned fugues; it counts as the most innovative and beautiful expression of pansophic alchemical thought from the German late Renaissance. In his *Ulysses* (1624), a short, posthumously published ethical tract, Maier presents Homer's hero as the image of the ideal man, unwavering in the face of misfortune and a life spent in foreign lands.

Maier's involvement with the early Rosicrucian phenomenon has been the subject of a great deal of unfounded speculation through the centuries. Contrary to the thesis of Frances Yates (*The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 1972) Maier's first encounter with the Rosicrucian manifestos was at the autumnal Frankfurt Book Fair of 1616; thus Maier played no role in the construction of a "Rosicrucian" Anglo-Bohemian axis whilst in England. Nor was he on good terms with the English Rosicrucian apologist → Robert Fludd, with whom he has erroneously been linked as the progenitor of a lineage leading from Rosicrucianism to English → Freemasonry. Perhaps the most prevalent myth involving Maier concerns his "Leipzig manuscript", which – far from providing evidence for 16th century origins of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz – is in fact a rough draft for the author's *Arcana Arcanissima*. → Arthur Edward Waite's suggestion in his *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (1924) that Maier entered the Rosicrucian Fraternity 'ere he died' stems from certain remarks mischievously inserted by Lucas Jennis into his translation of the *Colloquium Rhodo-Stauroticum* (1624), which state that Maier was 'rewarded' by the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross prior to his death. That Jennis was aware of the strictly virtual nature of the Fraternity is clear

from his description of Maier as a *Regni Christi frater*, i.e. a Brother of the Kingdom of Christ. Like other Rosicrucian apologists, Maier utilised the frenzy of publishing activity provoked by the Rosicrucian manifestos as an arena for the furtherance of his own worldview, influentially portraying the Brethren in his *Silentium post Clamores* (1617) and *Themis Aurea* (1618) as pious investigators into the secrets of alchemy and readers of divine signs in Nature. Thus for Maier the initials R.C. are “hieroglyphs” veiling the many levels of significance of the alchemical work. The perception of such signs, or *insignia impressa*, constitutes an act of gnosis: hence Maier proclaims in his *Hymnosophia* that the phoenix may be seen beyond the land of Egypt, provided that we look about with ‘the little eye of the soul’. Here he refers to a universal law of death and resurrection, reflected not only in the processes within the alchemical vessel and the cathartic action of the mercurial medicine, but also in the trials of earthly existence by which a finer spirit is distilled. Maier’s “spiritual alchemy” achieved its greatest influence through the periodic re-publication of the *Allegoria Bella*, an alchemical allegory concerning his quest for the phoenix which originally constituted the final chapter of the *Symbola Aureae Mensae*.

Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens, hoc est, Emblemata nova de secretis naturae chymica*, Oppenheim: Johann Theodor de Bry, 1617; a helpful modern edition with extensive commentary and an English translation of the discourses is to be found in: H.M.E. de Jong, *Michael Maier’s Atalanta Fugiens: Sources of an Alchemical Book of Emblems*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, York Beach: repr. Nicholas Hays, 2002; see also Joscelyn Godwin (ed.), *Atalanta Fugiens: An Edition of the Fugues, Emblems and Epigrams*, Grand Rapids, Mi.: Phanes Press, 1989 ♦ Michael Maier, *Symbola Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum*, Frankfurt am Main: Lucas Jenis, 1617; Graz Verlag produced a good facsimile edition of this work in 1972, and the *Allegoria Bella* appears in English translation as “A Subtle Allegory concerning the Secrets of Alchemy”, in: *The Hermetic Museum, Restored and Enlarged* (Arthur Edward Waite, trans.), London: J. Elliott and Co., 1893, 199-233 ♦ Michael Maier, *Cantilenae Intellectuales, in Triadas 9. distinctae, De Phoenixe Redivivo*, Rostock: Mauritii Saxonis, 1622; a limited edition of this work in English translation appeared as *Intellectual Cantilenae in Nine Triads upon the Resurrection of the Phoenix* (Mike Dickman, trans.), Glasgow: Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, 1997 ♦ Erik Leibenguth, *Hermetische Poesie des Frühbarock: Die ‘Cantilenae intellectuales’ Michael Maiers*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002, offers not only a fine German edition of the *Cantilenae intellectuales* but also a detailed and insightful account of Maier’s life and worldview.

Lit.: J.B. Craven, *Count Michael Maier, Doctor of Philosophy and of Medicine, Alchemist, Rosicrucian, Mystic: Life and Writings*, Kirkwall: William Pearce and Son, 1910 ♦ Karin Figala and Ulrich Neumann, “‘Author cui Nomen Hermes Malavici’: New Light on the Bio-Bibliography of Michael Maier (1569-1622)”, in: Piyo Rattansi and Antonio Clericuzio (eds.), *Alchemy and Chemistry in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994, 121-148 ♦ Hereward Tilton, *The Quest for the Phoenix: Spiritual Alchemy and Rosicrucianism in the Work of Count Michael Maier (1569-1622)*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003.

HEREWARD TILTON

**Maistre, Joseph de, \* 1.4.1753  
Chambéry, † 26.2.1821 Turin**

Educated by the Jesuits, de Maistre became a member of the Savoy Senate in 1787. After Napoleon’s invasion of Savoy, de Maistre went into exile in Switzerland. In 1803 he was appointed envoy to St. Petersburg by the King of Sardinia. He remained in Russia for fourteen years. Upon his recall, he served as magistrate and minister of state of the Sardinian Kingdom.

The scholarship of Georges Goyau, Emile Dermenghem, and François Vermales in the 1910s to 1930s established that the Savoyard Catholic Traditionalist de Maistre belonged to Masonic lodges [→ Freemasonry], maintained a life-long interest in → Illuminism, and that esoteric themes are integral to his thought.

From 1774 to 1790 de Maistre belonged successively to two masonic obediences. He first joined the Chambéry lodge *Saint-Jean des Trois Mortiers*, affiliated with the Grand Lodge of London. After five years he left the *Trois Mortiers* to join *La Sincérité*, where he ascended rapidly through the grades. *La Sincérité* was also a Chambéry lodge, but it was under the patronage of the Rectified Scottish Rite Masonry of Lyon, which, under the direction of → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, was an esoteric masonry whose grades and rituals drew on the theosophic teachings of → Martinès de Pasqually. De Maistre’s interest in esoteric masonry, and Illuminism in general, predates his entrance into *La Sincérité*; two years before he had travelled to Lyon where he received, under the name Josephus a Floribus, the rank of Chevalier in the Order of the *Stricte Observance Templière* from Willermoz.

At *La Sincérité*, de Maistre associated himself with those working for the regeneration of the templar obedience. De Maistre expressed his ideas for

reform most fully in a document written in response to the invitation, in preparation for the Convent of Wilhelmsbad, to comment on the state of masonry extended to the brotherhood by Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick, Grand Master of the *Stricte Observance Templière*. In his *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick* (1782), de Maistre argues that Masonry should drop its pretence of a chivalric past and establish itself as a new Christian Order. Devoted to a spiritual and mystical end, and governed by inspired sages for whom the highest grade will be reserved, Masonry should become an intermediate power between Church and State, without ever usurping the place of either one. De Maistre's *Mémoire* was ignored at Wilhelmsbad.

De Maistre was always a practicing Catholic. In the years during which he belonged to the *Trois Mortiers* and *La Sincérité*, de Maistre was also a member of two Christian brotherhoods: the Pénitents Noirs and the Jesuit-directed Grande Congrégation Notre Dame de l'Assomption. De Maistre saw in the Illuminist doctrines of Rectified Scottish Rite Masonry a providential counter-force to the rationalism and irreligion of the 18th century. He understood esoteric initiation to be religious in essence and an excellent means of deepening Christianity. In considering that esoteric Masonry, far from opposing Catholicism, would be the agent of its revival, de Maistre was not unique. There was little conflict at this place and time between Catholicism and Masonry, although the French Revolution brought an abrupt end to this harmonious situation. Similarly, the lodges were places for an ambitious young man to make friends useful for advancement and to discuss political reforms. Nevertheless, de Maistre's masonic activities appear to have delayed his rise through the ranks of the Savoy judicature, and upon the outbreak of the Revolution he was suspected by the authorities of participating in Jacobin conspiracies in Savoy. De Maistre abandoned the lodges in 1790, but never broke with his theosopher friends, nor with Illuminist themes.

Around 1810, however, and coincident with his writing of *Du Pape*, with its theme of obedience to papal authority, de Maistre experienced a crisis of suspicion of Illuminism. He denounced individualist tendencies within Illuminism and condemned the revolutionary agitation and opposition to legitimate authority of some Illuminist groups. If Catholic commentators have sometimes downplayed de Maistre's ties to Illuminism, those on the Illuminist side have sometimes overlooked de Maistre's criticisms of these aspects of it. By 1816 de Maistre had arrived at his final position on Illu-

minism, which is set out in the private letters of the period and in dialogues X and XI of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. While he continued to insist that Illuminism, in relation to Catholicism, compromises the question of authority, he points out that Illuminism works to overcome the disunion of the Churches caused and perpetuated by Protestantism. He urges that Illuminism be seen as an agent of the unification of Christianity in all countries separated from Rome. De Maistre also makes a point of distinguishing between Illuminisms. While Illuminism can refer to 'these guilty men in Germany who have dared in our time to conceive and even to organize, by the most criminal association, the frightful project of stamping out Christianity and sovereignty in Europe' (the Illuminaten of Bavaria), 'the same name is given to the virtuous disciples of → Saint-Martin, who not only profess Christianity, but work to raise themselves to the most sublime heights of this divine law' (*Soirées*, dialogue XI).

These same dialogues of *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* display the Illuminist themes retained, as de Maistre freely admitted, in his mature thought. (1) The conviction that humanity is able to lift the veil separating it from its Creator and, by thereby discovering the providential order within history, to clarify a little the mystery of the human condition. (2) The interpretation of St. Paul's description of this world as 'a system of invisible things visibly manifested' (Heb. 11: 3) as referring to a network of → correspondences between that which is above and that which is below, linking analogically the visible and invisible levels of reality. (3) The defense of divinatory intuition, or immediate participation in the thought of God on which truth rests (these last two are the grounds for the Catholic charge that de Maistre confused the natural and supernatural realms). (4) The allegorical interpretation of Scripture in order to render intelligible passages otherwise unintelligible. (5) The metaphysics of numbers [→ Number Symbolism] as a proof of the supreme intelligence. (6) The hope for a reunification of Christian churches. (7) The conviction that prophecy is always present among humanity, and will soon lead to a new and glorious efflorescence of Christianity. (8) The expectation of a third revelation that will complete and supersede the Old and New Testaments.

*Ecrits Maçonniques de Joseph de Maistre et de quelques-uns de ses amis franc-maçons* (Jean Rebotton, ed.), Geneva: Slatkine, 1983; this work includes the *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick* and a valuable introduction by Rebotton ♦ *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg, ou Entretiens sur le gouvernement tem-*

*porel de la Providence*, Paris: Cossin, 1821; English edition: *St. Petersburg Dialogues, or Conversations on the Temporal Government of Providence*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993 ♦ *Oeuvres complètes*, 14 vols., Lyon: Vitte, 1884-1886.

*Lit.: Revue des études maistriennes* 5-6 (1979-1980): "Joseph de Maistre: Illuminisme et Franc-Maçonnerie", Actes du colloque de Chambéry, 4 et 5 mai, 1979 (Engl. trans.: R.A. Lebrun [ed.], *Maistre Studies*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1988) ♦ Emile Dermenghem, *Joseph de Maistre mystique: Ses rapports avec le martinisme, l'Illuminisme, et la Franc-Maçonnerie. L'influence des doctrines mystiques et occultes sur sa pensée religieuse*, Paris: La Columbe, nouvelle édition, 1946 ♦ Georges Goyau, *Le Pensée religieuse de Joseph de Maistre*, Paris: Perrin, 1921 ♦ François Vermale, *Le Franc-Maçonnerie savoisienne à l'époque révolutionnaire*, Paris: Leroux, 1912.

ARTHUR MCCALLA

## Mandaeans

### 1. NAME 2. LITERATURE 3. ORIGIN AND HISTORY 4. DOCTRINE 5. RITUAL

#### 1. NAME

The Mandaeans are an ancient religious community living traditionally in several settlements in southern Iraq (Basra, Baghdad, Amarah, Nasiriya, Suq esh-Shuyukh) and in Iranian Khuzistan (Ahwaz, Disful, Shushtar), but after the Gulf wars (1980-1986 and 1990-1991) also in Europe (e.g. Sweden, Denmark), the USA and Australia. They are thought to consist of ca. 40,000 members. For centuries, most of them seem to have been silver- and iron-smiths, boat-builders and bridge-constructors, but today they are also practising other modern professions. What they do not have in common with the surrounding peoples is their religious tradition or faith, and their traditional literature, which is written in an unique Semitic (East-Aramaic) dialect and script (both are called "Mandaic" by Semitists). Nowadays, with the exception of their priests, only very few Mandaeans still know their traditional language and writing. In some of the Iranian settlements, several kinds of "Modern Mandaic" have been preserved.

According to the Mandaean sources, the earliest self-designations are: "elect of righteousness" (*bbiria zidqa*) and "guardians" or "possessors" (*našuraiyi*), i.e. of secret rites and knowledge. "Mandaeans" (*mandayi*) refers back to the ancient term for "knowledge", Gnosis (*manda*), and therefore means "Gnostics"; but today it denotes the

"laymen" in distinction from the "priests" (*tarmidi*, originally "disciples") and "initiates" (*našuraiyi*). Portuguese Catholic missionaries of the 17th century called them "disciples of John the Baptist" and thus they were known in European literature until the 19th century under this name or that of "John-Christians" (true is only that they consider John the Baptist to be one of their former priests or disciples). The Muslims gave them the name "Sabians" (in modern dialect: *Šubba*), known from the Qur'an and early Arabic literature ("Sabians of Marshes"); it enabled them to be considered "people of the book", and thus to be tolerated by Islam. Probably the original meaning of the word is "baptists, those who baptize" (from the Aramaic root ŠBA "to immerse, baptize, wash").

#### 2. LITERATURE

Over many centuries, the Mandaeans have produced extensive and diverse forms of literature: ritual books (liturgies, prayers, hymns) and commentaries, theological/mythical tractates, illustrated scrolls, legends, and magical texts. Since we do not know the names and dates of the authors, editors or compilers, it is very difficult to give exact information about the origins and the age of this literature. Often the nature of the writings creates a problem of interpretation, because early and late materials are interwoven. Surely the collection of many writings into "books" (*sidria*) had already started before the invasion of Islam into the Mandaean settlements in Mesopotamia (635). Apart from these, other texts have been transmitted in the older form of scrolls; when they are illustrated (in a peculiar style), they are called "Diwans". The oldest magical texts (bowls and lead scrolls) can be dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries C.E. All the texts have been copied by hand until our times; but in 1998 the first computer print of Mandaean manuscripts was published by Mandaeans in Australia, based on a newly-created font of Mandaean letters.

Modern investigations of the records of the text copyists (colophons) and comparisons of the special terminology, style, and phrases with non-Mandaean literature (Gnostic and Manichaeism [→ Manichaeism]) have shown that the liturgical and poetic writings must be postulated to have existed already in the 3rd century C.E. The script of the texts was probably developed in the 2nd century or earlier, using late-Mesopotamian Aramaic alphabets, in order to preserve the more ancient religious tradition which originated in Palestine and Syria and was brought to Mesopotamia by oral tradition.

The more important Mandaean works are the



following: the *Treasure (Ginza)* or the *Great Book (sidra rba)* is the most complete collection of writings; it consists of two parts, the larger *Right Ginza (ginza yamina)* and the smaller *Left Ginza (ginza smala)*. The first one is a collection of eighteen (according to Lidzbarski) tractates with predominantly cosmological (mythological), theological, and didactic contents, while the other one deals only with the ascent of the soul to the realm of light, which is why it is also called *Book of the Souls (sidra dñšmata)*. There exists only one edition based on ancient manuscripts (Petermann 1867); a more recent one is based on three manuscripts of the 19th century (al-Mubarakī 1998).

The *Book of John (draša dyahya)* or *Book of the Kings* (i.e. Angels, *draša dmalkia*) is a collection of mixed contents. The main parts deal with the “sermons” of John the Baptist, the “discourses” of Shum (Shem), the appearance of Anosh (Enosh) in Jerusalem and the story of the conversion of Mary (*Miryai*) from Judaism to Mandaism. The liturgical hymns, prayers, and ritual instructions are collected in the *Canonical Prayer-book*, in Mandaic called *Qolasta* (“praise” or generally “collection of hymns”). The first two parts of the book contain the liturgy for the baptism (*mašbuta*) and the mass for the dead (*masiqta*); both are still used today by the priests. A series of other ritual texts or scrolls have been published only in recent times, e.g. the wedding ritual, a ritual for the ordination (“crowning”) of priests, a ritual for a polluted priest. Other, similar texts are still unpublished. A large collection of writings for priestly use only is the so-called *1012 Questions (alf trisar šuialia)*.

Some of the scrolls are illustrated, like the interesting *Diwan Abathur*, which deals with the ascent of the soul through the heavenly purgatories, or the *Diwan of the Rivers (diwan nabrawata)*, which gives an impression of the traditional (geographical) world view of the Mandaeans. The only historical information on early periods of the Mandaeans is given by the (fragmentary) *Diwan of the Great Revelation called Haran Gawaita* (i.e. interior Haran). Two scrolls include speculative interpretations of rituals for the ascending soul, the *Great First World (alma rišaiā rba)* and the *Small First World (alma rišaiā zuṭa)*, published by Lady Drower in 1963. Another one describes and explains the “coronation” of a priest, called *Diwan of Exalted Kingship (diwan malkuta 'laita)*. The *Book of the Signs of the Zodiac (sfar malwašia)* serves the priests for horoscopes and for giving the secret (religious) names to the Mandaeans, the so called “Malwashi names”.

### 3. ORIGIN AND HISTORY

In spite of the extensive literature of the Mandaeans it is very difficult to give an exact and complete history of their origins and development. There is only one short text of more or less historical value, the *Haran Gawaita* mentioned above. Not much more is to be gained from passages of some other texts, e.g. the *Right Ginza* or the *Book of John*. Non-Mandaean sources are very rare, especially concerning the pre-Islamic period. Therefore we mainly have to base ourselves on investigations of relevant texts, rituals, doctrines, and terminology in order to reconstruct the roots and early history of the community. According to the Mandaean tradition, the former “Naṣoraeans” had been expelled from Jerusalem (*'urašlam*) by the Jews (*yabuṭaiia*). The destruction of Jerusalem (70 C.E.) is seen as punishment for this act. In the same context it is told that John the Baptist (*yuhana, yahya*) as a “disciple” or “priest” (*tarmida*) of the Nasoraeans was an opponent of Jesus Christ (*'šu mšiba*), who was baptized by him, but then apostatized in order to establish his own community. For the Mandaeans John the Baptist is not the founder of their religion but only one of their prominent representatives – particularly over against the Muslims he is their “prophet”. Until now, there is no strict proof that the Mandaeans were originally followers of John the Baptist. The only testimony for such a relationship is their central rite, baptism (*mašbuta*), which can not be performed without a priest, who, like John, is witness and performer of baptism. Without any doubt the significant water ceremonies (lustrations) go back to the area of the so-called Jewish baptist sects that flourished between the 2nd century B.C. and the 2nd century C.E.

Some linguistic arguments based on special Mandaic terms (e.g. Jordan/ *Yardna, manda, kušta, yu* – beings, *našuraia, mašbuta*) refer to the west-Aramaic (or old-Aramaic) period. There are also several similarities in style and phraseology between Mandaic and early-Syriac/Christian literature (*Gospel of John, Odes of Solomon, Acts of Thomas*). Significant for an early stage of the Mandaean religion is the impact of → Gnosticism on its ideology (see below). This can be shown by the strict dualistic world view with its two opposite principles of light and darkness and by many parallels to Gnostic sources (e.g. in the domains of cosmogony and anthropogony), especially to some of the Nag Hammadi texts (e.g. *Apocalypse of Adam, Apocryphon of John, Hypostasis of the Archons, Origin of the World*). Probably Mandaism has its origin in the early history of Jewish



religion before the consolidation of rabbinic orthodoxy. The polemics against Judaism (→ Moses being presented as the prophet of the bad “spirit”, *Ruha*), and Christianity (Jesus being presented as the false messiah and a manifestation of the bad planet Nbu-Mercury) have to be seen as elements of the preservation process of a new religion based on Jewish and Gnostic ideas and baptist rituals, which were documented in a special tradition and literature.

In the successive history, the exodus from Jewish Palestine to the East is connected with the “Median Hills” (*tura dmadai*) or the “Interior Harran” (*baran gawaita*): legendary names of places of the East, and with one of the Iranian king *Ardban* (either Artabanus III or IV). It is said that the Nasoraean settled in Mesopotamia, where they suffered oppression by the Sassanian kings (since 224). This can be confirmed by one of the inscriptions of the Zoroastrian high-priest Kirtir (end of 3rd century), which, among several persecuted communities, also mentions “Baptists” (“washers”) and “Nasoraean”. At the same time, → Mani (217-274) grew up in a Mesopotamian branch of the → Elchasai, a Jewish-Christian baptist sect. We know his later polemic against this community and other similar groups, among them presumably the early Mandaeans or Nasoraean. There are some common traits between Manichaean and Mandaean terminology, mainly in the poetry or hymn books (e.g. *Psalm of Thomas*). Much of the Mandaean history can thus be traced back to the first centuries of the Christian era in the Near East. After the Islamic conquest (635) the situation of the Mandaeans did not change completely, because they were accepted as adherents of a “religion of the book” and identified with the Sabians (*aṣ-Ṣabi’un*) mentioned in the Qur’an (2, 62; 5, 69; 22,17). In later Arabic sources they are also called “Sabians of the Marshes”, as distinct from the Harranians or Sabians; these were heresiological designations for special religious groups of pre-Islamic times, and eventually for paganism in general. In spite of the toleration, by Islam, of the Mandaeans as Sabians, their circumstances remained difficult. The transmission texts (colophons) are filled with news about local pogroms. This changed only with the British rule of Mesopotamia (1918) and after the founding of the Republic of Iraq (1958).

#### 4. DOCTRINE

It is not very easy to present a coherent picture of the beliefs of the Mandaeans, particularly concerning the origin, growth and development of the traditions. No scholarly consensus has yet been

reached with regard to source analysis and redaction. Solid results of such investigations would undoubtedly enable scholars to isolate early traditions and thus to trace their development throughout the extensive and diverse Mandaean literature. Here only a brief summary of the main lines of Mandaean thought can be presented.

The cosmology is marked by a strict (Gnostic) dualism between a “world of light” (*alma dnhura*) and a “world of darkness” (*alma dhšuka*). The world of light is ruled by a sublime being who bears different names: “Life” (*hiia*, resp. *haiyi*), “Great Life” (*hiia rbia*), “First Life” (*hiia qadmaiia*), “Lord of Greatness” (*mara drabuta*), “Great Mind” (*mana rabba*), “King of Light” (*malka dnhura*). He, or It, is surrounded by countless beings of light, called “wealth” (*utbria*) or “kings” (*malkia*), living in dwellings (*skinata*) or “worlds” (*almia*), performing cultic acts and praising the “Life”. The world of light came into being from the “First Life” by way of descending emanations or creations, which are called “Second”, “Third”, and “Fourth” Life; they also bear personal names, such as *Yoshamin*, *Abathur*, and *Ptahil*. The last one is later on the creator of the world (earth).

The “World of Darkness” is governed by the “King of Darkness” (*malka dhšuka*) and arose from the “Dark waters” (chaos). Its main powers are a giant, monster or dragon, with the name *Ur* (i.e. probably a polemic transformation of Hebr. *’or* ‘light’) and the bad (female) “Spirit” (*Ruha*). Their offsprings are demonic beings (*daiiia*; *deus*) and “angels” (*malakia*). To them belong also the “Seven” (*šuba*) or Planets (*šibahia*) and the “Twelve” (*trisar*) signs of the Zodiac.

The hostile relations between light and darkness, life and death, good and evil leads to the creation of the world (*tibil*) by the demiurge *Ptahil* with the help of the dark powers, mainly the planets. In this process, the body (*pagra*) of the first man, Adam, is created by the same beings, but the “animating essence” is derived from the World of Light. This “substance of light” in Adam is called “inner (hidden) Adam” (*adam kasya*, *adakas*) and represents the “soul” (*nišimta*, *nišma*) or “mind” (*mana*) in humans, which has to be saved or rescued from the dark, evil body or world by heavenly beings of light. The salvation of these “souls” is the main concern of the Mandaean religion. One of its central creeds is the belief in several “messengers” (*parwanqa*), “helpers” (*saruiia*), or “redeemers” (*paruqa*), sent by the “Life” in order to inform the people by their “call” and to save the souls. The dominant figure of these envoys of light is the “Knowledge of Life” (*Manda dHiia*,

resp. *deHaiyi*), who is also called “Son of Life” (*Barhiia*, resp. *Barhaiyi*) or “Counterpart of Life” (*Dmuthiia*, resp. *Dmuthaiyi*). Beside him stand the three heavenly Adamites, *Hibil* (Abel), *Šitil* (Seth), and *Anoš* (Enosh). Actually the Mandaean know no “historical” redeemers but only “mythological” ones appearing throughout the different ages of the history of the world as a repetition of the first revelation to Adam. Only after the confrontation with early Christianity did they develop the story that one of their messengers (*Anoš* or *Manda dHaiyi*) appeared in Jerusalem as an antagonist of Jesus Christ (*šū mšiha*), in order to expose him as a liar. In this connection John the Baptist played the role of a true Mandaean “disciple” or “priest” (*tarmida*), not as a redeemer or founder of the Mandaean religion. For the Mandaean, death is the “day of salvation” (*yum purqana*), because the soul is ready to leave the body (three days after the burial) and to start with the long journey to the worlds of light through the purgatories of the demonic powers, which try to catch the soul; only the pious are able to reach the Life and its realm, with the help of some rituals (see below) and of the heavenly redeemers. There is also the idea of the end of the world, called “day of end” (*yuma dsuf*) or “day of the last judgement” (*yuma ddina*), when the earth (*tibil*) and the bad and dark powers will be destroyed by fire. Some later texts speak about resurrection and a Mandaean reign of freedom after the realm of the false Messiah (Christ).

The behaviour of the Mandaean is mainly based on some ethical standards similar to those of the Jews and Christians. A collection of laws – a kind of a Mandaean Torah – is preserved in the first two books of the *Right Ginza* (I, § 77-180; II, 1, § 12-116 Lidzbarski). In spite of the strict distinction between body and soul and the idea of the darkness of the world, marriage is a duty for the Mandaean; marriages are mostly monogamous, but in earlier times, under the influence of Islam, they could also be polygamous (but this practice was mainly restricted to priestly families). The Mandaean do not perform circumcision. A multitude of purification rules, primarily by washing, are very important for the life of the pious; these involve food and meals, slaughter (especially ritual slaughter of chicken and sheep) and kitchen utensils (e.g. pots). Unique is the rejection of → music, due to the belief that the demons and bad powers are making noise by playing instruments in order to catch the souls (today this belief has become less usual). Frequently the texts polemicize against the veneration of foreign gods, devils, demons, pictures etc. Religious benefits (primarily for a good ascent of the

soul) can be earned by giving alms, being merciful, obeying father and mother, and taking part in the ceremonies and prayers. According to different traditions and influences, the times of the daily prayers vary between three, five and seven. Like the Christians, the Mandaean honour the Sunday, or in Mandaic the “first day of the week” (*habšaba*). The religious calendar follows the sun and has six festivals: the New Year (*Dibba rba* or *Nauruz rba*), the Little New Year (*Nauruz zuṭa*), the Little Feast (*Dibba hnina* or *Dibba tirma*), the *Ashuriya*, the *Pansha* or *Parwanaiya* (the five intercalary days or *Epagomenae*; the main feast at the end of the year), and the Baptismal Feast (*Dibba daimana*).

##### 5. RITUAL

The centre of the Mandaean religion is its cult. For centuries the traditional cultic locations (*mandi*) have been the principal centres of the local communities. They consist – probably we have to say consisted – of a small hut (*maškna*, *bit manda*, *bimanda*) made of mud and reed. In front of it lies the pool or “Jordan” (*yardna*) with flowing water; therefore the sanctuaries are always situated next to rivers or channels. Besides the Mandi the rituals were performed on the banks of rivers or creeks close to the residence of the community. Since the mid-1970s the Mandaean have changed the traditional location of their cultic areas in order to avoid polluted streams and rivers. Modern cultic houses are built of bricks and the ritual font is made of stone and connected with the public water system. But at present there is again a trend of going back to the traditional pattern of performing the baptism in rivers; this also has to be done outside of Iraq and Iran, i.e. in the communities of the Mandaean refugees.

The most important and oldest ceremonies are the “Baptism” (*mašbuta*) and the “Ascent of the Soul” (*masiqta*). The baptism, or “immersion”, is performed every Sunday (*habšaba*) in flowing water (*yardna*; Jordan) and can only be done by a priest. It consists of two main parts. The first one is the actual baptismal rite including a threefold immersion (the participants dressed in sacral white garments), a threefold “signing” (*rušma*) of the forehead with water, a threefold gulp of water, the “crowning” with a small myrtle wreath (*klila*), and the laying on of hands by the priest. The second part takes place on the banks of the stream and consists of the anointing with oil (*šušma*, sesame), the communion of bread (*pihta*) and water (*mambuha*), and the “sealing” of the neophyte against evil spirits. Both parts are finished by the ritual

handclasp or *Kušta* (“truth”). The purpose and meaning of the baptism is not only a “purification” of sins and trespasses but also a special kind of communion (*laufa*) with the world of light, because it is believed that all “Jordans” or “living waters” originate in the upper world of “Life”. There is no doubt that the basic constituent features of the water ceremonies are derived from baptismal practices (lustrations) of early Judaism in the pre-Christian period (see above). Apart from this “full baptism” ritual, there exist two lesser water rites, which can be performed without a priest but always in flowing water.

The other chief ceremony is a kind of mass for the dead, or rather for the soul of the dead, called “Ascent” (*masiqta*). It is performed at the death of a Mandaean and supports the “rise” of his soul to the world of Light and Life. It consists of lustrations with flowing water, anointing with oil, and crowning with a myrtle wreath. The main ritual starts three days after death, respectively burial, when the soul is released from the body and begins its forty-five-day “ascent” through the heavenly purgatories (*maṭarata*) until it reaches the “home of Life”. Recitations from the *Left Ginza* and ceremonial meals serve the ascending soul (including its symbolic nourishment, rebirth, and creation of a spiritual body). The roots of these ceremonies and the idea of “meals in memory of the dead” probably go back to Iranian-Zoroastrian soil, but they are shaped by the Gnostic background of the Mandaean religion.

The Mandaeans have many more rituals, such as the ordination of a priest and a bishop or “treasurer” (*ganzibra*), the end-of-year-ceremony (*Parwanaiya* or *Pansha*), the cleansing of the cult-hut or temple (*maškna*), the marriage ceremony (which includes baptism), and several kinds of funeral and commemorative meals, called “Communion” (*lofani*) and “Blessed Oblation (of alms)” (*zidqa brikha*).

Characteristic of the Mandaean religion is the close connection between rituals and gnostic ideas. It is not only “knowledge” (*manda, madihta, yada*) that brings salvation but also the ceremonies: primarily baptism and the “offices for the soul”, which are indispensable means for the soul’s release. One may indeed say that gnosis has been implanted here into the ancient stock of a cultic ceremony of probably Jewish origin; but from this connection, an authentic and even typical Mandaean-Nasoraean offspring was created.

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KURT RUDOLPH

**Mani,\*** 14.4.216 near  
Seleucia-Ctesiphon, † 26.2.277  
Beth-Lapat (Gundeshapur)

Mani, the founder of the gnostic [→ Gnosticism] world religion of → Manichaeism, was born near the southern Mesopotamian town of Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the Tigris. More or less trustworthy original Manichaean sources on his life are relatively late and scanty. It now seems certain that his father's name was Pattīg or Pattēg (Greek: Patikios; Latin: Patticius; Arabic: Futuq); the name of his mother was probably Maryam or Mīryam. It may be questioned whether his mother had close ties with the then still ruling house of the Arsacids: more likely these and other claims of noble birth are only pious legends. A recently re-established fact, however, is the narrative already handed down by the 10th century Muslim writer Ibn an-Nadīm in his *Fihrist* or Catalogue that from his early youth onwards Mani grew up in a community of Mugtasilah, that is: 'those who wash (or: baptize) themselves'. The *Cologne Mani Codex* (e.g. CMC 94-97) confirms that the members of this sect

of 'Baptists' were (a group within the) → Elchasai. According to the CMC, these Jewish Christians practised daily ablutions of their bodies and food; referred to their religion as the Law; emphasized the keeping of the Sabbath; referred repeatedly to ancestral traditions; but also acknowledged Jesus as the Saviour.

The bare fact of this descent from the Jewish-Christian milieu of the Elchasai may explain Mani's connections with gnostic Christianity. Here, one can also find the initial sources for his strict asceticism and his eschatology that, to a far-reaching extent, was determined by Jewish-Christian and Encratite (strongly ascetic) ideas. The notion, attributed to Elchasai, of the earth being 'the flesh and blood of my Lord' (CMC 97, 9-10) can be treated as the basis of the Manichaean doctrine of Jesus as the one who suffers in the whole cosmos (*Jesus patibilis*). Evidently, it was also the Jewish-Christian concept of the true prophet revealing himself anew in various periods of history that was accepted by Mani and his early disciples (cf. CMC 47, 1-72, 7). Besides, it seems to be most likely that already in this sect Mani had become acquainted with astrological speculations [→ Astrology] such as are particularly present in his cosmology.

The *Cologne Mani Codex* demonstrates that, initially, Mani tried to be the prophetic reformer of the Elchasai. From his earliest youth he received revelations. A special revelation by his Syzygos or heavenly Twin was imparted to him at the beginning of his 25th year (CMC 17, 8ff.; 73, 5f.). Because of the fragmentary status of its quires, it remains unclear whether or not the CMC mentions a major revelation at the end of Mani's twelfth year. Both the Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia* (14, 31) and the Arabic writer al-Biruni († 1048) also explicitly mention such a major revelation at the end of his twelfth year; it may remind one of Jewish (bar mitswah) as well as Christian legacy (cf. the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple). The traditions about such a revelation seem to reach back to accounts given by Mani himself in his *Shābuhragān*.

A clear identification of Mani's Syzygos or Twin with the promised Paraclete (e.g. *Kephalaia* 14, 32ff. & 15, 22f.) may well have been derived from traditions in the Aramaic Christian Church of Mesopotamia that equated the Holy Spirit (which is given at baptism) with one's guardian angel. By adopting the title of Paraclete (cf. Gospel of John 14, 16) for himself, Mani indicated that he would follow in Jesus' footsteps. Yet the Manichaeans not only identified Mani with the Paraclete, but also



considered him to be the new Jesus (e.g. Coptic Manichaean *Psalm-Book* 9, 3-7; 12, 28-32; etc.). Thus Mani would be, at the final judgment, both the Judge and the peace giving Paraclete (e.g. *Psalm-Book* 20, 19ff.). Apart from these and other appropriations of genuine Jewish and Jewish-Christian heritage, the various but fragmentary sources of his life also testify to Mani's conscious imitation of the apostle Paul. The recurrent designation of Mani as 'apostle of Jesus Christ' is a clear manifestation of this *imitatio Pauli* (e.g. CMC 66,4-5), as is the emphatic mention of Paul in the series of those who received the true revelation (CMC 60-62). This concentration on a gnostic tailored Paul, a process in which → Marcion and Bardesanes (the Syrian Christian "heretic" Bardaisan, 154-222, a native of Edessa who, apart from docetism, probably taught a kind of astrological fatalism) seem to have played a role, led to Mani's break with the sect of his youth. After he had heard the Call from the heavenly world through the inspiration of his "Syzygos", or "Companion", Mani went out: 'I am a grateful hearer / who was born in the land of Babylon. / I was born in the land of Babylon / and I am set up at the gate of the truth. / I am a singer, a hearer, / who has come from the land of Babylon. / I have come from the land of Babylon / to send forth a call in the world' (Turfan fragment M 4).

Immediately after his vocation, Mani started his missionary journeys inside and outside Iran, at first only accompanied by his father and two other members of the sect. While missionaries like Addā were sent to the Western, Roman, provinces, in 241 Mani sailed by boat to India and subsequently journeyed up the Indus valley to Turan, where he won over the king for himself. Soon after the accession of Shapur I (242-273) as the sole King of Kings, Mani returned to Babylonia. He probably delivered his only Middle Persian writing, the Shābuhragān, to the new Shahanshah on 9 April 243. His admittance into Shapur's entourage (*comitatus*), together with the permission to propagate his new syncretistic religion, accorded him unique opportunities. After Shapur's death, Mani also found a willing ear with Shapur's son and successor Hormizd (Ohrmazd, 272-273). However, at the beginning of the second year of the reign of Bahrām I (274-276/7), this benevolent attitude disappeared: Kardēr, the head of the Magi whose aim was a thorough reform of the Zoroastrian church, began to persuade the Great King to take action against the prophet from Babylon. Mani was summoned before Bahrām, duly accused, put in chains, and tortured. After 26 days in prison he died, in all

probability on 26.2.277. In several Manichaean sources his death is described as a crucifixion. His gnostic-theosophic doctrinal system, however, which was well-described in a number of canonical works, soon spread from Mesopotamia to the Atlantic in the West and, finally, as far as the Pacific in the East. On Mani's missionary activities, doctrinal system, Canon, ecclesiastical organization, etc., see → Manichaeism.

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JOHANNES VAN OORT

## Manichaeism

1. HISTORY OF RESEARCH
2. ORIGINAL SOURCES
3. MISSION
4. ORGANIZATION
5. DOCTRINE
6. SALVATION AND ETHICS
7. ORIGINS

### 1. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Manichaeism is the gnostic world religion which was named after → Mani. Although this self-styled gnostic prophet and "apostle of Jesus Christ" flourished in the 3rd century C.E., it was not before the beginning of the 18th century that his religion became the object of serious historical and theological research.



During many centuries, the term “Manichaeism” was in use in the West, but mainly as a label falsely applied when rejecting any dissenting opinion. In the course of the Middle Ages, both in the Church and the State, the label “Manichaeism” was used increasingly, even if opinions to which it was applied had nothing to do with the religion in question. Thus dissenters from established social and theological opinions were routinely labeled Manichaeans (examples are the Paulicians and the Bogomils [→ Bogomilism] and particularly the Cathars [→ Catharism] in Southern France and some regions of Northern Italy). In the 16th century, Luther and other Protestants like Matthias Flacius Illyricus were accused of Manichaeism, and in this respect not only biased theologians played a part, but even an irenic scholar such as Erasmus could not restrain himself. Because of such accusations, it was in protestant circles that Mani and his religion first became the objects of serious study. In order to defend his friend Matthias Flacius, Cyriacus Spangenberg wrote his brief *Historia Manichaeorum* (Ursel 1578). Another early but still rather speculative attempt was made by the notorious dissident → Gottfried Arnold in his *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (Francfort 1699-1700). Against all current opinions, this German Pietist tried to understand and even to justify the Manichaeans. He particularly stressed the cruelties perpetrated by the Catholics against them. The first genuinely scholarly study, and the foundation of all future research into Manichaeism, was written by the Huguenot Isaac de Beausobre. His monumental *Histoire critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme* was published in two substantial folio volumes in Amsterdam in 1734 and 1739. Although apologetics was an important motive (De Beausobre tried to vindicate the Protestant Reformation, and in his efforts he sometimes even depicted Manichaeism as Protestantism *avant la lettre*), subsequent studies have been able to build upon several of his profound insights. The originality of De Beausobre’s analyses can be detected in, for instance, his observations about the importance of the *Gospel of Thomas* to the Manichaeans and their use of Jewish Enochic lore. Not until the discoveries at Nag Hammadi and Qumran has it been possible to properly evaluate his remarkably prescient insights.

For almost a century after De Beausobre, virtually no progress was made. Studies were usually entrenched in anti-Manichaean polemics. A fresh treatment of the subject had to wait until 1831, when the theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur from Tübingen published his book *Das manichäische*

*Religionssystem nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt*. Although Baur attached too much importance to Buddhism as a formative element in Mani’s religion, his study is of lasting value because of its meticulous analysis of the traditions preserved by the Church Fathers, → Augustine in particular. After the ground-breaking work of Baur, the 19th century also saw the publication of new Oriental source material by scholars like G. Flügel (*Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften*, Leipzig 1862; *An-Nadīm, Fihrist al-ʿUlūm*, Leipzig 1871-1872); E. Sachau (*Al-Bīrūnī, Chronologie orientalischer Völker*, Leipzig 1878); K. Kessler (*Mani: Forschungen über die manichäische Religion*, Berlin 1889); and H. Pognon (*Inscriptions mandaites des coupes de Khouabir*, Paris 1898). This new information, together with the material already known from Greek and Latin sources, provided a solid basis for subsequent studies.

## 2. ORIGINAL SOURCES

Still, all this research was based upon materials that had been collected mainly from Christian opponents of Manichaeism such as [Ps.] Athanasius, Epiphanius, Hegemonius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephraem the Syrian, Serapion of Thmuis, Didymus the Blind, Titus of Bostra, Augustine, Theodor bar Kōnī, Severus of Antioch; from pagans such as Alexander of Lycopolis and the 6th century Neoplatonist Simplicius; and from Muslims such as Ibn an-Nadīm, al-Bīrūnī, aš-Šahrastānī and Ibn al-Murtadā. Genuine Manichaean texts began to be discovered from the beginning of the 20th century on. Between 1902-1914, Prussian archaeological expeditions, first led by A. Grünwedel and then by the more successful A. von Le Coq, brought back to Berlin several thousand fragments of Manichaean texts mainly originating from the sites of Turfan in Sinkiang (China) along the famous Silk Road. These texts were written in some seventeen (then partly unknown) languages and dialects such as Tokharian, Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Uighur, “Bactrian”, New Persian and also Chinese. The year 1905 brought the news of Sir Aurel Stein’s discovery of a large hoard of Buddhist and Manichaean manuscripts in Tun-huang (Dunhuang) in Chinese Central Asia. Here, shortly afterwards, the French scholar Paul Pelliot was also successful, as were some Chinese expeditions which followed him. Among the documents discovered at Turfan were a Manichaean *Confessional for the Hearers* in Uighur (usually called the *X<sup>u</sup>āstvānīft*); among the documents from Tun-huang were a lengthy doctrinal tractate in Chinese (usually known as the *Traité*), the *Compendium of the Doctrines and*

*Styles of the Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light* (conserved in London; a supplementary part, known as the *Fragment Pelliot*, is in Paris), and the Chinese *Hymnscroll*.

Subsequently, an important series of discoveries followed in the West. As early as 1918, leaves of a Manichaean codex in Latin were found near Tébessa in Algeria (*Codex Thevestinus* or *Fragmenta Tabestina*), which seem to be part of a letter written by a Manichaean Elect to justify the lifestyle of the Elect through a skilful use of Biblical texts. At about the same time, a number of fragments from Egypt in Syriac (but in an Estrangela script peculiar to Manichaean texts found in Central Asia) were discovered. The texts were originally published in a number of journals; afterwards they were collected together and republished by F.C. Burkitt (*The Religion of the Manichees*, Cambridge 1925, 111-119). In November 1929 a large number of Coptic Manichaean texts, the importance of which cannot easily be overestimated, was first made known by antique dealers to the Danish Egyptologist H.O. Lange and then, in 1930, to the Berlin scholar Carl Schmidt during a visit to Cairo. Eventually the greater part of these manuscripts ended up Berlin; the other part was acquired by the Irish-American collector Sir Chester Beatty for his famous collection of manuscripts in London (now housed in Dublin). As is generally assumed, all these Coptic texts, although they were found in Medinet Madi in the Egyptian Fayoum, did not originate there but probably in the region of Assiut (ancient Lycopolis) in Upper Egypt. They are generally dated about 350-400 C.E., and seem to be translations of Syriac originals that reach back to Mani himself or to the first generations of his Church. Now accessible in (facsimile) edition are the lion's share of the *Kephalaia*, the *Psalm-Book*, and the *Homilies*. Unfortunately, the bulk of three codices (among them a historical work that gave reports on Mani's death and the early history of his Church, and a collection of *Letters* of Mani) seem to have been lost in the aftermath of the Second World War. A great surprise was the publication in 1970 of another document from Egypt, i.e. the now famous Greek Cologne Mani Codex. The *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (CMC) contains a unique biography of Mani's youth and first missionary journeys based upon the eyewitness accounts of his closest disciples. Through this Codex, the argument for early Manichaeism to be studied as a manifestation of Jewish Christianity has received a decisive impulse. The Cologne Mani Codex demonstrated that Mani grew up in a Jewish-Christian baptising sect in Southern Mesopotamia.

This descent explains his deep familiarity with Christian scriptures like the Gospels and the Pauline corpus. The Codex has opened a wide-ranging debate on the Jewish and Christian origins of Mani's world religion. Most recent research (e.g. John C. Reeves) even depicts essential elements in Mani's religion as stemming from Jewish sources: Jewish concepts have functioned as a point of departure, or even as a basic principle, in the development of Manichaean concepts.

Since 1991, other Manichaean texts have been discovered at the site of Ismant el-Kharab (Ismant the Ruined), ancient Kellis, in the Egyptian Dakhleh-Oasis. This site was submerged in sand towards the end of the 4th century C.E. Apart from about 3000 Greek and Coptic fragments on papyrus, the ongoing excavations uncovered, among others, a palimpsest wooden board containing a complete cycle of Manichaean anaphoric prayers in Greek, some bilingual (Syriac-Coptic) Manichaean texts, and fragments in "Manichaean" Syriac. The new texts from Kellis are in the process of being edited, while archaeological work still continues on the site. An important part of the Coptic personal letters was written by Manichaeans: this provides the unique opportunity to study a Manichaean community. Amongst the literary texts, fragments from Mani's own canonical works have been found. Some of the Kellis psalms parallel and even pre-date those from the Medinet Madi *Psalm-Book*. There are also Coptic-Syriac glossaries of technical Manichaean terms. It is expected that, in the foreseeable future, and after preliminary editions elsewhere, these documents will be published as a separate *Series Dachlaica* in the new and, so it is hoped, comprehensive series *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum* (Turnhout 1996ff.).

Notwithstanding the startling discovery of the Cologne Mani Codex as an eyewitness account of Mani's youth and first missionary journeys, our knowledge of his life and deeds is still relatively scanty. The same goes for his own adherents in previous centuries. In his compendium of heresies, the Church Father Augustine characteristically begins his description of Manichaeism as follows: 'The Manichaeans sprang from a certain Persian called Manes, but when his mad doctrine began to be preached in Greece, his disciples chose to call him Manichaeus to avoid the word for "madness". For the same reason some of them, somewhat more learned and therefore more deceitful, called him Mannichaeus, doubling the letter "n", as if he were one who pours out manna' (*De haeresibus* 46,1). In this passage, it is actually not so much Augustine's

derision of Mani's name by suggesting a connection with madness (Greek: *manía*) that is conspicuous. Such a pun was obvious and used by many. It is more characteristic that in regard to the person of Mani, Augustine, who had been an auditor of the sect for some ten years, confines himself to the statement that he was a Persian (*Persa quidam*). This profile matches the then current view and even applied to members of the inner circle of Mani's Church: the words and doctrines of the master had to be considered important, but about his descent one was usually badly informed. Besides, in this passage the simple (and in fact misleading) designation of Mani as a Persian had a fatal ring to Roman ears because Persia was Rome's hereditary enemy. But highly noteworthy and very accurate is Augustine's record that Mani's name designates 'the one who pours out manna'. The Cologne Mani Codex has confirmed that Mani styled himself the new Johannine Christ 'to scatter the bread on my people' (CMC 107, 18-20). It is thanks to this Codex and several other authentic sources (particularly those from Turfan and Medinet Madi, apart from some remarkably accurate Arabic writers) that we have precise information about Mani's descent.

### 3. MISSION

Already during his lifetime, the Babylonian prophet had dispatched several missions headed by his chief disciples: as far as Egypt came Addā or Addai (Greek Addas, Chinese A-to; mentioned by Augustine according to a Hellenised version of his name as Adimantus) and the missionaries Papos and Thomas; as far as Chorasan and the Sogdiana came Mar Ammo. Even before 277, a widespread Church had developed within and even outside the Persian Empire. Mani could legitimately say: 'I have [sown] the corn of life . . . from East to West; as you see [my] hope [has] gone towards the East of the world and [all] the regions of the globe (i.e. the West), to the direction of the North and the [South]. None of the apostles has ever done this . . .' (Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia* p. 16). After his death, however, the Manichaean Church endured some difficult times because of persecutions and schisms. In particular the persecutions under Bahrām II (277-293) and Hormizd (Ohrmazd) II (303-310) are reflected in the Manichaean sources. There was a long-term interregnum immediately after Mani's death, which even led to a temporary schism. Sisinnios, Mani's first successor as *archègos* (Head of the Church), seems to have assumed office only after a vacancy of five years (cf. Coptic Manichaean *Homilies* 83, 13, where it is stated that he

was in office for ten years). He was executed apparently fifteen years after Mani's death and was succeeded by Innaios (*Hom.* 83, 21).

In the Graeco-Roman world, the Manichaean Church expanded into Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Asia Minor, the Balkans (in 1906 a unique tombstone of a Manichaean *electa* named Bassa was discovered at Salona, near modern Split, in Dalmatia), Roman Africa, Spain, Italy and Gaul. In the East, Manichaeism was made the State religion among the Uighurs of Turkestan, by Bögü Qan in A.D. 762-763. In the centuries which followed, this highly syncretistic but in essence still gnostic religion spread as far as the Indian Ocean and the China Sea.

Although Mani had failed to make his revelation the official religion of Iran, he succeeded in what he really intended: the establishment of a new world religion. Due to the Manichaeans' missionary zeal, their new Church soon became the dreaded competitor of the official Christian Church both in the Roman Empire and elsewhere. Its firm organization guaranteed a strong unity. Thanks to its organization and a system of teachings that could easily be adapted, Manichaeism was a success already within the Graeco-Roman world.

### 4. ORGANIZATION

The interior organization of Mani's religion was a hierarchical one, headed by Mani's deputy (*archègos*), who had his residence in Babylon until the beginning of the 10th century, when it was moved to Samarkand. The worldwide unity of this Church may be illustrated by the fact that, even in the 8th century, a North-African is said to have been its leader (An-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 793). Immediately following the *archègos* or *princeps* there were three subsequent ranks: 12 apostles or teachers, 72 bishops, and 360 presbyters. The fourth rank of this gnostic Church was constituted by the *electi*, both men and women. The many scribes, illuminators of books and, for example, Church musicians will have belonged to these Elect. An official fifth rank consisted of the many male and female auditors (*auditores*, a term which e.g. in Syriac Christianity denoted the catechumens).

The numbers 12 and 72 seem to be rooted in the tradition of the Christian Church; the number 360 will stem from astrological lore which, as a rule, was highly valued in gnostic circles. The number 12 reminds us of the example of Jesus' 12 apostles, but perhaps this also goes for the number 72: in a typically Jewish-Christian writing like the *Pseudo-Clementines*, in the *Acts of Thomas* which were

well-known among the Manichaeans and also transmitted archaic Jewish-Christian traditions, and particularly in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, it is said that Jesus sent out 72 (and not 70) missionaries.

### 5. DOCTRINE

Mani laid down his teaching in various books that were to gain canonical status throughout his Church. He himself took great pains to ensure that his teachings would be handed down in writing, in order to prevent what had already happened to other founders of religions, such as the Buddha, Zarathustra and Jesus: the development of disputes as a result of the fact that they did not record their doctrines in writing. Apart from the *Šābuhragān* (which seems not to have been an official part of his sevenfold Canon, although it was a widely-read classic among the Manichaeans in Persia and Central Asia), Mani composed all his writings in his East Aramaic (Syriac) mother tongue and used a variant of the Palmyrene script. The names of these writings are usually given as follows: 1. *The Living (or Great) Gospel*; 2. *The Treasure of Life*; 3. *The Pragmateia (or Treatise or Essay)*; 4. *The Book of Mysteries (Secrets)*; 5. *The Book of the Giants*; 6. *The Letters*; 7. *The Psalms and Prayers*. All of them survive only in fragmentary form. The non-canonical literature included the *Kephalaia* (Coptic), the *Homilies* (Coptic) as well as several hymn collections (e.g. the Coptic *Psalter*) and the *Image* (Greek: *Eikōn*; Persian/Parthian: *Ārdahang*), a painted picture-book illustrating the most important aspects of the doctrine.

Manichaeism should be seen as a form of → Gnosticism. The heart of this religion was Mani's own speculative version of the gnostic myth of cosmic exile and salvation. As a religious system, Manichaeism offered the promise of a salvation through the revealed knowledge (gnosis) of transcendent realities, including the divine nature of the soul, and of what needs to be known about the way to eternal life.

All this is expressed in a detailed and very complicated myth. Any account of this myth inevitably tends towards an artificial synthesis. In several Manichaean and other sources we find important elements of Mani's doctrinal tenets which turn out to be carefully adapted and tailored to the needs of those addressed. This is particularly the case in works like the Coptic *Kephalaia*, the Middle Persian *Šābuhragān*, and in the Chinese *Traité, Compendium* and *Hymnscroll*. However, in documents such as the *Cologne Mani Codex*, the *Tebessa Codex* and the Coptic Manichaean *Psalter*, the mythical elements can only be detected as a kind of

substratum underlying the present text. The same turns out to be case with the new Kellis finds: at first glance these texts are "ordinary" Christian. Thus more than once there appears to be little knowledge of or interest in the many gods and demons among the Manichaeans; nor do we always find much interest in the intricacies of cosmogony and cosmology.

Nevertheless, Mani and his followers taught a cosmogony of a definitely dualistic kind: evil is an eternal cosmic force, not the result of a fall. Two realms or kingdoms, the realm of light and the realm of darkness, good and evil, God and matter, oppose each other implacably. It should be noted that this is not the Hellenistic dualism of spirit and matter, but one of two substances: the divine light is a visible, spatial and quantifiable element, as is the evil substance of darkness, the active principle of lust, the 'thought (reflection, idea: *enthymēsis*) of death'.

In the kingdom of light the Father of Greatness rules, and this kingdom is in fact an extension of himself. It has four divine attributes (purity, light, power, and wisdom) and the Father resides in his five intellectual powers or limbs (reason, mind, intelligence, thought, and understanding, which are otherwise substantially detailed as the five elements of living air, light, wind, water, and fire). Surrounding the Father are the twelve aeons, equally distributed towards the four directions of heaven, and refracted also into myriads of 'aeons of the aeons'.

Opposed to this kingdom of light is the realm of the King of Darkness, a kingdom that is essentially the domain of evil matter. It is disorderly and dominated by the "Prince of Darkness", who is the product of (and even identified with) evil matter. This dark realm likewise consists of five areas or worlds (dark reason, dark mind, and so on), which are also referred to as the five dark elements of smoke, fire, wind, water(s), and darkness. In this area countless demons are actively present; they fight and devour each other.

Because there was an accidental shift of these disorganized and senseless movements, the Prince of Darkness (in fact a collective personification of the five evil archons "ruling" the five worlds of darkness), having once reached the upper limit of his territory, glimpses the radiance of light, desires to possess its life, and therefore attacks the kingdom of light.

In the ensuing struggle, the Father of Light calls forth the Mother of Life, who in turn evokes the First Man. This is the first series of emanations or creations. It may be remarked in passing that, with

regard to the emergence of new gods and godly powers, the Manichaeans strictly avoid any suggestion of generation and thus of evil sexuality. Instead, they speak of “calling out” or “calling forth”. Accordingly the First Man, the “first born” Son of God, was also called forth and, being equipped with the five powers of light that appear personified as either his “sons” or his “arms”, went out into battle. But the Primal Man was defeated, and his fivefold armour that constitutes the Living Soul or Living Self was devoured by the powers of evil. To say it in Mani’s own words as quoted by the Nestorian bishop Theodore bar Kōnī (8th cent.): ‘Then the Primal Man gave himself and his five sons to be consumed by the five sons of darkness, like a man who has an enemy and mixes a deadly poison into a cake and gives it’ (*Lib. Schol.* XI).

This having happened, the divine Soul (also termed the Living Self that is suspended on the Cross of Light and particularly in the West personified as the suffering Jesus, *Jesus patibilis*) is mixed with the dark elements of matter and is therefore henceforth in need of redemption. The First Man, being vanquished, lays unconscious in the depths. In order to redeem him, the Father of Light calls forth a second series of emanations: a new divine trinity. First, the Father sends forth the Beloved of the Lights; from him comes the Great Builder; and he in turn produces the Living Spirit who, like Primal Man, has five sons: the King of Splendour; the King of Honour; the Adamas of Light; the King of Glory; and Atlas. The Living Spirit (also termed the Father of Life) sends his Call from the lowest boundary of the world of light to the First Man lying in the depths. By this Call, the First Man is aroused from his unconscious state and he responds by an Answer. Then the Living Spirit, together with its five sons and the Mother of Life, descends to the First Man and leads him up to the world of light. To rescue the light still captured through the compound of the divine Soul with evil matter, the Living Spirit constructs with the help of its sons ten heavens and eight earths. It is noteworthy that this act of creation is performed by a god of light, not by an evil demiurge. Thus, in the gnosis of Manichaeism, the structure of the universe is divinely devised. In order to create the cosmos, however, it is necessary to use material of a mixed substance (light and darkness). The sun and the moon are vessels of pure light, being made from the particles of light completely unaffected by darkness. The planets and stars, however, are evil rulers, because they are created from material contaminated with darkness.

The world being thus constructed as a well-

ordered prison for the forces of darkness and also as a place where the divine Soul is captured, the process of salvation can begin. To this end a third evocation of deities occurs. The Father of Greatness calls forth the Third Messenger, or Ambassador, who is charged to extract and purify the light still retained by the powers of darkness and contained in their bodies. By taking advantage of the innate lust of the male and female archons who are chained in the heavens, this *Tertius Legatus* and his female double the Virgin of Light (also represented as the Twelve Maidens, each corresponding to a sign of the Zodiac) make them relinquish the light they have devoured and still retain. It is concentrated, in particular, in their semen and in their wombs. The “sins” of the male archons fall upon the earth when they see the beautiful Maiden(s); out of that part of their semen that has fallen into the water a monster arises; but this fearful beast is subjugated by the Adamas of Light. From the semen that has fallen on the dry ground, five trees spring up, and from them all other forms of plant-life originate. When the female archons, impregnated by their own evil nature, see the naked form of the Third Messenger they are also agitated, and their foetuses fall down upon the earth. These abortions not only survive their premature birth, but also devour the fruits of the trees that have grown out of the semen of the male archons. Driven by sexual lust, they unite with each other and give birth to the innumerable species of animals as we know them. The light that is not yet saved is thus transferred to the earth where it is scattered and bound in plants and, to a lesser degree, in the bodies of animals.

This well-known episode in the Manichaean myth (referred to, ever since François Cumont, as “the seduction of the archons”) is a pivotal one. Through recent research (e.g. Reeves) it has become increasingly clear that, apart from its origins in a variety of earlier traditions, several details in this multifarious account are drawn from Jewish lore.

The next episodes of the Manichaean myth can be summarized succinctly. In order to continue the liberation of the light, the Third Messenger calls forth the Column of Glory (also referred to as the New or Perfect Man; cf. *Ephesians* 4, 12-13) and sets in motion the work of “the ships of light” (i.e. sun and moon) in order to transport the light to the New Paradise which was built by the Great Builder. This process frightens the powers of darkness and, in a desperate attempt to preserve some of the captive particles of light, they create the first human couple: Adam and Eve. Hence man was made by the demons. He was created, however, after the



image of the Third Messenger (and so ultimately after the image of God!) which the demons had seen on high. Man is thus rooted in two worlds, but at first he is unconscious of his high descent, because the necessary *gnosis* is still missing. This explains why the work of the redemption of light must be concentrated on man. Thus Jesus the Luminous descends to Adam to bring him the saving knowledge. In Manichaeism, this revelation is the archetype of all future human redemption. Gradually the liberation will be achieved. In order to bring about the redemption of light, Jesus evokes the Light Mind or Nous (Intelligence); and this Nous, in turn, summons forth the Apostle of Light who becomes incarnate in the great religious leaders throughout world history, such as the Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus the Messiah.

The final stage of world history is introduced by the Great War between the forces of good and evil. Through the practice of the laws of the true religion, light is liberated. When the Church of the righteous ones triumphs, every soul will be judged, and those of the chosen will rise to heaven. After that, the world will be destroyed and purified by a fire lasting 1468 years. All, or most, of the light particles will be saved; evil matter, in all its manifestations and with its victims (the damned), will be forever imprisoned in a globe (*Bôlos*, *globus*) inside a gigantic pit covered with a huge stone. Then the separation of light and darkness will have been accomplished for all eternity.

This is a necessarily brief and – inevitably – eclectic account of the complicated myth. The most coherent description of Manichaean cosmogony can be found in Theodore bar Kōnī's already cited *Book of Scholia*, but his account ends with the creation of Adam and Eve. Many other cosmological and cosmogonic tenets have been preserved in the surviving works of the Manichaeans and in the writings of opponents such as Augustine. The latter also includes very interesting passages from Mani's *Treasure of Life* in Latin translation (cf. *Contra Felicem* II, 5 and *De natura boni* 44; this *Thesaurus* appears to have circulated in Gaul and Spain as well).

However complex and arcane the various ramifications of the Manichaean myth became during the course of its distribution through many countries and centuries, its essential elements remained the same from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is Mani's doctrine that there are two principles (or roots or kingdoms or realms or cities) and three "moments": the time before the commingling and the struggle, when the two kingdoms of light and darkness were still separated; the time of the com-

mingling, being the present world time; and future time in which the two kingdoms will again (and now definitively) be separated. In essence this message of salvation is typically gnostic: the Nous (the heavenly revelation) rescues the Psyche (the divine spark of light in man) from Hyle (evil matter).

#### 6. SALVATION AND ETHICS

On the basis of its complicated myth alone, it would be difficult to understand the success of Mani's religion. In fact, the elaborate myth was only of minor importance to Manichaeans and its relevance was sometimes even played down. What really interested both the Hearers and the Elect was the microcosmic significance of the macrocosmic drama. Indeed, the long-term imprisonment of light by matter in the physical universe had important practical consequences for those who had been illuminated by the Nous. Their duty was to be instruments for the liberation of the divine light.

Carrying out this liberation required from the individual both a conscious effort to promote virtue, and the avoidance of any action which might harm the light or prolong its captivity. The Manichaean Elect were therefore expected to observe "the five commandments": 1. truthfulness, 2. non-injury, 3. chastity, 4. purity of the mouth, and 5. poverty. From Augustine and from Iranian and Turkish sources as well, it is known that the Manichaean ethic which was binding upon the Elect was more generally summarized as the "three seals" (*tria signacula*): the seal of the mouth; the seal of the hands; and the seal of the bosom. For the Hearers, there were ten commandments which have not been preserved uniformly, but which encompassed in any case the prohibition of killing, lying, false accusations, an unchaste life, stealing, and black → magic.

From this it can be inferred that the catechumens were allowed to marry and to carry out normal daily activities. Their main obligation, however, was what is termed in Middle Persian *ruwānāgān*, "soul-service". This service consisted of providing food, shelter and any other required sustenance for the Elect, and was the condition for the Hearers' own redemption: they would be rescued and purified according to their works. Although in very exceptional cases a catechumen (like an Elect) may be directly saved by his or her conduct, as a rule salvation will only take place through a series of incarnations in e.g. luminous fruits and, finally, into an Elect. In the *Fragmenta Tabestina*, the vital place of the Hearer in the Manichaean Church is illustrated by the New Testament story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10, 38-42): like these two sisters,

the two classes of Elect and Hearers both perform indispensable and complementary tasks in order to ensure the liberation of light.

The Elect received the Hearers' daily offerings: in particular, fruit and bread at "the table". This sacred meal, probably the only real sacrament in Manichaeism, was opened by the Elect with "an apology to the bread". Of special importance was the yearly Bema festival to commemorate Mani's martyrdom. A judgement seat (*Bèma, tribunal*) was raised in the middle of the worshipping congregation upon which stood an icon of Mani to celebrate his continuing presence in the community of the Elect, and to symbolize his role as Jesus' representative until the last judgment. This feast of the Bema was preceded by a month of fasting. Other fast days were Sunday (for the Hearers and the Elect) and Monday (for the Elect). Fasting was also practised at other times and periods, e.g. during the five nocturnal festivals, each of which encompassed a day and a night. Ritual prayer had its place within these fasts, as well as during the daily services, together with hymns, reading of scripture and, for instance, sermons and catechetical lessons. The ritual greetings and blessings that Mani introduced into his Church were seen as reenactments of divine archetypes: the "peace" (the first greeting), the giving of the right hand, the kiss, the "salutation" (*proskynèsis*), and the laying on of hands.

## 7. ORIGINS

The origins of Manichaeism are still open to question. For centuries this religion was assumed to be a Christian heresy. As we have seen, Augustine called Mani a 'Persian', and until recently it has been common in the history of religions to treat Manichaeism primarily as part of the religious history of Iran. This view seemed to be corroborated by the finds at Turfan and Tun-huang. However, with the discovery of original Manichaean texts in Coptic, the scholarly consensus concerning the general character of Manichaeism has changed. Manichaeism now appears to have firm roots in a Gnostic type of Christianity. This view has been convincingly demonstrated by the *Cologne Mani Codex*. According to this Codex, some of the Jewish-Christian Elchasaites among whom the young Mani lived regarded him as a prophet, and some even said that the Living Word spoke through him (CMC 86). There is reason for the assumption that at that time Mani shared their Jewish-Christian convictions and believed that he was the new incarnation of the true prophet.

In recent research, several other tenets of Manichaeism have been re-interpreted against this

Jewish and Jewish-Christian background. Indeed, any unprejudiced reader of the CMC will be struck by its Jewish and (Jewish-)Christian elements. This does not, however, exclude the probability that Iranian or other religious and philosophical components may well have influenced both the origin and the subsequent developments of Mani's religious system. Iranian and perhaps even specifically Zoroastrian elements may be identified in his concept of history as the Three Times, in certain particular traits of his mythology, in terms such as "the Great War", in the Daëna-concept, or in the designation of the highest God as "the One with four faces". As regards the last two concepts, however, reference can be made to Christian and Jewish parallels as well. That Mani's concept of the Nous ought to be derived from the Iranian *Vohu manah* (as argued by Geo Widengren) seems unlikely in view of its many substantial equivalents in Hellenistic thinking. From Buddhism, Mani may have received impulses resulting in the radical division of his Church into Elect and Hearers and to his doctrine of metempsychosis. Besides these possible "sources", much influence was doubtlessly exerted by the radical gnostic → Marcion. Major formative elements of Mani's system, particularly of his cosmology, may well have been inspired by Bardesanes († 222). If the latter is to be treated not so much as a gnostic, but as a typical representative of pluralistic Syriac Christianity, then this again indicates certain backgrounds of Mani in Edessene Christendom. Apart from these and other possible "sources", however, Mani has to be evaluated first and foremost as the founder of an independent and unique gnostic world religion.

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JOHANNES VAN OORT

## Marcion,\* ca 85 Pontus, † ca. 160 place unknown

Marcion was a shipowner and maritime merchant from Pontus (according to Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 42, 1, 3, from Sinope on the Black Sea coast) and the most successful Christian heretic of the 2nd century. He founded a counterchurch for which he claimed divine truth and catholicity against the emerging “great church”. The Marcionite community survived until the 3rd century in the West, the 4th century in most of the East, and for a still longer period in Syria. It was a dangerous rival for orthodox Christianity until the middle of the 3rd century.

According to our best sources Marcion came to Rome about 140, probably not yet baptized, joined the Christian congregation there and gave it as a present the large sum of 200.000 sestertii, perhaps the proceeds from selling his ship. A few years of bitter quarrels about the right understanding of the Christian message must have followed. When the majority of the Roman Christians turned against Marcion, he broke away and founded his own church (about 144). He immediately started a powerful missionary campaign. It led towards a serious crisis of the Catholic Church, which it took some 50 years to overcome. Another tradition (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42, 1, 4–7, and later authors) tells us that Marcion was excommunicated by his own father, who was bishop of Sinope, for seducing a virgin, and was already rebuked for his teaching in Asia Minor before he came to Rome. These are obviously antiheretical legends.

The heart of Marcion's teaching is his assumption of two gods, existing alongside each other. It is not a dualism of equal balance. Firstly, there is the good god who is described as the absolute, perfect and almighty god of ancient philosophy, who is also the god of life and mercy. He is unknown to the other god and to the world, until he decides to reveal himself in Christ. The other god is the Demiurge, the creator god of the Old Testament with all his anthropomorphic features of wrath, remorse and self-contradiction, ‘a judge, fierce and warlike’ (Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, I, 6, 1). He has created the world and the human race, both reflecting the imperfection of their maker in their own nature. Out of weakness humanity fell into sin and was from now on threatened by the Demiurge with

his relentless law of vengeance. The assumption of two gods of different standing and power is common Gnostic teaching. Marcion, however, juxtaposes his gods as having coexisted from the beginning. The good god is not the principle of being, difficult though this may be to accept. The antagonism of Marcion's gods explains the dualism of his whole doctrine. Although there is no link whatever connecting him with the creator's realm, the good god out of mere love and mercy for humankind suffering under the regime of the creator sends Christ into the world to save all those who believe in him (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, I, 14, 17).

Marcion is a strict docetist: Christ is not born from a woman but comes down from the heaven of the good god as an adult person in the 15th year of the emperor Tiberius (29 A.D.). The substance of his body resembles that of the angels. He preaches the gospel of the good god to all human beings, offering redemption from the creator's law and judgment to all who believe in him and his father. Christ gives his own life to the Demiurge as the price for liberation of the believers (Marcion is the first Christian theologian to hold a "ransom" theory of redemption). He takes their souls up into the heaven of his father; the material bodies cannot enter the heavenly realm. The doctrine of Christ's descent to the underworld is of particular importance for Marcion: as the good god did not reveal himself before the coming of Christ, his preaching to the souls of the dead is the unique chance for them to hear the gospel and to believe. Indeed, the pagans and the sinners of the Old Testament follow him immediately, while the holy persons of the Hebrew bible, who belong to the Demiurge, do not trust Christ and stay behind (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 27, 3).

The Demiurge will also send his son, the Messiah of the Old Testament. He has not yet come. He will be a warrior and reestablish the kingdom of the Jews (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* III, 21-24). The period between the resurrection of Christ and his second coming is a time of suffering for the Christian believers because they are hated and persecuted by the creator god. When Christ comes again, he will not judge the sinners himself, but will hand them over to the creator to judge and punish them. (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, I, 27, 6-28, 1; II, 11, 3). Perhaps after this has happened the creator with his adherents and with his whole world will perish in his own fire (Harnack, 140f.).

Marcion's dualistic teaching can be understood as radical → Gnosticism, including influence from contemporary philosophy. His view of Christian

tradition is a new achievement. Marcion denies that the Old Testament is to be understood as a Christian book: it is a true book in a historical sense, but a book in which the Demiurge addresses the Jews. Christological interpretation is rejected. Having lost the Old Testament basis for his theology, Marcion had to look for Christian sources for his teaching. He discovered that both oral and written tradition had suffered judaizing interpolations in the church since the time of the apostles. General appeals to tradition were no longer sufficient. Marcion had to find written documents the origin of which could be traced. He eventually found such evidence in the Gospel of Luke and in the Pauline corpus, which was circulating in several collections. From the beginning of the letter to the Galatians Marcion learned that Paul was the only apostle who had remained steadfast in the truth and had never forsaken Christ (Gal. 2, 11-14). And when Paul mentioned the one gospel he had received from Christ, Marcion referred this to Luke. Even the Pauline corpus and the Gospel were not free from judaizing additions. Marcion had to eliminate them in order to produce reliable texts. Marcion opened a new era in the history of the biblical canon: his abandoning of the Old Testament forced him to create a canon of New Testament-writings. The Catholic Church reacted to this with its twofold Bible, which keeps the Old Testament and contains a greater number of New Testament books. We know about four works written or revised by Marcion: 1. the *Gospel*, 2. the *Apostolicon*, 3. a letter in which he admitted that he had once been a member of the Catholic Church (Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 2, 4; *Adv. Marc.*, I, 1, 6; IV, 4, 3) and 4. the *Antithesis*, which presented Marcion's theology; the opposing statements of law and gospel were to show the diversity of the gods. What is the attitude of Marcion towards Gnosticism and esotericism? It has been said above that Marcion's teaching of the two gods and the resulting dualism appear very Gnostic. Concerning the understanding of tradition and esotericism however, there is a sharp contrast. Gnosticism is intrinsically an esoteric movement. Its teaching is not addressed to the pagans or ordinary Christians in a general way: it is directed to the elect, to those who participate in the heavenly spirit (pneuma) without knowing. Those who believe in the Gnostic myth hereby prove to be elected, which the unbelievers are obviously not. A favorite literary form for communicating esoteric lore is the preaching of Christ after his resurrection to a select group of disciples. The secret teaching could also be said to be transmitted by little known



teachers of the past (cf. Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VII, 20, 1) or even claimed to be “apostolic tradition” (Ptolemy, *Epistula ad Floram*, in Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 33, 7, 9). Marcion dismissed oral tradition and never referred to apocryphal writings; he did not distinguish classes of Christians according to their spiritual progress either. For him faith was the only condition of salvation. He preached the one truth of the gospel to everybody, not only to an advanced spiritual elite. Marcion is the least esoteric Christian thinker of his time. The Marcionite church was a well-organized body with bishops, presbyters and deacons. Members called themselves *Markiōnistai*. Marcion was highly honoured in his church. He was said to sit on the left of Christ in heaven with Paul sitting on the right (Origen, *Hom. in Luc.* 25 [ed. Rauer, 162, 6f.]), and he was called “the bishop” (Adamantius, *De recta in deum fide*, I, 8 [ed. van de Sande Bakhuyzen, 16, 34]).

After Marcion’s death theological schools developed in western Marcionitism. They discussed the number and nature of the principles of being (*archai*). Two, three and four principles were assumed. It seems to have been a deliberate attempt at reaching a deeper philosophical understanding of Marcion’s doctrine. Similar ways of thought were pursued outside Marcionitism as well. Disputes took place both within Marcionite circles and with teachers from outside (cf. Rhodon, in: Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V 13; Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, X, 19, 1-3). The most important pupil of Marcion was Apelles, (ca. 120-ca. 185), head of a school in Rome. In contrast to his teacher he taught one absolute god of perfect goodness. This god created angelic powers. The first angel created the world with an imperfect result. A second angel turned away from the supreme god and persuaded the preexistent souls to come down to the lower world to put on flesh. The next angel is fury (like a demon), he is the god of the Jews who spoke to → Moses from the burning bush. This angel inspired the Old Testament, which is a book full of lies and contradictions. Apelles dedicated a voluminous work, called *Syllogisms*, to this topic. On the request of the creator-angel the supreme god sent Christ to the world to save the human souls. For his appearance on earth Christ needed a body. There are two descriptions of its making. The first is that when Christ descended through the celestial spheres he weaved for himself a body out of the elements of the stars (Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 6, 1-3, 8); the second is that Christ fabricated his body on earth out of the terrestrial matter (Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VII, 38, 3-5; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 44,

2, 2f.). Both versions show that Apelles and his school tried to come closer to the catholic doctrine of the true body of Christ. On earth Christ suffered and died; after his resurrection he returned to his father, giving back the elements of his body during the ascent.

In Rome Apelles was connected with a prophetess, Filumene. He put her sayings together in a book *Phaneroiseis* (“Manifestations”). Perhaps Apelles added these revelations to the Marcionite canon. This would explain a certain distance between Marcionites and Apelleians. Rhodon, a catholic writer of the late 2nd century, tells us that Apelles as an old man declared that for a Christian nothing matters but faith in the crucified Christ and good works (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, V, 13, 5). One must beware not to understand this statement in modern terms of subjective faith. Apelles is still quoted and criticized in the 4th century. His school had vanished much earlier.

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GERHARD MAY

**Marconis de Nègre, Jacques-Étienne,\***  
30.1.1795 Montauban (Tarn et  
Garonne), † 21.11.1868 Paris

The founder of the “Egyptian” masonic rite of Memphis (1838) was also one of the first theoreticians and employers of the word *ésotérisme* (→ esotericism). His family seems to have been marked by the double origin reflected in his name; his father Gabriel-Matthieu Marconis is said to have been an Italian officer in Napoleon’s army in Egypt, while the patronym “de Nègre” is current in South/West France. This was the region where Marconis Sr., together with a certain “Brother” Honis of Cairo, founded, on April 30, 1815 in Montauban, a Grand Egyptian Lodge called “Les Disciples de Memphis”. Since this rite was duplicated by that of Misraïm, of which Gabriel-Matthieu was Grand Master, the lodge was “put to sleep” in the following year and not reawakened until 1838 by his son. Jacques-Étienne soon became its “Grand Hierophant”, a new grade (the 96th!) created on this occasion. He was an excellent connoisseur of masonic rituals, and worked a synthesis of Misraïm with the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, explaining and justifying it in two works: *L’Hiérophante, développements complets des mystères maçonniques* (The hierophant, complete expositions of the masonic mysteries, 1839) and *Le Sanctuaire de Memphis ou Hermès* (The sanctuary of Memphis or Hermes, 1849). Especially in the latter, he underlined the concordances with ancient masonic initiations such as the Primitive Rite of Narbonne, and clarified and simplified the rituals of Misraïm, a rite established in Paris in 1814-1815 by the Bédarride

brothers. Marconis had belonged in 1833 to a Parisian Misraïm lodge, where a conflict with other members caused his expulsion. Nevertheless, in 1836 a certain “Monsieur de Nègre” was able to open a new lodge in Lyon, “La Bienveillance”, armed with an authentic patent from the Parisian authorities, until the discovery in 1838 of his true identity and of the irregularity of the rituals he was practicing caused a fresh expulsion. It was in these contentious circumstances that he founded his own organization in the same year, and carried on an endless polemic with the Bédarrides.

Mistrust of public authorities and of the forms of Freemasonry recognized by them accentuated the secret character of both Memphis and Misraïm, justifying their insistence on mythical origins as proof of their legitimacy. The Grand Hierophant appropriated the legend that the Templars had inherited their knowledge from the “Brothers of the Orient”, an order founded by the Egyptian sage Ormuz, converted to Christianity by St. Mark, and whose transmission had taken place in secret [→ Neo-Templar Traditions]. All the knowledge of masonry was placed under the auspices of esotericism, a veritable mystery within the mysteries: “That is why the masonic science, the science par excellence, is both esoteric and exoteric, the esotericism being its thought, the exotericism its power . . .” (*Le Sanctuaire . . .*, 17). Marconis nevertheless succeeded in integrating the Grand Orient of France in 1862, at the moment when Marshall Magnan (1791-1865) was attempting to unify all the masonic obediences under his authority; he had taken advantage of the refusal of Misraïm. Memphis had a genuinely international influence. From 1859, French emigrant lodges functioned for a time in London; and Marconis made a voyage in 1856-1857 to New York, where he created a Sovereign Grand Council of which Harry J. Seymour became Grand Master in 1861. In 1863-1864, another one was established in Alexandria, Egypt. It was through the intermediacy of Seymour that the English occultist mason John Yarker re-established a Sovereign Grand Sanctuary in 1872.

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JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Marcus the Magician, 2nd century

Marcus the Magician was a Gnostic [→ Gnosticism] and a disciple of → Valentinus who claimed a right to correct his teacher. The dates of his birth and death are unknown, but his floruit can conceivably be located between 160 and 180 AD. Probably he was a native of Asia Minor, an ancient centre of diffusion of Christianity, in particular of Gnostic Christianity, and he presumably carried out his propaganda missions in the Rhone valley. A presence of Marcosians – his disciples – is attested in the diocese of Lyons and later in Rome itself (Hippolytus). The treatise *Adversus haereses*, I, 13-16, by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, is the direct or indirect source of all the subsequent heresiological information available in the Greek, Latin and Syriac languages, with the partial exception of the ritual of *apolytrosis* (redemption, in this case a second baptism) described by Hippolytus of Rome (*Refutatio*, VI, 41; the reports contained in the Arabic *World History* by Agapius, the Melchite bishop of Hierapolis in Syria, are unreliable and of little consequence).

Marcus placed special emphasis on the ritual aspects of (mainly oriental) Valentinianism. The basic sacrament with which he used to initiate his followers – women, in particular, who flocked to him captivated by his charismatic personality – consisted in the manipulation of wine in cups, by practices that according to Irenaeus (*AH*, I, 13, 2) were nothing but a parody of the Catholic ritual of the Eucharist. White wine changed to red – fertilized by the blood of the superior female aeon Grace (Charis) – or it increased prodigiously in volume thanks to the skills that Marcus – the accomplished alchemist and conjuror – displayed in the presence of an astonished female audience. The second step consisted in inculcating the charisma of prophecy (glossolia?) in his faithful to allow them to partake of the gifts of Grace, the aeon with which he enjoyed a privileged relationship ('Take Grace from me through me . . . open your mouth and prophesy'). Irenaeus reports that Marcus, to achieve his objective, availed himself of the magical powers of a helping daemon (*paredros*). It is therefore presumable, from an ethnopsychiatric point of

view, that he was endowed with an uncommon hypnotic talent. The "seed of light", which was also a vehicle for the prophetic spirit (cf. Delphic Pythia, insuflated by Apollo), entered the over-excited aspiring prophetess – who yearned to "restore unity" – through her most natural orifice by a procedure that might be seen as similar to the well-known rituals of left-hand tantrism. Marcus (who identified himself with the *syzygos* angel of the Valentinian Pleroma) and his Gnostic and pneumatic female followers materialized the symbol and drew extreme consequences (a sort of realized eschatology) from the Valentinian sacrament of the bridal chamber (*nymphon*) – a sacrament which gave a (merely symbolical!) foretaste of the copulation (realized in the Pleroma) between the spiritual and his/her angel – thereby restoring the androgynous unity broken by Sophia's sin. In addition, to have success also with those women who were less easily influenced by his psychic powers, Marcus made use of erotic potions based on well-known recipes taken from the magic papyri. According to heresiologists, of course, the use of magic arts – particularly aphrodisiac potions – was to be imputed to the Gnostic groups that were most suspected of libertine attitudes, i.e. the Simonians (Irenaeus, *AH*, I, 23. 4), the Basilideans (I, 24, 5) and the → Carpocratians (I, 25. 3). Irenaeus testifies, and there is no reason to disbelieve him, that in his own diocese a large number of women had fallen prey to the seductive arguments – religious and erotic – put forward by Marcosian missionaries. The special sacrament they received before dying – the so-called "redemption" (*apolytrosis*), a kind of second baptism or chrism or extreme unction – made them perfect and consequently free from the risks of the afterlife, i.e. the verdict pronounced by the supreme court presided over by the Demiurge (Achamoth's son) in the lower skies.

In Irenaeus' and Hippolytus' opinion, however, the most distinctive feature of the Marcosian sect was its speculation on letters and numbers (in terms of neopythagorean arithmology [→ Number Symbolism] and Graeco-Jewish gematria), reported as a sequence of visionary revelations attributed to various entities of the Pleroma. The first teaching that the Tetrad, in female shape, imparts to Marcus is a meditation on the letters that compose the names of the Father and other members of the Pleroma. The Tetrad's second speech consists in translating the body of the aeon Truth into the letters of the alphabet: two letters of the Greek alphabet, starting either from alpha or omega, are correlated with each of the limbs. The Tetrad's

third and longest speech is also the most elaborate: gematric interpretations of the names of Jesus, Christ and other personages of the Pleroma are interspersed with musicological, Christological and cosmological speculations. Only the female components of the Supreme Tetrad (Silence and Truth) show themselves; but since revelation is the work of the Tetrad as a whole, the male aeons (First Father and Intellect) must consequently be regarded as invisibly present. Marcus is the privileged recipient of a visionary revelation issued by a dyad that behaves in a paradoxical fashion, considering that Truth is always silent while Silence talks too much. Similar grammatological and gematric speculations, in theurgic terms, can be found in the treatise *Marsanes* (NHC X. 1), which characteristically presents itself in the form of an apocalypse attributed to Marsanes, a Gnostic prophet and visionary who must have been no stranger to the circles of Valentinus' Marcisian followers.

Rather like his gnostic ancestor → Simon Magus and the contemporary pagan Alexander of Abonutheichos, Marcus is represented as a powerful, charismatic figure, perhaps even a charlatan, with his magic tricks, visionary claims, entrepreneurial usage of syncretism and skill in attracting well-educated religious women. In conclusion, Marcus' heritage can be envisaged immediately in medieval Merkabah literature (esp. *Sh'ur Qomah*: angels as letters that reproduce the structure of the human body) and in perspective in contemporary pseudo-scientific cults founded by personages like Ron Hubbard (→ Scientology), Bhagwan Rajneesh, or Claude Vorilhon called Raël.

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*Lit.*: G. Casadio, "La visione in Marco il Mago e nella gnosi di tipo sethiano", *Augustinianum* 29 (1989), 123-146 ♦ A. Cosentino, "Il sistema battesimale valentiniano", in: G. Sfameni Gasparro (ed.), *Destino e salvezza: tra culti pagani e gnosi cristiana*, Cosenza: L. Giordano, 1998, 131-148 ♦ M. Idel, "Il mondo degli angeli in forma umana", *Rassegna mensile d'Israël* (1997), 1-76 ♦ A.H.B. Logan, "Magi and Visionaries in Gnosticism", in: J.W. Drijvers-J.W. Watt (eds), *Portraits of Spiritual Authority*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, 27-44 ♦

A. Wypustek, "Un aspect ignoré des persecutions des chrétiens dans l'antiquité: Les accusations de magie erotique imputées aux chrétiens aux II et III siècles", *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 42 (1999), 50-71.

GIOVANNI CASADIO

## Martinism: First Period

### 1. THE DOCTRINE 2. THE CULT 3. THE LEGACY

The title of → Papius's work *Martinésisme, Willermosisme, Martinisme et Franc-Maçonnerie* (Martinesism, Willermozism, Martinism, and Freemasonry, 1899) encompasses fairly exactly what modern historiography understands under the name of "Martinism", at least for the period of its origins and early developments (18th-beginning of the 19th century). The expression "Second Martinism" applies to the history of the Martinist Order as "re-awakened", as Papius put it – though in fact he founded it – in 1887 [→ Martinism: Second Period]. The term "Martinism" refers in part to → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, but much more to → Martines de Pasqually, the master in matters of thought, action, prayer, and ritual of all those who constitute the type of esotericism thus named. This company, apparently heterogeneous but basically united, is sufficiently profiled to distinguish it from the other currents of thought of the 18th century, even when those currents take on initiatic forms (namely masonic ones), and to arouse contrasting reactions, now as then.

#### 1. THE DOCTRINE

In the beginning was Martines de Pasqually, and above all his doctrine: this is what defines "Martinism". This doctrine is a gnosis, i.e., a "science" in the esoteric sense of the word, on which all Martines' disciples (Saint-Martin, → Willermoz, → de Maistre, among others) are agreed. According to this sense, science is not predicated on the acquisition of learning or knowledge (though that aspect is far from absent), but much more on the transformation of the inner being of the person who devotes himself to it. It is conceived as spiritually active and operative: a transformative science which applies less to objects than to the subject.

This doctrine is all-encompassing. It is a "hierohistory", a sacred History; a history of man and the universe in their mutual relationships and in their relationship to God; a history which is not merely descriptive but dynamic, made of actions and re-

actions (or “counter-actions” as Martines called them) on the part of both man and God. This metahistory is not restricted to reportage, to drawing up a *Natural Table of the Relationships between God, Man, and the Universe* – to cite the title of a well-known work of Saint-Martin – and of their evolution; it is all aimed at the modification of these relationships and, briefly, at their *restoration*. For these relationships have become degraded, and everything depends on re-establishing them in their original *integrity*. The history in question, typical of sacred histories, thus consists of acts of rebellion of man against God, and of God’s interventions for the punishment of man, followed by his reconciliation – his punishment being intended to achieve his reconciliation.

Martines’ doctrine, and the practice that goes with it, thus comprise: 1) a cosmology that is also a cosmogony, opening up onto a cosmosophy; 2) an anthropology that is an anthropogenesis and also an anthroposophy; 3) a theology that is a theosophy; 4) an angelology that is an “angeloduly”: a cult of, and with, the angels, hence a liturgy. All these are placed under the sign of Wisdom, or as Saint-Martin would later call it, Sophia.

At the origin alike of time and of the world there was the Fall, which Martines calls “prevarication” – a term commonly used in the French spiritual school of the classic age. It was a double event: a fall or prevarication first of the angels, then of man. But there was a history before history, a time before time. In that pre-historic, pre-temporal time, the Eternal (a term that underlines the Creator God’s sovereign exemption from all temporal determination) emanates “spirits” in the bosom of what Martines calls the “divine immensity”. Their number is infinite, and this “infinity” is not static but dynamic: ‘the multitude of the inhabitants of the divine immensity increases and will increase ceaselessly and infinitely, without ever reaching a limit’, since the divine fecundity is uninterrupted: God never ceases to create.

To be exact, the term “create” is inappropriate here, for Martines reserves it for the production of material and temporal forms, whereas for the divine productions on the spiritual plane he uses the words “emanate” and “emanation”. The distinction is important, for it leads one to envisage the “divine essence” under two different aspects. The term “essence” is used here following Martines’ best exegete, Robert Amadou, not in the philosophical sense and even less in the theological sense, but rather in the chemical or alchemical sense of “species” or of “active nature”. From this double point of view, this divine essence is “triple”

relative to creation, and “*quatriple*” relative to emanation, the “quatriple” being moreover primary in relation to the triple. A complex numerology and arithmosophy [→ Number Symbolism] derive from this, preserved by all Martines’ disciples. They are found, for example, in the degrees of the Régime Ecossais Rectifié as instituted by Jean-Baptiste Willermoz.

It is important to note that the terms “emanate” and “emanation” have nothing to do with “emanationism”, a form of pantheism found in several variants of → Gnosticism. The classic language to which Martines, for all his awkwardness and idiosyncrasy of expression, pays tribute, implies nothing of the sort. E.g. Furetière in his *Dictionnaire* of 1690 defines emanation as “dependance on a cause, on a superior power”, giving as an example: “The rational soul is an *emanation* of Divinity”.

Martines derives an important significance from this “emanation” in respect to the essence of the “spirits” that are thus perpetually emanated. They certainly do not *belong* to the divine essence, because they emanate from it; but still they *participate* in it, because, as Martines states, ‘they have in themselves a part of the divine domination’. The totality of these spirits constitute the “divine immensity”, which *is not God*. Thus, ‘the fullness of divinity, but not the Deity, [belongs] to the emanated spirits’ (Amadou). This similarity of essence, which *is not identity*, recurs in the Régime Ecossais Rectifié under the dynamically initiatic theme of the “image and resemblance”, Martinian by origin but accommodated to Christianity, in whose tradition it also figures. Martines also calls the “divine immensity” the “divine court”. Like every court, it is hierarchical: the spirits are differentiated in “classes” or “circles” which are ‘distinguished from one another by their virtues, their powers, and their names . . . according to their faculties of divine spiritual operations’. Moreover, although Martines states that ‘this famous divine immensity [is] incomprehensible not only to mortals but to every emanated spirit; this knowledge belongs to the Creator alone’, he himself has given us his observations about the angelic hierarchies such as he has contemplated them.

According to a summary by Willermoz, these circles are four in number: ‘10. Circle of superior denary spirits: the agents and special ministers of the universal denary power of the Father, creator of all things. 8. Circle of major octonary spirits: immediate agents and ministers of the Word of God, which is the being of double quaternary power. 7. Circle of inferior septenary spirits: direct

agents and ministers of the divine operative Action of divine quaternary power and operating the triple creative essence. 3. Circle of minor ternary spirits: agents of manifestation of the divine quatriple essence’.

Thus the hierarchy of spirits is a hierarchy of functions, which refer to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. All the same, Martines explicitly rejects the hypostatic distinction (i.e., that of the Three Hypostases or divine Persons) on which Christian theology has rested since the dogmatic formulations of the Council of Nicaea (325). In technical terms, he was what is called a “Unitarian”, or to be absolutely strict, a “modalist”. For him, the distinction between the “three Persons of God” is more symbolic than real, referring to ‘three divine faculties which are Thought, Will, and Action, or in another sense . . . the Intention, the Word, and the Operation’. These three faculties are typified by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and also symbolized by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For this reason, these three personages are constantly present in the prayers and degrees of the Order of → Elus Coëns.

This trinitarian theology, which was not so much heterodox as archaistic, or as Amadou says, “pre-Nicaean”, was hardly acceptable to Martines’ disciples, all Christians in faith and practice. The paradox was that Martines insisted, as a condition of admission into his Order, on membership of a church, namely the Roman Catholic Church, of which he himself really did not accept one of the two fundamental dogmas, that of the Holy Trinity. The other one was that of the double nature of Christ, which on the contrary he fully embraced. Thus one very soon sees his disciples returning, for example in the *Leçons de Lyon* (Lessons of Lyon, 1774-1776), to a dogmatically orthodox trinitarian theology.

The divine immensity, although in dynamic expansion, was perfect, hence sufficient unto itself. But then a first accident occurred, with the prevarication of perverse spirits who, wanting to equal the Eternal, strove to become first causes as He was, instead of the secondary causes that they were. They wanted to “operate” like Him, i.e., to emanate. Needless to say, this failed, unleashing a cosmic catastrophe in the literal sense of the word. In fact, the Eternal created, or rather ordered the minor spirits who had remained loyal to create, the temporal material universe (this being no longer a matter of *emanation* but rather of *creation*), so as to ‘contain and subject the evil spirits in a state of privation’ in it; in other words, to imprison the “prevaricating spirits” therein. Here we find the

recurrence of an idea common to various forms of → Gnosticism, namely that matter is connoted as evil. Yet there is an important difference, in that for Martines matter is not evil in itself; on the contrary, it is intended to contain evil and prevent it from contaminating everything. Moreover, since evil has not a positive but a negative definition, and consequently has no constituent reality, matter also has none. Matter, just like evil, is destined to disappear and disintegrate. Martines keeps repeating that matter is null and void, that it is only appearance, and that there is no true reality but spiritual reality. This is another legacy of Martinesian doctrine to the Régime Écossais Rectifié, found particularly in the Master’s degree.

Matter is created by the operations of the minor ternary spirits. This is done by setting in motion a whole series of ternaries or triads that have issued by simultaneous or successive combinations from the first ternary, that of the “spirituous essences” (“spirituous” in the chemical or alchemical sense, not to be confused with “spiritual”). These essences themselves have ‘stemmed from the divine imagination’, whereas *spiritual* beings, on the contrary – and the difference is essential – pre-exist in God (see above; there is a similarity here with Origen’s idea of the pre-existence of souls in God). These primitive “spirituous essences”, called Salt, Sulfur, and Mercury as in the alchemical treatises, produce through their mixtures the three elements of Water, Fire, and Earth, then, also by mixture, the three corporeal principles known as “aquatic”, “igneous”, and “solid”. Consequently Martines assigns symbolically a “triangular form” to the earth, explaining that it ‘has only three noteworthy horizons: north, south, and west’. The lodges of the Régime Écossais Rectifié were also heirs to this.

The cosmic catastrophe did not fail to have its effect on the “divine court”. The minor ternary spirits were obliged to leave it, having been delegated by the Eternal first to the creation, then to the conservation (see below) of the temporal material universe. And while at the summit of the angelic hierarchy ‘the divine denary spirits have never left the place they occupy in the divine immensity’, other spirits in their turn were ‘subjected to the temporal, although they were not at all subject to time’ by their own nature: they too are, in effect, delegated outside this immensity in order to ‘perform . . . temporal spiritual actions’, or in other words to ‘act and operate in the supercelestial, the celestial, and the terrestrial’ – the three divisions of the created universe (see below) – because they are ‘destined to accomplish the temporal manifestation of the Creator’s justice and glory’. This delegation



outside the divine immensity is called by Martines “emancipation”, which should in no way be confused with “emanation”. There was, is, and will always be emanation in eternity, or at least in sempiternity. But emancipation has only occurred within time, and that only for reasons of circumstance. Thus all the ternary spirits have been emancipated in order to attend to the material things of the universe, as well as a ‘sufficient number’ of septenary spirits, to ‘perform temporal spiritual actions in the supercelestial’; and some of them, to this end, have been ‘endowed with a denary power’, because the denary spirits have remained in their place.

A gap would thus seem to have occurred in the divine immensity, caused by the departure of the ternary spirits; but such a gap is intrinsically impossible, since ‘there cannot be any void next to the Creator or in his immensity’. Thus this place was occupied by a new production, a particularly eminent and glorious one: the “minor quaternary spiritual” – quaternary in the image of the Divinity –, namely Man. He was an emanation directly from the Eternal Himself, just as had been the case with the other spiritual beings; there was no cooperation, as was the case with the temporal creation entrusted to the ternary spirits. Man was then the object of a double emancipation. First, the totality of spiritual beings constituting his class was emancipated in the “supercelestial”. Then a portion of this class was emancipated in the “celestial”, this portion being known by the name of “Adam” or “Réau”: a name that is both collective and individual, but more consistently applied to a unique being containing potentially within itself all of its spiritual posterity. We are told that this name is a pseudonym referring to the nature or state of him who bears it. For ‘this man-God, in his state of glory, had his proper name directly attached to his spiritual being’. Now, in all traditions name is power. The power of Adam, like his glory, was pre-eminent. ‘He received [from the Creator] the august name of man-God of the universal earth’, he was ‘the chosen god of the earth’. Man, the last to arrive of the emanated spiritual beings, was set above them all for two reasons, which were really only one. First, ‘to contain in privation’ the perverse spirits, to ‘molest’ them, ‘to manifest the divine glory and justice against the prevaricating spirits’; then in order to reconcile them. Their chastisement was not for the sake of punishment, but for repentance. Here Martines, again like Origen, holds firmly to the idea of apocatastasis.

‘Created in the image and resemblance of the Omnipotent Being’ and placed ‘in the sight of

the Divinity’, Adam ‘in his first state of glory was the veritable rival of the Creator. As pure spirit, he openly read the divine thoughts and operations’. The Creator caused him to perform three operations through which he received the Law, then the Precept, and finally the Commandment. After that, the Eternal left him to his free will. Thereupon Adam “prevaricated”, in imitation and at the instigation of the perverse spirits. The latter whispered that he could operate ‘the power of divine creation’ inherent in himself. And he in turn found himself, like them, captive in the material prison of which he should have been the jailer. He who should have worked to “reconcile” them would henceforth be at pains to reconcile *himself*. This possibility had been offered him thanks to the help which which God, in his tireless mercy, supplied him: namely, by ascetic and religious practice. Adam’s place, left vacant in the center of the supercelestial, awaits the moment when he will return to be enthroned there: ‘it is in this holy place that Adam’s minor spiritual posterity must needs be reintegrated’.

There remains the fate reserved for another category of spirits, the “octonary” ones. This class, being the second in the angelic hierarchy, does not remain in the divine immensity, nor is it emancipated in a specific region. These spirits are assigned to ‘go and operate [the Creator’s] justice and glory in the different immensities without distinction’. They are as it were the *missi dominici* (divine envoys) charged to bring help to the deserving: ‘the doubly strong spirit is with you when you deserve it, and it departs from you when you make yourself unworthy of its doubly powerful action’. Their task is to work for reconciliation: in fact, this class of spirits ‘will have to work its powerful faculties eternally in the different classes wherein are placed the first and the last reconciled ones’.

It is necessary to take a closer look at the “three immensities” mentioned above. The indispensable traveler’s guide – the ‘road-map of the Elus Coëns’ (Ama-dou) – is the famous *figure universelle*, otherwise called *tableau universel*, of which several representations exist (Amadou having published in 1974, 1995, and 1999 the only ones conforming with the sources). Martines calls it a ‘universal figure, in which the whole of the spiritual nature – major, minor, and inferior – operates’. Equally valuable is the descriptive commentary provided by Willermoz (published by Amadou as Preface to the *Leçons de Lyon*, 43-45). A summary follows.

The “*divine immensity*” is ‘this place where the most perfect spiritual beings cannot penetrate, if it is not indeed God himself’ – and, we might add, the spiritual beings which he permanently

emanates. Next comes the “*universal creation*” – the cosmos –, composed of the three immensities, or worlds, already mentioned: supercelestial, celestial, and terrestrial. The *supercelestial*, which abuts and touches the divine immensity, although it is “limited” whereas the latter is infinite, is nevertheless ‘the semblance of it’: ‘the same faculties of spiritual power are found in both immensities’. Four circles are also found therein, just as in the divine immensity. At the top: 1) that of the *superior denary spirits* (in fact, as we have seen, ‘major spirits . . . clothed with a denary power’); its center is ‘the type and figure of the Divinity whence all emanation and all creation proceeds’. On either side are: 2) the circle of *superior septenary spirits*, guardians of the divine Law; and 3) the circle of *inferior ternary spirits*, guardians of the divine spiritual Precept. Lastly and lowest: 4) the circle of *minor quaternary spirits*, where Man was in the first place emancipated ‘in the sight of God’ and where he will finally be reintegrated when his reconciliation is perfect. Then come the two worlds or immensities that compose the universal creation in the strict sense, which will be discussed below. This creation is material and temporal, that is, constituted of matter and subject to time, matter and time having begun simultaneously after the first prevarication, that of the perverse spirits.

The *universal creation* is circumscribed by a mysterious reality called ‘*the central fire axis*’, which is ‘simultaneously the envelope, the support, and the center of creation’. It is ‘the principle of material life’: it animates and vivifies it. We recall that matter is the result of the combination of three “spirituous essences”: ‘in the same way as the three spirituous essences are the principle of all corporisation, likewise the central fire axis is that of all animation’ (Amadou). It is the principle of individuation and life in all created bodies: ‘without [it] no being can have life and movement’. The reason is that it is ‘the organ of the inferior spirits who inhabit it and who operate in it on the principle of apparent corporeal matter’. These inferior spirits (see above) are the ternary spirits, emancipated for this purpose, who provide for every corporeal being a ‘vehicle of central fire’ (this notion has its counterpart in the theme of the “temple”: ‘all is temple’, writes Martines). Thus ‘no body can exist without having within itself a vehicle of the central fire, on which the inhabitants of this axis operate, as having proceeded from themselves’. It is clearly specified that these vehicles ‘are by no means spiritual beings. They are beings of passive life, destined simply for the preservation of forms. The produc-

tions or emanations of the spirits of the axis can only be temporal and momentary’.

As for the universal creation, thus enveloped by the vivifying central fire axis, it is composed of two immensities or worlds: celestial and terrestrial. The *celestial* – symbolized by Mount Sinai – is in turn susceptible to two divisions, into which the “seven heavens” are distributed: one ternary, and the other septenary. The *ternary* division is composed of: 1) the “rational circle” which is ‘adherent to the super-celestial’ via the central fire axis, under the sign of Saturn; 2) the “visual circle”, under the sign of the Sun; 3) the “sensible circle”, under the conjoined signs of Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, and the Moon. The *septenary* division, which is superimposed on the preceding one, is the ‘seven planetary circles which contain the seven principal agents of universal nature’, which ‘operate for the conservation and the sustenance of this universe’. These latter are also charged with suppressing the ‘evil spiritual beings’, imprisoned in the material universe (as explained above), who ‘combat the faculties of good influential actions which the good planetary spirits are charged to spread around the whole world’. Tossed from one to the other, the minor-man has to choose. One can see here how the principles of traditional → astrology are incorporated in an active angelology, which one might call an “angelomachy” – a battle of good and evil angels –, itself ordered in the eschatological perspective of a sacred History.

Finally, just as the four supercelestial circles reflect the ordering of the divine immensity, so the four major celestial circles (those of Saturn, the Sun, Mercury, and Mars) reflect the same ordering. The three other circles, those of Jupiter, Venus, and the Moon, or rather the spirits attached to them, serve to “substantiate” the ‘general terrestrial body’, also called ‘*general creation*’. From the latter ‘emanate all the nutriments needed to substantiate the particular’, or ‘*particular creation*’, namely ‘all the inhabitants of the celestial and terrestrial bodies’. Both the general and the particular creation are “triangular” or “ternary” in constitution (see above). It is the same for the “body of matter” of present-day man, which is far different from his primitive “body of glory”.

Nonetheless – and this is fundamental – Martines tells us insistently ‘not to consider these three circles [sensible, visual, and rational] only materially’. For in reality, the ascent represented by their traversal symbolizes the successive stages of *reconciliation* of minor-men, at the end of which the latter will be *reintegrated* in the quaternary

supercelestial circle which is waiting for them to repossess it: 'it is in this holy place that Adam's minor spiritual posterity is to be reintegrated'. The "great matter" is in fact the 'Reintegration of beings in their primitive properties, virtues, and divine spiritual powers' – to quote the title of the *Traité*. This reintegration requires the disintegration of man's body of matter, which is his prison, so as to allow his original body of glory to reappear in all its splendor. This great matter, which is that of 'the mercy of the divine Father towards his creature', is the universal reconciliation. It is realized progressively, each time a little more completely, at each stage of the sacred History already described. This occurs by means of the operations that the 'universal Reconciler . . . , the Christ' – who according to Martines is himself present and active during this whole History under the guise of "types" – had to perform among men for the manifestation of the divine glory, for the salvation of men, and for the molestation of demons. These three operations are: first, that which was done for the reconciliation of Adam; the second, for the reconciliation of the human race, in the year of the world 4000' – (i.e., with Noah at the time of the Flood, according to traditional chronology); 'and the third, which shall appear at the end of time and which repeats the first reconciliation of Adam, by reconciling his whole posterity with the Creator'.

## 2. THE CULT

This doctrine, which forms a whole and includes everything from God down to man and the material universe, does not exist primarily for theory, but is meant to be put into practice. For every minor-man, it is a question of entering into possession of all the arguments of the case in order to effect this reconciliation and reintegration, first for his own sake but also for the sake of universal creation. This reintegration, as the etymology shows, will be the return to the original integrity, the primal unity. This is the goal that Martines set for his Order, first called "Ordre des Élus Coëns de Josué", then "Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Élus Coëns de l'Univers". It appeared to be a masonic and chivalric Order, but this was merely for practical purposes, so as to offer to seekers unsatisfied by other Systems a real spiritual goal, capable of obtaining (as Willermoz wrote when this goal was revealed to him) 'that inner peace of the soul, the most precious possession of humanity, relatively to his being and his principle'. However, the attempt to implant the Order in the field of French masonry

was, as we know, a failure, because the foundation was so different from the appearances.

Martines expounded the final goal of the Order thus, replying in 1769 to Willermoz's questionings: 'The Order contains a true science, it is founded on truth pure and simple, it is impossible for sophistry to reign or for charlatantry to preside there. On the contrary, error lasts but a moment, it flees and truth remains'. And further on: 'I swear to you that you will not have to ask me much more to be convinced that the Order contains for the minor of this lowly world things that are most necessary and essential for his advantage; so the Order seeks *the man of desire*, and when he lets himself be led, he is content' (Van Rijnberk, vol. II, 120). Earlier, in 1768, Martines had declared to Willermoz: 'I am only a feeble instrument which God wishes to use, unworthy as I am, to recall men, my fellows, to their first masonic state, *which spiritually means man or soul*, so as to make them see truly that they are really man-God, being created in the image and semblance of this all-powerful Being' (*ibid.* II 89). This was far from the 'amiable sociability' enjoyed by many of the masonic lodges of the time!

The two terms in the title of the Order should be noted. "Élu" (chosen, elect) is only superficially reminiscent of the innumerable degrees of "élus" invented at the time. The term refers in fact to the spiritual phenomenon of "divine election", through which the Eternal chooses and sets apart a man, or a people, in view of a mission which He assigns to it. This choice is sovereign, gratuitous, and often incomprehensible to men, but God is not accountable to anyone. Just as in sacred History there is a "chosen people", so there is a long line of chosen ones: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, → Moses, the prophets (including Elijah and John the Baptist), right up to the apostle Paul. It is easy to see why they all figure in the ceremonies of the Order. Martines in fact claimed for the latter an origin as ancient as the universe, thus far older than masonry: 'Remember, Lord, this Society that Thou hast formed and possessed *from the beginning*', says a ritual invocation. The other essential term is "coën", which means "priest". But a priest of what religion? Certainly the word is Hebrew, but a Coën is not a *Cohen*, the Coëns are not *Cobanim*, the priests of the Mosaic religion formerly celebrated in the Temple of Jerusalem, and which disappeared at the same time as the Temple, to be replaced by the ceremonies of the synagogues. If one believes the Gospel – and the Coëns did so – this disappearance was final. The cult celebrated by the Élus Coëns is quite different. It is the 'primitive cult

confided by the Eternal to Adam and perpetuated by the minor elect until our day in the *Ordre des Coëns*, which is identified with the *Ordre des Élus de l'Éternel* [Order of the Elect of the Eternal] or to the High and Holy Order of which Jean-Baptiste Willermoz speaks in the *Instructions* which have nothing *secret* but their name' (Laurent Morlet). As is taught in the 99th *Leçon de Lyon*: "The true ceremonial cult was taught to Adam after his fall by the reconciling Angel; it was piously performed by his son Abel in his presence, re-established by Enoch who taught new disciples, then forgotten by the whole earth and restored by Noah and his children; again renovated by Moses, David, Solomon, and Zorobabel, and brought to final perfection by Christ in the midst of his twelve Apostles at the Last Supper'. As one can see, Solomon and Zorobabel, figures well known to masons, are here inserted from a radically different perspective.

In truth, 'the Order is sacerdotal' (Amadou). Its *raison d'être* is to perform this cult which was originally entrusted to man, and which has not been taken from him; it is just that its procedures, especially the ceremonial ones, have changed. This cult is "quatriple" or quadruple, consisting of: 1) *sanctification*, corresponding to the divine Thought or to the *Father*; 2) *reconciliation*, corresponding to the divine Will or to the *Word*; 3) *purification*, corresponding to the divine Action or to the *Holy Spirit*; 4) *expiation*, corresponding to the divine Operation or to *Man*. However, 'Man in his first state only had to perform a cult of sanctification and praise. He was the agent through which the spirits whom he was supposed to retrieve' – the perverse, prevaricating spirits – 'were to perform the three others. Having fallen, he had to perform them for himself'.

Since the Order was sacerdotal, the receptions into the various degrees are not "initiations", like those found in the masonic systems, but rather "ordinations". As Serge Caillet explains it, each of these ordinations impresses on him who receives it 'a spiritual seal, the characteristic mark of divine election, which makes the Coën a priest of this original cult'. And it is the spirits who confer on the recipient the reality of his ordination, each according to its class: denary, octonary, or septenary, corresponding (cf. above) to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Through them, the Coën is conjoined, or one might say put in communion, with the Chosen One of the Eternal, whether patriarch or prophet, who presides over the class into which he is admitted. It is from this Chosen One 'that he receives the name, the spiritual influx, the seal of his own election' (L. Morlet). Each of the elections successively received within the Order is in fact

placed under the active and efficacious patronage of one of these Chosen Ones of the Eternal: Adam, Abraham, Moses, Zorababel, Jesus Christ. This Chosen One, with whom the Élu Coën is conjoined, will henceforth cooperate "sympathetically" with him in the ceremonial operations, as long as the latter fulfill the exacting conditions that are required; but this cooperation will always take place through the mediation or intercession of the spirits – angels – who are the vehicles of the divine influxes or energies.

This is the source of the "passes", so famous but so often misunderstood. These "luminous glyphs", said to appear during the ritual, were by no means the object of the Coëns' ceremonies, contrarily to what has often been thought. The aim of these ceremonies is to pierce through the phenomenal plane to reach and transform the being of man, so as to set in motion his reconciliation, and at the same time that of the universe. In this perspective, the "passes" are believed to be the sensible marks of the divine favor, confirming that the procedure is true, that "the man of desire" is desiring aright. Thus they are not phenomena that one can produce at will or on demand. They are favors given by grace, as Martines reminded Willermoz in the letter cited above, from 1768: 'Do not be impatient, bide your time. This sort of thing is not at the disposal of man alone, but rather at that of the Most High and Omnipotent Eternal' (Van Rijnberk, op. cit. 89).

The active and beneficent divine reality which thus epiphanizes itself was mysteriously known by Martines, and after him by his disciples, as *La Chose* (the Thing). What is the Thing? Much has been written about it, and much erroneously. According to Amadou, 'the Thing is not the person of Jesus Christ . . . , the Thing is not Jesus Christ, it is the *presence of Jesus Christ*, as the *Shekinah* was the presence of God in the Holy of Holies'. What has scarcely been noticed, as pointed out by Laurent Morlet, is that the Hebrew word for "thing" is DaBaR, which primarily signifies "word", secondarily "thing", and thirdly "cause". It appears from this that the Thing is nothing less than the Creator Word, that Word which the Coëns' Instructions also qualified as Mediator: in short, Christ Jesus. It was certainly not for nothing that the Order was originally called the *Ordre des Elus Coëns de Josué*, for in Hebrew Joshua and Jesus are the same name. Thus the Coën is 'a partisan of the true Wisdom', as Martines proclaims, asserting unequivocally that this same Wisdom has 'dictated . . . the knowledge [that he] professes'. This Wisdom, which Saint-Martin would celebrate without any diver-

gence from his master's thought under its traditional name of *Sophia*, thus presides over the Order and all its works. That is why these are, as has been said, theosophy, anthroposophy, cosmosophy, chronosophy, and sophianic liturgy. Moreover, in the Christian tradition to which Martines' disciples belonged who gathered on the occasion of the *Leçons de Lyon*, Wisdom typifies the Creator Word.

The "passes" have another purpose: they are signals, even signatures, of the spirits who "activate" in cooperation with the celebrant. The latter is provided with a collection of 2400 diagrams and as many names of angels (in Hebrew) – brought to light by Robert Amadou and published by him under the appropriate title of *Angéliques* – diagrams permitting the identification of the angels who are at work. In short, the Coën ceremonial is a liturgy that is truly co-celebrated by angels and men.

This liturgy should in no way be identified or even compared with a liturgy of the ecclesiastical type. What is believed to be operative in it is the primitive cosmic priesthood with which Adam, the first Man, was endowed. The Coën is devoted to the "primitive cult" aiming at the reconciliation of man and of the creation – of man with God, man with the creation, and the creation with God. And in order to do this, the Réau-Croix, identified both with the first, fallen Adam, and with Christ, the new Adam, universal Redeemer and Repairer, recapitulates in and through himself the stage of fall and "privation". The Coën cult thus does not rival that of the Church, does not substitute for it or surpass it: it presupposes it and harmonizes with it. This is the reason why Martines obliged the Coëns to practice the ceremonies and receive the sacraments of the Church.

Moreover, just as the Church's priests, beside the ceremonies of their cult, must also devote themselves to personal prayer, both spontaneous and regulated, that is, in rhythm dictated by rule (the offices of the monastic or canonical Hours, reading the Breviary and the Holy Scriptures), likewise these priests of a particular kind who are the Coëns are obliged every six hours to say prayers modeled (with adaptations) on those same offices, not to mention various other offices to be celebrated following the calendar (days of the week, phases of the moon, seasons . . .). In addition, they must follow rules of diet (fasting) and practice a real moral and mental asceticism. In sum, the Coën is a priest and the Coën rule of life is an asceticism. And the Coën doctrine, which can truly be called a theosophy and an anthroposophy, is ordered to this end: to make

the Coën, in his accomplished state which is that of Réau-Croix, fully capable of working for the universal reconciliation.

### 3. THE LEGACY

The destinies of the Ordre des Elus Coëns, apparently fairly unfruitful, are described elsewhere [→ Pasqually; → Elus Coëns]. The Order contained few members, and suffered a kind of official ostracism. Nonetheless, it continued to arouse curiosity, as on the occasion of the Convent des Philalèthes (1785 and 1787). Also significant is the interest, lasting if sporadic, on the part of Bacon de la Chevalerie, a highly placed Mason in the Grand Orient de France, whom Martines had named as his universal Substitute. Willermoz, who by common consent was the real preserver of the Order, was assailed by indiscreet requests which he could not always reject.

Willermoz in fact managed to preserve for a time the legacy of the master to whom he remained faithful until his death. He preserved it in a way that the latter would surely have disapproved of. Convinced that this System, which was more crypto-masonic than masonic, was doomed as such, he concealed it within the hybrid System, both masonic and chivalric, that he himself invented, namely the Régime Ecossais Rectifié. We must make clear that the Ordre des Elus Coëns de l'Univers is not part of the Régime Ecossais Rectifié; but it is nevertheless at the heart of the latter, and even *is* its "heart" (Amadou). The Régime teaches the same doctrine, the same "science of man", but without practicing any liturgical ceremony, and does not even speak of it except in covert terms to the Grands Profès (the highest degree of the R.E.R.). 'The Régime Ecossais Rectifié lives only by the doctrine of reintegration and for reintegration, like the Ordre des Elus Coëns. Between the two of them, the *modus operandi* differs' (Amadou). In the Régime, only Masons and Knights appear. If there are Coëns present, it is not in that capacity, but incognito.

This creation of Willermoz was of capital importance for Martinism. It was in the bosom of the Régime Ecossais Rectifié that its survival was assured, at least in its doctrinal form, after the disintegration of the Ordre Coën. All the "instructions" officially dispensed, from that of Apprentice up to Grand Profès, taught Martines' doctrine step by step, in an increasingly overt fashion. Willermoz declared it explicitly in a letter of 1812: 'The initiation of the Grands Profès instructs the tested mason, the man of desire, about the origin and formation of the physical universe, its destination and



the occasional cause of its creation at a certain moment and at no other; the emanation and emanicipation of man in a glorious form, and his sublime destination at the center of created things; his prevarication, his fall, the benefit and absolute necessity of the Incarnation of the Word itself for the Redemption, etc.’

Even so, the most outstanding disciples of Martines, namely → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and Jean-Jacques Du Roy d’Hauterive, who organized the *Leçons de Lyon* with Willermoz himself from 1774 to 1776, did not hold to his System for very long. Hauterive withdrew to his little Coën group in Toulouse, and “de-masonized” the ceremonies to simplify them and reduce them to the purest spiritual → alchemy. Saint-Martin, for his part, chose a purely internal path, known since Papus under the odd name of the “cardiac way”, otherwise the “way of the heart”, where prayer takes precedence over all ceremonial forms as a method of spiritual realization. Already while he was with Martines, Saint-Martin had a certain suspicion of the rituals, hence his well-known question: ‘Master, does it really take all these forms to pray to the good God?’ The reply is less well known, and gives food for thought: ‘One should be content with what one has’. Later, in *Ecce Homo*, Saint-Martin would severely denounce the ‘outer manifestations or movements’, declaring: ‘The works that result from them are, so to speak, the shadows of works, works of the surface, and consequently not sufficiently enlivening to link with the plan of God’s great work, which is to recall us to our inner center where God is to be found, instead of dividing ourselves into centers that are external, fragile, obscure, or corrupt, where God is not to be found’. For all that, Saint-Martin remained convinced all his life, if not of the utility of Martines’ practices then at least of the truth of his doctrine, which he continued to deepen even after his discovery from 1788 onwards of → Jacob Boehme, who opened new horizons to him. He then set himself to “marry” his two masters, as he put it. He made himself the efficient and constant propagator of this doctrine, performing this task as co-author, in the function of secretary, of the *Traité sur la Réintégration*, as well as in the many documents, rituals, and instructions needed for the life of the Order; also by putting out many of the *Leçons de Lyon*; by publishing (under the pseudonym of *Philosophe Inconnu* [Unknown Philosopher]) the books *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (On Errors and Truth, 1775) and *Tableau naturel des rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l’homme et l’univers* (Natural Table of the Relationships that Exist between God, Man, and

the Universe, 1782), which are quasi-official expositions of the doctrine. Even afterwards, this continued to inspire all his works right up to his death: *L’Homme de désir* (The Man of Desire, 1790), *Ecce Homo* (Behold the Man, 1792), *Le Nouvel Homme* (The New Man, 1792), and *Le Ministère de l’Homme-Esprit* (The Ministry of the Spirit-Man, 1802). His thought is fundamentally the reflection of Martines’: a faithful reflection, although enriched by his own personality as well as by a theosophy in which the role of theurgy is much reduced, even absent, or else totally interiorized and spiritualized. Without a doubt, his literary work has been an efficient vehicle for the diffusion of the doctrine. It is principally thanks to Saint-Martin’s interpretations that Martinian concepts found a ready response among the French Romantic writers: Chateaubriand (on whom, however, they made little impression), much more → Ballanche, and equally Balzac (who “married” Saint-Martin to → Swedenborg), Lamennais, Sainte-Beuve, Hugo, and → Nerval; and also in German writers: → Schelling, Zacharias Werner, and the Schlegel brother. On the sidelines we might also list Sébastien Mercier, author in the *Tableaux de Paris* (Pictures of Paris, 1783) of the first report on the “Martinists”; also Madame de Staël with her *De l’Allemagne* (On Germany, 1813); and lastly, though more subservient to literary fashion, → Cazotte, Charles Nodier, George Sand, and Alexandre Dumas. → Joseph de Maistre occupies a place to himself: for all that he was a Roman Catholic and a papist, he presented in his *Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (Saint Petersburg Evenings, 1821), under the guise of a controversy for and against → “illuminism”, an excellent defence and illustration of Martinian ideas. He never abjured them, to the point (as Jean-Marc Vivenza has recently shown, op. cit., 64-67) of regularly performing the “operations” of the Order at the propitious calendrical moments, even in the heat of the Revolution. So it was through Willermoz and Saint-Martin, or their joint influence, that the doctrine of reintegration and all that goes with it has been perpetuated up to the present day. Thus, for example, in Russia at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century the noun “Martinism” and the adjective “Martinist” carried several meanings, serving to designate: 1) the Régime Ecossais Rectifié, introduced into that country after the Convent of Wilhelmsbad (1782); 2) the theosophy of Martines; 3) the theosophy of Saint-Martin (some of his works having been published in Russian thanks to → Novikov and → Lopukhin); 4) in a vague but current manner, all these three senses at once.

It should be added that all forms of Martinism then suffered a long eclipse. The works of Saint-Martin lacked a readership until they were brought back to light at the end of the 19th century by → Papus; the *Traité de la réintégration* (Treatise on Reintegration), which up to then had only circulated in manuscript form, was first published only in 1899; it was not until 1926 that the *Instructions secrètes aux Profès* (Secret Instructions for the Profès) were rediscovered and published by Paul Vuillaud; and in 1970, the *Instructions secrètes aux Grands Profès* (Secret Instructions for the Grands Profès) by Antoine Faivre. But since then, the four components of Papus's title cited at the beginning, "Martinesism, Willermozism, Martinism, and Freemasonry", have met with increasing success, which goes to show that to study this question does not imply a merely antiquarian and documentary interest, and that the doctrine of reintegration offers to a number of men of our time a "spiritual goal" as much appreciated by them as it was by Willermoz.

*Traité de la réintégration des êtres créés dans leurs primitives propriétés, vertus et puissances spirituelles divines* (Robert Amadou, ed.), Paris: Robert Dumas, 1974 (including the text of the first edition, Paris: Chacornac, 1899) ♦ *Traité sur la réintégration des êtres dans leur première propriété, vertu et puissance spirituelle divine* (Robert Amadou, ed.), Le Tremblay: Diffusion rosicrucienne, 1993 & 1995 ♦ Martines de Pasqually, *La Magie des Elus Coëns, Franc-Maçonnerie: Explication Secrète du Catéchisme d'Apprenti, Compagnon et Maître Coëns*, Institut Eléazar, n.d. ♦ Martines de Pasqually, *La Magie des Elus Coëns, Théurgie: Instruction secrète*, Paris: Cariscript, 1988 ♦ Pierre Fournié, *Ce que nous avons été, ce que nous sommes et ce que nous deviendrons*, London: A. Dulau & Co., 1801; Paris: Gutenberg Reprint, 1983 ♦ Pierre Fournié(?), *Nouvelle Instruction Coën* (R. Amadou, ed.), Institut Eléazar n.d. ♦ *Les Leçons de Lyon aux Elus Coëns, un cours d'illumination au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle par Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Jean-Jacques Du Roy d'Hauterive, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz* (Robert Amadou, ed.), Paris: Dervy, 1999 ♦ Willermoz, "Instruction secrète pour la réception des Profès" in: Paul Vuillaud, *Joseph de Maistre franc-maçon*, Paris: Nourry, 1926, 231-247 ♦ Willermoz, "Dialogue après la réception d'un Frère Grand Profès", idem, 248-251 ♦ Willermoz, "Instruction secrète de Grand Profès" in: René Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie occultiste et templière aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Antoine Faivre, ed.), Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1970, 1021-1049 ♦ Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité, ou les Hommes rappelés au Principe universel de la Science*, Edinburgh, Paris, 1775; reprint in *Œuvres majeures*, vol. 1 (Robert Amadou, ed.), Hildesheim/New York: Georg Olms, 1975 ♦ idem, *Tableau Naturel des Rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'Homme et l'Univers*, Edinburgh, Paris,

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## Martinism: second period

→ Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin created neither an Order nor a society. Whether or not an “apostolic succession”, originating from him, reached into the late 19th century, remains a matter of some debate. In the 1880s, two well-known figures in the Paris esoteric milieu, namely magnetist Henri Delaage (1825-1882) and librarian Augustin Chaboseau (1868-1946), claimed independently to have received such a succession, through an unbroken lineage of “Unknown Superiors” (Supérieurs Inconnus) dating back to Saint-Martin himself. No evidence confirming (or definitely disproving) their claims has ever surfaced.

Both Delaage and Chaboseau were friends of → Papus (Gérard Encausse, 1865-1916), a key character in the development of contemporary Martinism. Papus claimed to have been initiated by Delaage in 1882, and exchanged initiations with Chaboseau in 1888. That same year, Papus created his journal, *L'Initiation*, which was published until 1914. In 1891, Papus and Chaboseau founded a Martinist Order, which included some of the most well-known figures of the Paris esoteric underground, such as → Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897) and → Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918). The Order was probably the most successful among the many founded or led by Papus. It became a matter of course for everybody interested in esotericism to become initiated into the Martinist Order; even → René Guénon (1886-1951) was one of them, before breaking with Papus and leaving the Order in 1909. As was usual then, most Martinists were, at the same time, members of one or other Rosicrucian, neo-Templar, or neo-Gnostic body. Most, but by no means all, were Freemasons [→ Freemasonry], and members of the “Egyptian” Rites of Memphis and Misraim in particular.

The success of Papus’ Martinism was also noteworthy for its international character. In 1891, a branch was created in the United States, and by 1900 the Order had been implanted in most Latin American countries, thanks, among others, to Viscount Albert-Raymond Costet de Mascheville (1872-1943), a French pupil of Papus who emigrated firstly to Argentina and later to Brazil. In 1949 his son, Viscount Léo Costet de Mascheville (1901-1970), founded under the name Sri Sevananda an independent “Mystical Association of the West” (Association Mystique de l’Occident: AMO), devoted to a “mystical Martinism” and to the ideas of the Lyon healer → Anthelme Nizier Philippe, “Maître Philippe” (1849-1905), one of Papus’s closest associates. In the United

States the Martinist Order split in 1902 after a bitter debate on whether or not non-Freemasons (and women) could receive the Martinist initiation. Whilst Papus’ answer was in the affirmative, some American Martinists preferred to grant solely to Freemasons membership into the Order, and it was the latter who later established a separate “Rectified American Martinist Order”.

Whether non-Freemasons and women should be initiated is just one of the questions plaguing modern Martinism, as well as being the cause of several schisms throughout its history. Another contentious question is: in the event of an obvious contrast emerging between the respective teachings of → Martinez de Pasqually and Saint-Martin, should the former or the latter prevail? The “Saint-Martinist” wing would often regard the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ’s divinity as a central Martinist tenet (a stand not regarded as incompatible with a certain anticlericalism), whilst the “Martinezist” faction would, in certain cases, also initiate non-Christians. “Saint-Martinism” is more concerned with Saint-Martin’s “way of the heart”, whilst Martinezism focuses on occult techniques.

A third source of conflict concerns the relationship between Martinism and the Gnostic Churches. In 1911, Papus signed a “Treaty” with Jean Bricaud (1882-1934), thereby making the latter’s → Gnostic Church the “official church” of Martinism. Not everybody agreed, however, and the seed of further schism was sown. Papus thought it was entirely possible for the same Order to include both a Saint-Martinist and a Martinezist wing. During the last years of his life, Papus even considered the possibility of incorporating a third wing into the Order, which he called “Willermozist” (after the name of → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz), and which took the shape of a “Martinist Grand Chapter” open only to Freemasons.

It was Papus’ own charismatic personality, however, that kept the different wings together, and when he died in 1916, mid-way through World War I, schism immediately followed. Most Martinists recognized Charles Détré (“Téder”, 1850-1918) as Papus’ successor, but he died only two years after Papus. Notwithstanding the opposition of Téder’s widow, a majority of French Martinists, in their turn, acknowledged Jean Bricaud as his successor. Bricaud was at the same time the patriarch of the → Gnostic Church allied with Martinism under the 1911 “Treaty”. Both Téder and Bricaud tended to neglect the Saint-Martinist wing in favour of the other two, Martinezist and Willermozist. Bricaud claimed a (fairly doubtful) apostolic succession from Martinez de Pasqually

himself, and also tried to exclude non-Freemasons and women from Martinist initiation.

The Saint-Martinist reaction was led by Victor Blanchard (1878-1953) who, on January 3, 1921, founded the independent Martinist and Synarchist Order. The term “Synarchist” was a reference to the Marquis → Joseph-Alexandre Saint-Yves d’Alveydre (1842-1910), recognized by Papus as his “intellectual master” (his “mystical master” being Maître Philippe). Blanchard was a member of several esoteric orders and brotherhoods, and was also a Gnostic bishop, having been consecrated by Bricaud in 1920. Shortly after this consecration, however, Bricaud and Blanchard quarrelled, and the latter went on to promote, in addition to his Martinist and Synarchist Order, both Rosicrucian and Gnostic organizations to rival those led by Bricaud.

There was some degree of interaction between → Rosicrucianism and Martinism during the 1920s and 1930s, however. In fact, Martinist divisions also reflected different attitudes towards the Rosicrucian order AMORC, and the activities of its leader → Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883-1939). In 1934, Lewis promoted the creation of the FUDOSI (Universal Federation of Orders and Societies of Initiation), which was regarded by his critics as an attempt to impose AMORC hegemony in Europe. Blanchard was one of the founding members of the FUDOSI, although he was later expelled from it (in 1939) following Rosicrucian quarrels with Lewis (but was readmitted in 1946, shortly before the FUDOSI ceased to exist in 1951). While Papus’ old companion, Chaboseau, sided with Blanchard (and would later replace him as a FUDOSI member), the “Lyon group” (so named after it moved the Martinist Order headquarters to Lyon), led by Bricaud, did not support Lewis and eventually joined the rival international FUDOSI federation, a creation of Lewis’ American arch-rival Reuben Swinburne Clymer (1878-1966).

In 1937, Blanchard granted Lewis “full authority” to confer Martinist initiations in the United States. After he broke with FUDOSI, Blanchard also granted some sort of Martinist succession to several independent Martinist organizations in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Quarrels about the FUDOSI also led to a (temporary) division between Blanchard and Chaboseau, the latter going on to establish yet another Martinist body, known as the “Traditional Martinist Order” and co-founded by Victor-Émile Michelet (1861-1938). Notwithstanding further schisms, this Order continued to operate within the AMORC.

Today, any would-be member of the Traditional

Martinist Order (O.M.T.) is expected to be an AMORC member in good standing and with at least a First Temple Degree initiation. The O.M.T. has three degrees, in fact, and its curriculum includes seventy-two monographs to be studied over a period of six years. Initiations are conferred in an O.M.T. temple, normally located at the premises of an AMORC facility. After the first six years, the initiate may join the Circle of Unknown Superiors (the higher echelon of the Order). The hierarchy of the Traditional Martinist Order largely coincides with AMORC’s.

Blanchard and the AMORC notwithstanding, it was the Lyon branch of Bricaud which attracted the largest number of French Martinists in the 1930s and 1940s. Bricaud died in 1934; his successor, Constant Chevillon (1880-1944), renamed the organization “Martinist Martinezist Order” in order to emphasize the Martinez connection (as distinct from the more purely Saint-Martinist group led by Blanchard). Chevillon was assassinated in 1944 by French Nazi collaborators, and was succeeded by Henri-Charles Dupont (1877-1960), who in turn emphasized the Masonic connection, in line with the Willermoz tradition. A more Martinezist group, less interested in Willermoz and more interested in theurgical “operations”, had in the meantime been established in Paris, in 1942, by Robert Ambelain (1907-1997), under the name of “Martinist Order of the Élus Cohens”. In 1952, the Saint-Martinist wing generated, in turn, a new organization when Papus’ son, Philippe Encausse (1906-1984), revived a “Martinist Order” in 1952, keeping as loyal as possible to his father’s style, emphasizing Saint-Martin’s mysticism and open to both non-Freemasons and women. On the other hand, he invited Ambelain to contribute to his journal *L’Initiation* (published from 1953 until the present time, a revival of Papus’ journal, now edited by Yves-Fred Boisset and Michel Léger), and thus proving that co-operative efforts between the different wings were not impossible.

Ostensibly, in the first decades after World War II, the three wings were clearly separated (Martinezist under Ambelain, Saint-Martinist under Encausse, Willermozist under Dupont) but, in reality, things were more complicated than that. Dupont, for example, claimed to have been initiated into the highest Martinezist degree by Chevillon himself, and he in turn initiated Encausse shortly before his death in 1960. In 1962, Encausse’s and Ambelain’s orders merged into a single organization, which included an external circle (Saint-Martinist) and an internal one (Martinezist).



It was not easy, however, to keep within the same fold those who were interested in Martinez' theurgy and those who preferred to follow the Christian mysticism of Maître Philippe (Encausse's own godfather). In retrospect, a split was inevitable, and in 1967 Ambelain's Martinezist wing went its separate way. After Philippe Encausse's death in 1984, the Martinist Order continued its activities (his successor, since 1979 until the present time, is Emilio Lorenzo), while Ambelain went on to pursue other interests and his followers split into a dozen different Martinezist groups.

It may be that the largest number of Martinists in a single country has been, and still is, concentrated in Italy. The concept of a "Neapolitan Martinism" has been used by several historians to designate an esoteric milieu in the tradition of → Raimondo di Sangro di San Severo (1710-1771) and → Cagliostro (1743?-1795), the key figure in the late 19th century being Giustiniano Lebano (1832-1909). Since → Giuliano Kremmerz (pseudonym used by Ciro Formisano, 1861-1930) was a pupil of Lebano, the Kremmerz movement (including the Brotherhood of Myriam and other organizations) has sometimes been seen as an offshoot of Martinism. Interactions between the two wings are frequent in Italy, and extend far beyond the small and recently established "Kremmerzian Martinist Order", led by psychiatrist Mario Betti.

There is, in fact, no historical evidence of a continuum between the presence of followers of Martinez de Pasqually in the esoteric milieu of Naples in the first decades of the 19th century, and of Martinists in 20th century Italy. Papus' Martinist Order soon expanded into Italy, and counted among its initiates such well-known figures as neo-Pagan esotericist → Arturo Reghini (1876-1946) as well as poet laureate Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863-1938). Reghini, however, later regarded both Papus and Saint-Martin as too Christian, and became a vocal critic of Martinism in general. After Papus' death, French schisms spread to Italy: the Martinezist wing loyal to Bricaud and his Gnostic Church kept the name "Martinist Order", while a Saint-Martinist wing reorganized itself under the name "Supreme Council of the Martinist Order".

The Fascist regime persecuted both groups for their supposed connection to the then banned Italian Freemasonry, and it was not until 1951 that an "Italian Council of the Martinist Order" (including both a Martinezist and a Saint-Martinist wing) was able to reorganize itself, albeit for only three years. The real success of Martinism in Italy came in the 1960s, however, thanks to the efforts of

two key figures in the world of Italian esoteric orders, namely Gastone Ventura (1906-1981) and Francesco Brunelli (1927-1982). These two leaders represent, respectively, the Saint-Martinist and the Martinezist wing. Brunelli was also instrumental in maintaining a relationship between Martinism and an Italian Gnostic Church in which he served as a bishop, while Ventura did his best to keep his branch 'independent from any church, including the Gnostic one'.

As was the case in France, the two branches made efforts to merge in 1962 and again in 1982, although the resulting united orders proved to be short-lived. Not only did the Ventura (Saint-Martinist) and the Brunelli (Martinezist) branches go their separate ways, but after the two leaders died in the early 1980s, each group was plagued by disputes about their succession, and eventually broke up into several different independent branches. The largest organizations are currently the "Martinist Order" (led by Sebastiano Caracciolo) in the Ventura tradition, and the "Ancient and Traditional Martinist Order" (OMAT) in the Brunelli tradition, although at least half a dozen other branches can lay claim to a national following in present-day Italy. It is as true in Italy as it was in France, that the division between a Martinezist and a Saint-Martinist wing is only indicative of a general trend and is far from clear-cut. Ventura was interested in theurgy, and several members of the Brunelli branch wrote about Saint-Martin.

It is true, however, that Brunelli's interest in ritual → magic led him to promote closer co-operation between his Martinist Order and several branches of Kremmerz' Brotherhood of Myriam. Brunelli's association with Luigi Petriccione (1928-1995), who was both a Martinist and a Kremmerzian, contributed to the development, in Brunelli's branch, of a number of detailed, confidential books of instructions on "internal" → alchemy and sexual magic, which, in turn, caused even greater divisions between his form of Martinism and that of the more Saint-Martinist wings. Brunelli was a great ritualist, quite apart from his interest in sexual magic; his (Martinezist) rituals for consecrating water, salt, ashes and fire, for blessing ritual dresses and frankincense, and for evoking elementals and nature spirits, are widely used in international Martinist circles and beyond, even today.

AMORC's Traditional Martinist Order is also quite active in Italy, with some two hundred members. In addition to France and Italy, the largest Martinist groups are found in other French-speaking countries (Belgium and Africa), in the Caribbean region (Barbados, Bahamas), and in



Latin America. A Martinism independent of the Traditional Martinist Order and AMORC has existed in the United States almost from its start, although its constituency has remained quite small. A large majority of English-speaking Martinists in general are members of the Traditional Martinist Order, a membership they regard as ancillary to their AMORC membership.

*Lit.*: Robert Ambelain, *Le Martinisme: Histoire et doctrine*, Paris: Ni Claus, 1946 [with great caution] ♦ Philippe Encausse, *Science occulte ou 25 années d'occultisme occidental: Papus, sa vie, son œuvre*, Paris: OCIA, 1949 ♦ Gastone Ventura, *Tutti gli uomini del Martinismo*, Rome: Atanòr, 1978 ♦ Francesco Brunelli, *Il Martinismo e l'Ordine Martinista*, Perugia: Volumnia, 1980 ♦ Massimo Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago: I nuovi movimenti magici dallo spiritismo al satanismo*, Milan: SugarCo, 1990 ♦ Marie-Sophie André & Christophe Beaufile, *Papus – Biographie: La belle époque de l'occultisme*, Paris: Berg International, 1995.

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

**Mathers, Samuel Liddell “MacGregor”,**  
\* 8.I.1854 Hackney (East London),  
† 20.II.1918 Paris

Together with → William Wynn Westcott, Mathers played a fundamental role in the history of English occultism as the co-founder of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and as one of the leading intellectual forces behind the development of its teachings and ritual system. Little is known about his early life. He probably received some classical education at Bedford Grammar School, but the first definite date on record (after his date of birth) is his initiation into Craft → Freemasonry in 1877. He was then living in Bournemouth with his widowed mother, working as a clerk, and would remain there until 1885, when he moved to London. Around that time he started to add the name “MacGregor” (from a traditional Scottish clan) to his own, and to use the title “Comte de Glenstrae”. This was connected to his lifelong passion for Celtic lore, but it is unlikely that his claims to an aristocratic lineage had any concrete ground. In 1882 he joined the Societas Rosicruciana In Anglia (S.R.I.A.), a group composed entirely of Master masons and devoted to the study of Western esoteric traditions. In that period Mathers made the acquaintance of W.W. Westcott, also a recent member of the S.R.I.A., who was evidently impressed by his enthusiasm for occult matters. Westcott decided to help him financially while he was engaged in

producing an English edition of some parts of the *Zohar*, using → Knorr von Rosenroth’s Latin version as his main source. This was published in 1887 as *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, and was to remain the most important and influential publication Mathers ever produced. During this early period in London he also made the acquaintance of → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and → Anna Kingsford, attending and lecturing at meetings of the → Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies]. Around 1887 he was invited by Westcott to collaborate in the writing of rituals and teachings for an occult Order on the basis of a cipher manuscript, very probably composed by the occultist and polymath Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie (1833-1886), that Westcott seems to have obtained after Mackenzie’s death. This led to the eventful foundation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, of which Mathers was to be a leader, together with Westcott and the head of the S.R.I.A. William Robert Woodman (1828-1891). His mottoes (i.e. initiatic aliases) in the Order were Deo Duce Comite Ferro (from Latin: “With God as leader, and the sword as companion”), and S’Rioghail Mo Dhream (from Gaelic: “Royal is my tribe”). In 1890 he married the sister of the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), Mina (later Moina) Bergson (1865-1928), who also joined the Order.

It is evident today that it was from Westcott that the idea of the Golden Dawn originated, and that he contributed at least as much as Mathers to the elaboration of its system of teachings. But when an Inner Order (the Ordo Rosae Rubrae et Aureae Crucis) was added to the Outer one (the Golden Dawn *stricto sensu*), it was Mathers more than anyone else who came to produce its rituals and the bulk of the new teachings. As time went by the Order met with considerable success, and Mathers felt less and less inclined to share his authority with Westcott. In 1892 Mathers and Moina moved to Paris, opening there a new Temple of the Order (the Ahathoor Temple No. 7), and his distance from the headquarters in London probably made him feel more and more uneasy about Westcott’s role in the Order. It seems likely that Mathers eventually came to see him as a potentially dangerous rival in the leadership. A rather drastic solution to the problem produced itself when Westcott’s occult activities became known to his superiors in office. He was forced to resign from the Order, leaving Mathers as the only leader (Woodman having died in 1891). While in Paris, Mathers pursued his occult researches and especially studied manuscripts of old magical grimoires in the main libraries of

the French capital, some of which he was able to edit and publish. One such edition, *The Key of Solomon the King* (1889), based on manuscripts in the British Library, had already been published in the early days of the Golden Dawn, while he was still in London. The publication of another important text, edited from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, took place during his time in Paris: *The Book of the Secret Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage* (1898). Another edition of a medieval magical text, *The Grimoire of Armadel* (1980) was published only many years after his death. It must be noted that, if these texts never became, as such, part of the official teachings of the Golden Dawn, they nevertheless served as an important source of inspiration, and had a wide impact on contemporary occultism even beyond Golden Dawn circles. In Paris Mathers, who sometimes used to present himself as an Egyptologist, also attempted to "revive" a cult of Isis, not directly related to the Golden Dawn, and consisting of sacred representations (performed firstly at his house and later on stage in a theatre) which aroused some interest in the press and gave him some notoriety. In this period Mathers's passion for Celtic culture and traditions, which was shared by other members of the Order such as → W.B. Yeats and J.W. Brodie-Innes (1848-1923), became more and more prominent as well. Mathers seems also to have been involved in some anti-English political activities, which were not infrequent in the more extreme fringes of the so-called "Celtic Revival". This, together with his authoritative manners in dealing with the problems of the Order, provoked a feeling of uneasiness and dissatisfaction among the members of Second Order in London. The situation exploded in 1900. Mathers's decision to reveal that some of the claims about the origins of the Order were untrue and to use the young → Aleister Crowley, then a junior member of the Order, to restore his authority, caused things to precipitate. A revolt erupted in London and a majority of the Second Order members decided to impeach and expel Mathers from the Order. A schism ensued which may be considered the end of the "golden age" of the Order. While the "rebel" faction underwent another schism in 1903, the "loyalist" one continued its activities under the new name of Alpha et Omega, now having its headquarters in Paris. In addition to this dramatic turn of events, there was the unfortunate "Horos affair", in which Mathers was involved. Mathers was deceived by a couple of swindlers, Frank and Editha Jackson (posing as a Mr and Mrs Horos), who persuaded him to give them some documents of the Order. Later they used

these for their frauds, but they were eventually arrested. This made the name of the Order, whose very existence was supposed to be handled as discreetly as possible, appear in the yellow press in a very bad light. Consequently, a certain number of members felt obliged to resign.

Little is known about the Mathers' activities in Paris after 1900. Apart from ephemeral contributions to some English occultist journals, such as *Anubis* (1902-1903), Mathers did not publish much in the following years, although he continued directing his branch of the Order. In 1910 he went back to London to try to prevent, by taking legal action, the publication of the rituals of the Order undertaken by his former pupil and friend Aleister Crowley in the pages of the latter's periodical *The Equinox*. The legal action and the court hearings were highlighted in the press, but Mathers's attempt was unsuccessful and the rituals were eventually published. After his death in 1918, Moina took over the leadership of the Alpha et Omega.

Undoubtedly Mathers must be considered one of the key-figures in English occultism, even if he has published comparatively little. While most of his output consists of translations and editions of ancient texts more than original contributions, his written production did not end there. In fact, much of the teachings and of the rituals of the original Golden Dawn must be credited to him, together with Westcott. Were it only for this reason, his influence on the evolution of English occultism should be considered fundamental. Moreover, the impact of his partial version of Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*, although unsatisfactory by modern standards of scholarship, remained for a long time the only means for English readers to gain access to the texts of the *Zohar*, touching therefore a much larger readership than the mere occultist one. Finally, Mathers was instrumental, particularly by his rediscovery and publication of ancient grimoires, in the revaluation of magic as a legitimate spiritual pursuit, thus opening the way for later authors such as → Aleister Crowley, → Dion Fortune and Israel Regardie.

Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (ed.), *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, London: George Redway, 1887 ♦ idem (ed.), *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage, as Delivered by Abraham the Jew unto his Son Lamech, A.D. 1458*, London: J.M. Watkins, 1898 ♦ R.A. Gilbert (ed.), *The Sorcerer and His Apprentice: Unknown Hermetic Writings of S.L. MacGregor Mathers and J.W. Brodie-Innes*, Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1983 ♦ Francis King (ed.), *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn: Works by S.L.*

*MacGregor Mathers and Others*, Rochester: Destiny Books, 1997 ♦ Darcy Kuntz (ed.), *The Golden Dawn Legacy of MacGregor Mathers*, Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group, 1998.

*Lit.*: Ithell Colquhoun, *The Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn*, London: Neville Spearman, 1975 ♦ R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Scrapbook: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order*, York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1997 (Engl. ed.: *Revelations of the Golden Dawn*, London: Quantum, 1997) ♦ Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887-1923*, Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1985.

MARCO PASI

**Mead, George Robert Stowe,**  
\* 22.3.1863 Nuneaton, † 29.9.1933  
London

Theosophist and writer on → Gnosticism, → Hermetism, and Christian origins. Son of Robert Mead (Colonel in the Ordnance) and his wife Mary. Educated at Rochester Cathedral School and St. John's College, Cambridge (B.A., 1884; M.A., 1926), reading first Mathematics, then Classics. Upon graduating, Mead joined the → Theosophical Society. He studied Oriental philosophy in Oxford (but not as a University member) and visited the University of Clermont-Ferrand to research → spiritualism. His first employment was teaching in a public school. From May 1887 onwards he spent his vacations with → H.P. Blavatsky, and in 1889 gave up teaching to become her private secretary. This involved answering her correspondence, sub-editing the monthly magazine *Lucifer*, editing or re-editing Blavatsky's later writings (including many articles, *The Voice of the Silence*, and *The Key to Theosophy*), and, as General Secretary for Europe, helping in the development of the Society abroad.

Mead gave the address at Blavatsky's cremation on 10.5.1891. He continued to work for the Theosophical Society, editing *Lucifer* with → Annie Besant (1847-1933), then from 1898 editing it alone under the new title *The Theosophical Review*. From 1891-1897 he also edited *The Vâhan*, a monthly journal for Theosophical notes & queries. He was responsible for the revised edition of Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (2 vols., 1893), and for the publication of the formerly secret instructions of the Society's "Esoteric Section" as part of "Vol. III" of that work.

During the 1890s Mead established himself as

the Theosophical Society's principal scholar, first ranging over the field of comparative religion but increasingly concentrating on the Greco-Roman period. Mead's books, and his translations with their extensive commentaries, revealed to English readers a virtually unknown sector of religious history, in which Hermetism, the various Gnostic schools, → Neoplatonism, the mystery religions of Mithras and Orpheus, and early Christianity had shared a common metaphysical ground.

In 1899 Mead married Laura Mary Cooper († 1924), daughter of Henry Cooper, C.B., a prominent member of the Bengal Civil Service. Laura and her sister Isabel Cooper-Oakley (1854-1914) had long been helpers and companions of Mme. Blavatsky. The Meads had no children.

As General Secretary of the Theosophical Society, Mead had to deal with the furore in 1894-1895 caused by the claim of William Quan Judge (1851-1896) to have received letters from the "Mahatmas". This ended with the departure of most of the American members. A second scandal was caused by → C.W. Leadbeater, who had resigned from the Society when his pedophile activity became known. The Society's President, Annie Besant, was infatuated with Leadbeater's occult powers, and in 1909 reinstated him over the protests of Mead and others. Mead then resigned, along with over 700 English members. Mead's reactions to these events were marked, respectively, by skepticism regarding the hidden Masters who were believed by many to be controlling the Theosophical Society, and by an uncompromising moral code.

Mead and some ex-Theosophists now founded the Quest Society. Mead was the first president, the vice-president being → A.E. Waite. In 1920 the presidency was assumed by Sir William Barrett, F.R.S. (1844-1925), the physicist and psychical researcher. A journal was also founded, *The Quest* (1909-1930), which attracted a distinguished body of academic and literary contributors. These included the Tantric scholar Arthur Avalon (= Sir John Woodroffe, 1865-1936), Mgr. Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914), Martin Buber (1874-1965), A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), and the Islamicist Reynold A. Nicholson (1868-1945); also literary and artistic figures such as → Gustav Meyrink, Gustav Holst (1874-1934), and → W.B. Yeats. The death of Laura Mead in 1924 was a hard blow to Mead, but after sittings with Eileen Garrett (1893-1970) and other mediums, he was convinced that he had contacted his wife's spirit. The world-wide economic crisis caused the demise of *The Quest*, but at the time of his death Mead was active in a

new “Society for Promoting the Study of Religions”. His last public appearance was to give a lecture on the → Mandaeans at the Royal Asiatic Society, of which he had been elected a member.

Mead’s life’s work is best understood as springing from his commitment to the “Perennial Philosophy” [→ Tradition], of which he first became aware through Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. From the beginning he showed little interest in the glamor of the Mahatmas, the claims of occult powers, or the minutiae of karma and → reincarnation. He understood the term “Theosophy” in the sense that others would use “esotericism”: as the basis for the deepening and reconciliation of all religions. Mead’s substantial body of writings is a monument to his brave attempt to cross-fertilize the esoteric and the academic approaches. However, his early involvement with the Theosophists, and especially his approving references to Leadbeater’s occult “revelations” in *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?* stifled Mead’s potential academic reputation. A virtual conspiracy of silence covered his work, broken only by sneering references (e.g. in Walter Scott’s edition of the *Hermetica*). Mead’s insistence on scholarly standards coupled with a respect for the spiritual reality behind religious traditions found its fulfilment in the Eranos Conferences, which likewise sprang from Theosophical roots. Mead was invited to Eranos in 1931, and although he did not attend, Robert Eisler, a frequent contributor to *The Quest*, formed a link between the two movements.

*Simon Magus, An Essay*, London/Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society [hereafter TPS], 1892 ♦ *The World-Mystery: Four Comparative Studies in General Theosophy*, London/Benares: TPS, 1895 ♦ *The Upanishads: The Theosophy of the Vedas* (co-translator with J.C. Chatopadhyaya), 2 vols., London/Benares: TPS, 1896 ♦ *Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Miscellany, Being for the Most Part Extracts from the Books of the Saviour, to which are Added Excerpts from a Cognate Literature*, London/Benares: TPS, 1896 ♦ *Orpheus*, London/Benares: TPS, 1896 ♦ *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: Some Short Sketches Among the Gnostics Mainly of the First Two Centuries – A Contribution to the Study of Christian Origins Based on the Most Recently Recovered Materials*, London/Benares: TPS, 1900 ♦ *Apollonius of Tyana, the Philosopher-Reformer of the First Century A.D.: A Critical Study of the Only Existing Record of His Life with Some Account of the War of Opinion Concerning Him and an Introduction on the Religious Associations and Brotherhoods of the Times and the Possible Influence of Indian Thought on Greece*, London/Benares: TPS, 1901 ♦ *The Gospels and the Gospel: A Study in the Most Recent Results of the Lower and the Higher Criticism*, London/Benares: TPS, 1902 ♦ *Did Jesus Live*

*100 B.C.? An Enquiry into the Talmud Jesus Stories, the Toldoth Jeschu, and Some Curious Statements of Epiphanius – Being a Contribution to the Study of Christian Origins*, London/Benares: TPS, 1903 ♦ *Thrice-Greatest Hermes: Studies in Hellenistic Theosophy and Gnosis, Being a Translation of the Extant Sermons and Fragments of the Trismegistic Literature, with Prolegomena, Commentaries, and Notes*, 3 vols., London/Benares: TPS, 1906 ♦ *Echoes from the Gnosis*, 11 vols., London/Benares: TPS, 1908 ♦ *Some Mystical Adventures*, London: J.M. Watkins, 1910 ♦ *Quests Old and New*, London: G. Bell, 1913 ♦ *The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition: An Outline of what the Philosophers Thought and Christians Taught on the Subject*, London: J.M. Watkins, 1919 ♦ *The Gnostic John the Baptizer: Selections from the Mandaean John-Book, with Studies on John and Christian Origins, the otherwise-Unknown, Arresting Passages on John and Jesus in the Slavonic Version of Josephus, and other New Material*, London: John M. Watkins, 1924.

*Lit.*: Boris De Zirkoff (comp.), *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. XIII, Wheaton/Madras/London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1982 (biographical note on Mead, 393-397); vol. XIV, Wheaton/Madras/London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1985 (Mead’s contributions to *The Secret Doctrine*, xxv-xliv) ♦ R.A. Gilbert, “The Idol with Feet of Clay: G.R.S. Mead in the Theosophical Society”, read at the Temenos Conference, London, 1992, to be published in a collection of Mead’s essays, *Quest Books*, Wheaton, Ill. ♦ G.R.S. Mead, “The Quest – Old & New: A Retrospect and Prospect” (*The Quest Reprint Series 1*), London: John M. Watkins, 1926 ♦ Arthur H. Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963 ♦ James Webb (ed.), *A Quest Anthology*, New York: Avon Press, 1976.

JOSELYN GODWIN

## Menander, ca. 80

According to the Christian heresiologists, Menander was an early Gnostic [→ Gnosticism] magician and teacher, a pupil of → Simon Magus. He came from Cappadocia in Samaria and worked in Antioch, where he, ‘inspired by the demons, deceived many by his tricks of magic’. Justin Martyr (ca. 150), our first source about Menander, to whom we owe this information, adds that ‘he even convinced his followers that they would never die, and there are some alive today who, inspired by him, still believe this’ (*Apology*, I, 26). Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 180), *Adversus Haereses*, I, 23, 5, has more to say about his teachings. According to him, Menander called the highest and completely unknown divine principle “the First Power”, and claimed that he himself had been sent down by the



“Invisible Powers” for the salvation of mankind. Just like Simon Magus, he taught that the creation of the world was due to the angels, who had been brought forth by Ennoia, the First Thought. These angels were apparently seen as evil beings, responsible for the death of man. They could be overcome by making use of what Irenaeus calls Menander’s → “magic”, but which in fact seems to have been no more than a special kind of baptism. Menander taught that by being baptized “in him” (“in eum baptisma”) his followers immediately received the resurrection: ‘they can no longer die, are imperishable, eternally young and immortal’. Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, 5, explicitly says that according to Menander the human body was a creation of the angels, an idea which is found in several Gnostic systems. However, his remark might be no more than an inference from Irenaeus’ report. In *De anima*, 50, 2, Tertullian also refers to Menander’s doctrine of immortality by baptism, but here he is evidently dependent on Irenaeus, and the same holds for all later authors who speak about Menander.

The relationship between Menander and Simon Magus is difficult to assess, if it did exist at all. As a Samaritan, Simonian and more or less heterodox Jewish ideas about the structure of the divine world and the creation may have influenced him, but he seems to have developed a salvation doctrine of his own. He did not, like Simon, claim to be the incarnation of the Great Power himself but said that he was sent by the heavenly powers to bring salvation to the world. Though the Church Fathers considered him the second link in the chain of Gnostic teachers which began with Simon Magus, it may be doubted whether he should be called a Gnostic at all. He certainly was not a Christian Gnostic, for there is no indication that the person of Jesus played a role of any importance in his system. Most likely, he came from or was influenced by one of the baptismal movements in 1st-century Palestine. The idea of an instant eternal life is reminiscent of the Johannine view of the effect of belief in Christ: ‘the believer possesses eternal life’ (John 6:47), he ‘has already passed from death to life’ (5:24; cf. *int. al.* 10:28; 17:3). That Menander’s followers were baptized “in Menander” has a parallel in Paul’s frequent expression of baptism “in Christ” (e.g. Rom. 6:3). Baptism as immediately providing the resurrection status in this earthly life was also taught by the 2nd-century Encratites in Alexandria (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, III, 48, 1).

M. Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis* (PTS, 38), Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1994 ♦

A. Rousseau & L. Doutreleau (eds.), *Irénee de Lyons: Contre les Hérésies, Livre I* (SC 264), Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1979 (with French translation); Engl. trans. after the German trans. by W. Foerster in: idem (ed.), *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, Engl. trans. edited by R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, 32-33.

*Lit.*: A. le Boulluec, *La notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque. II<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985, 80-81 ♦ W. Foerster, “Die ‘ersten Gnostiker’ Simon und Menander”, in: U. Bianchi (ed.), *The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina, 13-18 April 1966. Texts and Discussions* (Studies in the History of Religions, 12), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967, 190-196 ♦ A. Hilgenfeld, *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums*, Leipzig: Fues, 1884, repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963, 187-190.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

**Mesmerism** → Animal Magnetism/  
Mesmerism

**Meyer, Gustav** → Meyrink, Gustav

**Meyer, Johann Friedrich von,**  
\* 12.9.1772 Frankfurt am Main,  
† 27.1.1849 Frankfurt am Main

Trained in law, von Meyer was successively a lawyer in his native city, counselor at the Court of Appeals in Mannheim, senator in 1816, president of the Court of Appeals and the Court of Assizes in 1827, ambassador of the free towns in the federal Diet and thrice mayor of Frankfurt, that is, head of the government of the free town. Keenly interested in literature, as early as 1794 he published a novel, *Kallias*, and wrote many literary essays that would appear in the *Teutscher Merkur*, Christoph Martin Wieland’s review. In 1803 he assumed the directorship of the Frankfurt theater and was responsible there for the first performances of plays by → Goethe and Schiller. In 1801, an inner illumination led to his conversion: the young aesthete discovered the immense richness of the Holy Scriptures. In 1806, translations of Cicero’s works still attested to his taste for classical Antiquity, but starting from this period his theosophical publications began to succeed one another at an accelerated rhythm: *Der Lichtbote* (The Herald of Light, 1806), *Hades* (1810), a contribution to → Jung-Stilling’s theory of spirits, *Bibeldeutungen* (1812), a work of biblical exegesis. From 1811 to 1818 he published reviews in the *Heidelbergische Jahrbücher*, notably one about *Dichtung und Wahrheit*



by Goethe, which met with great success. In 1819 he published an annotated translation of the Bible, intended to correct Luther's text. It went through several reprints. From 1818 to 1832, the eleven volumes of his *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit* (Papers for Higher Truth), which contain the essentials of his theosophical teaching, came out in the bookshops. His work *Inbegriff der christlichen Glaubenslehre* (Compendium of the Christian Creed, 1832) summarizes the whole. In 1830, he was the first to translate and publish in the German language the celebrated *Sepher Jezira*, considered the most ancient document of the Jewish Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. Von Meyer's text was reprinted in 1993. In 1833, his *Schlüssel zur Offenbarung St. Johannis* (Key to the Revelation of St. John) bears witness to his taste for apocalyptic and eschatological studies. The *Hesperiden* (1836) assembles the majority of his poems. Up until his death, he continued to contribute more than one hundred and forty articles to → Justinus Kerner's *Blätter aus Prevorst* (1831-1839) and *Magikon* (1840-1851), two reviews dedicated to paranormal phenomena. Besides a gigantic correspondence, he left many manuscripts dedicated to somnambulism, → alchemy, → astrology, Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → Freemasonry, physiognomy, → *Naturphilosophie*, theology, → Christian theosophy, etc. Two unpublished volumes on the "alchemical Kabbalah" (*Cabala magica et theosophica*) are the key items in this precious manuscript estate.

If von Meyer's surest reference always remains the Bible, he never restricts himself to the letter of the Scriptures. Considering the language of the Bible to be primarily a pictorial language (*Bildersprache*), a set of hieroglyphs that must be decrypted in order to apprehend its infinite richness, he integrates it into a vast symbolic system that is believed to give the Christian myth its full dimension. He develops in his work a typology that places high value on the Kabbalah, alchemy, arithmosophy [→ Number Symbolism], astrology and all the traditional esoteric "arts", in which he sees reflections, albeit often deformed, of the Revelation that God has never ceased communicating to humanity. At the same time one finds in him a *Naturphilosophie* that owes as much to → Paracelsus, → Agrippa and → Schelling as it does to Luther. As an alternative to the doctrine of *sola fides* – a little too monolithic and dogmatic to his taste – he erects his own theosophical temple, the two central columns of which are connected, in a subtle play of reciprocal interactions, by the intermediary force of the Spirit, as a "third term" deemed indis-

pensable to the return to unity. His system both takes into account and surpasses a dualism that presides, at the level of the macrocosm as well as of the microcosm, over all the manifestations of creation. Centered on the themes of fall and reintegration, his thought does not disregard any one of the three panels of the theosophical triptych: cosmogony, cosmology and eschatology are cemented by a profound christology, or rather, christosophy, that makes von Meyer one of the most representative Christian theosophers of the German 19th century.

*Hades: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie der Geisterkunde*, Frankfurt: Hermann, 1810 ♦ *Bibeldeutungen*, Frankfurt: Hermann, 1812 ♦ *Die Heilige Schrift in berichtiger Uebersetzung mit kurzen Anmerkungen*, Frankfurt: Hermann, 1819-1823 ♦ *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit*, in 12 issues, Frankfurt: Brönnner, then Frankfurt: Hermann; then Berlin: Oemigke, 1818-1832 (and see *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit: Auswahl in zwei Bänden*, Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1853) ♦ *Wahrnehmungen einer Seherin*, 2 vols., Hamburg: Perthes, 1827-1828 ♦ *Das Buch Jezira*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1830 ♦ *Schlüssel zur Offenbarung St. Johannis*, Karlsruhe: G. Braun, 1833.

*Lit.*: Jacques Fabry, *Le théosophe Johann Friedrich von Meyer et l'ésotérisme en Allemagne au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1989 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Philosophie de la Nature (Physique Sacrée et Théosophie, fin XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1996, 305-338.

JACQUES FABRY

**Meyrink, Gustav** (Gustav Meyer),  
\* 19.1.1868 Vienna, † 4.12.1932  
Starnberg (Bavaria)

Meyrink's reputation is rooted in literature as well as in the occult [→ occult / occultism]. Representatives of both camps have often been tempted to take from his work only what suited them best and claim the exclusive right to interpreting it according to their perspective. It will therefore be necessary here to critically reappraise some one-sided ideas about Meyrink.

The illegitimate son of a senior Minister of State in Württemberg, Baron Karl von Varnhübler, and an actress from Hamburg, Mary Meyer, the very circumstances of Meyrink's birth may have introduced him to his central theme of a quest for identity. His childhood and youth were spent in the various capital cities where his mother had a brilliant career: first Munich, then Hamburg and finally, from 1883 onwards, Prague. A little less than two years later she abandoned Meyrink there,

henceforth showing a total lack of concern for him. Meyrink completed his studies at secondary school, then attended classes at the Academy of Trade, before setting up the “Meyer & Morgenstern” Bank. Meanwhile he was leading a chaotic love life, marked by the eccentricities of a dandy lifestyle. It was during this period that what he called his “occult mania” started, characterized by the intermingling of a genuine spiritual quest and a taste for provocation. In this field he left no road untravelled, no stone unturned: → spiritualism, theosophy [→ Theosophical Society], → alchemy, and yoga are among the more prominent subjects he explored. In his personal pantheon we find William Crookes along with → Helena P. Blavatsky, Camille Flammarion and → Swedenborg, along with many others. His interests were not restricted to books, but led him to try out all kinds of spiritual techniques among his friends, in addition to establishing personal connections with some of the spiritual guides of his time – see, in this regard, his correspondence with Alois Mailänder, → Annie Besant, → Bô Yin Râ – and joining a large number of paramasonic [→ Freemasonry] and rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism] movements (including the Prague Theosophical Lodge, founded by K. Weinfurter). As the years went by, the banker G. Meyer, a regular customer at the *Continental* and the *Ungelt*, two cafés with a reputation as meeting-places for eccentric artists and authors, gained notoriety among the Prague bourgeoisie for his outrageous lifestyle. In 1901, a scandal on account of a duel with a garrison officer was used as pretext for a violent smear campaign against him, which even caused him to be thrown into prison for a few days and ruined his career.

At this precise moment he started writing: his first scathing texts he sent to the famous Munich satirical review *Simplicissimus*. Due to their provocative power and stylistic originality, these short stories – later published in one volume under the title *Des deutschen Spiessers Wunderhorn* (1913) – written in the genre of the *grotesque* and violently denouncing philistine and chauvinistic attitudes, were an immediate success. They attracted the attention of critics like Max Brod, Thomas Mann, Kurt Tucholsky and Hermann Hesse. In 1904 Meyrink was forced to leave Prague and decided to settle for some time in Vienna, where he was seen with Fritz Eckstein and his set. Here he became editor-in-chief of the review *Der liebe Augustin*. After that enterprise failed, in 1907, he went to Munich, where he settled permanently and at last led a serene family life (after the divorce of his first wife, Hedwig Aloisa Certl, in

1905 he married Philomena Bernt, which whom he had two children, Sibylle and Harro).

If his mania for secret rites had hitherto been, for the most part, a way to *épater le bourgeois*, Meyrink now deliberately turned towards esoteric doctrine; he saw in it a mode of addressing the basic questions of life, particularly relevant in the context of the impending world conflict. This new stage in his career drew him away from the *Simplicissimus* mindset, and he became known as an eccentric character in Munich literary circles, where he mixed with Franz Wedekind, Erich Mühsam and Heinrich Mann, among others. His first novel, *Der Golem* (1915), was highly successful and brought him a certain financial security; he used the opportunity to withdraw from society to his property near Lake Starnberg. Several other novels followed: *Das grüne Gesicht* (The Green Face, 1916) and *Walpurgisnacht* (1917). Meyrink's fame increased as the World War progressed, but the writer now stayed away from the agitation and fashions of contemporary literary life and assumed the role of an initiate, ‘light years away from what priggish pedants of all kinds understand art and literature to be’. He kept writing novels after the World War, notably *Der weisse Dominikaner* (The White Dominican, 1921) and *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster* (The Angel of the Western Window, 1927). On December the 4th, 1932, a few days after the death of his son, he serenely took leave of his relatives and retired to his bedroom. Sitting in front of the open window, stripped of the waist in spite of the cold, he died at dawn as he had predicted, with his eyes fixed on the rising sun.

Apart from a few autobiographical writings, which are not without a certain amount of self-derision (see e.g. *Fakine*, 1907; *Wie ich in Prag Gold machen wollte*, 1928; *Telephonverbindung mit dem Traumland*, 1928), Meyrink's occult ideas may be discerned most clearly below the surface in his fictional works, and must be seen as one of the foundations of his characteristic approach to fantasy literature. In all his great novels born from the cataclysmic experience of World War I, the fantastic element in the plot takes its starting point in a legend that becomes reality. Each one of the legends used by the author tells the story of an irruption of violence, an outbreak of destructive fury: the mad Golem who roams the narrow streets of the Prague ghetto every thirty-three years (*Der Golem*), an apocalyptic cataclysm punctuated by the recurring appearances of Ahasverus the wandering Jew (*Das grüne Gesicht*), or the bloody figure of the Hussite leader Jan Zizka returning again and again to his old haunts (*Walpurgisnacht*). As he retells the leg-

end, confirming its historicity, the author provides a mythical explanation for outbreaks of violence in history. This procedure provides comfort since it gives meaning to what might seem meaningless; but it is disconcerting as well, because the explanation tends to present the individual as merely the plaything of dark forces. This is where the occult theme comes in. On the symbolic level, the novelist introduces a specific doctrinal structure (with a kabbalistic tinge in *Der Golem*, yoga in *Das grüne Gesicht*, the Vedas in *Walpurgisnacht*). A wide range of symbols and forms of diction are used, but the message is always the same: the individual, while faced with the violence of history that may well rob him of his own identity, can still aspire to a spiritual awakening which will in the end allow him to save that identity. What we have here is a patient conquest of salvation through a form of self-knowledge, which is attained by means of an encounter with one's Double, and culminates in the magical union of ideal love (represented in the above-mentioned novels by the couples Pernath-Mirjam, Hauberrisser-Eva, and Flugbeil-Liesel respectively): the perfection of a *Mysterium conjunctionis*, reflecting a nostalgia for the androgynous life of the hermaphrodite, or Baphomet. This occult concept is the basic source of inspiration and provides the underlying structure for each journey of initiation in Meyrink's novels. While the hero meets various wise men during his adventurous journey (under the guise of archivists and scholars), ultimately his crowning glory or spiritual rebirth will be due to his own efforts. Accordingly it is just as inappropriate to try and reduce these novels to the doctrines they teach, as some commentators have done, as it is to dismiss these doctrines as obsolete artefacts. It is more correct to speak here of an occult discourse set in narrative form. This procedure was sometimes less successful from a literary point of view, as in *Der weisse Dominikaner*, with its taoist background; but it could also lead to the masterly, breathtaking construction of Meyrink's last novel, *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster* (1927). Thanks to its narrative structure based on a mirror effect – we read the autobiographical works of John Dee at the same time as the narrator, who receives them as a legacy –, a whole network of coincidences linking past and present, legend and reality, appears. This causes the protagonist, who is deciphering his grandfather's manuscript, to have trouble working out whether he is really himself or whether he is his grandfather, whether he is still alive or already dead, 'whether the present is nothing else but the sum of past instants, in a moment of

lucidity', and whether 'each person is not both his own ancestor and his own heir'.

It seems too simplistic to maintain (as many commentators have done) a strict division between Meyrink the satirist, who wrote for *Simplicissimus*, and Meyrink the esoteric novelist, the author of *Der Golem*, and then minimize the importance of the former. Those who decide, peremptorily, to establish this division often make it part of a value judgment and an ideological estimation. Yet the division appears unfounded in the light of the essay *An der Grenze des Jenseits* (On the Border of the Beyond, 1923), in which Meyrink reveals some of his deepest convictions. In his opinion the occult, regardless of the specific tradition from which it is approached, has always provided a way of thinking which is simultaneously subversive and liberating. The notion of "suprasensitivity", as he understands it, can only be defined by facing a double challenge: that of positivism, on the one hand, and of theological vision on the other (in all their various forms). Meyrink suggests that – on the condition that we understand this double challenge of positivism and theological vision on his part, and keep an open eye with respect to all the counterfeits and trickery of "pseudo-prophets" who hide their secret thirst for power behind a flood of words of wisdom – the occult entails a set of doctrines which alone make it possible to envision genuine personal development: 'the occult feeds on the instinctive desire for liberty which is at the heart of every man'.

*Gesammelte Werke in sechs Bänden*, Leipzig, 1917 (*Der Golem*, *Das grüne Gesicht*, *Walpurgisnacht*, *Des deutschen Spiessers Wunderhorn I. u.2. Teil*, *Fledermäuse*) ♦ *Der weisse Dominikaner*, Wien, 1921 ♦ *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster*, Leipzig, 1927 ♦ *Das Haus zur letzten Latern: Nachgelassenes und Verstreutes*, München: Langen-Müller, 1973.

*Lit.*: Helga Abret, *Gustav Meyrink conteur*, Bern/ Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1976 ♦ Yvonne Caroutch (ed.), *Cahier de l'Herne: Gustav Meyrink*, Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1976 ♦ Eduard Frank, *Gustav Meyrink, Werk und Wirkung*, Bidingen-Gettenbach: Avalun-Verlag, 1957 ♦ Manfred Lube, "Gustav Meyrink als Literat in Prag, Wien und München", in: Rein A. Zondergeld (ed.), *Phaïcon 3: Almanach der phantastischen Literatur*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978, 70-92 ♦ Jan Christoph Meister, *Hypostasierung: Die Logik mythischen Denkens im Werk Gustav Meyrinks nach 1907*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1987 ♦ Jean-Jacques Pollet, "L'image de Gustav Meyrink dans les lettres allemandes", *Etudes Germaniques* 1 (1977), 30-39 ♦ idem, "Gustav Meyrink: l'enjeu de l'occultisme", *Recherches Germaniques* 16 (1986), 100-118 ♦ idem,

“Le satiriste et l’ésotériste: Gustav Meyrink interprète la Grande Guerre”, in: J. Benay & G. Ravy (eds.), *Écritures et langages satiriques en Autriche*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1999, 263-276 ♦ Frans Smit, *Gustav Meyrink: Auf der Suche nach dem Übersinnlichen*, München/Wien: Langen Müller, 1988 ♦ Marianne Wünsch, “Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Wirklichkeit: Zur Logik einer phantastischen Welt”, in: Gustav Meyrink, *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster*, München/Wien: Langen-Müller, 1975, 528-558.

JEAN-JACQUES POLLET

**Michael Scot**, \* before 1198 place unknown, † after 1236 place unknown

An eminent astrologer, Michael Scot’s activity is documented from 1198 to 1216, and from 1221 to 1224, years in which he was translating the various books of Aristotle’s *De animalibus* and perhaps *De anima* and other works of the philosopher. In 1224 Pope Honorius III elected him Archbishop of Cashel in Ireland, but he declined the position. He was definitely active at the court of Frederick II from 1227 to 1236. Michael Scot is known as the translator of works by Arab scientists, including Alfarabi’s *De ortu scientiarum*, Alpetragio’s *De motibus coelorum*, which he finished translating at Toledo probably on August 12, 1217, and some philosophical works such as the Commentary on the *Sphaera* of Sacrobosco. He also authored an important encyclopedic “Introduction to Astrology” (*Liber introductorius maior in astrologiam*), in which he collected all the encyclopedic knowledge of his time, and was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy as well as by Jewish, Arab, and Christian thought. Many spurious works have been attributed to him. → Dante places him among the Magi, considering him the man who ‘delle magiche frodi seppe il gioco’ (knew how to play magical tricks).

Michael Scot’s *Liber introductorius in astrologiam* is directed at any beginner who wants to learn the astronomical art. His intention is to treat many arguments about the celestial and terrestrial worlds, which are the secrets of the philosophers and concern the astronomical art. The *Liber introductorius* contains two further sections: the *Liber particularis* (including *De mirabilibus mundi*) and the *Physiognomica*. His *Introductorium maius in astrologiam* is characterized by a Christian-Arab-Jewish syncretism, connected to the tradition of 12th century Toledo and to the compilations of translators such as Herman of Carinthia, John Ispalense, and Gerard of Cremona. This type of

thought is extremely eclectic and does not yet follow the rules of philosophy, theology, and science as set down by Christian Scholasticism. In Michael’s text, → astrology is considered to be the practical science of the philosopher through which he resembles a magus; for astrology is the art or science that offers infallible tools for mastering the celestial powers that govern the world.

Astrology is the ‘wisdom in man’ (*sapientia in homine*): a type of knowledge produced by the influx from the sun and moon – ‘those are indeed the two bodies that illuminate the souls of men and turn them towards their cause; they are the road to truth’. Thus the principles of the science and of the doctrine of wisdom ‘are acquired through revelation from the immutable spirit, received from the sun’, and actually represent the divine wisdom. Furthermore, ‘infallible wisdom is acquired through the sun’, while ‘through the moon is acquired the virtue of wisdom or the knowledge of good and evil’.

In this context astronomy or astrology becomes the philosophical science *par excellence*, which permits us to acquire the marvelous divine wisdom that manifests in creation, because astrology teaches us how to master this cosmic influence. Michael speaks of this concept of astronomy-astrology as a philosophical and religious science in a passage of the *Introductorium maius*: it is the foundation of all the other sciences because it furnishes them with their common basis (*subiectum commune*) which is the *ens* (being). He presents a classification of the speculative sciences, among which astronomy, together with astrology as its practical aspect, occupies a privileged position, because it is considered the universal science of the motion of the celestial intelligences, from which every type of influence derives.

Michael Scot’s definition makes it clear that he considers astronomy to be the same as astrology; but there are also differences, and some very curious details. Astronomy takes its name from “astrum”, which is a great star – or so he writes – and from “nomos”, which signifies “science”, i.e., rule. In the same way, astronomy is the law of the stars (*lex astrorum*), or even the science from the stars (*de astris*); whereas astrology is the discourse (*sermo*) about the stars, so that it is a *sermocinatio de astris*. It is also called thus because of “astrum”, star, and “logos”, which means a discourse or sermon about the stars. Moreover, there are two terms that derive from astronomy: “astronomus”, the man who knows the art, and “astronomista”, the man who imitates the art of astronomy (*idest homo*



*imitans artem astronomiae*). Two terms also derive from astrology: “astrologus”, the man capable of mastering this art (*homo utens haberi artem*), and “astrologista”, the man who copies its vestiges as best he can (*hic astrologista idest imitans vestigia ipsius artis suo posse*). The astrologer is the man who uses instruments such as the astrolabe, which is ‘that round tablet resembling the sky, through which it is possible to identify the position of the sun, the ascending and descending signs of the other planets, and the ruling hour’.

Necromancy is included within astronomy, being an operation based on the invocation of the spirits of demons, contained in the hierarchy of the 48 celestial images (the 12 signs of the zodiac, plus the 36 constellations of the northern and southern hemispheres). But Michael Scot, a believer in this matter, distinguishes the multitude of spirits that reside in the 48 images from the divine sphere that is supersensible, incorporeal, and immobile, inasmuch as the images are natural, physical, terrestrial, and controlled by the sun and moon. Moreover, he writes: ‘The multitude and order of the angels differs from the multitude of the stars; their greatness differs from the greatness of heaven, sun, and earth. For the former are mobile, the latter immobile’. The mobile either moves by itself (*per se*), and is the angel or soul, or else it moves by means of another (*per aliud*), like the natural beings compounded of body and spirit; stone on the other hand is immobile.

Michael’s idea of wisdom is that it is a revelation within man (*sapientia in homine*) which derives through procession from the celestial spirit, via the intermediate hierarchies. His *Liber introductorius* and *Liber particularis*, with their colorful demonology and angelology, are a kind of encyclopedia of → magic, astrology, and demonology, with a structure that is at the same time Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism], Platonic, patristic, Christian, and Gnostic [→ Gnosticism], influenced by → Augustine and by Hermetic [→ Hermetic Literature], Arab, and Jewish sources. The philosophers and theologians of the second half of the 13th century were probably reacting against it when they developed a different adaptation of astrology to philosophy and theology, as for instance in the *Speculum astronomiae* attributed to → Albertus Magnus, and later → Peter of Abano (1250–1315) in his *Lucidator dubitabilium astronomiae* or *astrologiae*.

Al-Bitrogi, *De motibus caelorum, translatio Scoti*, ed. F. Carmody, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954 ♦ Aristotle, *De animalibus, Michael*

*Scot’s Arabic-Latin Translation*, ed. Aafke M.I. van Oppenraay, 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1992, 1998 ♦ Michael Scot, *Liber introductorius maior*, Paris, ms. BN, nouv. Acq., lat 1401 ♦ idem, Munich, CLM, lat. 10268.

*Lit.*: C. Burnett, “Michael Scot and the Transmission of Scientific Culture from Toledo to Bologna via the Court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen”, in: *Science at the Court of Frederick II, Micrologus* 2 (1994), 101–126 ♦ P. Morpurgo, “Fonti di Michele Scoto”, in: *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche, Filosofiche*, series 8, 38 (1983), 59–71 ♦ Lynn Thorndike, *Michael Scot*, London, 1965.

GRAZIELLA FEDERICI VESCOVINI

**Milosz, Oscar Vladislas, \* 28.5.1877**  
Czercia, Lithuania (15.5 according to the Julian calendar then in use), † 2.3.1939  
Fontainebleau (Seine et Marne)

On his father’s side Milosz belonged to the Baltic landed aristocracy, the family property being situated in a region annexed by Russia. His father, violent and unbalanced in character, had led an adventurous life culminating in marriage with a Polish Jew, Marie Rosalie Rosenthal, who was rejected out of anti-Semitism by the entire family and locality. His mother came from a cultivated background which had produced several rabbis, but she became isolated in her unhappiness and left the young and emotional Oscar to his solitude, at the side of a father who terrified him. Oscar lived at the château until he was twelve, then left to study at the Lycée Janson de Sailly in Paris. He had no contact with his mother’s people until 1906, after his father’s death. The maternal milieu soon disillusioned him, but he remained fascinated by Jewish culture, and the Bible in Hebrew remained his bedside book. Familiar with the literary and social life of Paris, he wrote poetry and plays, participating in the foundation of the “Société des artistes polonais” (Society of Polish artists, 1911). In 1916 he was drafted into the Russian troops fighting in France and attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where his concern for Lithuania developed. He represented that country as a diplomat until his French naturalization in 1936. Milosz’s political testament is found in *Deux messianismes politiques* (Two political messianisms, 1927), which also contains memoirs of his youth in the Parisian occultist world; but soon the loss of all his property in the Russian Revolution precipitated a spiritual revelation, described in the “Epistle to Storge” (*Revue de Hollande*, January 1917). This profound



transformation took place in a heightened state of prayer and meditation on religious texts such as *The Imitation of Christ* or on esoteric ones such as → Swedenborg's. Milosz's *Ars Magna* (The great art, 1924) and *Arcanes* (Arcana, 1927) contain the essence of his message, before he condemned himself to silence a few years later. It presents itself as a both metaphysical and poetic speculation on traditional symbolic themes, especially the symbolism of numbers [→ Number Symbolism] and the Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. By means of the method developed here, he believed he could decipher the sacred texts, as in *Clefs pour l'Apocalypse* (Keys for the Apocalypse, printed at his own expense in 1938). Milosz's "literary" mission was complemented by social action: in 1919 he founded Catholic "apostolic groups", hierarchical models of a society regenerated on traditional principles, and for several years he participated in the secret society of the "Veilleurs".

*L'Amoureuse initiation*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1910 ♦ *Ars Magna*, Paris: Alice Sauerwein, 1924 ♦ *Arcanes* (*La vie des lettres et des arts*, May 1926), Paris: Silvaire, 1994.

*Lit.*: Jacques Buge, *Milosz en quête du divin*, Paris: Nizet, 1963 ♦ Jean Bellemin-Noël, *La poésie-philosophie de Milosz*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1977 ♦ Alexandra Charbonnier, *Milosz, l'étoile au front*, Paris: Dervy, 1993.

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## Mnemonics

### 1. MEMORY IN THE CLASSICAL WORLD 2. THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION: RHETORIC, ETHICS AND SPIRITUALITY 3. MEMORY AND THE SEARCH FOR UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE

#### 1. MEMORY IN THE CLASSICAL WORLD

In Greek mythology Memory – *Mnemosyne* – was a goddess beloved of Zeus who gave birth to the Muses, the divinities who would preside over poets and their art. Mnemosyne was the guardian not only of the secrets of beauty, but also those of knowledge, since in her hands she held the threads of the past, the present and the future. The poet's inspiration was believed to come directly from the Muses, and hence he was considered akin to the oracular priestess through whom the deities spoke or the king responsible for dispensing justice. Indeed, to the ancient Greeks it was obvious that

the divinities – as well as the abstract concepts – of Justice, Truth and Memory were very closely related. *Aletheia*, or Truth, was the "absence of oblivion" and therefore *Aletheia* was she who, with the help of Mnemosyne, brought to life once again the glorious acts of gods and heroes, in this way saving them from oblivion.

The myth of Mnemosyne captures the central importance of memory in a society which relied upon the oral transmission of knowledge, for where there is no written language, memory becomes essential, indeed sacred. The function of memory was to hand down knowledge and a precise set of values from one generation to the next; by thus preserving the sense of identity of its members, it assured the survival of the community. Poetry was uniquely suited to this purpose, for a poem could be recited or sung in such a way that the words, together with the → music and the movements of the body which accompanied them, would be imprinted indelibly – almost magically – upon the mind of the listener. During his recitation the poet was in direct communication with the Muses, the daughters of Mnemosyne, both because he was drawing exclusively upon memory and because the subject of his verses was not of his making but had been transmitted to him from the past, and his role was to merely reinterpret and re-elaborate the words for his listeners.

This situation changed with the spread of written language and the birth of the *polis*, the Greek city. The obvious advantages of writing tended to diminish the importance – and therefore the sacred nature – of memory. Nevertheless the need to remember survived and indeed assumed a new importance in the life of the city, where the orator and the poet had to recite their speeches and poems in public in an effective manner and without reading them. Thus, memory became an art which could be taught and practised.

According to classical tradition the inventor of the art of memory was Simonides of Ceos, a lyric poet from the pre-Socratic age (556-568 BC). Legend recounts that Simonides was summoned by Scopas, a nobleman of Thessaly, to entertain his guests at a banquet by reciting his poetry. In the eulogy dedicated to his host, Simonides inserted some lines in praise of the gods Castor and Pollux. Scopas was intensely irritated by this digression and paid the poet only one half of the agreed-upon sum for his troubles, suggesting that he ask Castor and Pollux for the remainder since he had praised them so well. At this point a servant came to tell Simonides that two young gentlemen were waiting for him at the door. The poet left the banquet hall

but to his surprise found no one outside. At this very moment the roof of the banquet hall collapsed, killing everyone inside. The bodies recovered from the ruins were so horrendously mutilated that they could only be identified by Simonides based upon where they had been found; thanks to the art of memory, he was able to remember the exact *order* in which the guests had been sitting around the banquet table.

Tradition also affirms that Simonides was the first poet in history to ask to be paid for his verses, and the first to draw an analogy between poetry and painting. According to Plutarch, Simonides defined painting as silent poetry and poetry as a speaking picture (*De gloria Atheniensium*, 3). This tradition sheds important light on the nature of the art of memory, which is based not only on an ordered disposition but also on the creation of mental images. In likening poetry to painting, it is clear that the Greeks had already recognised that the two arts both involved the creation of images, and one of the fundamental techniques of the art of memory would be to associate words with images, translating one into the other and back again.

Naturally, remnants of the archaic origins of poetry lingered for many centuries, with poets continuing to invoke the Muses, Apollo and Mnemosyne for inspiration. Orpheus, the musician-poet who descended into Hades to free his beloved Eurydice, would become the prototype of the magical, life-giving force of poetry, of the cosmic powers which found expression in its rhythm and which could draw animals and even lifeless stones in its dancing wake. The music, rhyme, gestures and movements that accompanied song continued to be recognised as powerful instruments of memory even after the invention of writing and, later, of the printing press.

The spread of writing also profoundly influenced the way in which the mind, and therefore memory, was perceived. Parallels were soon drawn between the practice of mnemonics and the acts of reading and writing. The scribe, following an orderly sequence of lines, engraves on the wax tablet the signs or letters that form words. After a lapse of time the tablet would restore to him the message that it had been entrusted with. In the same way the art of memory taught the user how to fix in his mind an orderly itinerary of *loci* where *imagines agentes* were to be placed, images that were associated with specific objects or words that one wished to remember. It should be possible to revisit these *loci* later and retrieve from each one the images that had been placed there; each image would then surrender the memories that had been entrusted to it.

Indeed the mind, and in particular the memory, began to be conceived as a space divided into niches where tangible images could be cached, either temporarily or permanently. Thence sprang the metaphors which would forever afterwards be associated with memory – the treasure trove of knowledge, the bottomless cupboard or knapsack of remembrances. The very nature of writing provided the masters of memory with an example of a combinatorial art of remarkable efficacy. They pointed out how with a finite and indeed relatively small number of signs it was possible to write all the words of a language, and suggested that by the same principle any number of memories could be fixed in the mind based on combinations of a limited number of images.

Places, images and a fixed order were the components that formed the basis of the art of memory. The techniques themselves sprang from a careful observation of the way in which memory spontaneously functioned: the art of memory or *memoria localis* or artificial memory consisted of a set of techniques designed to reinforce the natural powers of memory and the mind. Next to these mental elements, we find in many treatises on the art of memory instructions of a medical nature on how the memory might be improved. Based on the principle that the functioning of memory took place in a precise location in the brain but that its effects could be felt throughout the body – a corollary to the system of humours whose proportions determined a person's health and temperament – prescriptions for herbs and drugs, as well as advice on the best way to eat, sleep, wash and make love, could be found.

Thus the complex practices of the art of memory were suspended between two poles, the mental and the corporeal – at one end the fashioning of mental images and at the other the use of medicine and diet. The art of memory was situated in a borderline territory – its procedures were based in part on universal laws concerning the functioning of the mind, and in part on the idiosyncratic responses of the individual mind. The art of memory acted at the confines between spontaneity, automatism and conscious action. Mastery of the body through the medical arts and mastery of the mind through the *imagines agentes*, the art of memory vouchsafed passage into an unmarked territory where the body and psyche could meet and interact in a mysterious symbiosis.

The art of memory sought to exploit the power of the emotions and passions as well. Since it was based on the use of arresting *imagines agentes* – images capable of striking the imagination and

arousing sentiments and desires – the authors of treatises on memory suggested using the images of persons who were the objects of intense love or desire or hate; the stronger their emotional impact, the greater their mnemonic power. Another category of memorable images, and one which came to be widely used in the second half of the 16th century, was that of the grotesque or cruel. In mnemonic practices, therefore, the rational and controlled part of the mind interacted with its darker, emotional side.

Furthermore, *imagines agentes* signified images wearing masks, just like the actors in a theatre. As such they could help to conserve memories, but by assuming a disguise and presenting themselves in another form. Thus, from its very origins the art of the theatre exerted a considerable influence on the techniques of memory. The mind could be thought of as a stage on which a play was being presented, and indeed one of the techniques most frequently used to aid the memory was the construction of dialogues.

The Greeks did not only recognise memory as one of the human arts; they sought to understand how it functioned, deciphering its modalities and laws, and thus discovering its close relationship to the world of dreams as well as that of artistic creativity. Aristotle was profoundly interested in the nature of memory. In *De memoria et reminiscencia* (451b) he considered by what spontaneous process the mind managed to recall those things that it had half forgotten. It involved, he decided, a chain of associations. One memory would evoke another and the image of one thing would summon another, if between the two there was a relationship of either similarity or opposition or contiguity. These three laws of association could therefore be used to enhance the natural capacity of one's memory. In *De insomniis* (458b) he noted that a similar process was responsible for the visions that one saw in dreams.

The art of memory would utilise these three laws to construct images capable of giving rise to a chain of associations, thereby allowing the mind to retrieve the memories to which they had been attached. The three laws of association which Aristotle recognised as essential for memory are very similar to the two types of associations identified by the linguist Roman Jakobson (in his work *Essais de linguistique générale*, Les Editions de Minuit: Paris 1964) as governing the two fundamental figures of speech, i.e. metaphor and metonymy. Jakobson observed that associations based on similarity or opposition underlie the metaphor, while associations based on contiguity produce metonymy.

In fact, the art of memory allowed space for the

free play of the → imagination in the construction of its images. Mnemonic techniques were not limited to the passive filing of intact memories. They often involved an ample measure of creativity, for the human mind is capable not only of storing, but also of transforming its memories in an infinite number of ways.

While Aristotle linked memory to the experience of the senses, Plato incorporated it into his metaphysical vision of the world. Before descending to earth and binding itself to a sentient body, the soul was immersed in the contemplation of the world of pure ideas. Retrieving memories of that ideal world was the task of the philosopher, but in order to do so he had to battle against the darkening effects of oblivion, retracing the universals that lay beyond the mortal world and its bewildering multiplicity of particulars, seeking beauty and light beyond the obscurity of the material. According to Plato remembrance was the practice of *anamnesis*, a journey backwards that would eventually bring the philosopher into contact with the original – and divine – component of human nature. The teachings of Plato and the Neoplatonists would have an important influence on the mnemonic tradition, particularly during the 16th century.

## 2. THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION: RHETORIC, ETHICS AND SPIRITUALITY

The fundamental principles of mnemonics developed by the Greeks were preserved and transmitted through the texts of the great masters of rhetoric: Cicero, Quintilian, and above all the anonymous author of the treatise *Ad Caium Herennium*, long identified (albeit mistakenly) as Cicero himself. This philological error had important repercussions during the Middle Ages because it provided theoretical support for a gradual shift in emphasis from memory as handmaiden to the rhetorical arts to memory as a process with an ethical significance.

This shift arose out of a medieval reinterpretation of the classical tenets of rhetoric. In *De inventione* Cicero wrote that memory, intelligence and foresight (*memoria, intelligentia, providentia*) were the essential components of the virtue Prudence (*prudentia*). The wise man was he who, steeped in knowledge of the past, could understand the present and make prudent provisions for the future. Medieval philosophers referred to *De inventione* as Cicero's First Rhetoric and the treatise *Ad Herennium*, which appeared to be its obvious sequel, was known as Cicero's Second Rhetoric. Since the First Rhetoric clearly assigned an ethical valence to memory, declaring it to be a part of

Prudence, by reasonable extension the practices of artificial memory described in the Second Rhetoric could be considered exercises in the virtue of Prudence.

Such great medieval philosophers as → Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas discussed at length the concepts of *loci*, order and *imagines agentes* in this new ethical context, in the part of their works dedicated to the cardinal virtue of Prudence. Since in medieval philosophy rhetoric and ethics were so closely tied, the arguments used to defend the figures of rhetoric (metaphor, allegory, poetic fables) from the accusation that they were mere devices of deception were the same as those used to justify the use of *imagines agentes* in the art of memory. Man is weak, the moral philosophers sustained, and generally incapable of understanding and remembering abstract concepts. Metaphors, allegories and *imagines agentes* were instruments that could be used to help him overcome this weakness since they lent concrete form to the abstract principles which he needed to embrace in order to gain eternal salvation. It was for this reason, St Thomas wrote in *Summa theologica* (I, 1, 9 and II Iae, 9.49 to 2m), that God chose to express himself in the form of parables and metaphors in the Bible.

The classical art of memory was thus grafted onto a tradition that gradually evolved within the enclaves of the monasteries of Europe, a tradition in which the functions and properties of memory were assigned an important moral dimension. The techniques of memory in turn influenced the way in which classical and biblical texts were read, assimilated, transformed and finally incorporated into the reader's personal repository of knowledge, to be drawn upon later as needed to produce new texts or to arrive at decisions in the moral sphere. Regarded in this light a literary text was not a closed and static entity, but rather an open-ended work which would never be definitively finished: it was a *res* (object) which would pass across times and generations, and function as an *auctoritas* – an authoritative text and also one that could be broken up into fragments, digested and re-combined into other forms and other models of behaviour.

This process of re-elaboration drew upon both corporeal and spiritual elements. Texts were in fact read aloud, dictated to scribes and copyists, and even sung on liturgical occasions. Furthermore, in accordance with the most widespread medical and philosophical theories of the period, both the images which the external world left imprinted on the mind and those that were created by means of the imagination and the techniques of memory

were *phantasmata* – images which had not only a mental but also a material consistency.

Finally, in the Middle Ages techniques of memory were closely linked to the techniques of meditation that were used to develop a particular “force of thought”. This force was used to build structures in the mind – temples, tabernacles, palaces, gardens, trees, stairways – which could then be used to design a spiritual itinerary. Each stopping place along this itinerary represented an advance in knowledge and a step forward in a gradual moral transformation which would culminate in the mystical experience of a union with God. In the ecstasy of this moment the images themselves would cease to function, evaporating like mist because they are tied to the material world, to the specific condition of human nature and therefore to its limits.

→ Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* may be seen as a wonderful representation of this metaphysical process. In it the author recounts his journey as a pilgrim through the hereafter, where he meets a series of figures embodying all of the vices and virtues of man. As he makes his way through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise he gradually becomes morally purified and achieves a clearer understanding of the divine order governing the cosmos. When he finally reaches the end of his journey, he is rewarded with a dazzling vision of the Holy Trinity and writes: ‘Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio / che ‘l parlar nostro, ch’a tal vista cede, / e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio (From that moment onwards my vision was greater/than human speech, which was overwhelmed by this vision/ and memory too was overwhelmed by this so great force; *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 55-57). From this passage we see that, for Dante, the use of places and images to give concrete form to spiritual experience was essential, both in order to describe and recount and to remember it. Writing and memory were together used to construct the itinerary of the pilgrim. The crisis provoked by his final vision of God clearly illustrates both the power and the limitations of words and memory.

In short, the Christian world inherited the classical tradition of the art of memory and re-elaborated it to reflect the new doctrine of the Church. The issue of memory had an importance that extended far beyond the principles and practices of mnemonics, however, for it permeated the mass, the liturgy and the private life of the believer. To remember the sacrifice of Christ, the terrible punishments of Hell and the infinite delights of Paradise, to remember one's sins in order to be able to confess them and be absolved, to remember at least a handful of prayers and the basic tenets of the

faith, were all decisive in determining one's eternal salvation or damnation.

As it was for the classical orator, the art of memory became an indispensable tool for the Christian preacher. Given the fact that the preacher would continue for several centuries to address a public that was in large part illiterate, the importance not only of remembering what he wished to say, but also of impressing it upon the minds of his listeners so that they would remember it, becomes evident.

### 3. MEMORY AND THE SEARCH FOR UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE

Between the 15th and 16th centuries the art of memory became the target of criticism and satire by humanists such as Erasmus, Melanchthon, → Agrippa and Rabelais. The masters of memory were derided for the useless exercises that they inflicted upon their disciples, the "by rote" nature of their techniques, and their absurd claims regarding the rapidity with which vast stores of knowledge based upon words rather than substance could be imparted. The diffusion of the printed book further contributed to diminish the importance of the ability to remember; the book, the dictionary and the catalogue seemed to furnish the reader with all of the tools he needed to broaden his learning and, should he wish, to create new works.

Nevertheless, it was against this background of criticism and radical change that the art of memory experienced not merely a renaissance, but its period of greatest splendour. The explanation for this paradoxical situation lies in the felicitous meeting of the art of memory with the principal elements of the culture of the period, from the extraordinary flowering of the arts and letters to a revived interest in → hermetism, → Neoplatonism, and Lullism to → magic, → astrology and kabbalism [→ Jewish Influences]. The workings of the human mind, in particular its capacity to formulate mental pictures, were no longer interpreted as a sign of weakness but rather as proof of its creative capabilities and therefore of its divine nature. The Aristotelean notion of the imagination as a mediator between the soul and the body, between feelings and the intellect, thus acquired new significance.

In this period the imagination also became a point of contact between man and the cosmos, between the particular and the universal. For example, → Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) borrowed a traditional syncretic process with roots in the distant past and re-worked it into a new and enormously successful formula, in which the Aristotelean concept of the imagination was combined with the Neoplatonic and hermetic traditions of

the *pneuma*, the *spiritus phantasticus*. According to this formula, in man there was a *spiritus* which was responsible for the creation of the images or *phantasmata*; this spiritus constituted the raw material of dreams, prophecies, enchantments and love. The cosmos was animated by this same principle, which acted as the intermediary between base matter and the soul of the universe, just as in man it permitted the soul to communicate with the body and the reason with the sentiments. In mnemonic practices influenced by Neoplatonism the construction of images meant the mastery of procedures based upon the secret order of the universe. Unlimited possibilities thus opened up before the philosopher who learned to place himself in syntony with the profound order of the cosmos; he had access to universal knowledge and could approach God in his omnipotence because to know, to remember and to be able to operate upon things represented different facets of the same mental process.

The classical theory attributed to Simonides, the inventor of the art of memory, of *ut pictura poesis* or the similitude between painting and poetry found expression in an extraordinary variety of ways during the course of the 16th century – in emblems, devices, mottos, rebuses and figured poems where linguistic and pictorial expression came together in an ingenious interchange. The hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt exerted a particular fascination; the mysterious symbols were considered to be a repository of antique knowledge written in a language approaching that of the gods, which could be deciphered only by a select few. In 1422 the Florentine traveller Cristoforo Buondelmonti brought back with him from the Greek island of Andros a manuscript allegedly written by an Egyptian priest, Horapollus, which claimed to explain the secrets of the hieroglyphs. The popularity of this work spread rapidly, especially after the humanist Pierio Valeriano (pseudonym of Giovan Pietro delle Fosse) published an edition in 58 books with an extensive commentary entitled *Hieroglyphica*, which was published in Basel in 1556. This obsession with the secret language of ancient Egypt was destined to endure, and inspired – among other things – the search for a universal language made up entirely of images.

The art of memory borrowed liberally from contemporary emblems, devices, hieroglyphics, images of classical gods and heroes, and from iconological tradition in order to create striking *imagines agentes*. Indeed a process of mutual borrowing was initiated in which it is not always easy to establish the original source of an image and the exact



sequence of its successive applications. For example, the immense catalogue *Iconologia* published by Cesare Ripa in 1593 was a favourite source of images among practitioners of the art of memory (as was Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*). For his catalogue, however, Ripa drew not only upon the vast repertoires of images used by poets and artists, but also from the tradition of the art of memory. In fact the authors of mnemonic treatises facing the challenge of vesting abstract concepts with concrete form often included an iconographic glossary *ante litteram* for the convenience of their readers.

A typical exponent of the Renaissance revival of the art of memory was the philosopher → Giulio Camillo. The memory system which he describes in his work *Idea del teatro*, published posthumously in 1550, is both profoundly traditional and highly innovative. In conformity with classical ideals the author promises to provide his readers with all the words and rhetorical devices needed to imitate the great authors of the past, from Cicero to Virgil, and from Petrarch to Boccaccio. Camillo's theatre encompassed not only the *memoria verborum* (the memory of words), but also the *memoria rerum* (the memory of things). He claimed that his techniques could be used to imprint upon the mind a body of universal knowledge embracing all the arts and sciences.

In his works Camillo explained the basic presuppositions which underlay the working of his memory system: first, the existence of a unitary cosmos in which the different levels of reality corresponded with one another and therefore words and things could be assumed to faithfully mirror one another; and secondly the premise that it was possible to construct a memory system whose *loci* and *imagines* were not arbitrary but real – that is, capable of reproducing the first principles, the hidden structures which constituted the foundations of reality. It was precisely for these reasons, he assures us, that the order, places and images which governed his theatre were so magically effective; they represented the secret nexus between all things, capturing that which linked the divine world with the heavenly world and the heavenly world with the terrestrial world.

The theatre contained within itself many different meanings, some of which were comprehensible only to a few initiates. Camillo describes an imposing structure, probably inspired by the amphitheatres of ancient Rome, supported by seven columns which on the most obvious level correspond with the seven planets and their associated divinities, while on a deeper level they refer the reader back to the seven days of Creation, to the secret names of

the Godhead contained in the Kabbala, and to the first principles established by Pythagorean and hermetic tradition. The philosopher who mastered the entire structure of the theatre, according to Camillo, could transform his mind into a universal intellect capable of working upon and manipulating words (through the art of eloquence), things (through the science of → alchemy) and also himself, thus recovering all of the divine elements contained in his nature.

The dream which inspired the theatre of Camillo – his attempt to contain the whole of reality within a structure based upon combinations of a fixed number of elements – was shared by most of the memory systems that were developed during the 16th and 17th centuries in the principal intellectual centres of Europe. A key role was played in these systems by the revival, at the beginning of the 16th century, of the works of the great Catalan mystic → Ramon Llull (ca. 1235-1316); both his actual writings and those attributed to him were reprinted in new editions by the most prestigious publishing houses of Paris, Lyon and Cologne.

Lullism was fascinating to 16th century philosophers because it appeared to offer a *clavis universalis* (universal key) to reality. According to Llull, once philosophy had identified the first principles of the universe, these could be codified very simply using letters of the alphabet inserted into a combinatory system made up of concentric wheels which, as they turned, would produce all of the possible associations in the universe. In this way one would have before one's eyes – and could thus control and reproduce – the logic underlying all reality.

These first principles could be found at every level of being; in God they are transcendent attributes; in the natural world they become relative principles; at the level of consciousness these principles in various combinations constitute the various systems of knowledge, which could be represented through the trees of science. The system of concentric wheels, the trees of knowledge, the letters of the alphabet, all assumed in Lullian thought the same function as the *imagines agentes* in the art of memory because they had the same purpose. Lullian philosophers believed that in this way it was possible both to store memories and to generate new knowledge, because they were convinced that the first principles of being were identical with the principles of knowledge and of remembering.

Intellectuals were intrigued by many other aspects of Llull's universal key. For example, they were fascinated by its intermingling of the metaphysical with the artificial-mechanical. Since it was based on divine principles, the wheels constituted a

guide to meditation and spiritual elevation. At the same time, however, they permitted the user to set in motion, like the interlocking parts of a watch, all the components of his knowledge. This mechanism could then, like a machine, “generate” or lead to the acquisition of a universal knowledge.

In addition, philosophers were greatly attracted by the nexus that Lull established between this new, universal method of acquiring knowledge and the ideal of universal peace. According to Lull, the very fact that his art worked, demonstrated the truth of its principles, and it was these same principles which formed the basis of the different systems of philosophy and religion. His art could therefore perform an ecumenical function by converting all men to the true faith and eventually leading them to universal peace. One may readily understand why the teachings of Lull were so popular in intellectual circles during the 16th and 17th centuries; in a period lacerated by war and divided by political, religious and social conflict, the search for an encyclopaedic art of memory could be linked to the ideals of universal peace and a profound moral and intellectual renewal.

Among the authors who were influenced by Lull was the philosopher → Giordano Bruno. The tragic end of this highly original thinker, who was burned at the stake as a heretic by the Roman Inquisition, and his lengthy involvement with the themes of memory, can be taken as symbolic of the seriousness and complexity of the questions connected with memory. In his work *De umbris idearum* Bruno adopted a device similar to Lull’s concentric wheels to generate all the possible words and to restore the occult powers of the magical and astrological images of the decans (vestiges of ancient Oriental rites). The art of memory therefore was directly linked to metaphysics, and through its practice the user’s knowledge, memory and powers of mind could be developed and enhanced. As Bruno pointed out, however, the procedures for constructing and using images were anything but arbitrary as they involved one in a continual search for the shadows which eternal ideas have left upon the world, the traces which the metaphysical principle of Unity has left impressed upon the plurality of visible and imperfect things. The exercise of the art of memory signified in the end a magical, almost divine capacity to impose order upon things and apprehend the ways in which things could be changed or conserved. The masters of the art of memory could detect the eternal forms that lay within and beyond the chaotic and multiform reality of the material world. In this context Giordano Bruno reinterpreted in contemporary terms the

classical nexus between the art of memory and the poetic and figurative arts. The *compositio imaginum* was in fact for him a philosophical exercise that united the activities of the philosopher with those of the master of memory in a creative effort similar to that of the poet or the painter.

The art of memory also played an important role in the 16th and 17th century utopian tradition. In his masterpiece *Città del Sole*, written in 1602, the philosopher, poet, and visionary → Tommaso Campanella describes a city whose layout mirrored the order of the cosmos. The City of the Sun is surrounded by seven circular walls and access may be gained by four gates corresponding to the four cardinal points. The citizens of the city are governed by a priest-prince whom Campanella referred to as *Sole* (Sun) or *Metafisico* (Metaphysician), assisted by three other priest-princes corresponding to the three principal elements of metaphysics – *Sapienza*, *Potenza* and *Amore* (Knowledge, Power, and Love). The children of the city would learn in part while playing and in part by observing the images that were painted in orderly succession along the walls of the city and which illustrated all the branches of knowledge. The constellations were instead painted on the walls of the circular temple that stood atop a hill in the very centre of the city. Thus Campanella united the art of memory with the latest pedagogic theories and the revived traditions of astrology, magic and metaphysics to show how right knowledge could ensure a more just and happy civic life.

The influence of *Città del Sole* can be seen in the work *Orbis sensualis pictus* (1658), an immensely popular textbook written by the Czech religious leader and educational reformer Jan Amos Komenský (→ Comenius). In it Komenský describes a system of images which would permit the reader to make his way to a universal land located beyond the plurality of languages, and at the same time to ascend from the *orbis sensualis* to the *orbis intellectualis*, or to a unitary vision of reality.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, therefore, in its quest for universal knowledge the art of memory bound itself inextricably with the arts of magic, physiognomy, chiromancy, and the occult. Its practitioners explored the secret network of analogies, signs and → correspondences which they believed linked the different levels of reality. The Aristotelean laws of association once used for the construction of images were replaced by associations based on these hidden relationships, which conferred a magical dimension and function on the process of remembrance. In the works of the French masters Pierre Morestel, Lazare Meyssonier

and Jean Belot, for example, the art of memory formed part of a magical and Kabbalistic vision of the world and included various divinatory practices [→ Divinatory Arts].

The Jesuit scholar → Athanasius Kircher adopted Lull's *ars combinatoria* in a complex philosophical construct in which the metaphysics of correspondence were joined to a free experimentation with various ingenious mechanisms. The mental procedures which Kircher describes, the new "alphabets" which he devised, and the complicated diagrams and splendid illustrations which accompanied his texts were intended to reflect – and render visible – the divine order that governed all reality.

Some decades earlier, between 1621 and 1627, the voluminous works of the English philosopher → Robert Fludd appeared in Germany. A learned apologist for the Rosicrucians, he was profoundly influenced by hermetism, neoplatonism and the revival of the Kabbala. The art of memory found its place among the arts of divination in one of the volumes in which he describes the myriad and mysterious correspondences which link the microcosm with the macrocosm, and man with the universe.

Thus, from the 16th to the 17th century, the art of memory celebrates its triumphs and at the same time suffers its crisis. Its encyclopaedic dreams, linked to a unified conception of the world and knowledge, go to pieces when old myths fall, the relations between words and things become once again problematic, and the various arts and sciences develop, separate, and become specialized. Furthermore, it is during the same period that the late 16th century *Wunderkammer* (a collection that in itself combines, almost as if constituting a mirror of the cosmos, the *naturalia*, the *mirabilia* and the *artificialia*, the products of man and his fantasies, along with those of nature) is replaced by the picture gallery, the collection of antiquities, and the museum of the various natural sciences. The theatre of the world is shattered in stages: the theatre of memory can no longer reunify and represent it.

*Lit.*: Jorg Berns & Wolfgang Neuber (eds.), *Ars memorativa: Zur kulturgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Gedächtniskunst 1400-1750*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993 ♦ Jorg Berns & Wolfgang Neuber (eds.), *Seelen-Maschinen: Gattungstraditionen, Funktionen und Leistungsgrenzen der Mnemotechniken vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Beginn der Moderne*, Wien: Böhlau, 2000 ♦ Herwig Blum, *Die antike Mnemotechnik*, New York, Hildesheim: Olms, 1969 ♦ Lina Bolzoni & Pietro Corsi (eds.), *La cultura della memoria*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992 ♦ Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, Toronto: Toronto Uni-

versity Press, 2001; It. orig. 1995 ♦ idem, *La rete delle immagini: Predicazione volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena*, Torino: Einaudi, 2002 ♦ eadem, *The Web of Images: Vernacular Preaching from its Origins to St. Bernardino da Siena*, London: Ashgate, 2003 ♦ Lina Bolzoni, Vittorio Erlindo & Marcello Morelli (eds.), *Memoria e memorie*, Firenze: Olschki, 1998 ♦ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 ♦ eadem, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 ♦ Pietro Corsi (ed.), *The Enchanted Loom: Chapters in the History of Neuroscience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991 ♦ Helga Hajdu, *Das mnemotechnische Schrifttum des Mittelalters* (1936), repr. Amsterdam: Bonset, 1967 ♦ Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, Harvard (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1963 ♦ Barbara Keller Dall'Asta, *Heilsplan und Gedächtnis: Zur Mnemologie des 16. Jahrhunderts in Italien*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2001 ♦ Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language* (It. orig. 1960), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000 ♦ Jean Paul Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs: Étude de psychologie historique*, Paris: Maspero, 1965 ♦ Ludwig Volkmann, "Ars memorativa", *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 3 (1929), 11-203 ♦ Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

LINA BOLZONI

## Monoimus, 2nd cent.

Monoimus was a Gnostic teacher [→ Gnosticism] of whose life and career nothing is known. Hippolytus (ca. 230), who has left us a summary of his teachings, including a fragment of one of his letters (*Refutatio*, VIII, 12-15; X, 17, 5) calls him 'the Arab', which means that he came from the Roman province of Arabia.

According to Monoimus, there is a twofold principle of the All, Man and the Son of Man, of whom the former is unborn and immortal and the latter born, albeit independently of time, will or plan. For just as a fire and the light it produces are inseparable, so Man is unthinkable without the Son of Man. In order to elucidate the essential characteristics of his first principles, Monoimus made use of Greek Pythagorean arithmetical speculations [→ Number Symbolism]. Man and the Son of Man are perfect and their perfection is best illustrated by the image of the letter *iota* (I), the perfect number, both in its Roman and its Greek interpretation. The unity of the All is expressed by the Roman letter I (= 1, interpreted as the Monad), the plurality of the All by the Greek letter I (= 10, interpreted as the Decad). The Son of Man is the ultimate source of

creation, since he possesses everything that is also in his Father. However, only a part of him is actually involved in the creation of the cosmos: 'The very dim beams coming down to this world from the Son maintain and strengthen the change of matter, i.e. the transformation' (VIII, 13, 3). Though Monoimus apparently did not have a positive view of the material world and the human condition, it remains unclear whether or not he ascribed the actual creation to a lower, imperfect Demiurge. It is very unlikely, however, that, as has been suggested (Marcovich, 139-140), Monoimus thought of the imperfect and malevolent Jewish Creator when he said that God 'takes pleasure in the transformation of the created world' (VIII, 14, 8).

In his letter, to a certain Theophrastus, Monoimus argued that to find God, i.e. the Son of Man, and at the same time one's own self, one has only to look at oneself. It is worthwhile to quote the fragment in full: 'If you want to learn to know the All stop searching for God in the creation and similar things: search for him starting from yourself. And learn who is this who had appropriated to himself absolutely everything in yourself, as somebody different from you, by saying my mind, my reason, my soul, my body. And learn what is the cause of your feeling grief or joy, love or hatred; and what is the cause of your being awake against your wish or feeling sleepy against your wish; of your being angry against your wish or feeling affection against your wish. And if you accurately examine all these things you will find him (God) in yourself, the Perfect One coming from the Perfect One, considering everything as his own – both the so-called non-existent things and the existent ones – and being one and many, just as is that "One Stroke" (Iota). And you will find the explanation from yourself' (combination of VIII, 15, 1-2 and X, 17, 5; transl. Marcovich, 141). We do not know the context of this fragment, but Monoimus apparently taught that everything participates in the divine being, and that, therefore, you only have to look at yourself if you want to know God, the All and yourself. These ideas are more Hermetic [→ Hermetism] than typically Gnostic. As a close parallel may only be mentioned here *Hermetic Definitions* IX, 4: 'Whoever knows himself knows everything. Everything is within man'. That raises the question of whether Monoimus was a Gnostic at all. That he called his divine principles Man and the Son of Man points undoubtedly to Gnostic influences. He quotes from the Old and the New Testament and seems to have been aware of the generally Christian identification of the Iota with Jesus, as can be concluded from his quotation of a combination of Colossians 1:19 and

2:9 (VIII, 13, 2). But we do not know whether or not Jesus played a role in Monoimus's doctrine of salvation, if he really had one. That Hippolytus' report does not say anything about it, might be an indication that his source provided him only with a part of Monoimus's system. However, it seems also possible that he adhered to a hermetic world-view, which he expressed in a Christian and more specific Gnostic terminology.

M. Marcovich (ed.), *Hippolytus: Refutatio omnium haeresium* (PTS, 25), Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1986, 330-335; Engl. trans. (after the German trans. by W. Foerster) in: W. Foerster (ed.), *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, Engl. trans. edited by R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1: *Patristic Evidence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, 247-250.

*Lit.*: M. Marcovich, "Monoimus' Letter to Theophrastus", in: idem, *Studies in Graeco-Roman Religions and Gnosticism* (Studies in Greek and Roman Religions, 4), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988, 134-143.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

### More, Henry,\* October 1614 Grantham, † 1687 Cambridge

More was born in Grantham, Lincolnshire, the son of Alexander More, Alderman and Mayor (1617) of Grantham, and his wife Anne (née Lacy). He was educated at Grantham Grammar School and Eton College. In 1631 he entered Christ's College, in the University of Cambridge, where Robert Gell was his tutor. He graduated BA in 1636 and MA 1639 and was elected fellow of Christ's College in place of Gell in 1641. In the same year he was ordained, and his uncle, Gabriel More, presented him with the advowson of Ingoldsby near Grantham. He remained a fellow of Christ's College for the rest of his life, declining preferment. He died in 1687.

More was, together with → Ralph Cudworth, one of the most important of the group of philosophical divines known now as the Cambridge Platonists. His tolerant religious convictions were formed in reaction against the strict Calvinism of his upbringing and the religious strife of the Civil War period. As well as being considered a founder of the Latitudinarian movement, he came to be regarded as one of the leading English philosophers of his time. He was certainly the most prolific and widely read of the Cambridge Platonists in the 17th century.

More's first published writings were long philosophical poems of Platonist stamp: *Psychodia*



*Platonica or a Platonick Song of the Soul* (1642) was republished with the further poems in the collection *Philosophical Poems* (1647). There followed, from 1650-1651, a public controversy with the alchemist → Thomas Vaughan, who wrote under the name of Eugenius Philalethes and whom More attacked under the pseudonym Alazonastix Philalethes. Thereafter More eschewed polemic, preferring to elaborate a measured, philosophical defence of his position. His *Enthusiasmus triumphatus* (1656) insists on the importance of reason as an antidote to what he regarded mistaken beliefs. There followed two important works of apologetics: *An Antidote against Atheisme* (1653) and *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659), in which he developed his philosophical defence of religious belief against perceived atheist philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes. The basic premise of this arguments is that the existence of spirits is logically connected to the existence of God, or as he formulates it in *An Antidote*, 'That saying is no less true in Politicks, *No Bishop No King* than this in metaphysics, *No spirit no God*' (*Antidote*, 3.16.17). To this end he adduced supernatural phenomena, firmly convinced that the appearance of ghosts and instances of → witchcraft constituted evidence of the operation of spirits. In the same cause he edited Joseph Glanvill's, *Sadducismus triumphatus* 1681, a work which consists largely in a compilation of such evidence. His most extensive elaboration of his philosophy of spirit comes in his *Enchiridion metaphysicum* (1671) where he seeks to explain natural and supernatural phenomena by the operations of what he calls his 'hylarchic principle' or Spirit of Nature.

*The Apology of Henry More* (1664), is a brief but important statement of More's understanding of the role of reason in matters of religion. However, his most important theological work is his *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660), which sets out his broadly tolerant theology as well as his revival of heterodox beliefs, such as the Origenist doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. In later life, he devoted considerable time to the study of biblical prophecy. Books such as *Paralipomena prophetica* (1685) and *Apocalypsis apocalypseos* (1680) develop the exegetical theories of his mentor, Joseph Mede. He also studied the Jewish kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], persuaded that the secret traditions of the Jews preserved in symbolic form nuggets of true philosophy. He was put in contact with the German kabbalistic scholar, → Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, by their mutual friend → Francis Mercury van Helmont. As a consequence, More contributed to the first vol-

ume of the *Kabbala denudata* (1679) edited by Knorr.

More's wide-ranging interests in prophecy, kabbalah and witchcraft, on the one hand, as well as theology, philosophy and science, on the other, mean that he cannot be easily classified in modern terms. Neither he, nor his contemporaries for that matter, regarded these interests as mutually incompatible. More's debt to what are now regarded as esoteric writers and writings must be understood in the context of his Renaissance syncretism which viewed religious and philosophical truth as belonging to a tradition of ancient wisdom. This *prisca sapientia* or *philosophia perennis* [→ Tradition] supposedly derived from Moses, and was imparted via a succession of thinkers both ancient (e.g. Plato) and modern (notably Descartes). This understanding of human wisdom was bolstered, in More's case, by his penchant for symbolic readings, by which he sought to unlock the rational content of occulted truth, whether in prophetic visions or → number symbolism. This is best illustrated in More's *Conjectura Cabbalistica* of 1655, which expounds the first book of Genesis as a species of Neopythagoreanism that prefigures aspects of contemporary philosophy, notably Cartesianism (though he subsequently revised his enthusiasm for Cartesianism, out of fears that it might encourage atheism). More achieves his interpretation of Genesis by way of Plotinus and Philo, among others. He attributed his interest in Platonism to his extensive reading of among 'the *Platonick* writers, *Marsilius Ficinus*, *Plotinus* himself, *Mercurius Trismegistus*; and the *Mystical Divines*' (Ward, *Life*, 18) when still a young man. Among these he mentions his special affection for 'that little golden book', *Theologia germanica* attributed to Johann Tauler. He claimed that it was reading these authors which helped to rescue him from a sceptical crisis which engulfed him after he graduated. And he continued to cite → Hermes Trismegistus as an authority, even after Casaubon had demonstrated that Hermetic writings were not as ancient as previously supposed. More took care to set a distance between his own philosophical Platonism and what he regarded as the confused and self-deluding claims of esotericists like Vaughan, → Paracelsus and → Jacob Boehme. His *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* includes an attack on → astrology, later republished as *Tetractys Anti-Astrologica* (1681). He was also deeply interested in the scientific developments of his day and was a fellow of the Royal Society. However, his own overzealous appropriation of the work of Robert Boyle to support his own theories resulted



in censure by Boyle. Controversies such as this notwithstanding, More's writings were widely read in his own day. He summarised his philosophical and religious views for the benefit of more general readers in his popular *Divine Dialogues* (1668) published under the pseudonym Franciscus Evistor Palaeopolitanus. The collected edition of his writings, a *Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (1662), and the translation of his works into Latin (*Opera omnia*, 1671-1679) ensured him a wide audience among the learned, both at home and overseas.

*Philosophical Poems*, Cambridge, 1647 ♦ [Alazonmastix Philalethes], *Observations upon Anthroposophia Theomagica*, [London], 1650 ♦ [Alazonmastix Philalethes], *The Second Lash of Alazonmastix*, London, 1651 ♦ *An Antidote against Atheisme: or, and Appeale to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man, whether there be not a God*, London, 1653 ♦ *Conjectura Cabalistica: or, a Conjectural Essay of Interpreting the Minde of Moses According to a Threefold Cabbala, viz., Literal, Philosophical, Mystical*, London, 1653 ♦ *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus, or a Discourse on the Nature, Causes, Kinds and Cure of Enthusiasm*, London and Cambridge, 1656 ♦ *The Immortality of the Soul, so farre forth as it is Demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason*, London and Cambridge, 1659 ♦ *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness; or, a True and Faithful Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, London, 1660 ♦ *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, London, 1662 ♦ *Apology of Henry More*, in: *A Modest Enquiry*, London, 1664 ♦ *Enchiridion Ethicum, Praecipua Moralis Philosophiae Rudimenta Complectens*, London and Cambridge, 1667 ♦ *Divine Dialogues Containing Sundry Disquisitions and Instructions Concerning the Attributes of God in the World*, London, 1668 ♦ *An Exposition of the Seven Epistle to the Seven Churches*, London, 1669 ♦ *Enchiridion metaphysicum; sive, de rebus incorporea succincta & luculenta dissertatio*, London, 1671 ♦ *H. Mori Cantabrigiensis opera omnia*, 3 vols, 1675-1679 ♦ *Apocalypse apocalpseos or the Revelation of St John the Divine Unveiled*, London, 1680 ♦ *Tetractys Anti-Astrologica*, London, 1681 ♦ *Paralipomena Prophetica: Containing Several Supplements and Defenses of Dr. Henry More his Expositions of the Prophet Daniel and the Apocalypse*, London, 1685 ♦ *The Conway Letters*, edited by M.H. Nicolson, revised by S. Hutton, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992 ♦ Joseph Glanvill, *Sadducismus triumphatus: or, A Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions*, edited with additions by H.M., London, 1681.

*Lit.*: Allison Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975), 633-652 ♦ Alan Gabbey, "Philosophia cartesiana triumphata: Henry More, 1646-71", in: T.M. Lennon et al. (eds.), *Problems in Cartesianism*, Kingston and Montreal: Queens McGill University

Press, 1982 ♦ Rupert Hall, *Henry More: Magic Religion and Experiment*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990 ♦ Serge Hutin, *Henry More*, Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1966 ♦ Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Henry More, 1614-1687: Tercentenary Studies*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990 ♦ idem, "More, Newton and the Language of Biblical Prophecy", in: J.E. Force and R.B. Popkin, *The Books of Nature and Scripture*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994, 39-54 ♦ Samuel Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962 ♦ Marjorie Nicolson, "Christ's College and the Latitude-Men", *Modern Philology* 27 (1929), 35-53 ♦ Richard Ward, *The Life of the Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More*, Parts 1 and 2 (S. Hutton, R. Crocker, R. Hall, eds.), Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000.

SARAH HUTTON

Morley, Daniel of, \* ca. 1140 Norfolk,  
† ca. 1210 place of death unknown

Living one generation after the masters of Chartres and Tours, Daniel demonstrated an interest similar to theirs in naturalistic Platonism. Unfortunately, regarding scientific subjects the Latin philosophers of his time offered him neither clarity nor certainty. Paris was mainly interested in Law and Theology. Daniel therefore went to Toledo to study the "teachings of the Arabs" (*doctrina arabum*) and joined the circle of translators gathered around Gerard of Cremona. Deriving strength from his new knowledge, he composed the tract *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum* (1187) in England.

Daniel drew much inspiration from the Bible and → Augustine. He read Plato, whose disciple he considered himself, through Calcidius, but did not hesitate to criticize the latter's astronomical theories. Despite his claims to the contrary, Daniel was indebted to the Latins: Adelard of Bath, his compatriot, whose example he followed in taking recourse to Arabian science; Guillaume de Conches, annotator of the *Timaeus* and philosopher of nature; Thierry of Chartres, who wrote a commentary on Genesis but renounced the traditional form of the *hexaemeron* inherited from the Fathers; → Bernard Silvester, whose *Cosmography*, nourished by these authors, was permeated with hermetism [→ Hermetic Literature]. Let us mention finally the hermetic sources themselves, such as the *Liber Triplicis Mundi*.

Astronomy, which Daniel did not distinguish from → astrology, was for him a major science. 'He who condemns astronomy', he said, 'necessarily destroys physics'. He argued that if we are ignorant

of the universe and its laws, we cannot know humanity and its destiny; we recognize here the hermetic theme of the relation between macrocosm and microcosm. Basing himself on the masters of Arabian astronomy, Daniel discussed the astrological virtues of the sun. He asserted, moreover, that the heavens had not been formed from a corruptible substance but from a fifth element, the quintessence. On this point he refuted the objections made notably by Guillaume de Conches with regard to the stars, which, not being composed of the four elements, could not have their qualities.

Daniel's terminological innovations, influenced by hermetism, can make his ideas appear more revolutionary than they are. In reality his work reconciled very diverse currents: Pythagoreanism, → Aristotelianism, Platonism, hermetism and Arabian astronomy. In this respect, he is very representative of the new philosophical tendencies that played a transitional role between the golden age of medieval Platonism and the triumph of the Aristotelianism that would supplant it.

*Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum* (K. Sudhoff, ed.), *Archiv für die Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik* 8 (1917), 6-40 ♦ Correction by A. Birkenmajer, idem 9 (1918), 45-51 ♦ *Philosophia* (Gr. Maurach, ed.), *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch* 14 (1979), 212-245.

*Lit.*: M. Müller, "Die Stellung des Daniel von Morley in der Wissenschaft des Mittelalter", *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 41 (1928), 301-307 ♦ Th. Silverstein, "Daniel of Morley, English Comogonist and Student of Arabic Science", *Mediaeval Studies* 19 (1948), 179-196 ♦ H. Schipperges, "Einflüsse arabischer Medizin auf die Mikrokosmosliteratur des 12. Jh.", *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 1 (1962), 139-142.

MICHEL LEMOINE

## Moses

In the syncretistic religious climate of Ptolemaic Alexandria Moses was identified with the Egyptian god Thot-Hermes [→ Hermes Trismegistus]. The only direct source for this equation is the third fragment of a book *On the Jews* written by a certain Artapanus (ca. 100 B.C.E.), preserved in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX, 27, 1-37. It tells us, mainly in 27, 1-10, that Moses or "Moysos", as Artapanos calls him, invented all kinds of utensils for the Egyptians, such as ships, instruments for hoisting stones, weapons, and inundation and war machines, and that he also introduced philosophy. He divided the country into 36 districts or nomes,

assigned to each of them the cult of its own special god – among these gods there were also cats, dogs and ibises –, allotted land to their priests and even taught them the art of writing. All this he did to preserve the monarchy for his stepfather, pharaoh Chenephres (= most probably Sebekhotep or -Kha'nefer-Re', ca. 1730-ca. 1722), and to prevent civil war. The ordinary people loved him for all this and the priests even deemed him worthy of divine honour, calling him "Hermes" because of his interpretation (*hermēneia*) of the hieroglyphs. His stepfather, however, became jealous and sent him on a campaign against Ethiopia, hoping that he would be killed in battle, for his army consisted of a hundred thousand untrained farmers. In order to have shelter, these men founded the town of Hermupolis and declared the ibis to be its sacred bird, because it kills all kind of vermin harmful to mankind. The end of the campaign and the subsequent events are less important in this connection, but as a result of it the Ethiopians adopted the ritual of circumcision from Moysos, and so did all the (Egyptian) priests.

Though Flavius Josephus does not mention the identification of Moses and Hermes, he does seem to have known Artapanus' story, for he offers a missing link in it. He tells us how Moses on his way to conquer Ethiopia had to cross a region full of snakes. These he overcame by letting loose from papyrus baskets numerous ibises, which attacked these snakes and killed them. In the end he agreed to marry the Ethiopian princess Tharbis, on condition that she would surrender the capital Meroe to him (*Antiquitates Judaicae* II, 238-253). This last detail is, of course, an elaboration on Numbers 12:1 (LXX) where it is stated that he had married an "Ethiopian" woman.

Although it seems strange that a Jew would ascribe to no one less than Moses, who was against all idols, the institution of the Egyptian animal cults, there can be little doubt that Artapanus himself was Jewish, for his writing is clearly apologetic in the sense that it defends the cultural primacy of the Jews. Not even his Persian name is an argument against his Jewish nationality, for there are other instances of Jews bearing Persian names such as Dareios and Arsames, and the very name "Artaphan" is found twice at the Jewish cemetery of Teuchira-Arsinoe in Cyrenaica (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 9, 613; 709). As Artapanus must have preceded Alexander Polyhistor, who quoted him, he may be dated to about 100 B.C.E. (Walter, 123-125). At first sight, he seems to have offered an example of Jewish Euhemerism:

originally, the great god Hermes would have been nothing else than a human being. On the other hand, it is true that in Jewish circles, and likewise in Alexandria, Moses was sometimes deified. Ezekiel Poeta's *Exagoge* (ca. 200 B.C.E.?) portrays Moses as receiving from God His diadem, sceptre and throne, and Philo's *Life of Moses*, I, 158 states in so many words that Moses was called 'God and King of the whole people'. In a way, therefore, the equation of Moses and Hermes is comparable to the well-known identification of two gods from different countries, such as Mars-Ares.

Most of the activities and inventions ascribed by Artapanus to Moysos-Hermes can be paralleled somehow by what the Old Testament tells of Moses and what is known about Thot. As to the technical inventions (except those of ships and weapons): Moses supervised the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. 39:32ff.), whereas Thot was the architect and decorator of the Egyptian temples (Boylan, 89), and was generally, according to Plato, 'most skilful' (*technikōtatos*; *Phaedrus*, 274 E), as well as the inventor (*heuretēs*) of all technology (Diodorus, *Library*, I, 43, 6). As for philosophy: Moses' connection with law and law-giving needs no illustration; for his wisdom and erudition, reference can be made to the tradition worded in Acts 7:22; Thot was the god of wisdom and law *par excellence* (Boylan, 185; 188; 192; 195; 197f.). The division of Egypt into nomes has its counterpart, of course, in the allotments of land in Transjordan and Canaan to the eleven tribes (Num 32:33ff.; 34:13ff.); to the land of the Egyptian priests one may compare the towns assigned to the Levites (Num. 35:1ff.); according to the Shabaka-stone line 59, Thot was the founder of the towns and districts, and also of the local cults (lines 59-60). That Moses would have established local cults seems strange in view of his reaction to the veneration of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32), but on the other hand he made the brass serpent, to which the Israelites had to look up (Num. 21:4ff.), and which was still, or again, venerated under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4). The invention of writing: Moses is the first man mentioned in the OT to have written (Ex 17:14); Thot was the god of language, writing and interpretation (Boylan, 182-194; Diodorus, *Library*, I, 16, 2); for Moses as interpreter of the Law, cf. Deut. 1:4. In addition to these parallels there are some more which have no basis in the text of Artapanus, but may well have supported the equation of Moses and Thot-Hermes (Mussies, 108-118).

Although several Christian authors referred to Hermes in a positive sense, they never identified

him with Moses. The tendency to keep them apart is much less marked in ancient and medieval magical and alchemical literature [→ Magic; → Alchemy]. In the great Leiden Magical Papyrus (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*, XIII, 3; 22), the treatises IV and X of the Corpus Hermeticum [→ Hermetic Literature] are entitled respectively *The Monad or Eighth Book of Moses* and *The Key of Moses*. It is even said that Hermes stole from Moses' *Monad* the exposition of the seven things and materials that can be burnt in magic and inserted this list in his own holy book entitled *The Wing* (PGM XIII, 14). In the alchemical corpus, *Kleidion* (The Little Key) is likewise the title of a book attributed to Hermes (*Collection des Anciens Alchimistes Grecs*, 2, 281/3, 271), and other works and words of Hermes (Trismegistus) are often quoted in the many recipes. The name of Moses, too, is here of frequent occurrence. By the side of many other biblical figures, such as notably king Solomon, Moses' presence in the science of alchemy was especially due to the fact that he had smashed the Golden Calf of the apostatizing Israelites to gold dust and had mixed this dust with their drinking water (Exod. 32:20), and further that he was the supervisor of Bezaleel, the skilled metal worker who built the Tabernacle (Exod. 35:30-33). Moses' so-called *aurum potabile* ("drinkable gold") played a role as late as the beginning of the 18th century, as a kind of Elixir that could prolong life (Bachmann-Hofmeier, 56f.), whereas Bezaleel is mentioned by name in the opening lines of the treatise *Chemistry of Moses*, which paraphrase Exod. 35:30ff., but make a priest of him (CAAG 2, 300-315/3, 287-302). This treatise is also quoted elsewhere in the corpus (CAAG 2, 182f.; 353, 180f.; 338). A famous alchemical recipe attributed to Moses is that of the *Diplosis* (Multiplication), that is of gold, by alloying it, here three parts of gold with one part of copper, in the belief that the end product would become four parts of gold (CAAG 2, 38f./3, 40). Moses' former link with Hermes is here echoed by the title of *Triseumoiros*, which the alchemist Pappos the Philosopher assigns to him (CAAG 2, 28/3, 30), the "Three Times Fortunate"; it certainly matches and continues that of Hermes "Trismegistos" or "Trisaristos".

M. Berthelot & Ch.-É. Ruelle (eds.), *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, 3 vols., Paris, 1887-1888 (repr. Zeller: Osnabrück, 1967) ♦ G. Schroeder & E. des Places (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée: La Préparation Évangélique. Livres VIII-X* (SC 369), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1991 ♦ German trans. with extensive commentary: N. Walter, *Fragmente jüdisch-hellenistischer*

*Historiker*, in: *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, I, Gütersloh: Mohn, 1976, 121-136.

*Lit.*: M. Bachmann & Th. Hofmeier, *Geheimnisse der Alchemie*, Basel: Schwabe, 1999 ♦ P. Boylan, *Thot the Hermes of Egypt: A Study of some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt*, London-Oxford: Milford-Oxford University Press, 1922 ♦ J.R. Harris (ed.), *The Legacy of Egypt*, Oxford, 2nd ed., 1971 ♦ E. Meyer, *Aegyptische Chronologie* (Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, I), Berlin: Reimer, 1904 ♦ G. Mussies, "The Interpretatio Judaica of Thot-Hermes", in: M. Heerma van Voss *et al.* (eds.), *Studies in Egyptian Religion Dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee* (Studies in the History of Religion [Supplements to *Numen*], 43), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982, 89-120.

GERARD MUSSIES

### Mouravieff, Boris, \* 8.3.1890 Cronstadt (Russia), † 28.9.1969 Geneva

Early in his life, Mouravieff came under the spiritual influence of his great uncle Andrei Mouravieff, the founder of an important orthodox monastery at Mount Athos. He became an officer in the Higher Military School in 1910 and in this capacity served in the Russian Imperial Navy during World War I. After the abdication of the tsar in March 1917, he became part of the Cabinet of Minister Alexandre Kerensky until October 1918. From that time on he began to steep himself in studies of archaeology and history. In 1920 he left Russia for Constantinople, where he attended some lectures given by → Piotr Demianovich Ouspensky, who became his friend and introduced him to → G.I. Gurdjieff. In 1924, Mouravieff arrived in France where he married a Russian, Larissa Bassof, and worked until 1941 as a consulting engineer for several oil companies, while simultaneously devoting himself to study and writing. Arrested by the Gestapo at the beginning of 1944, he escaped thanks to the help of members of the French Resistance. He and his family fled to Switzerland, where he made a living as a translator for industrial companies. Having enrolled in 1945 as a student at the University of Geneva, he prepared a thesis on the history of the Russian-Turkish Alliance under the reign of Napoleon. He became Privatdozent at that University in 1955, a position which he held until 1963. In addition to teaching history (mostly of Russia), he gave seminars on "esotericism", which became the basis of his main work *Gnosis*, first published in French in 1961-1965.

In 1961 Mouravieff founded the Centre d'Etudes Chrétiennes Esotériques (C.E.C.E.), based in

Geneva, which he directed until his death. The aim of this Association was to contribute to the emergence of the "New Man" during what he called the "transitional period" (i.e., Modernity), a period he considered fraught with perils for the future. From 1962 on he devoted himself to the C.E.C.E., creating many subsidiary branches in various countries, and to the task of supplementing what he had written in *Gnosis*. He titled these additions "Stromates", a term borrowed from → Clement of Alexandria, under the motto "The Art to Overcome". They circulated among a number of his followers from 1966 until his death and thereafter thanks to the initiatives of his widow. The C.E.C.E. disappeared around 1967. Mouravieff's widow deposited the C.E.C.E. archives at the University Library of Geneva. Then she left for Montreal, where she lived until her death in 1989 with their son Boris Vsevolod Volkoff, who remained the only heir to the rights of Mouravieff's works. The Boris Mouravieff Association, whose main purpose is to contribute to the dissemination of *Gnôsis*, was created in Paris in 2000.

By "esotericism" Mouravieff means the ways to become 'conscious of one's real self' ('conscient de son vrai Moi') and develop this true self beyond the deceitful illusions of one's ordinary "Personality". This involves achieving a progressive psychic development that is likely to give access to higher levels of "Consciousness". Mankind is on the threshold of the "Era of the Holy Spirit", a position which is supposed to open up enormous possibilities for human evolution. But if mankind fails to enter this new era, it will be subjected to the deluge of fire mentioned by the Apostle Peter (2nd Epistle, III, 10).

The first volume of *Gnôsis* opens with an introductory note dealing with Piotr Demianovich Ouspensky, whose *In Search of the Miraculous* had been published in 1950. Mouravieff criticizes both the title and the book. The title, because there is no such thing as an "Unknown Teaching" – there is no secrecy, no unknown spiritual legacy, since the latter, he says, has always been accessible to 'those who were seriously interested in such matters'. He criticizes the book, because it is just a conglomerate of "fragments", whereas a really comprehensive presentation of the "Tradition" would have been necessary – a presentation which he, Mouravieff, intends to offer his readers with the three volumes of *Gnôsis*. For him, true "Tradition" is essentially Christian in character. Save for the idea of karma, which he occasionally endorses, he borrows very little from non-Christian eastern religions. Besides, Mouravieff believes that true "Tradition" has been transmitted over the cen-



turies since Jesus Christ through a never-interrupted chain of members of the “Great Esoteric Brotherhood”, whose existence he believes has been described by Paul in Romans (8:28-30).

The referential corpus of *Gnôsis* is comprised first and foremost of the Bible, some Church Fathers, and Christian orthodox mystics or theologians. Apart from these references, Mouraviëff does not quote (even in the many footnotes) any representative esoteric thinkers. In the long bibliographies presented at the end of the first two volumes the names of many esoteric thinkers do appear, such as → Jacob Boehme, → Antoine Fabre d’Olivet, → René Guénon, → Frithjof Schuon, even → C.G. Jung, and of course Ouspensky (George I. Gurdjieff is conspicuous by his absence), but they are not mentioned in the text itself. In fact, it seems far from certain that Mouraviëff was instrumental in the compilation of the bibliography, which is said to have been “prepared with the collaboration of Dr. Albert-Jean Lucas”.

*Gnôsis* is not the work of a theosopher proper. It lacks the visionary inspiration characteristic of classic theosophical works. The practice of the so-called creative → imagination, which is so important in the latter, plays a secondary role here. Mouraviëff’s book is devoid of vivid images (no descriptions of the Fall of angels, of Man, etc.) and consists instead of abstract theological and mathematical symbols. Indeed, Mouraviëff’s work is lavishly illustrated with geometrical diagrams and algebraic formulas aimed at laying out the interconnections between the visible and invisible skeletal structure (he says that “Tradition” calls it the “Great Octave”) of the cosmos on the one hand, and the various levels – material, psychological, spiritual, etc. – of the human being on the other. By means of these diagrams he presents what he thinks to be the → correspondences between the seven/eight parts of the universe (for instance, the Milky Way, the Sun, etc.), the seven musical notes (from A back to A), the various stages of a person’s spiritual development, and/or the tripartition body/soul/spirit. He goes as far as to apply the “Great Octave” to the eight items into which he divides the Paternoster, thereby making each of them correspond to a musical note.

Mouraviëff’s speculations extend to such domains as politics and sexuality. In politics, he is far from being the elitist and pessimist that most proponents of the “Traditionalist School” (Guénon, Schuon, etc.) – to which he obviously did not belong – appear to be. For instance, he endorses the existence of international organizations (like the UNO) and gives advice about how to complement them with spiri-

tual dimensions. As a historian he had ample material at his disposal (mostly related to Russia). On this basis he elaborated propositions about international politics, laid out in *Gnôsis* and other publications (see bibliography). More generally, he remained very open to the scientific achievements of his century – in short, to Modernity. Contrary to the representatives of the “Traditionalist School”, he did not anticipate doom but the positive progress of mankind. The third volume of *Gnôsis* contains long passages devoted to sexual relationships, marriage, and family. Although these latter reflections start from a practical and concrete examination of society as he knew it, he praises the ‘couple of the Knight and of the Dame of his thoughts’ as the true model to be imitated in order to achieve a genuine realization of what love should be all about.

The Christian esotericist Mouraviëff did not want to be typecast as a guru, and indeed he certainly was not one. He did not direct disciples like Gurdjieff did, nor did he offer oracular pronouncements like Guénon. His teachings bear very little resemblance to those of the → Theosophical Society. But his form of thought (not his “doctrine”) displays some kinship with that of both → Rudolf Steiner and Ouspensky, however different these three thinkers otherwise were. Lastly, his disciples are and have always been persons who work individually on the basis of *Gnôsis*, which they use as an initiatic working tool.

*Le problème de l'autorité super-étatique*, Neuchâtel/Paris: La Baconnière, 1950 ♦ “L’histoire a-t-elle un sens?”, *Revue Suisse d’Histoire* [Zurich] 4 (1954) ♦ “Le problème de l’Homme nouveau”, *Synthèses* [Brussels] (1956), 126-127 ♦ “Ouspensky, Gurdjieff, et les Fragments d’un Enseignement inconnu”, *Synthèses* [Brussels] 138 (1957) ♦ *Gnôsis: Etudes et Commentaires sur la Tradition ésotérique de l’Orthodoxie orientale*, 3 vols., Paris: La Colombe, vol. 1, 1961; *Cycle Exotérique*; vol. 2, 1962; *Cycle Mésotérique*; vol. 3, 1965; *Cycle ésotérique*, Paris: New ed. La Baconnière: 1972 ♦ English ed.: *Gnosis: Study and Commentaries on the Esoteric Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy*, Newbury (MA): Praxis Institute Press, ed. and intr. by Robin Amis, translated by Manek d’Oncien and Robin Amis, 3 vols., 1992-1993 (1st ed. 1989) ♦ *La Monarchie russe*, Paris: Payot, 1972.

*Lit.:* *Bulletin d’information de Madame Larissa Mouraviëff* (see in particular issue dated June 1967, Geneva) ♦ William Patrick Patterson & Barbara A. Patterson (eds.), *Taking With the Left Hand: Enneagram Craze, People of the Bookmark, and The Mouraviëff “Phenomenon”*, Fairfax (CA): Arête Communications, 1998.



## Music I: Antiquity

Music was a highly developed art in the ancient world. From very early texts and a number of musical scores, from representations in visual art and actual instruments that have been found in excavations, a whole spectrum of musical practice and theory has been recovered for virtually every ancient culture. Given the aural nature of music, it is almost impossible to reconstruct the sounds of antiquity, but much progress has been made in reconstructing both the technical aspects of ancient musical culture – instruments, tonality and musical theory – and the emotional impact music was thought to have on humans. Music played a pervasive role in many religions of antiquity, in public festivals and temple rituals, in the cultic life of private groups dedicated to the worship of a deity of choice, and as one of the options open to humans to acquire a deeper knowledge of the world or of the divine and thus aid in the goal of releasing the soul from the bonds of matter.

In most religions of the ancient world, music was a prominent element in temple rituals. In this, as in so many other aspects, temple ritual resembled court ritual. In the temple, the house of the god, the god was entertained with food and drink, with prayers and rituals and with music. The gods of Mesopotamia had a small ensemble play for them when they took their meals, just as the god of Israel enjoyed songs sung for him to the accompaniment of the lyre and the harp. The central rite of animal sacrifice in ancient Greece was always accompanied by the playing of flutes and eventually came to be accompanied by the singing of hymns. For most modern readers, these hymns are texts: that is how they have been preserved and how they are published. They are, therefore, sometimes studied as if they were prayers, but this they most certainly were not. They were, rather, cult songs composed, often in competitions in the context of festivals, by professional poets and singers to please the deity and extol his or her virtues, and to memorize the deeds of men of past or present generations. Festivals in ancient Greece, following the cultic calendar of the individual cities, usually consisted of sacrifices and solemn rituals as well as competitions in sports, poetry, and music and the performance of dances, mask plays or mummeries and drama.

Two types of cult hymn stand out in importance: the paeon and the dithyramb. Both probably originated in short, very ancient ritual cries: *ie ie paian* and *thriambe* respectively. The *paeon* was a song of gratitude dedicated to Apollo; the *dithyramb* originally a hymn sung in the context of the cult of

Dionysus. Although they were formalised in an early stage, came to be mixed up and contributed to the development of Greek tragedy, there was a certain tradition ascribing a different impact to these hymns. In the evolved traditions, the contrast between Apollo and Dionysus, one of the favourite subjects of many authors, was also detected in the moods brought about by their specific hymns.

There are many more examples of Greek ideas on the emotional or moral impact and influence of tunes, modes, and musical instruments. Many of these belong to a type of popular psychology, for instance attributing different moods and effects to different instruments. Thus, the lyre was associated with silent inspiration and poetic contemplation, whereas the *aulos*, the instruments of courtesans no less than that of cult musicians, moved men to act. In two different cases, the importance of such ideas was more pervasive.

In the first place, there were types of music and musical instruments that came to be associated chiefly with the non-civic Greek and (later) Roman cults, in particular with the so-called mystery cults. The cult of Cybele or the Mother of the Gods (the Roman Mater Magna) was associated chiefly in Greece with *tympana* and with the loud noise that these drums produced in the rituals of the Mother. Other instruments, cymbals and flutes also were associated with the rites of the Mother, especially in their Roman context, with the cult of Cybele and Attis. These instruments not only recalled the actual use of types of instrumental music in the cult of these deities, but their sound or the instruments themselves seem to have become carriers of meaning. Especially the sound of the *tympanum* was widely held to produce certain psychological or religious transformations, moving worshippers to dance, shout and become enraptured by the goddess.

In the second place, with much more lasting success, from the 5th century B.C.E. onwards, music came to be developed spectacularly as one of the sciences. This development was already in antiquity attributed to Pythagoras and even Orpheus, and it is very well possible that there was a keen interest in music in early Pythagorean and Orphic circles; but the methodical foundations of “Pythagorean” music theory were laid by Aristoxenos, a pupil of Aristotle. In Pythagorean and Platonic doctrine, the creation and order of the cosmos was connected to numbers, and these functioned not only as the symbols of certain concepts (for example, 1 is “mind”, 3 is “whole”, 10 is “perfect”), but also as ratio and mathematical formula [→ Number Symbolism]. Number is “harmony”: the per-

fect harmony with which the cosmos was created. On the basis of the recognition that all musical intervals are determined by numerical ratios, it is also the harmony of earthly music. The harmony or music of the cosmos is further developed in the idea of the “music of the spheres”, the idea that the heavenly bodies resound in a perfect harmony, brought forth by the relations of their distances and speeds.

At the centre of Pythagorean wisdom lies the so-called “tetractys”, or “four-group”, generally visualized as a triangle made up of the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4, which add up to 10. The most important intervals derived from these numbers are the octave (2:1), the fifth (3:2) and the fourth (4:3). From these, other intervals are derived, such as, for example, the second, which is the difference between the fifth and the fourth (9:8). These mathematical foundations of musical intervals allow of a sheer endless series of speculations and derivations. Thus, in the Greek intellectual tradition music was not only an art, used for entertainment or the creation of a solemn atmosphere, but more importantly a science, and an earthly reflection of higher truths. Plato used music as a cosmological paradigm in the *Timaeus*, the influence of which can hardly be overestimated in Western intellectual culture. Music was thought to have a direct influence on human behaviour, to possess educational functions and play an important role in the development of character. These ideas are connected with the more popular notions of what music does, but were given a completely new foundation in the development of “ancient Greek music theory”, which is the name of a fairly large body of Greek musical writings, that range in date from the 4th century B.C.E. to the 4th-5th century C.E.

Ancient Greek music theory expressly tried to stay as far removed from musical practice as possible. These writings were written neither by, nor for practising musicians, but wanted to serve other, less mundane, purposes. The noetic quality of music lay, chiefly, not in listening to it, but in understanding how it worked and what its (mathematical) foundations revealed about the nature of being. It is almost inevitable that this, in turn, should have given rise to musical adaptations of these new ideas, attempts to put them to practical use, to use music as an instrument of salvation. This may indeed have been the case. There is an often-quoted passage from pseudo-Demetrius, *De Elocutione* 71, on the seven Greek vowels (ΑΕΕΙΟΥŌ), which are commonly encountered in the magical papyri and similar ritual texts from late antiquity. It is well known that the seven vowels

can represent the seven planets, and that the seven planets were thought to be characterised by their own individual tones, producing a heavenly harmony. Demetrius writes that the Egyptian priests chanted the seven vowels “in succession” and his words suggest a musical/tonal adaptation.

This passage is often connected with Hermetic writings. In → Hermetic literature, music is very commonly encountered, in many different appreciations. This seems to be an important difference with Christian Gnostics, for although both Hermetists and Gnostics must have been “singing communities” (witness also the caption “secret song number 4” and the hymn itself in C.H. 13) the use of musical imagery and speculation in Hermetic literature is much more prominent than it is in Gnostic texts. As is the case with their views on the nature of the world, Hermetic appreciations of music seem to have differed. In the *Asclepius*, the heavenly and earthly harmonies are praised (*Ascl.* 9) and the study of music is explicitly recommended as one of the best methods to know how everything is ordered (*Ascl.* 13). In the same passage, however, it is more or less debunked in favour of the “true” philosophy, which makes no use of technical sciences whatsoever. The first part of the treatise C.H. 18 is a fully worked-out metaphor, explaining the works of God, ‘the tireless musician’ in terms of the professional training and activities of a musician. It is particularly in descriptions of the ascent of the soul, through the planetary spheres with their proper sounds, that we may suspect musical imagery. In fact, descriptions of the experience of reaching the supra-cosmic realm (the eighth and the ninth sphere) generally use the language of music: the soul sings hymns to the supreme deity in the eighth sphere with the souls of the blessed and hears even sweeter music from the ninth sphere (C.H. I.26). The most fully worked out ideas on this subject can be found in the *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*, where, however, the supreme music in the eighth sphere is said to be an internal song, sung in silence, without sound. Just before the experience of the Self, the *ego* of the text describes himself in the following words: ‘I am the instrument of your spirit. Mind is your plectrum, and your counsel plucks me’. Thus, from the cult musician pleasing his god to God playing his human instruments, musical imagery, theory and practice have contributed greatly to the systematic development of ideas and belief systems on the relations between the different realms of being.

*Lit.:* W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge, MA, 1972 ♦ G. Fowden, *The*

*Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*, Cambridge, 1986 ♦ E.A. Lippmann, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece*, New York, 1975 ♦ T.J. Mathiesen, *Apollo's Lyre: Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Lincoln/London, 1999 ♦ F.G. Naerebout, *Attractive Performances: Ancient Greek Dance. Three Preliminary Studies*, Amsterdam, 1997 ♦ M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford, 1992.

ALBERT DE JONG & MARIKEN TEEUWEN

## Music II: Middle Ages

In the medieval worldview, music powerfully reflects the divine order of the cosmos. Through the study of its principles, human beings will come closer to grasping the meaning of creation itself. This view is apparent from medieval treatises on musical theory and philosophical texts that touch on the subject of music, but also from liturgical texts and from poetry or prose in which the miraculous harmony of creation is praised. It is very difficult, however, to point at evidence in the music practice of the time. There are no records of experiments in which the power of music is actually put to the test, and the evidence for a firm belief in it remains restricted to texts.

The whole concept of scientific thinking on the subject of music is essentially classical in nature. The sources of musical thinking of the Middle Ages faithfully reproduce central pieces of classical theory and are firmly rooted in the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions. The myth of Pythagoras, who discovered the basic ratios of musical consonances when passing a blacksmith's shop, figures in many medieval treatises on music, as do speculations on the music of the planetary spheres, and classical myths on the (magical) power of music (e.g. Orpheus and Eurydice, Amphion and Arion). Two themes seem particularly relevant: the role of music in the whole of creation, and its effect on the individual.

The music of the cosmos, *musica mundana* in Boethius' influential treatise *De institutione musica*, was part of the classical heritage: Plato's *Timaeus* (4th century B.C.E.) was translated and commented upon by the 4th-century author Calcidius, the 5th-century author Macrobius wrote a commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. In Augustine of Hippo's *De musica* (387-389), Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (5th century) and in Boethius' *De institutione musica* (ca. 500-510) the ancient tradition on the theme is well established and handed down to the medieval scholars. At the basis of the ancient tradi-

tion lies the relation between divine creation and number, the idea that the cosmos was created according to mathematical principles. The numerical ratios that created Plato's World Soul are reflected in musical consonances: the numbers one and two form the ratio of the octave, two and three that of the fifth, three and four that of the fourth, eight and nine that of the second. According to the ancient sources, the harmony of the cosmos was musically realised by the eight planetary spheres revolving around the earth. These brought forth a perfect harmony of musical tones that were determined by aspects measured in number: their distances from each other, their velocities or the size of their orbits.

In the Middle Ages, the ancient idea of a sounding cosmos was readily adopted. From Carolingian times onwards, speculations on the actual music of the planets are attested. In the 11th century, when the system of the eight church modes was well established, relations were established between planets and church modes. The numbers of creation, adopted from the classical heritage, were given Christian interpretations, and medieval speculations on the harmony of the heavenly spheres are an intricate mixture of classical and Christian cosmology, theory of harmony and → number symbolism. The earliest examples are found in music treatises such as Aurelian of Réôme's *Musica disciplina* (9th century), and Regino of Prüm's *Epistola de harmonica institutione* (early 10th century). The ideal music of the heavens remained a popular topic throughout the Middle Ages. → Hildegard of Bingen's mystical allusions to the power of music are a well-known example: she is convinced that music and harmony are present in every aspect of God's creation and especially in the human soul itself. Our natural love of music and the human ability to be moved by it can be explained through the craving of mankind to be reunited with its Creator.

The idea that the heavenly planets and the biblical choirs of angels join in a collective and continuous song of praise to honour their Creator is present in the earliest sources of the liturgy of the Western church. Only in the 12th century, however, under the influence of scholasticism, attempts were made to systematically bring ancient and Christian cosmology to a synthesis. In the 12th-century poem *Naturalis concordia vocum cum planetis*, for example, the nine choirs of angels surrounding God's throne are related to notes from the Greek system and to planets.

In the second half of the 13th and in the 14th century, when the Aristotelian influence on Western

thinking grew stronger, the idea of an actually sounding cosmos was viewed with scepticism in certain scholarly circles. In his *Speculum musicae* (1321-1324) Jacobus of Liège, for example, denied the existence of a planetary music. He argued that if the massive planets would bring forth actual sounds, they would be so loud as to have made us deaf. Guido of Saint-Denis (*Tractatus de tonis*, ca. 1300) and Heinricus Helene (*Summula musicae*, ca. 1360) treat the music of the planets as a metaphor, and no longer take the concept literally. But at the end of the Middle Ages, when Aristotelianism was declining and Platonism was flourishing, the concept was again made welcome by scholarly thinking, and received new attention in the theoretical works on music of, for example, Bartolomeo Ramis de Pareja (*Musica practica*, 1482) and Franchinus Gafurius (*Practica musice*, 1496).

The influence of music on the individual, the *effectus* or *affectus* of music, is a classical topos that kept receiving scholarly attention throughout the Middle Ages. Music was believed to have an effect on the body and mind of human beings. It was able to disturb the inner harmony of body and soul, or to restore it when it was disturbed through illness or emotion. In ancient sources the power of music over individuals is illustrated by anecdotes. Its healing power is illustrated with stories in which madmen are cured from their frenzy, babies are soothed, youth is kept to the straight and narrow path, all by playing them the right kind of music. Its power to inflame is demonstrated in examples of armies triumphing because of the fierceness of their music. In the Patristic and medieval tradition, biblical examples are added to this list: the story of David curing Saul from his madness by playing him music, or of the prophet Elisha, on whom the spirit of the Lord descended after he had summoned a cithar player to perform for him.

From the 11th century onwards, attempts were made to attach ethical characters to concrete musical modes. These were partly modelled after ancient sources, but since the ancient sources themselves were not very consistent, the relations between ancient heritage and medieval renewal are garbled and often only superficial. Guido of Arezzo (*Micrologus*, ca. 1025) was the first to explicitly relate church modes to certain characters, and scholars such as Hermannus of Reichenau (*Musica*, ca. 1050), Frutolf (*Breviarium de musica*, ca. 1100), and Johannes of Afflighem (*De musica*, ca. 1100) followed his example with their own interpretations. In many of these systems the Dorian or first mode, for example, is characterised

as noble, worthy or solemn, the Phrygian or third mode is always associated with excitement, violence and fierceness. Although certain general characterisations are concurrent, the details of each system relating church modes to characters are different.

At the very end of the Middle Ages authors such as Franchinus Gafurius (*Practica musice*, 1496) and Bartolomeo Ramis de Pareja (*Musica practica*, 1482), designed systems in which modes are related to characters and corresponding planets: the Dorian mode, for example, corresponds to the Sun, the Phrygian to Mars, etc. Building on earlier models Bartolomeo Ramis de Pareja went even further: he related each mode not only to a corresponding planet, but also to a colour and humor (*sanguis, colera, phlegma* and *melancholia*). These speculative models, which reflect the thorough belief in the power of music over the material and immaterial world, over the human body, mind and soul, formed the basis for the 16th- and especially 17th-century musical experiments in the field of → mysticism and → magic.

*Lit.*: H. Abert, *Die Musikanschauung des Mittelalters und ihre Grundlagen*, Halle a.d. S., 1905 ♦ L. Spitzer, "Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word 'Stimmung'", *Traditio* 2 (1944), 409-464 & *Traditio* 3 (1945), 307-364 ♦ J. Haar, *Musica Mundana: Variations on a Pythagorean Theme*, diss. Harvard University, 1961 ♦ R. Hammerstein, *Die Musik der Engel: Untersuchungen zur Musikanschauung des Mittelalters*, Berne/München, 1962 ♦ idem, "Pythagorean Harmony of the Universe", in: *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, New York, 1973, 4, 38f. ♦ B. Münxelhaus, *Pythagoras musicus: Zur Rezeption der pythagoreischen Musiktheorie als quadrivialer Wissenschaft im lateinischen Mittelalter*, Bonn/Bad Godesberg, 1976 ♦ H. Schavernoch, *Die Harmonie der Sphären*, Freiburg [Breisgau], 1981 ♦ J. Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde*, London, 1987 ♦ A. Barbera (ed.), *Music Theory and Its Sources: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Notre Dame, 1990 ♦ F. Zaminer (ed.), *Geschichte der Musiktheorie*, Band 3: *Rezeption des antiken Fachs im Mittelalter*, Darmstadt, 1990 ♦ J. Godwin, *The harmony of the Spheres: A sourcebook of the Pythagorean tradition in music*, Rochester/Vermont, 1993 ♦ several articles in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Zweite, neu bearbeitete Ausgabe, L. Finscher (ed.), 9 Sachteile, 12 Personenteile, Kassel, Basel, London, etc., 1994-in progress [spec. M. Walter & A. Jaschinski, "Engelsmusik-Teufelsmusik", Sachteil 3, 8-27; P. von Naredi-Rainer, "Harmonie", Sachteil 4, 116-132; L. Röhrich, "Musikmythen", Sachteil 6, 1421-1440] ♦ S. Gersh, *Concord in Discourse: Harmonics and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism*, Berlin/New York, 1996 ♦ F. Hentschel (ed.), *Musik*



*und die Geschichte der Philosophie und Naturwissenschaften im Mittelalter*, Leiden/Boston/Köln, 1998 ♦ E. Vetter, *Concentrische cirkels: Modus, affect, sfeer en tijd in een middeleeuws muziektheoretisch gedicht*, diss. Utrecht University, Amsterdam 2000 ♦ J. Haar, “Music of the spheres”, in: Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., 29 vols., London etc., 2001, vol. 10, 487-488 ♦ M. Teeuwen, *Harmony and the Music of the Spheres: The Ars Musica in Ninth-Century Commentaries on Martianus Capella*, Leiden/Boston/Köln: E.J. Brill, 2002 ♦ several chapters in Th. Christensen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, Cambridge, 2002.

MARIKEN TEEUWEN

### Music III: Renaissance

Scholarly discussion of the relationship between music, → hermetism and → magic in the 16th and 17th centuries still takes its point of departure from the authoritative texts by D.P. Walker, Frances Yates and Joscelyn Godwin. As their work shows, together with the more recent studies of Gary Tomlinson and Penelope Gouk, music played an especially significant role in the “occult philosophy” [→ occult/occultism] that became so fashionable in European culture in the decades around 1600. This fascination not only manifested itself in the philosophical literature which will be reviewed below, but was also expressed through artistic endeavours and practical experiments. Indeed, historians of science have shown that it was the emphasis on experiential knowledge and the magus’s ability to harness occult forces and bring about predictable effects that led 17th century experimental philosophers to appropriate these powerful features of natural magic into their new form of scientific practice. However, most occult experiments involving music will never be recovered, not only because of their inherently secret and dangerous nature, but also because the vocal and instrumental practices involved were never written down.

Music, or more precisely, “harmony” was central to the process in which understandings of “occult” and “scientific” ways of knowing were decisively transformed in the so-called Scientific Revolution. Music’s relevance to early modern esoteric wisdom (scientific, philosophical, religious, or magical) lay in its power to mediate between material and immaterial realms, operating at the threshold between inner and outer worlds, between body, mind and soul. The most popular expression of this magical power during the period was the phenomenon of “sympathy”, or musical resonance. The *locus classicus* for this example of occult “action at

a distance”, was Plotinus’s *Enneads*, a Neoplatonic text [→ Neoplatonism] unknown to medieval scholars that → Ficino published in 1492 and also used as a source for his own *De vita libri tres* (1489), the most influential modern work on musical magic. Plotinus’s image of a universal lyre connecting all levels of being through resonance was now made concrete by using two lutes: a string of one instrument was plucked, which moved the equivalent string of another lute lying on a nearby table.

The linkage between cosmic and human harmony via stringed instruments was long established in Western philosophy, and can be traced back via Plato’s *Timaeus* to the Pythagoreans before him. Pythagoras’s discovery of the numerical proportions governing consonance, leading to his invention of the monochord, was recounted in Boethius’s *De musica*, the standard university text on music, as well as more esoteric sources such as Iamblichus’s *De mysteriis* (ed. Ficino 1497). Yet the idea of actually putting Pythagorean and Neoplatonic mysteries to the test seems to have been a 16th century development. It occurred around the same time that poets and musicians began to make serious attempts to recreate the effects of ancient music.

In tracing this process, musicologists have chiefly focused on the 1570s experiments by Count Bardi’s Florentine camerata and Jean-Antoine de Baïf’s *Académie de Poésie et la Musique* in Paris to revive a lost Greek rhapsodic art. The impact of Neoplatonic doctrine on secular courtly entertainments in the 16th and 17th centuries is well documented. Much less scholarly attention has been paid to attempts at recreating ancient theurgic and magical practices in the context of Reformation and Counter-Reformation struggles over proper modes of public and private worship. There is plenty of early modern *literature* celebrating music’s power as a vehicle for poetic frenzy, spiritual revelation, prophetic madness, and rapture, but there is almost no evidence how or whether these actual *practices*, including incantations for summoning gods and demons (theurgy) actually took place other than in the theatre. → Campanella’s magical activities with Pope Urban VIII during the 1620s may have been exceptional, or just unusual because written evidence for them remains.

During the 16th century several important new works addressing music’s relationship to magic and the occult were published. At the same time new editions and translations of key ancient and medieval texts began to circulate more widely through numerous printed editions. Apart from the



Hermetic corpus and the *Asclepius* (ed. Ficino), the most important ancient sources which explicitly addressed music's powers to communicate with demonic spirits included the *Orphic Hymns* (ed. Ficino 1462), the *Chaldaean Oracles* (ed. Patrizi 1491), the Old Testament *Psalms*, → Augustine's *Confessions*, and the Jewish Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] mediated through → Johannes Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica libri tres* (1517).

This body of theological and mystical literature overlapped with the tradition of speculative harmonics, a discipline dealing with the mathematical and philosophical dimensions of music theory, and especially focusing on the hidden proportions governing the structure of the universe. Among the ancient harmonic texts which received renewed critical attention in the 16th century were Ptolemy's *Harmonics*, Euclid's *Section on the Canon*, and Boethius's *De musica*. Although this latter work was no longer considered useful for teaching the principles of musical practice, Boethius's tripartite structure of *musica instrumentalis*, *musica humana* and *musica mundana*, still proved to be a valuable model for scholars and theologians seeking to discover the secret harmonies in God's Creation (e.g. see Fludd below).

→ Francesco Giorgio's *De harmonia mundi totius cantica* (1525) was an important 16th-century contribution to this Boethian tradition of speculative harmonics, which paradoxically led to new practical applications. Thus, for example, the numerical principles that Giorgio found in the heavens were incorporated at the same time into the architectural plans of San Francisco della Vigna in Venice. Fifty years later Giorgio's Pythagorean, Neoplatonic and Kabbalistic studies received fresh impetus through its translation by → Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie as *L'harmonie du monde* (1575), a work which had a major impact on French, as well as English, Renaissance literature and philosophy. Le Fèvre de la Boderie also published translations of Ficino's and → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's works. Together with Pontus de Tyard's *Solitaire première* (1552) and *Solitaire second, ou discours de la musique* (1552), Le Fèvre de la Boderie's learned editions of these Italian Neoplatonist sources provided the intellectual foundations for the French academies of Ronsard and Baïf. These courtly schools sought to effect a proper union of music and poetry as the first stage of ascent towards ultimate union with the divine. In a society rent apart by religious and political upheaval, where Catholics and Protestants alike sought for reconciliation, there was a powerful incentive to restore harmony to mankind by realigning cosmic

and divine influences, as well as recreating the hymns of Orpheus and David.

→ Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (first version completed 1510, published as greatly enlarged edition in 1533), was another early influential 16th-century text which ensured music's prominence in the "occult synthesis" of the late Renaissance. Reprinted in numerous editions down to the 18th century, and translated into many vernacular languages, this text proved to be the main channel for introducing Ficino's controversial music-spirit theory to a wider audience. At the same time it popularised the basic principles of Neoplatonic philosophy and natural magic. Part of Ficino's rules for planetary music, combined with Pico's account of the use of Orphic hymns in magic, are found in Book I, cap. 71 on incantations. According to Agrippa, nothing is more efficacious in natural magic than these hymns, used according to a due harmony. Ignoring the Church's prohibition on magical operations, Agrippa explains how the instrument of enchanter is 'a most pure harmoniacall spirit, warm, breathing, living', that can be used for compelling and directing planetary angels as well as simply conditioning the operator's own spirit into a suitably receptive state for heavenly influences.

A somewhat less dangerous discussion of instrumental music and the corresponding harmonies in celestial and human bodies is found in Book Two on mathematical magic (caps 24 to 28). This section closes with a celebration of the power of music to attune the soul to the divine, and to drive out demons: 'Hence by the ancient prophets and fathers, who knew these harmonical mysteries, singing and musical sounds were brought into sacred services'. However, towards the end of Book Three on prayers, sacraments and other religious rites (caps 58-64), Agrippa places invocations to God on the same level with pagan or magical incantations. As Walker has observed, although Agrippa's exposition of Ficino's spiritual music gave it a wide diffusion, it may also have frightened people away from it by showing just how dangerous Neoplatonic magic was from a Christian point of view.

The attraction of universal harmony and the occult philosophy reached a peak in the first half of the 17th century. The most comprehensive text to appear on the subject was → Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia universalis* (Rome, 1650). Like so many of Kircher's voluminous writings, this work continued to be an important source for scholars interested in music, magic and mysticism even into the 20th century. Music played a prominent role

in early 17th-century esotericism because of the importance attached to musical practice at leading centres of occult studies, most notably the courts of → Rudolph II in Prague and Prince Moritz of Hessen (who was a noted musician). Thus although Kircher himself promoted what was meant to be a Catholic Counter-Reformation vision of universal harmony, he nevertheless also drew on important Protestant sources published earlier in the century. Of these texts, Johannes Kepler's *Harmonices mundi libri V* (1619) and → Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi . . . historia* (1617-1619) have attracted the most scholarly interest, because of their disagreement over how to discover the true harmonies governing nature.

The Kepler-Fludd controversy has been significant in defining the boundaries between science and magic, between "true" and "false" philosophy, not just in its own time but also in more recent attempts to distinguish between occult and scientific mentalities. Music played an important role in this debate. Kepler (1571-1630), for example, claimed that his discovery of the correspondence between the harmonies of modern polyphonic practice and the ratios governing the elliptical motions of the six planets was grounded in empirical observation. Therefore a true analogy existed between these planetary and musical systems, both of which derived from the geometric archetypes in the mind of God. Kepler explicitly differentiated this from Fludd's approach to cosmic harmonies, saying that the latter's portrayal of the divine monochord had no other foundation than the imagination. A similar line was taken by the French Minim friar Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) in his *Traité de l'harmonie universelle* (1627) in which he criticised Fludd's schema for having no correspondence with any measurable quantities of the world. Augustine's *De Musica* served as a theoretical basis for Mersenne's own empirical investigations into musical phenomena, while the *Confessions* provided grounds for his vigorous rejection of Fludd's natural magic.

Mersenne's discovery of the mathematical laws governing musical pitch ("Mersenne's laws") rapidly became a cornerstone of the so-called "new experimental philosophy", even while Fludd's system of hidden → correspondences was apparently rejected on the grounds that they were imaginary. Yet despite trenchant criticism of Fludd's allegedly "false" representations of occult harmonies (which are based on a different set of conventions than those privileged by Kepler and modern science), many of the musico-magical principles expressed in his *History of the Macrocosm and Microcosm*

were eventually incorporated into mainstream natural philosophy, most notably through the optical and mathematical treatises of → Isaac Newton. Yet the importance of Fludd's *History* in communicating abstract musical principles to 17th-century scholars (rather than to professional musicians) has been completely overlooked. Because Fludd follows Giorgio's strategy of organising the *History* around Boethius's tripartite classification of music, and privileges the Pythagorean scale, the work has been dismissed as speculative in the pejorative sense of the term.

The chief significance of the *History* lies in its use of powerful visual imagery, realised through engravings by the son of his Oppenheim publisher Theodore de Bry. Another occult classic which these men produced at exactly the same time was → Michael Maier's musical-alchemical emblem book *Atalanta fugiens* (1618). In the context of the present article, the importance of this work lies in the author's belief that the practices of both → alchemy and music rely on the manipulation of the *spiritus mundi*, a view shared by Fludd and one which of course ultimately derives from Ficino. Precisely the same belief is embodied in the famous illustration of the magus-physician's alchemical laboratory from → Heinrich Khunrath's *Amphiteatrum sapientiae aeternae Christiano-Kabalisticum* (1595, 1609). The theosopher himself is shown devoutly at prayer on the left of picture, and the instruments he uses for alchemical investigations into the fundamental secrets of nature are towards the right. Most prominently on display, however, are four stringed musical instruments on the table at the centre foreground (including a harp which is a clear allusion to King David). The inscription beneath translates roughly as 'Sacred music (is) the escape from sadness and evil spirits because the spirit (*spiritus*) rejoices cheerfully in a heart filled with pious joy'. This image provides a rare glimpse of how Ficino's musical magic might be transmuted into a practice that at least outwardly conformed to Protestant reformist sensibilities.

None of these works by Khunrath, Maier and Fludd achieved wide circulation, and it was only in the late 20th century that their images began to be reproduced on a significant scale. Yet the importance of Fludd's work in particular is due to the influence it has exercised on a relatively small number of scholars since first appearing. For example, although Fludd's image of the divine monochord was strongly criticised by Mersenne, he nevertheless copied the idea of using a picture to illustrate this particular manifestation of cosmic harmony. The principal route by which Fludd's concepts

became more widely known, however, was via Kircher, who plagiarized many of Fludd's diagrams for his own purposes.

Like all his lavishly illustrated works, Kircher's *Musurgia universalis* achieved an international circulation through the institutional backing of the Jesuits. By the late 17th century his books had become the most widely disseminated sources available on esoteric and occult wisdom. Thus even as the "Scientific Revolution" gained momentum, the accessibility of the *Musurgia* ensured that natural magic continued to function as a valid descriptive and analytical category for dealing with musical phenomena. Themes raised in the *Musurgia* which continued to attract debate in the Enlightenment include the origins and development of human music and its magical and religious applications; the classification of musical styles and their correspondence to the human passions; and musical devices that relied on hidden sources of power (for which he drew heavily on Fludd). Book 9, which deals explicitly with magical topics, focuses on music's power to affect the mind and body in ways that can be explained in purely "natural" but hidden (i.e. occult) terms. Much of the first part is taken from Mersenne, and deals with the everyday psychological and emotional effects of music. His examples of music's more exceptional and explicitly therapeutic properties are drawn from both ancient and modern literature, the most notable being the cure of Saul's melancholy through David's psalms, the amazing story of a Danish king aroused to frenzy and murder by his courtly musician, and the cure of the Tarantula's bite. A majestic conclusion is reached in Book 10 which situates the work within the broader context of *musica humana* and *musica mundana*. Although Kepler and Fludd were both Protestants, and had taken opposing views about the role of number in understanding the world, this did not prevent Kircher from appropriating their ideas and showing how their thinking could be reconciled in his own eclectic synthesis of universal harmony.

Despite the conventional emphasis placed on the unchanging and secret nature of esoteric wisdom, between 1500 and 1700 some very significant changes took place in music's relationship to this increasingly accessible philosophical tradition. Thus although the sympathetic correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm remained a central feature of occult thinking, the radical changes in musical and scientific practice which took place between early Renaissance and late Baroque ensured that Ficino or Giorgi's conception of "harmony" was quite different from that of

Kircher or Newton. While many of the techniques musicians used to arouse or imitate particular emotional effects seemed truly wondrous in the early 16th century, by the 18th century these were subject to scientific classification and analysis. Similarly, most of the ancient and even modern occult texts 17th-century philosophers had access to were almost completely unavailable in Ficino's lifetime, only becoming more available through the medium of print.

*Lit.:* Joscelyn Godwin, *Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979 ♦ idem, *Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979 ♦ Penelope Gouk, *Music, Science and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999 ♦ Penelope Gouk (ed.), *Musical Healing in Cultural Contexts*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000 ♦ Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others*, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1993 ♦ D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, London: Warburg Institute, 1958 ♦ D.P. Walker, *Music, Spirit and Language in the Renaissance*, edited by P.M. Gouk, London: Variorum, 1985 ♦ Robert S. Westman, "Nature, Art, and Psyche: Jung, Pauli, and the Kepler-Fludd Polemic", in B. Vickers (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 177-229 ♦ Frances A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, London: Warburg Institute, 1947 ♦ Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

PENELOPE GOUK

## Music IV: 18th Century to the Present

It is questionable whether music in itself can be "esoteric", as distinct from the texts or associations linked to it. Some music might be called esoteric in the sense that it appeals to, or is understood by, a restricted group of people. Such is the more abstract fugal work of Bach, the late string quartets of Beethoven, and the atonal or serial music of Schoenberg and his followers. But the esotericism of such musics, for all their refined emotions and heightened intellectual content, is not necessarily spiritual. For present purposes, esotericism is in question when music is offered and used in a context of conscious spiritual development. The field thus defined excludes merely sacred music, but includes "speculative" music, i.e. the unsounded music that gives insight into cosmological and numerical mysteries.

The century of F. Couperin (1668-1733), Vivaldi (1678-1741), Rameau (1683-1764), J.S. Bach (1685-1750) and his sons, D. Scarlatti (1685-1757), Händel (1685-1759), Gluck (1714-1787), Mozart (1756-1791), Haydn (1732-1809), and the young Beethoven (1770-1827) was a high point in Western music, but from the point of view of esotericism it was an infertile period. Musical esotericism has generally been coupled with the Pythagorean philosophy. While in earlier times this had led to the concepts of a *musica mundana* ("harmony of the spheres") and a *musica humana* of psycho-physical effects, the Enlightenment discarded such notions as irrational. Its musical aesthetic was not spiritually or cosmically based, but rested, like that of the other arts, on the principle of imitation. The primary purpose of music was thought to be the representation of human emotions, and its main resource was expressive melody.

Of the celebrated composers, only two had interests bordering on esotericism. J.S. Bach defied the fashion of his time in continuing to write learned, contrapuntal music in encyclopedic cycles (*Orgelbüchlein*, *Well-tempered Clavier*, *Klavierübungen*, *Musical Offering*, *Art of Fugue*) and in filling his sacred works with numerological significances. Mozart's commitment to → Freemasonry gave birth to the Masonic opera, *The Magic Flute*, which has been the subject of many esoteric interpretations. Two notable esotericists of the 18th century were musically gifted. The Comte de → Saint-Germain (1693/94?-1784) worked in London in the 1740s as a musician and composer. → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was a good amateur violinist, and made use of speculative music in his first book, *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (1775).

At the turn of the century, the composer Johann Friedrich Hugo von Dalberg (1760-1812) wrote a series of theoretical and imaginative works (especially *Blicke eines Tonkünstlers in die Musik der Geister*, 1787; *Untersuchung über den Ursprung der Harmonie und ihre allmähliche Ausbildung*, 1800) that treat music as a vehicle by which the soul ascends to higher states, and that approach harmony in a neo-Pythagorean spirit. Dalberg's work heralded the German Romantic movement [→ Romanticism], which would elevate music to the status of a religion. Around 1820, → Antoine Fabre d'Olivet wrote a treatise on music (*La Musique expliquée comme science et comme art*, published posthumously) that shares the same assumptions and interests as Dalberg's. Fabre d'Olivet was the first of many French esotericists whose universal cosmic systems gave an important role to

music. These included Charles Fourier (1772-1837), → Hoëné Wronski, → P.F.G. Lacuria, Louis Lucas (1816-1863), and the *fin-de-siècle* figures → Joséphin Péladan, Charles Henry (1859-1926), Edmond Bailly (dates unknown) and → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre. Bailly, active in the French → Theosophical Society, was an amateur composer in the Romantic idiom, and a friend of Debussy and Satie. His most original work, *Le chant des voyelles* (1912), was a study of the vowel-invocations found in Greek magical papyri, together with a realization for modern instruments and voices. Saint-Yves, reputedly a talented improviser on the piano and organ, gave music a large place in his system of universal knowledge, the *Archéomètre*. The musical supplement to this work, *L'Archéomètre musical* (1909), comprises nearly 200 short piano pieces in a style to which there is no contemporary parallel.

The music dramas of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) have all been interpreted esoterically, especially *The Ring of the Nibelung* and *Parsifal* regarded as an epic of man's history and hopes. As his own librettist and the builder of the temple-like Bayreuth Festival Playhouse, no one did more than Wagner to actualize the Romantic idea of music as a religious or even mystical experience. A cluster of post-Wagnerian composers interested in various forms of esotericism, with an indication of their leanings, includes Gustav Mahler (1860-1911; Theosophy); Claude Debussy (1862-1918; occultism, numerology), Erik Satie (1862-1925; → Rosicrucianism), Jan Sibelius (1865-1957; → Freemasonry), Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915; Theosophy), Gustav Holst (1874-1934; → astrology; → gnosticism); Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951; → Swedenborg; Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]), Cyril Scott (1879-1970; Theosophy), Anton Webern (1883-1945; Swedenborg, German → *Naturphilosophie*). However, the involvement of these early modernist composers with esotericism did not long outlast World War I. One exception is Scott, whose attempt at a spiritual history of music and its effects, *Music, Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages* (1933), continued to be reprinted up to the end of the century.

The revival of Pythagorean ideas in the 20th century was mainly due to two men. → Rudolf Steiner, though not himself a musician, invented the art of Eurythmy (not to be confused with Jacques-Dalcroze's Eurhythmics) and gave many lectures on the spiritual significance of music. Music consequently plays a large role in → Anthroposophy, especially in Waldorf education. Hans Kayser (1891-1964), inspired by hints given in the extraordinary work



of Albert von Thimus (1806-1878), *Die harmonikale Symbolik des Alterthums* (1868), developed a comprehensive system of world-explanation through application of the harmonic series and the “Pythagorean Table” derived therefrom (*Lehrbuch der Harmonik*, 1950). Kayser’s work was continued by Rudolf Haase (b. 1920) and Werner Schulze (b. 1952) at the Hans-Kayser Institut für harmonikale Grundlagenforschung, Vienna.

In the 1960s, esoteric ideas began to filter back into practical music. They first appeared in the popular field, for instance when the rock-musical *Hair* played with the notion of an imminent “Age of Aquarius”. Superficial themes from oriental philosophy appeared from the Beatles after their encounter with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; scraps of pseudo-Satanism from the Rolling Stones; Celtic and magical themes from Robin Williamson and the Incredible String Band; Meher Baba’s influence from Pete Townshend and The Who. This trend in popular music was part of a broader movement that included the Hippies and Flower Children, the mind-altering effects of cannabis, LSD, and mescaline, and a renewal of interest in spiritual philosophy, esoteric literature, and divination (→ Tarot, astrology, I Ching).

In the so-called classical field, avant-garde trends were split during the 1950s and 1960s between the increasing use of chance and noise, and the attempt at total control through serialism following Schoenberg and Webern. The leader of the former trend was John Cage (1912-1993), whose music and writings were strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism, and to a lesser extent by the mysticism of Meister Eckhart. The strength and appeal of Cage’s personality affected every one of the arts, holding out the possibility that they might have a spiritual (as distinct from a religious) purpose. This ran counter to the predominant desacralization of the arts that characterized the modernist mainstream.

The two avant-garde trends united in the middle-period work of Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928), already a leader of the serialist school, who began using overtly spiritual references in the text for improvisation *Aus den sieben Tagen* and in the six-voice, harmonically-based *Stimmung* (1968). This tendency culminated in Stockhausen’s *Licht* (1977-), a cycle of seven operas named after the days of the week. The cosmogony of *Licht* revolves around the figures of Michael, Eve, and Lucifer, who are presented in a Gnostic context, specifically influenced by *The Urantia Book*, an anonymous “channeled” work of the 1930s. Stockhausen’s composing methods, derived from serialism, have

a microcosmically-ordered, Hermetic flavor, in which each part reflects the whole. While some critics were repelled by his messianic pretensions, his prestige encouraged a fad among composers of the 1970s and 1980s for giving music a gloss of Hermetic, astrological, alchemical, or mystical references. This was one of several manifestations in music of the → New Age movement. Another is the genre of music simply styled “New Age”, characterized by static, diatonic harmonies, gentle, repetitive rhythms, and folksong-like melodies. New Age music is anti-modernist, diametrically opposed to both rock ‘n’ roll and to the atonality of the “classical” avant-garde. Healing qualities are claimed for it, recalling the use of music in the Pythagorean schools.

The end of the 20th century saw a strong post-modernist trend in serious music. Philip Glass (b. 1937) and John Adams (b. 1947) achieved success by using some of the techniques of New Age music. The compositions of Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) and John Tavener (b. 1944) invite the listener into contemplative states akin to prayer, with explicit links to the Christian Orthodox tradition and the Traditionalist school [→ Tradition]. The same period saw a rediscovery of the songs and personality of → Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) and a sudden popularity of Gregorian Chant. Connected to this was the increased use of music for personal development, especially in active methods using the voice, such as overtone singing. In widening circles, music was regarded as a bridge to the sacred, an adjunct to mystical experience, and an agent for the healing of body and soul. The rift between classical and popular genres, so evident in music of the 20th century, has become increasingly irrelevant. These trends seem to hold the promise of a return to certain Pythagorean and Platonic ideals.

*Lit.:* Jacques Chailley, *The Magic Flute, Masonic Opera*, London: Gollancz, 1972 ♦ Judith A. Eckelmeyer, *The Cultural Context of Mozart’s Magic Flute*, 2 vols., Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991 ♦ Michael Embach & Joscelyn Godwin, *Johann Friedrich Hugo von Dalberg 1760-1812: Schriftsteller, Musiker, Domberr*, Mainz: Gesellschaft für mittelhessische Kirchengeschichte, 1998 ♦ Jean Overton Fuller, *The Comte de Saint Germain*, London/The Hague: East-West Publications, 1988, 66-88 ♦ J.O. Fuller, *Cyril Scott and A Hidden School* (Theosophical History Occasional Papers VII), Fullerton, Ca.: History, 1998 ♦ J. Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic: A Sourcebook*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986 ♦ idem, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1987 ♦



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JOSCELYN GODWIN

## Mysticism

'Like the sphinx of old, mysticism remains the point where one meets with an enigma. It can be located but it cannot be categorized' (De Certeau 1977). This is doubtless one reason why the term is so ambiguous, and so often lends itself to confusion with other forms of apprehending reality, such as → esotericism.

Etymologically, the semantic field of mysticism is close to that of esotericism: *mu* refers to the closed mouth, hence *muô*, to be closed (especially the eyes and the mouth); *mustēs* means the "mystes", the initiated one, he who keeps his lips sealed; *mustērion* refers to the initiation cult, hence → secrecy. In Christianity this vocabulary covers, on the one hand, the manifestation of the divine plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, beyond what can be discovered by natural knowledge, but revealed by mystical and allegorical interpretation; and on the other hand, it refers to religious and liturgical elements, especially of a sacramental order. The Latins rendered *mustērion* as *mysterium* as well as *sacramentum*, which was considered equivalent; the latter term is of juridical origin (deposit of guarantee in a trial; oath) and refers less to the pagan mystery cults than is the case with *mustērion*, especially in its plural *mustēria* (or, in Latin, *mysteria*). The adjective *mustikos* thus related first to the initiate and to mystery, and to the communion of the faithful with Christ, prior to becoming a substantive at the turn of the 16th to the 17th century, designating a unitive experience of the intimate presence of God in Man

(*mysticism*) and the person enjoying this experience (*mystic*). This substantivation completed the process inaugurated at the end of the Middle Ages by the autonomization of mystical theology in relation to scholastic and positive theology; and it continued by the separation of mysticism as an experience from theology as rational discourse.

The semantic proximity between mysticism and esotericism has not escaped either the esotericists or its scholars, whether they assimilate the two words or distinguish between them. Historical and conceptual filiations have been established, not without some justification, between esotericism and mysticism; these have been based primarily on the fact that both are linked to experiences of a dimension of reality that escapes natural and common understanding by the senses and by reason. Thus Stroumsa (*Hidden Wisdom*, 1996) has described the process by which the Fathers of the 2nd-3rd century shifted the meaning of *mustērion* from the hidden to the ineffable. He concludes that, in view of the universality claimed by the Christian salvation and the competition with → Gnosticism, the Fathers suppressed any properly esoteric dimension of orthodox Christianity in order to develop, with the aid of esoteric vocabulary, mystical doctrines bearing on the ineffability of God and human interiority.

Other researchers, perhaps as a result of the discredit cast upon the study of esotericism in mainstream academic research, contributed to the confusion by qualifying as "mysticism" domains that would seem to fall, rather, within the province of esotericism. Thus Gershom Scholem, in the English editions of his works, and especially after 1941, used the term mysticism for what he had formerly been ready to refer to by Hebrew terms equivalent to "esotericism". Charles Mopsik has criticized Scholem for having made the expression "Jewish mysticism" an equivalent of "Kabbalah"; to the latter, he argues, the word "mystagogy" would be more appropriate, since its etymology 'simultaneously evokes the idea of secrecy and that of teaching or initiation' as well as transformative wisdom (Mopsik 1993, 24-25). Similarly, when Hans Lewy gives his *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (1978) the subtitle *Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, Pierre Hadot remarks that 'the word "mysticism" is a badly defined term that is mostly used haphazardly' (1978, 718). Its use in the context of → Neoplatonism connects it with theurgy and the ancient mysteries, and not with the unitive experience of the divine that has later come to be attached to it. It therefore seems that, in many cases, the use of the

word “mysticism” to designate esoteric trends reflects a strategy of avoiding the pejorative associations attached to the term esotericism. This strategy is made possible by the polysemy of the term *mustērion* and its derivatives developed in the course of their history, and by the vagueness that is attached to it today.

Some modern esotericists, most often Christian, have not hesitated to identify themselves with mysticism. Examples are → Paul Sédir (Yvon Le Loup) and Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, who generally avoids speaking of esotericism, preferring terms like → hermetism and Christian mysticism. It is especially true of → Valentin Tomberg, who saw in mysticism a basic element of hermeticism and distinguished three forms in it according to the union that each one is considered to make possible: with Nature, with the transcendental human Self, and with a living God. However, esotericists as well as historians of esotericism have sought to differentiate mysticism from esotericism. Thus, among the latter, Antoine Faivre, while recognizing that the terms esotericism and mysticism are often used interchangeably, proposes to distinguish these areas according to the relative importance that their representatives attach to “intermediary realities”: a domain where the esotericist tend to linger, whereas it is a mere stage to pass through and leave behind for the mystic (Faivre 1996, 28).

On the side of the esotericists themselves, the traditionalists in the wake of → René Guénon oppose the initiatory path, seen as properly esoteric, to the mystical path; they emphasize that the etymology connecting mysticism with mystery is no counter-argument, since mysticism has long designated an exclusively religious and therefore exoteric path, which is consequently incompatible with the initiatory path of esotericism. While mysticism takes an attitude of passivity and receptivity to divine influences, whatever they may be, without any doctrinal preparation being required, initiation is a methodical activity that requires the individual's initiative from the very beginning. Besides, mysticism is confined to the realization of the individual, whereas initiation can go beyond, at least in some cases. → Frithjof Schuon sometimes lets it be understood that the mystical path does include a certain amount of activity and can sometimes anticipate a real union with the divine principle, but he nevertheless maintains a certain distinction between volutaristic mysticism and intellective gnosis. In an approach to the “Christian mystery” that includes the “esoteric perspective”, Jean Borella has sought to refute the Guénonian critique of mysticism. He argues that it neglects, first, that the undeniable but

relative passivity of the mystical path is assumed in a process actively realized by Christ, and second, that by virtue of the hypostatic union, mystical union with Christ is in fact union with divine nature.

Any study of the relationships and differences between esotericism and mysticism is certainly made particularly difficult by the confusion that reigns between these two areas, and that seems to be more or less consciously maintained. This confusion results from a number of factors: their common experiential nature; their related semantic connotations; their frequent historical interferences; a similar independence claimed in relation to scholastic theology and ecclesiastical institutions; the suspicion of heterodoxy associated with it in many modern theologians; and the discredit that rationalist thinking has long cast on both. To this whole set of factors must be added the complex relation, not only between mysticism and esotericism, but also between these two notions and those of → magic and theurgy. Esotericism and mysticism do have similarities: the primacy of experience and inner transformation, the quest for unity, and the claim that the very heart of religion will be revealed only by going beyond rational discursivity. However, the two notions do not come down to the same thing. Even when, especially from the 17th century on, mysticism tends to translate its inexpressible dimension into psychological and corporeal phenomena, almost like a sort of stigmata through which the invisible intrudes into the field of observation, it still maintains the demand for a total union with the divine. In such total union, all intermediaries and phenomena disappear: the body of the modern mystic is a body of pain, subject to a “road of excess” that disfigures and annihilates rather than transfigures it. The esotericist, on the other hand, typically awaits the transmutation of the world and of his own carnal reality; he prefers to sojourn ‘on Jacob's ladder, where the angels – symbols, mediations – are ascending and descending, rather than venture resolutely beyond’ (Faivre 1996, 28).

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Etudes augustiennes, 1978, 703-720 ♦ Jean-Pierre Josua, *Seul avec Dieu: L'aventure mystique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1996, 285 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1992 ♦ Charles Mopsik, *Les grand textes de la cabale: Les rites qui font Dieu. Pratiques religieuses et efficacité théurgique dans la cabale des origines au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lagrasse: Verdier, 1993, 18-41 ♦ Guy Gedaliahuh Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, Leiden etc.: E.J. Brill, 1996 ♦ Moritz Bassler & Hildegard Châtellier (eds.), *Mystik, Mystizismus und Moderne in Deutschland um 1900*, Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1998 ♦ Joseph Dan, "In Quest of a Historical Definition of Mysticism: The Contingental Approach", in: Dan, *Jewish Mysticism* vol. 3, Northvale, NJ: Jason Aroson, 1999 ♦ idem, "Christian Kabbalah: From Mysticism to Esotericism", in: idem, 117-130 ♦ Dan Merkur, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1993 ♦ Dan Merkur, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1999.

JÉRÔME ROUSSE-LACORDAIRE

## Naassenes

The Naassenes were adherents of a 2nd-century Gnostic sect that is only known through an extensive report by Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, V, 6-11. The greater part of this report consists of an extract from a Naassene document, which is usually called the "Naassene Sermon" (V, 7, 2-9, 9). It is preceded by an introduction (V, 6, 1-7, 1) and followed by a concluding section (V, 9, 10-11, 1), in which Hippolytus provides further information about their beliefs. The whole section is part of Hippolytus' so-called "Sondergut", which is, *inter alia*, characterized by the ascription of similar ideas and images to different Gnostic groups. This complicates the study of the Naassenes to a certain extent, but a more complicating factor is that the author of the Sermon wrote for initiates and, for that reason, took knowledge of the Naassene doctrines and rituals for granted.

The name "Naassenes" derives from the Hebrew word *nāhāš*, "serpent", which the Naassenes, like other Gnostic groups, venerated (V, 6, 3; 11, 11-12), though it does not play a role of any importance in the Naassene ideas described by Hippolytus. There is no discernible relationship between the Naassenes and the → Ophites, the other Gnostic sect that explicitly derived its name from the serpent (Greek: *ophis*) they worshipped. The Naassenes called themselves "Gnostics", because they claimed to be 'the only ones who knew the depths', i.e. of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2, 10) or of Wisdom (V, 6, 4).

The Naassenes honoured Man (*Anthropos*) and the Son of Man above all other divine beings (V, 6, 4-7, 1), which they have in common with other Gnostic sects [→ Gnosticism]. In the summary of his report, Hippolytus explicitly states that both titles refer to the same divine entity (X, 9, 1), and as a matter of fact, his main report only speaks about "Man", who is also called Adamas. He is described as the androgynous manifestation of the highest God, the intermediary being between the divine realm and the created world. That Man is not the highest, unknown God becomes apparent from the following Naassene statement: 'The beginning of perfection is the knowledge of Man, but the knowledge of God is complete perfection' (V, 6, 6). The ontological and cosmological structure of the universe is rather unexpectedly introduced in V, 7, 9, which mentions three eternal principles: the Pre-existent, the Self-originate and Outpoured Chaos. It seems that the Self-originate and the Heavenly Anthropos are identical, and that he is called "Man" when envisaged as directed to the Pre-existent One and "Son of Man" as turned to the world of matter (Lancellotti, 2000). The whole universe has a tripartite structure. Heavenly Man consists of a rational, a psychic and a material part, which together came down on 'one man, Jesus, the son of Mary'. Through these three elements Jesus spoke to the three classes of being and the three communities ("churches") in the universe, the angelic, the psychic and the earthly, which are respectively named the "chosen", the "called" and the "enslaved". According to Hippolytus, these ideas were the principal points of a great number of teachings that Mariamne would have received from James, the Brother of the Lord (V, 7, 1; a late reflection of this tradition is found in the apocryphal *Acts of Philip*, 94ff., where James and Mariamne together go to the land of the Ophites).

The basic idea of their whole system is that of Adamas, the celestial Anthropos, of whom Scripture says: 'Who shall declare his generation?' (Isaiah 53:8; V, 7, 2). The Naassene "Sermon", which then follows, is in fact no more than an extensive answer to this question. It is not a sermon in the usual sense of the word and its ideas cannot be taken as the shared beliefs of a group. It is a learned Gnostic treatise by an individual, who seeks to illustrate the meaning of the Anthropos and other Naassene tenets by a wealth of "parallels" from Greek and Oriental religions, which he finds corroborated by a great number of biblical texts. The Sermon is largely a Gnostic commentary on two hymns to Attis, the emasculated young god of the mysteries of the Great Mother, which are quoted in

full at the end of the treatise. The first of these hymns equates Attis with, *inter alia*, the deities of the “mysteries” of Syria (Adonis), Egypt (Isis), Samothrace (Adamas), and Greece (the moon god Men, Eleusis). All these deities and the rites connected with their cults and also the many epithets of Attis, mentioned in the first hymn, are applied to the myth of the Naassene Anthropos. There are no compelling arguments to distinguish, with Frickel and other scholars, several layers of successive revisions in the document and to assume that the author has adapted an already existing “pagan” commentary on the Attis hymns to his Naassene beliefs. The author was most probably a Gnostic teacher who had a good knowledge of Greek and Oriental religious traditions, but also of both the Old and the New Testament.

His discussion of the pagan “parallels” reveals some interesting aspects of the Naassene ideas on anthropology and soteriology. The heavenly Anthropos (Adamas) is the prototype of which earthly man (Adam) is the image. The exact relationship between them is difficult to establish: on the one hand, the Son of Man, as the creative force in the universe, gives life to the human mould, on the other hand he is captured by the evil powers and enslaved in the human body. The Naassenes considered this an inexplicable mystery: ‘How and in what way he came down, we do not know’ (V, 8, 13). It is clear that somehow the soul constitutes the link between the divine prototype and its earthly image. The souls, at least those which become enlightened or “reawakened”, come from ‘that blessed being on high, Man or Primal Man or Adamas, from whom they were brought down into this moulded figure of clay to serve the artificer of this creation, Esaldaeus, the fiery god, the fourth in number’ (V, 7, 30). Esaldaeus is the Demiurge, whose name is a Greek form of the biblical divine name El-Shaddai (probably “God of the mountain”). He might have been called “the Fourth”, since he brought order in the “outpoured chaos”, the third eternal principle of the universe, and rules over it together with his powers (Lancellotti, 2000, 115-120). As said above, the three aspects of the heavenly Man came down on Jesus, who became the Gnostic Saviour by revealing the truth to those who are worthy of it. The cosmology and soteriology are in fact aspects of one process of descent and return of both the divine Anthropos and human souls. This process is compared to an ocean, ‘always turning in its ebb and flow, now upwards, now downwards’ (V, 7, 38). In one of his few references to the serpent, the author says that it is the liquid substance, without which nothing can exist,

and he then identifies it with the river that comes out of Eden (Gen. 2, 10ff.). This river in its turn is an image of both earthly man and the heavenly Anthropos, who is also equated with the water above the firmament mentioned by Jesus in John 4, 10 and 14 (V, 9, 13-22). The Naassenes said that they were ‘the spiritual people (*pneumatikoi*), who were chosen as his own possession by this “Living Water” on high . . . for we enter in through the true gate, which is Jesus the blessed one, and out of all men we alone are Christians’ (V, 9, 21-22).

At the end of his report, Hippolytus quotes a Gnostic hymn, ‘through which they suppose they are celebrating all the mysteries of their error’. This hymn, the famous *Psalm of the Naassenes*, starts with a reference to the three basic principles of the universe, here called “First-born Mind (*nous*)”, “Outpoured Chaos”, and “Soul (*psychè*)”. They are probably identical to the principles mentioned in the Sermon: the Pre-existent One, Outpoured Chaos, and the Self-originate as the intermediary divine entity between the two extremes. Thereupon the hymn continues with the fate of the Soul, which finally ‘in her wanderings entered the exitless Labyrinth’, i.e. the world of matter and evil. Then Jesus, who as the Saviour is apparently identified with the heavenly Anthropos, takes action to save the soul. It is worthwhile to quote the rest of the Psalm in conclusion, since it is a beautiful expression of the Gnostic idea of salvation, not only of the Naassenes, but also of the Gnostics in general (Marcovich, 1978): ‘Then Jesus said: “Look, Father:/this prey to evils is wandering away to earth,/far from thy spirit./And she seeks to escape the bitter Chaos,/but knows not how to win through./For that reason send me, Father./Bearing the seals I will descend;/I will pass through all the Aeons;/I will reveal all the mysteries/and show the forms of the gods;/I will transmit the secrets of the holy way,/calling them Gnosis”’.

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*Lit.*: M.J. Edwards, “The Naming of the Naassenes: Hippolytus, *Refutatio* V.6-10 as hieros logos”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 112 (1996), 74-80 ♦ J. Frickel, *Hellenistische Erlösung in christlicher Deutung: Die gnostische Naassenerschrift: Quellenkritische Studien, Strukturanalyse, Schichten-scheidung, Rekonstruktion der Anthropos-Lehrschrift* (NHS, 19), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984 ♦ J. Holzhausen,



*Der "Mythos vom Menschen" im hellenistischen Ägypten* (Theophrastica, 33), Bodenheim: Athenäum Hain Hanstein, 1994 ♦ M.G. Lancellotti, *The Naassenes: A Gnostic Identity Among Judaism, Christianity, Classical and Ancient Near Ancient Traditions* (Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte, 35), Münster, 2000 ♦ idem, *Attis Between Myth and History: King, Priest and God* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 149), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002, 119-125 ♦ M. Marcovich, "The Naassene Psalm in Hippolytus (*Haer.* 5.10.1)", in: B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale New Haven, Connecticut, March 28-31, 1978*, vol. II, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981, 770-778 ♦ H.-M. Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

### Naturphilosophie (end 18th-first half of 19th century)

Not to be confused with "natural philosophy", considered as the pursuit of an objective knowledge of phenomena, several "philosophies of nature" have adopted a more intuitive approach, as followed by thinkers like Gottfried W. Leibniz, Georg W.F. Hegel or Henri Bergson, but also by those who represent the specific current called *Naturphilosophie*, which belongs to the Romantic period [→ Romanticism] *latu sensu* (end of the 18th century and first half of the 19th), particularly in Germany.

Among the precursors of *Naturphilosophie* are, in particular, → Christian Theosophy, "mosaic physics", "physico-theology", the so-called "theology of electricity", the first experiments in → animal magnetism; and also three new orientations which appeared toward the end of the 18th century on the stage of philosophy in general, and will be further explained below.

To begin with Christian Theosophy, an esoteric current which flourished from the beginning of the 17th century onward, one of its prevailing aspects was the search for dynamic → correspondences between Nature, Man and God (or divine entities) through an ongoing, "illuminative" speculation bearing on the complex and dramatic relationships between these three, envisaged as *dramatis personae*. In the 18th century, theosophical discourses dealt more and more with the notion of "higher physics", or "sacred physics", as opposed to a merely rational variety. Such sacred physics opposed the desacralization of the universe result-

ing from the increasing amount of scientific discoveries. It was a matter of resacralizing both science and the world. Theosophy *stricto sensu* starts from a speculation which bears on the Divine, whereas *Naturphilosophie* proper begins with an observation of natural phenomena, which it then tries to integrate into a holistic and spiritual worldview. But since theosophers often transferred to the Spirit or the Divine Itself the proprieties of physics, it is scarcely surprising that in some authors the distinction between *Naturphilosophie* and Theosophy tends to get blurred (see below).

"Mosaic physics" also flourished in the 17th century. The term *physica sacra*, often linked to it, served to designate a reading of the Bible considered as the key to understanding another Book, that of Nature. The contents of both Books were supposed to coincide. → Jan Amos Comenius, for instance, represents this tendency. In the pre-Enlightenment era, at the end of the 17th century, first in England, then in other European countries, there arose a certain physico-theology, which endeavoured to reconcile scientific discoveries with faith (not necessarily with the Bible) as a reaction to mechanistic worldviews and Cartesian rationalism. Physico-theologians (for example, Friedrich Christian Lesser, *Lithotheologie*, 1735) were lavish in descriptions of animals (bees, molluscs, spiders, birds, etc.), plants, and natural phenomena (lightning, storms), to which they attributed symbolic and spiritual, albeit generally static, meanings.

In the context of the later widespread craze for experimentation with electricity and galvanism (1789, experiments of Galvani; 1800, Voltaic pile), the pre-Romantic period witnessed the spread of Franz Anton Mesmer's theories, and the development of animal magnetism by Armand Marie de Puységur and his followers. Another result of the belief in a magnetic fluid pervading Man and the whole universe was the so-called "theology of electricity". The latter was marked by a kind of spiritual realism represented by the theosopher → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger and other figures like Prokop Divisch, Johann Ludwig Fricker, Gottlieb Friedrich Rösler (e.g. their book *Theorie der meteorologischen Elektrizität*, 1765). This "theology" may be considered, at least with regard to Oetinger, as a kind of proto-*Naturphilosophie*.

Besides these three precursors, three further factors pertaining to the history of philosophy proper are also relevant to the appearance of *Naturphilosophie*.

A) The influence of French naturalism. With Georges-Louis de Buffon's theoretical works and Denis Diderot's *Le rêve de d'Alembert* (1769), a



new way of considering physics had begun to emerge. It began as a kind of literary exercise rather than a strictly scientific discourse, but as it became more popular it pervaded the culture of the time. Buffon, in particular, fostered a taste for synthesis (typical of Romantic thought), and promoted the theme of the Soul of the World (*anima mundi*).

B) The philosophies of Imanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science, 1786), which discussed the necessity of discovering the *a priori* principles at work behind empirical data, Kant presented as a constitutive characteristic of Nature the two forces of Newtonian physics, attraction and repulsion, at a time when the notion of polarity was already spreading outside esoteric circles and flowing into various domains including medicine. Leaning on some of Kant's ideas, which he extended to the utmost, Fichte proceeded to spread the idea that the world is a product of → Imagination (notably in *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* [Foundations of the Entire Doctrine of Science, 1794-1795]). Imagination was understood as resulting from a synthetic and spontaneous activity of the Spirit (*i.e.*, the thing in itself and our representation of it are identical).

c) Spinozan philosophy. Having been considered an atheist during most of the 18th century, Spinoza's religious ideas returned to centre stage at the turn of the century, but were now interpreted as those of a man intoxicated with God. His "*Deus sive natura*" was no longer read as a disguised profession of materialistic faith, but as the affirmation that Nature is something divine. At this time, there was a prevailing tendency to conceive of God not as identical with things but as the primordial centre of energy from which the development of organic forms and the entire finite world proceeded. *Naturphilosophie* generally avoids pantheism in favour of this panentheism.

*Naturphilosophie* proper appeared during the last years of the 18th century, heralded by two groundbreaking works, published almost simultaneously in 1798: → F.J.W. Schelling's *Von der Weltseele* (On the Soul of the World), and → Franz von Baader's *Über das pythagoräische Quadrat in der Natur* (About the Pythagorean Square in Nature). Besides these two, mention must be made of the first writings of the theoretician in animal magnetism Carl August von Eschenmayer (e.g., *Sätze aus der Naturmetaphysik auf chemische und medicinische Gegenstände angewandt* [Elements of Metaphysics of Nature, applied to chemical and medical objects], 1797). Along with Baader, and even more

than Schelling, Eschenmayer combined the data of the pansophic-esoteric legacy with the new spirit of Kantian philosophy.

Among the further representatives of *Naturphilosophie*, the following authors and their representative works stand out: Karl Friedrich Burdach (*Blicke ins Leben* [Glimpses into Life], 1842-1848); Wilhelm Butte (*Arithmetik des menschlichen Lebens* [Arithmetic of Human Life], 1811); Carl Gustav Carus (*Natur und Idee*, 1862); Joseph Ennemoser (*Der Magnetismus im Verhältnis zur Natur und Religion* [Magnetism as related to Nature and Religion], 1842); Gustav Theodor Fechner (*Zend-Avesta*, 1851); Joseph Görres (*Aphorismen über Kunst, als Einleitung zu künftigen Aphorismen über Organonomie, Physik, Psychologie und Anthropologie* [Aphorisms on Art, as an Introduction to Future Aphorisms on Organonomy, Physics, Psychology and Anthropology], 1802); → Justinus Kerner (*Eine Erscheinung aus dem Nachtgebiete der Natur* [A Manifestation from the Night-Side of Nature], 1836); Dietrich Georg Kieser (in particular his contributions of the 1820s to the journal *Archiv für den Thierischen Magnetismus*); Giovanni Malfatti (*Studien über Anarchie und Hierarchie des Wissens* [Studies about Anarchy and Hierarchy of Knowledge], 1843); → Johann Friedrich von Meyer (in particular his contributions to *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit* [Journal for Higher Truth], 1820, 1823, 1827, 1832); Adam Müller (*Lehre vom Gegensatz* [The Contradiction Theory], 1804); → Novalis (ps. of Friedrich von Hardenberg: *Das allgemeine Brouillon: Materialien zur Enzyklopädistik* [The General Draft: Materials for my Encyclopaedic Project], 1798-1799); Hans Christian Oersted (*Der Geist der Natur* [The Spirit of Nature], 1850-1851); Lorenz Oken (*Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie* [Coursebook on *Naturphilosophie*], 1809); → Johann Wilhelm Ritter (*Fragmente aus der Nachlasse eines jungen Physikers* [Fragments from the Legacy of a Young Physicist], 1810); the painter Philipp Otto Runge (*Farbenkugel* [Ball of Colours], 1810); → Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (*Ansichten über die Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* [Views on the Night Sides of the Science of Nature], 1808); Henrik Steffens (*Grundzüge der philosophischen Naturwissenschaften* [The Main Traits of the Philosophical Science of Nature], 1806); Gottfried Reinhold Trevisarus (*Die Erscheinungen und Gesetze des organischenn Lebens* [The Manifestations and Laws of Organic Life], 1831-1833); Ignaz Troxler (*Über das Leben und sein Problem* [On Life and Its Problem], 1806); Johann Jakob Wagner (*Organon der menschlichen*

*Erkenntniss* [Organon of Human Knowledge], 1830). One should also mention, with respect to other cultural fields, such names as → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (*L'Esprit des choses* [The Spirit of Things], 1802), William Paley (*Natural Theology*, 1802), or Sir Humphrey Davy (*Consolations in Travel*, 1830).

The theosophical tendency is far from being the rule amongst these figures. It is conspicuous in Baader, Meyer, and Schubert, for example, but almost absent from the works of such authors as Burdach, Oken, and Wagner. However most *Naturphilosophen* share three common tenets, which are explicitly or implicitly present in their discourse, and account for their proximity to esotericism in general, and to theosophy in particular:

*First tenet: Nature has a history of a mythical order.* This ontological postulate functions as a poetic mainspring for research and speculation. The world is not made of eternal, immutable things but is, like the Spirit, engaged in a process of a highly dramatic character. A quadruple polar structure underlies most of these speculations. The first pole is the undifferentiated chaos, or primordial light. From it, two opposite poles emerge, which are both opposed and complementary to one another and assume various forms, like Fire and Water, Fire and Light, Masculine and Feminine, Attraction and Repulsion. A fourth term then manifests, which reflects the first one and is the common product within which the two opposing terms combine. Such a quaternary is the basic structure from which emerges a mythical narrative, identified by Schelling as ‘the repressed mystery of Christianity’. It is the story of the “Redeemed Redeemer”, *i.e.*, the meta-history of a captive Light awakened by another Light that had remained free. Hence the frequent use of the two notions of light and gravity (rather than darkness), the latter being understood as something by which the primitive energies have been engulfed, but from which they are still likely to re-emerge. In a similar vein, → Jacob Boehme described Nature as a fire whose embers Man should rekindle and which in turn would redeem him.

*Second tenet: The identity of Spirit and Nature,* first expressed by Schelling. “Spirit” is understood as the universal, even divine One, in His relation to Nature and Man. Ontologically, this identity rests on a mythical conception of the history of Nature (see above), based on an epistemological plane where the negative or destructive opposition of the two is surmounted: Spirit becomes Nature, Nature becomes spiritualized. Oersted wrote, ‘The more you advance toward [the] agreement between

Nature and Spirit . . . , the more perfect you will find it and [the more you will see that] these two Natures are the seeds of one common root’ (*Betrachtungen über die Geschichte der Chemie* [Considerations on the History of Chemistry], 1807). This “philosophy of identity” (*viz.* Schelling) has remained the most suggestive idea of *Naturphilosophie*, because it bears on the perennial metaphysical question of the relationship between Nature and Spirit. By the same token, self-knowledge and knowledge of the world go hand in hand. Both are an initiatory journey and immersion into “the becoming” (*das Werden*). But this *Werden* is dramatic because it implies both order and disorder. The world that surrounds us, and we ourselves, bear witness to an ancient order which has been disrupted. The idea is conspicuous also in Romantic art and literature, which lavishly depict natural landscapes resulting from cataclysmic events, thus reflecting one of the essential themes developed by theosophy, namely the belief in an original Fall of Man and Nature. The interdependence of Man and Nature, including the entire cosmos and the Soul of the World, is the central idea underlying the researches of such *Naturphilosophen* as Baader, Schubert, and Kerner in mesmerism, animal magnetism, and dreams.

*Third tenet: Nature as a whole is a living net of correspondences to be deciphered and integrated into a holistic worldview.* Nature is to be read as a text replete with symbolic implications, whose meaning lies beyond herself. A Spirit speaks through her. As a consequence, rigorous experimental science is never more than an obligatory first step toward a comprehensive, holistic knowledge encompassing both *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* (*i.e.*, the invisible as well as the visible processes at work within Nature and the whole cosmos). Things always present themselves as symbols which lead back to both the warp and woof of a universal web. Living structures are detected in crystals, celestial constellations, and electrical phenomena. Mechanistic imaginary and the compartmentalization of science into sectors cut off from one another, are replaced by an organic merging of all disciplines. Thus concrete science and metaphysics, or experimentation and meditation, are two sides of the same coin. Almost all representatives of this current were scholars with at least one scientific specialty, like chemistry, physics, geology, mine engineering, or medicine. The fragments of empirical reality required a “second reading”. Once reality had been subjected to scientific analysis, it needed to be deciphered symbolically in order to yield clusters of meaning. Consequently, a sci-

entific fact is perceived as a sign; and signs respond to each other. Concepts borrowed from chemistry are transferred to astronomy or human psychology; notions pertaining to botany are used to describe inorganic processes, and vice versa. It is not surprising that the Romantic image of the wise physician, characteristic of period literature, enjoyed a great success, based as it was on the analogy between medicine and poetry. In literature, such transfers from one domain to another often took the form of aphorisms (e.g. Novalis), a genre generally favoured by German Romanticism. The Romantic writer Friedrich Schlegel claimed that ‘the combinatorial mind is truly prophetic’, and Schelling advocated a form of non-dogmatic polytheism: ‘Monotheism of the mind and of the heart, and polytheism of the imagination and of art, this is what we need’ (*Briefe und Dokumente*, 1962, vol. I, 70).

→ Goethe’s philosophy of Nature is somewhat distinct from the current of *Naturphilosophie*. Admittedly, throughout his life he certainly maintained the notion of a vital universe, and his scientific works, especially those on the metamorphosis of plants and on colours, place him close to some leanings of the *Naturphilosophen*. But he was more interested in trying to grasp eternity in an instant, or infinity in an object (→ William Blake), than in discovering commonalities or correspondences between things, or in what the latter symbolize of the invisible. More generally, he remained aloof from Romanticism.

After about sixty years, the current of *Naturphilosophie* faded away in the 1850s. It was probably the last period in which Man – or, at least, the savants – had felt at home on Earth. Gradually, an estrangement of Man from Nature had made headway. This process had already been smouldering for a few decades, as exemplified by Arthur Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation, 1819), in which Nature is considered as being outside the categories of understanding. In the second half of the 19th century, *Naturphilosophie* was definitely superseded by the advent of scientific, materialistic worldviews. However, it left numerous legacies. A number of celebrated philosophers in the 20th century, like Ludwig Klages, Hermann Keyserling, and Max Scheler, have reclaimed some of its heritage, but in an essentially speculative manner, since none of them was a chemist, astrophysicist, or physician.

Originally inspired by Goethe, → Rudolf Steiner then followed an orientation more akin to *Naturphilosophie* proper, which has consequently left its

imprint upon the teachings and literature of the Anthroposophical Society [→ Anthroposophy] until the present. Less directly but more importantly, the most obvious survival of *Naturphilosophie* is to be found in the theories of the unconscious. In this respect, works like Schubert’s *Die Symbolik des Traums* (Symbolism of Dreams, 1814), and perhaps even more Carus’s *Psyche: Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele* (Psyche: The Developmental History of the Soul, 1846), certainly influenced the ideas of late 19th century thinkers like Eduard von Hartmann (*Philosophie des Unbewussten* [Philosophy of the Unconscious], 1869). Even more importantly, these theorists of the unconscious represent the historical origins of psychoanalysis, leading to the theories of Sigmund Freud (for whom the unconscious is monolithic, as it had been for Arthur Schopenhauer) and those of → Carl Gustav Jung, who described the unconscious as a dynamically functioning quaternary. Jung may be considered the last major representative of *Naturphilosophie*. His view of → alchemy, namely that what alchemists saw in their crucible was a constellation of their own unconscious, might well be applied to the *Naturphilosophen* as well. Apart from brilliant exceptions like Ritter and Oersted, the *Naturphilosophen* did not make significant discoveries themselves; but they were keen to find and express truths of a different order, that of the Absolute.

Over the last decades, members of several scientific communities have adopted some conceptions pertaining to *Naturphilosophie*, whether they were aware of this tradition or not. For example, the idea of intelligent matter has been addressed by scientists like Valdemar Axel Firsoff (*Life, Mind and Galaxies*, 1967) and Jean Charon (*L’Homme et l’Univers* [Man and the Universe], 1974). The hypothesis that matter is modelled on the Spirit has been developed in Arthur Koestler’s *The Roots of Coincidence* (1972). Authors like David Bohm (*Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980) and Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of Physics*, 1975) have developed “holistic” interpretations of modern physics, thus fostering a sort of visionary physics that can be interpreted as a new form of *Naturphilosophie* (Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 64-76).

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

## Neo-Catharism

→ Catharism, the dualistic medieval Christian heresy, disappeared in the early 15th century, and was occasionally remembered only by Church historians until the Enlightenment, when anti-Catholic *philosophes* lionized Cathars as victims of Catholic intolerance. Later, in the 19th century, Romantics linked Catharism to the legend of the Holy → Grail. In 1846, for instance, historian Charles-Claude Fauriel (1772-1844) interpreted the word "Monsalwaesche", the name of the mythical Grail castle in the 13th century *Parzival* written by Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220), as a German version of Montségur, the Pyrenean fortress from which the Cathars organized their last act of resistance in 1244. Fauriel, in his *Histoire de la poésie provençale*, argued that "Montségur" (*Mons Securitatis*) had the same meaning as "Monsalwaesche", i.e. "the Mount of Salvation". Contemporary historians, however, have concluded that, strictly speaking, the Cathars

and the Grail have no mutual relation whatsoever. The alleged connection was popularized by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) in his *Parsifal* (1882), and actually taken for granted by generations of artists and poets.

It was Jules-Benoît Doinel (1842-1902) who first revived Catharism as a living religious faith. Born into a pious Catholic family in Moulins (France) in 1842, as a teenager Doinel experienced mystical visions of St. Stanislas Kostka (1550-1568), a 16th century Jesuit novice celebrated for his chastity. Doinel dreamed of joining the Jesuits, but the latter did not particularly appreciate his visions and mysticism. Disappointed, while achieving national prominence as an archivist and student of medieval documents, he left the Roman Catholic Church altogether and became a spiritualist medium [→ Spiritualism]. After a short return to Catholicism between 1868-1874, he furthermore became an anticlerical Freemason [→ Freemasonry], a Theosophist [→ Theosophical Society], and a Martinist [→ Martinism: Second Period]. In the late 1880s, Doinel became a regular of the Paris circle surrounding Maria Mariátegui, Duchess of Pomar, Lady Caithness by marriage (1830-1895), a key figure in the Paris esoteric milieu of the time. In May 1890, Doinel and the Duchess founded a secret → Gnostic Church. One month later, during a famous spiritualist séance in the Duchess's private chapel, the spirits of no less than 41 "Cathar bishops" appeared and consecrated Doinel as patriarch of a new neo-Cathar Gnostic Church.

Based on this spiritualist consecration Doinel, in turn, proceeded to consecrate as Gnostic bishops some of the most well-known figures of the Paris' occult "underground", including → Papus (Gérard Encausse, 1865-1916) and → Paul Sédir (Yvon Le Loup, 1871-1926). Doinel also claimed that the Cathars of old had had women bishops, and thus went on to consecrate Marie Chauvel de Chauvigny (1842-1927) as yet another bishop in his Gnostic Church, giving her the name of Esclarmonde (after the Cathar heroine, 1250-1300). Between 1890-1894, Doinel devised a full religious ritual, drawing on both ancient → Gnosticism and medieval Catharism. He recreated, in particular, two Cathar sacraments, the "Consolamentum" and "Appareillantum" (a penitential ritual).

In 1895, Doinel announced his re-conversion to Roman Catholicism, and repudiated his neo-Cathar Church by publishing a vitriolic exposé of this and other occult activities and rituals under the title *Lucifer démasqué* (Lucifer Unmasked). Although the scandal generated by this book eventually subsided, it is unclear what Doinel really



thought up to his death in 1902: he had attended both Gnostic and Catholic rituals, and had remained a contradictory and enigmatic figure. Doinel's Gnostic Church continued, and still exists today (although divided by several schisms into a dozen different international branches), but the Cathar connection largely died with him.

Quite apart from the Gnostic Church, a Cathar revival emerged in Southern France (the *pays cathare*, "Cathar country" where Cathars once lived and died) in the 1930s around Déodat Roché (1877-1978) and Antonin Gadal (1877-1962). Their work was largely indebted to the 19th century writer Napoléon Peyrat (1809-1881). Occasionally regarded as the founder of modern neo-Catharism, Peyrat was a Protestant pastor who believed that the real continuation of Catharism was, in fact, Protestantism. Southern French neo-Cathar circles gained some audience in Paris, where they also influenced novelist Maurice Magre (1877-1941), who returned to the Grail connection linking it to the legend of a Cathar treasure hidden somewhere in the hills of Montségur. Roché did much to promote the mythology of Montségur, where he later built a monument, dedicated in 1959. In 1950, he established the Société des Souvenirs et des Études Cathares, and from 1949 edited the journal *Cahiers d'Études Cathares*. Both the Society and the journal still exist, and Roché is still honored in his native village of Arques, although he also had a number of critics unable to share his enthusiasm for the → Anthroposophy of → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). In fact, Roché consistently refused to be nicknamed "Pope of (neo-)Catharism", which was a title liberally conferred on him by the local press, and he remained a loyal Anthroposophist throughout most of his life.

Somewhat similar was the itinerary of Antonin Gadal. Born in Tarascon, he worked as a school teacher in Ussat-Ornolac (Ariège) and became a student of the village's Cathar history. Although not everybody was persuaded, he himself believed that Cathars had congregated in the caves near Ussat, and he arranged for them to be opened to tourists (similarly, Roché "catharized" the graffiti found in some caves near Montségur). Gadal tried to reconstruct the Cathar religion (which he called "Maneism", carefully distinguishing it from → Manichaeism), and also regarded Cathars as the direct descendants of a French branch of Gnosticism. After World War II, Gadal met → Jan van Rijckenborgh (Jan Leene, 1896-1968), the founder of the Rosicrucian organization Lectorium Rosicrucianum. In 1957, Gadal founded the French branch of the Lectorium, and faithfully served the

Dutch-based Rosicrucian organization until his death in 1962, linking the Lectorium to the caves and museum in Ussat. While Roché and Gadal did much to revive both local and international interest in Catharism, they ultimately isolated themselves from the larger milieu of Cathar enthusiasts by each joining a specific movement (Anthroposophy for Roché, and the Lectorium for Gadal).

Roché and Gadal's cause also suffered because of its association with Otto Rahn (1904-1939), an SS officer who explored "Cathar country" and the alleged Grail connection in the 1930s, eventually publishing two books on the subject. It is unclear whether Rahn worked alone, or whether his Grail quest was conducted on behalf of the Nazi hierarchy and its Wagnerian aspirations. Nazi interest in Cathar mythology in German-occupied France has been mentioned not only in popular "esoteric" fiction, but also in more reputable literature, including the celebrated *Avignon Quintet* by Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990). Most Catharism buffs did not join any specific movement, but remained secular humanists (in most cases), Protestants, and even Roman Catholics, while at the same time collecting old Cathar documents and promoting tourism to "Cathar country". The latter activity has met with considerable and unexpected success, and "Cathar country" is now visited yearly by millions of tourists. Others, following Otto Rahn (or the rumors and mythology surrounding his visits to Southern France), promoted small neo-Cathar groups which are right-wing politically as well as religiously, and made Catharism the putative "national religion" of Occitania. Some smaller groups are explicitly neo-Nazi, whilst others promote *nationalisme occitan* and Languedoc separatism from France.

Neo-Cathar mythology also played a role in the strange saga of Rennes-le-Château, a small village in the Aude department, in the heart of "Cathar country". In 1885, Berenger Saunière (1852-1917) became the parish priest of Rennes-le-Château. An amateur historian and archeologist, he recovered a number of artifacts dating back to the Middle Ages and built a neo-Gothic home and tower for himself next door to the parish church. Conflicts about the ownership of these buildings, and other matters, led to Saunière being disciplined by his bishop, and in 1910 he was suspended from his priestly office. Rumors and legends abounded about the strange priest, and after his death in 1917 his former maid, Marie Denarnaud (1868-1953), who had inherited Saunière's buildings and was trying to sell them, claimed that the priest had found an ancient treasure on the site, and had re-hidden it there.



Eventually, Denarnaud sold the property to Noel Corbu (1912-1968), who used it to open a restaurant, and spread the treasure story through the local press in the hope of attracting tourists and customers. Corbu was quite successful, precisely because his claims fell on receptive ears among Cathar enthusiasts, who regarded Saunière as having some connection with “the” Cathar treasure.

Pierre Plantard (1920-2000), a well-known participant in Paris’s occult milieu, also became a key character in the Rennes-le-Château saga. He claimed that the treasure found by Saunière included not only material goods and artifacts, but also documents proving that Jesus had married Mary Magdalene, and that their children originated a royal bloodline which ultimately flowed through the throne of France in the veins of the Merovingian dynasty. The Holy Grail, the *Saint Graal* in French, was really the “*Sang Réal*” (Royal Blood), the blood of Jesus Christ himself carried by the Merovingians and their descendants. Plantard ultimately claimed to be a true descendant of the Merovingians, and that Cathars, Knights Templars, and a secret society called Priory of Sion, were all custodians of Jesus’ secret. In fact, a Priory of Sion was legally established by Plantard in 1956 and, even after his death in 2000, it still has members in several countries. In the meantime, the idea that documents proving that Jesus had children by Mary Magdalene are hidden somewhere in Rennes-le-Château, has been popularized in books written by both French (Gérard de Sède) and British journalists (Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, who also produced a BBC TV series of international fame). Eventually, the idea of a Jesus’ bloodline, and of the Cathars as custodians of this secret in Southern France, made its way into fiction (e.g. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 2003), movies, and even into such internationally popular comics as *Preacher* and *The Magdalena*.

The alleged connection of these claims with the Cathars is understandably regarded with great suspicion by professional historians, but has undoubtedly added to the mystery and fascination of “Cathar country”, to the further benefit of local tourism. Once again, however, this claim has not been immediately translated into a religious neo-Catharism. A General Conference Cathar Church – Assembly of Good Christians, is extremely active on the Internet through its website [www.cathar.net](http://www.cathar.net) but, despite claims of a large worldwide membership, it seems, in fact, to be a fairly small group.

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MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Neopaganism

1. INTRODUCTION
2. HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS
3. WICCA
4. FEMINIST WITCHCRAFT
5. DRUIDRY
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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Neopaganism is a complex phenomenon, representing many different traditions, practices and beliefs including neopagan witchcraft, neopagan Druidry, Asatrú/Heathenism, neo-shamanism, “non-aligned” Paganism, and initiatory Wicca. Each has its own starting point and may have multiple founders or originators. Neopaganism is often inspired by the practices of indigenous peoples and the paganisms of the ancient world revealed through archaeology, classics, myth and history. However, practices and beliefs are then revived or recreated in the context of modern-day life in a continual creative process. This occurs to a greater or lesser extent in the different traditions which fall under the term “neopagan”. As a result of these characteristics, in neopaganism, no one belief system can claim to be correct, and each person has the freedom to choose their own religion. Neopaganism has no official doctrines and no central authority.

This rejection of doctrine and authority is evident in definitions of neopaganism as a term covering movements which offer a critique, though not necessarily rejection of, Christianity. According to Hanegraaff (1998, 77), this is ‘based on the conviction that what Christianity has traditionally denounced as idolatry and superstition actually represents/represented a profound and meaningful religious worldview and . . . that a religious practice based on this worldview can and should be revitalized in our modern world’. He goes on to argue that the term “neopaganism” itself contains a ‘polemical thrust’ towards Christianity as the religion which is held responsible for the decline of western paganism and the negative perception of it over the past two thousand years. More recent concerns expressed through feminism and environmentalism tend to be seen in neopaganism as the consequence of the loss of pagan wisdom, which must be recovered, and thus Christianity has done the world a disservice in dismissing such wisdom. Nevertheless many, though by no means all, neopagans recognise an esoteric Christianity existing alongside Christian institutions, and this is regarded as compatible with neopaganism. The attitude of “being neopagan” in opposition to “being Christian” is growing more rare. Rather, neopagans claim to be tolerant and respectful towards other religions and spiritual practices. Much changed in the 1990s, as the influence of historical research permeated neopaganism and historical claims were re-evaluated. Along with this re-evaluation of the past has come a re-evaluation of Christianity. Neopagans are involved in the development of interfaith meetings with members of other religions, and as neopaganism has grown in popularity, and public awareness of it has increased, it has adopted a less reactive posture which no longer requires legitimisation through false histories or hatred of the Christian Church.

## 2. HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Such a perception of Christian and neopagan co-existence stems from a shared history within the Western Esoteric Tradition. The antecedents of neopaganism can be found in the late 19th century, in academic developments such as Egyptology, the development of tourism to sites of ancient pagan civilisations in Greece and Rome, the rise of occult [→ occult / occultism] and magical societies such as the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the eastern emphasis of the → Theosophical Society, and the writings of key figures such as → Aleister Crowley and → Dion Fortune. In addition, many leading occultists regarded as influential to neopa-

ganism were Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] or members of quasi-Masonic fraternities, the rituals and claims of which were carried over and adapted in some forms of neopaganism, particularly Wicca and Druidry.

19th century literature also influenced the development of neopaganism. Throughout the 19th century, the “pagan spirit” of subsequent waves of → Romanticism was developing into a paganism as an attitude of mind which was based on philhellenism and an exploration of nature and the deities of pagan antiquity. Although the beginnings of Romanticism (c. 1790s-1810) were overtly Christian and esoteric, at least as far as → William Blake and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) were concerned, later, under Lord Byron (1788-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), and John Keats (1795-1821), it became more “pagan” in its emphasis. All three left England for Greece and Italy for a variety of reasons and the ancient paganisms of the Mediterranean figured strongly in their work – Keats, for example, read the 19th century Lemprière’s [Classical] Dictionary to the point of obsession! Shelley was classically-minded and rebellious, seen as a dreamy lyricist by the Victorians, with a recurrent interest in Prometheus, though loved by the Italians among whom he made his home – his heart was buried in Rome, near the grave of Keats for whom he wrote the elegy *Adonais* which contains the exhortation to ‘go to Rome, which is the sepulchre./Oh, not of him, but of our joy’ (*Adonais*, XLVIII, 1-2). Of the three, Keats was the most classically minded (and obsessive), mixing Elizabethan literature with classicism and mythologising the ancient world as a dreamy arcadia, an escape from modernity. The 1840s saw Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) reviving Keats’ love of ancient Greece, albeit from a liberal Christian perspective, and in the 1850s Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was drawn to classical themes and characters, as well as Norse and Christian Arthurian legends.

It is with Algernon Charles Swinburne (1839-1909) that “paganism as an attitude of mind” finds its clearest expression. Like Keats and Shelley before him, Swinburne was a philhellenist and much of his poetry is filled with images of classical ancient paganisms, the exuberant paganism of *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) being a supreme example. He mourned the triumph of Christianity over paganism in his *Hymn to Proserpine*, and in *The Last Oracle* (A.D. 361), recorded the final surrender of paganism: ‘And dying, *Thou hast conquered*, he said./Galilean; he said it and died . . .’ (*Poems and Ballads, Second Series*, 1878). Such

tension with Christianity later gave way to an expression of the divine spirit in humanity, Swinburne's personal religion, which he expounded in his favourite poem dedicated to the Teutonic goddess *Hertha*.

Swinburne's influence on fellow aesthetes and later poets, such as Walter Pater (1839-1894), was considerable. Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) and *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), and Oscar Wilde's *Poems* (1881) were steeped in classicism. Indeed, in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1873, John Morley traced a line of pagan movements from the Oxford Movement, through John Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and William Morris, to Pater's *The Renaissance*. The late 19th century in particular saw a return to Hellenic Paganism as a protest against the 'mechanical and graceless formalism of the modern era' and, according to Walter Pater and Matthew Arnold, to redress the imbalance caused by Judaeo-Christian values, 'where all sides of one's being were sacrificed to the religious side, and where systems of conduct and moral codes threatened to become more important than the spirit which originally inspired them'.

Many of the themes contained within the works mentioned above echo those of ancient paganisms and anticipate neopaganism: ideas of faith not reduced to a creed; the Stoic and the Epicurean as narrative devices in philosophical debate; a stress on feeling; the importance of the individual, indeed an individuality found in feeling, thus a valuing of the emotions; a celebration of plurality; an acknowledgement that different people react differently to, and need, different religions, suited to their own personality; and the conflict between "religion" or "cult" versus institutionalised, established "church".

### 3. WICCA

Modern neopaganism in the strict sense originated in 1940s Britain in the form of a 'relatively self-contained, England-based occultist religion' (Hanegraaff 1998a, 85) known as Wicca. From this, other neopagan traditions and other varieties of witchcraft have developed. It is largely undisputed that the development of Wicca was initiated by Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964), under the influence of (among others) Margaret Murray's 1921 publication *The Witch-cult in Western Europe*, Robert Graves, and Aleister Crowley.

Gardner was born in the early years of the *fin de siècle* in Crosby, Liverpool, and became a Freemason, Rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism], and member of the → Ordo Templi Orientis and other secret

societies. Having spent most of his adult life working in the Far East, Gardner returned to England in 1936 and two years later retired to the New Forest with his wife, Dorothea, usually known as Donna. Here he became involved with the Fellowship of Crotona, an occult group of Co-Masons established by Mrs. Besant-Scott, a daughter of the theosophist → Annie Besant.

The Fellowship of Crotona allegedly contained a hidden inner group of hereditary witches, who initiated Gardner in 1939; much about the nature of this group remains unclear however. With the permission of the "coven", and under the pseudonym Scire, Gardner included the rituals of witchcraft in a novel called *High Magic's Aid* (1949). However, Gardner was not able to publish more open accounts of witchcraft under his real name until the repeal of the 1736 Witchcraft Act in 1951 and its replacement with the Fraudulent Mediums Act, which gave freedom for individuals to practice witchcraft so long as no harm was done to person or property. No longer threatened by a law which enabled persecution of a person alleged to have magical powers, Gardner wrote *Witchcraft Today* which was published in 1954 and included an introduction by Murray, followed by *The Meaning of Witchcraft* in 1959.

*Witchcraft Today* vaulted Gardner into the public spotlight, and he made numerous media appearances. Believing witchcraft to be a dying religion, he propelled it into the public domain, initiated many new witches, and encouraged covens to spring up, operating according to the outlines provided in his books. By the mid-1950s, Gardner's love of publicity had drawn the religion to the attention of the public, and in the early 1960s it was exported to North America. Gardner died in 1964, but his tradition of Gardnerian Wicca was firmly established, much to the annoyance of those who practised Traditional and Hereditary witchcraft, which they believed to be a witchcraft religion older than Gardner's Wicca.

Into this stream was injected another current in the 1960s, as Alex Sanders (1926-1988) brought a stronger application of high ritual magic (rooted in 19th century occultism) to his branch of Wicca. Sanders, a resident of Manchester who claimed a witch ancestress from Snowdonia, established his own version of Wicca along with his wife Maxine, which became known as Alexandrian Wicca. He, like Gardner, was a prolific initiator, but did not confine himself to Britain: many covens in Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in Northern Europe sprang from his visits to the continent. Sanders sought publicity from the very beginning,

and by the 1970s had become known as the King of the Witches. He was regarded by many Gardnerian witches as a maverick, seeking sensational publicity in newspapers and on the television (just as Gardner had done!). Over time, however, the Alexandrian stream of Wicca came to be considered as valid as the Gardnerian, and the rifts started to heal. Sanders is now credited with having made Wicca more accessible and bringing about greater public awareness of it.

In September 1970, a small group of Wiccans established The Pagan Front, which held its inaugural meeting in London at Beltane (1st May) 1971. This group had, in 1968, printed an inter-coven newsletter called *The Wiccan*, and the aim of the Front, like the newsletter, was to facilitate networking between covens and act as a point of first contact for those seeking initiation. The organisation grew relatively quickly, from a print run of just twelve for the newsletter in 1968 to a circulation of 250 by 1989 and over 5000 by 2000; it attracted neopagans other than Wiccans, but it was not until 1989 that the organisation changed its name to the Pagan Federation, which even then saw itself as representing Wicca, rather than neopaganism, in the UK. By the end of the 20th century, the Pagan Federation had become not only a representative body for neopagans in the UK, but also for those in Europe, with more or less autonomous branches in France, the Netherlands, Austria, Scandinavia, and elsewhere.

#### 4. FEMINIST WITCHCRAFT

The growing popularity of Wicca from the 1950s onwards thus gave it an enormous amount of influence over the development of neopaganism. From the 1970s, a variety of forms of Wicca, witchcraft and other neopagan traditions developed, many of which derived from Wicca as it became more public. Feminist witchcraft developed out of the feminist consciousness movement, as female witches took part in the Women's Movement and began to influence the nascent Goddess Movement, which despite witchcraft involvement does not associate itself with either occult, magical traditions or with neopaganism. Witchcraft and feminist/Goddess spirituality blend into each other, and in North America Wicca and neopaganism are virtually synonymous. Wicca had been exported to the United States in the 1960s by an initiate of Gardner's, Raymond Buckland, and throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, in North America, neopaganism increasingly became influenced by the emerging → New Age Movement and feminist spirituality. As a result, it was transformed into a very

different kind of religion, with a less formal and hierarchical ritual style, Native American influences such as shamanism and drumming, the increasing use of psychotherapy within Wicca, and Wiccan involvement in political and environmental activism. In particular, Wicca was adapted by the women's spirituality movement, resulting in the development of neopagan Goddess spirituality and feminist witchcraft traditions such as the Reclaiming collective, founded in San Francisco in 1980 by (among others) Starhawk.

#### 5. DRUIDRY

After Wicca, perhaps the most popular form of neopaganism is Druidry. Modern neopagan Druids draw their inspiration from early evidence of Druidry gleaned from the works of writers such as Pliny the Elder and Julius Caesar, as well as from Celtic traditions, since Bardic Colleges in Ireland and Scotland continued until the 16th and 17th centuries respectively. By this time, antiquarian writers such as John Aubrey (1629-1697), John Toland (1670-1722) and William Stukeley (1687-1765) had revived a Christianised form of Druidry as a religious practice in England. The Welsh visionary, poet and charlatan, Edward Williams (1747-1822), better known as Iolo Morganwg, continued this process. He invented rituals for his Gorsedd of the Bards of Britain in 1792 which he claimed were medieval, and which are still performed today as part of the Welsh Royal National Eisteddfod. His writings were published as *The Iolo Manuscripts* (1848) and *Barddas* (1862).

The 19th century revival of interest in Celtic studies provided new impetus to the development of Druidry. In the 20th century, further revision was undertaken through the writings of Lewis Spence, Ross Nichols and others, with present day writers such as John and Caitlín Matthews and Philip Carr-Gomm continuing the development of the tradition. Philip Peter Ross Nichols (1902-1975) joined the Ancient Druid Order in 1954, but on the death of the Chosen Chief, Robert MacGregor Reid in 1964, the Order split and Nichols became founder and chief of a reconstituted Order which developed the three grades of Bard, Ovate and Druid and is thus known as the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. Nichols was chief of the Order from 1964-1975, and produced a definitive account of the history and practice of Druidry in *The Book of Druidry* (1990), the manuscript of which was lost for nine years after his death. He is also thought to have developed the cycle of eight festivals which now make up the Wheel of the Year celebrated by most neopagans (the Ancient Druid

Order had celebrated only the equinoxes and the summer solstice). In the 1980s, the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids developed a correspondence course in Druidry, offering readings, tapes and workbooks which facilitate progress through the three grades. The Bardic level involves studies of the four elements of earth, air, fire and water, the cycle of nature, the Sun, the Earth, the calendar, poetry and developing the artistic self. In the Ovate grade, students work on healing and divinatory skills and study tree-lore, animals and plants, sacred sites, ley-lines, and Arthurian legend. Druids are trained in the opening and organisation of a Druidic group, known as a “grove”.

The emphasis on Celtic, Arthurian, and → Grail mythology is typical of neopagan Druidry, but not all Druid groups are neopagan. For the 19th and much of the 20th centuries, Druidry overlapped with Christianity and many Druid orders operated as social or charitable, rather than religious, bodies. In contemporary Druidry, there remains debate as to whether Druidry is a religion, a philosophy or a science. This is not surprising, given the diversity within contemporary Druidry, which includes neopagan Druids, Christian Druids, Zen Druids and even Hasidic Druids. There are also some more light-hearted versions, such as the Berengaria Order of Druids which draws its inspiration from science fiction series such as *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5*. Many Druids, however, share a vision which is common to neopaganism as a whole in seeking to preserve the ecological balance of the Earth and seeing humankind as an integral part of nature rather than above or in control of nature. It was not until the 1980s that Druid orders which specifically proclaimed themselves neopagan were established, with the foundation of orders such as the British Druid Order (1979), which has a shamanic and Wiccan influence. The British Druid Order was founded by Chosen Chief Philip Shallcrass (“Greywolf”), who was also instrumental in the establishment of the Council of British Druid Orders in 1988 which has developed into an organisation representing around twenty Druid orders. He was later joined as Joint Chief by Emma Restall Orr (“Bobcat”); it is now led solely by the latter, Shallcrass having retired in 2002.

## 6. HEATHENISM

A third main grouping is that of the Northern Traditions, or Heathenism. The assimilation of Græco-Roman paganism into Christianity in Late Antiquity, including the Mediterranean images of witchcraft, have led to a greater sense of continuity with, and thus a centrality of, a neopaganism

couched in Judæo-Christian theology. Partly in response to this, Heathenry and Heathen witchcraft – the wiccecraft and seidr – have been reconfigured since the 1980s, their attraction being that they are indigenous to northern European lands which were converted to Christianity much later than its homeland around the Mediterranean, and that they provide what are believed to be the only genuine paganisms to exist outside Christian constructs.

Given the Latinisation of the West by Christian hegemony, people and groups who are drawn to Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian traditions and languages prefer to be called Heathen rather than neopagan. The term equates with the Latin “Pagan”, and was coined by the Goths and used throughout the Germanic languages in the Middle Ages to indicate a follower of a non-Christian religion. In some cases, Heathens regard themselves and their traditions as something distinct from neopaganism, whilst others see Heathenism as something distinct *within* neopaganism. Many Heathens are particularly concerned with ecology and conservation, and regard (other kinds of) neopaganism as too removed from the land, which is perceived as the crux of a people’s identity. Some share the eight-fold Wheel of the Year with neopagans, whilst others regard this as too Celtic in its influences and prefer to celebrate festivals (known as *blots*) which they feel are more closely linked with their Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian ancestry, such as Winternights.

Heathens follow the pre-Christian Pagan traditions of Northern Europe, centred around two distinctive groups of Norse divinities, the Aesir sky gods (such as the chief god Odin, Frigga, Thor and Baldur) and the Vanir earth gods (such as Frey and Freya). Some therefore call themselves by a more specific name, such as Asatrú or Odinist. Asatrú was revived in the 20th century and in 1973 was recognised as an official state religion along with Christianity in Iceland, with the right to conduct legally binding weddings and child namings. Meaning “trust in the Aesir”, Asatrú is an Icelandic term used by Heathens to denote their affinity to the Aesir sky-gods of Norse mythology, and is also sometimes generally applied to Heathenism, particularly in North America, where the Asatrú Free Assembly was founded in 1972 by Stephen McNallen. Until 1987, the Assembly published a quarterly journal, *The Runestone*, and held an annual festival called *The Althing*, but the presence of racist and National Socialist adherents caused the assembly to be disbanded.

It was succeeded by the Asatrú Alliance and the



Ring of Troth. The Ring of Troth was founded in 1987 by Edred Thorsson, and functions as a religious institution in which the heritage of the Norse/Germanic religions can be reconstructed. Thorsson laid out the basics of the Ring of Troth in his 1992 book *A Book of Troth*. Rune Gild UK is part of this organisation, and is led by Freya Aswynn. It specialises in the study of the runes, and has three levels of membership in common with old craft Guilds – Apprentice, Fellow/Journeyman, and Master – overseen by the Grandmaster (*Drifhting* or *Drifhten*) and the High Grandmaster (*Yrmin Drifhten*). Asatru has a reputation for being more male-oriented than some neopagan religions, but Asatru groups are led by both men and women and both officiate in religious ceremonies. Women played an important role in Norse-Germanic religion as Volvas and Seidkonas, the priestess-practitioners of → magic and divination, and these roles are being developed along with their associated practices such as the somewhat shamanistic *seidr*, a form of witchcraft once practised widely in northern Europe and described in the Edda, knowledge of which was believed to be imparted by the goddess Freya.

#### 7. BALTIC NEOPAGANISM

The Baltic countries were the last in Europe to be Christianised, converting to Christianity only in the Middle Ages. Baltic pagan practices thus continued until the 14th and 15th centuries, with a few remnants surviving and being celebrated in the latter half of the 20th century – as late as 1960 Midsummer was abolished as a national holiday in Lithuania by the Soviet authorities. Lithuanian neopaganism was formally restored in 1967, repressed by the Soviets in 1971, and has been growing in popularity since 1988.

In general terms, a distinctive Baltic neopaganism has developed since the late 1980s, becoming particularly strong after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. In newly re-emerging countries such as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, neopaganism has played an important part in efforts to establish national identities. Reinstated neopagan festivals attract many thousands of people who believe that participating in the rites of their ancestors is an important part of their cultural heritage. Lithuania, for example, established a strong neopagan church and an organisation called Romuva (after the Medieval Lithuanian central pagan temple) which promotes Lithuanian neopaganism and is also active amongst the Lithuanian community in the United States. A similar organisation operates in Latvia, called Dievturiba, after Dievs the sky-god who, along with Laima, goddess of life, is

believed to determine the fate of humans. The Latvian neopagan tradition is known as Dievturi, and its aims are to live in harmony with Nature and other members of society and to follow the will of the Gods.

As in neopaganism generally, Baltic neopaganism considers all of nature to be sacred, the Earth is regarded as the universal mother, and a seasonal cycle of eight festivals are celebrated – the solstices and equinoxes, together with four other festivals important in the local agricultural year.

#### 8. NEOPAGAN PRACTICE

As these brief outlines indicate, neopaganism encompasses a variety of contemporary traditions and practices. They have in common a worldview which reveres nature as sacred, ensouled or alive, and they draw on pagan beliefs and practices of the past, either those of classical civilisations or of indigenous peoples, and thus tend to be polytheistic, pantheistic and/or duotheistic rather than monotheistic, at least to the extent of accepting the divine as both male and female and thus including both gods and goddesses in their pantheons. Neopagan groups take many forms, from Wiccan covens to Druid groves, from Heathen hearths to magical lodges, and entry into them may be by formal rituals of initiation or informal groupings based on friendship. Some groups may practice magic, whilst others do not. Many use ritual, and almost all make use of myth, celebrating eight seasonal festivals which together constitute a mythic-ritual cycle, usually referred to as The Wheel of the Year.

These festivals are the so-called Celtic fire festivals or cross quarter days of Imbolc/Candlemas (c. February 2nd), Beltane (c. April 30th), Lughnasadh/Lammas (c. July 31st), and Samhain/Hallowe'en (c. October 31st), plus the Winter and Summer Solstices (December c. 21st and June c. 21st) and the Spring and Autumn equinoxes (March c. 21st and September c. 21st). These are the traditional dates for each festival, but they are not fixed; many groups often find it easier, for the practical purpose of getting everyone together, to work to a set date (usually the nearest Friday or Saturday to the dates given), whilst smaller groups or individuals working alone may choose to wait for a specific sign of nature (e.g. first snowdrop for Imbolc) and celebrate on that day. In the southern hemisphere, the festivals are reversed in line with the seasons, celebrating the autumnal equinox, for example, whilst northern hemisphere neopagans celebrate the vernal equinox. Rites of passage for the birth of a new child, menarche (the celebration

of a girl's first menstrual period), manhood, marriage, menopause, ageing and death are becoming more popular, as well as initiation rituals and those which celebrate the phases of the moon.

Nevertheless, great diversity remains the norm, and commonalities operate on a somewhat superficial level. Even when celebrating the Spring Equinox, for example, different groups within Wicca, Druidry, Baltic neopaganism, and Heathenism will perform different rites with different deities and mythologies invoked. The lack of any central organisational structure allows for an enormous level of variety, and neopaganism at the beginning of the 21st century looks likely to retain its complexity and differentiate further as research into local ancient pagan practices continues.

*Lit.*: Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and other Pagans in America Today*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1986 ♦ "Latter-Day Pagans", *The Quarterly Review* 182 (1895), 31-58 ♦ Jenny Blain, *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism*, London: Routledge, 2002 ♦ Vivianne Crowley, "Wicca as Nature Religion", in: Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel (eds), *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, 170-179 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, ch. 4 ♦ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999 ♦ Graham Harvey & Charlotte Hardman (eds), *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty First Century*, London: Thorsons, 1996, 3-15 ♦ Francis King, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism*, Dorset: Prism Press, 1989 ♦ Tanya M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*, Basingstoke: Picador, 1994 ♦ Loretta L. Orion, *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revived*, Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1995 ♦ Joanne E. Pearson, *A Popular Dictionary of Paganism*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002 ♦ Joanne Pearson (ed.), *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age*, Aldershot: Ashgate/Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2002, 15-54.

JOANNE E. PEARSON

## Neoplatonism I: Antiquity

Neoplatonism was a philosophical school based on Platonic doctrines whose founder, Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), claimed only to be an exegete of the teachings of Plato (*Enn.* V.1.8.10-14) and, before him, of the "ancients", including the Pythagoreans. In the more than seven centuries after

Plato, however, several philosophical schools – the Stoics and Aristotelians especially – had attained a powerful influence among thinkers in the Hellenic world, and Plotinus' writings, collected and edited by his student Porphyry (c. 232-c. 305 C.E.), reflect his effort to defend the teachings of Plato and the ancients against the materialism of the Stoics and the biologically limited view of the human soul seen in Aristotle. In this, Plotinus appropriated and reshaped Stoic cosmology and Aristotelian metaphysics into the service of a spiritual Platonism. The Plato that Plotinus championed was the author of mystical doctrines that deified the soul by lifting it into the ineffable erotics of the One. According to Jean Trouillard, the fundamental intuition of the Neoplatonists derived from their reflection on the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*, transforming its dialectics of the One into apophatic initiations. It is this emphasis on the soul's capacity to be unified with the One that marks the distinctive contribution of Plotinus and the later Neoplatonists, yet they claimed that this was not an innovation but a traditional teaching already understood by Plato.

It is precisely as a defender of ancient and Platonic teachings that Plotinus attacked the Gnostics [→ Gnosticism]. Although this term has been misunderstood and misused by contemporary scholars as a label for virtually all dualist and anti-cosmic worldviews in antiquity – thus overlooking the complexity of the various gnostic schools both dualist and monist – Plotinus himself clearly portrayed the Gnostics as anti-cosmic dualists, and his great treatise (*Enn.* III.8; V.8; V.5; II.9) is devoted to refuting their beliefs. Porphyry reports (*VP* 16; cf. *Enn.* II.9.10.3-4) that among the "friends" of Plotinus were those who had previously adopted gnostic revelations of Allogenes and Zostrianos, and it was for their benefit that Plotinus criticized these teachings as distortions of Plato and the ancients. Specifically, Plotinus argued against gnostic anti-cosmicism and the myth of the fall of Sophia as cause for creation and the embodiment of souls. He also characterized their exaltation of the particular soul to the status of World Soul as nothing more than "wishful thinking" (*Enn.* II.9.9.49) and insisted that the human soul should coordinate itself with the order of the visible cosmos rather than trying to escape it. For Plotinus, the soul's deifying contact with the Nous and the One is attained only by first aligning itself with the sensible cosmos, and he maintains that all creation is good and rooted in a mysterious "contemplation" (*theōria*) that pervades the spiritual and material realms (*Enn.* III.8.1). Porphyry reports (*VP* 16) that both he and Plotinus' senior pupil,

Amelius, were encouraged by their master to continue this polemic against the Gnostics and they wrote many treatises, now lost.

Plotinus' positive assessment of the material cosmos and his profound intuition of an active *theōria* creating and sustaining the material cosmos were due, in large part, to his effort to refute the Gnostics' anti-cosmicism and their insistence that *theōria* was removed from the cosmos. Some of Plotinus' most profound insights were forged in the heat of his polemic against the Gnostics and influenced several trajectories of his thought. In response to gnostic views of matter, evil and the soul Plotinus employed Aristotelian terminology to give a positive account of the material world and the soul's capacity for *theōria*. On the other hand, his encounter with the Gnostics left its mark, seen especially in Plotinus' description of the human soul and its embodied experience. Acknowledging his divergence from Platonic tradition on this issue, Plotinus maintained that the human soul does not fully descend into a body but something of it remains in the intelligible world (*Enn.* IV.8.8.1-4; cf. IV.3.12.1-5; I.1). Thus, despite his polemic against the Gnostics, there was an ambiguity in Plotinus on the value of the material world and the status of the embodied soul.

Porphyry's student Iamblichus (c. 240-c. 325 C.E.) criticized Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended human soul for the same reason that Plotinus had criticized the Gnostics: it diverged from the teachings of Plato and the ancients, among whom Iamblichus included Pythagoreans and theurgists. Although Plotinus had argued for the divinity of the world against the Gnostics, he nevertheless characterized sensible matter as 'primal and absolute evil' (*Enn.* I.8.3.38-40). Consequently, salvation for the soul required an escape from material evil by withdrawing into its unfallen essence. The imagery and terms employed by Plotinus to portray the soul's fall into material reality were the same that Gnostics had used to describe the descent of Sophia. The soul's inclination to the body is, for Plotinus, not a genuine descent but only an illumination (*ellampsis*) to what is below while its essence remains above the shadows of the material world (*Enn.* I.1.12.25-29). In the same way, Plotinus says that the gnostic Sophia did not descend into matter 'but only illuminated (*ellamp-sai*) the darkness. . . .' (*Enn.* II.9.10.25-27). Thus, the dualism Plotinus perceived in the Gnostics remained – at least in residual form – in his own thought, and his view of salvation as the recovery of the soul's unfallen condition might easily be construed as correlate to this. It is significant that

Iamblichus' theory of the completely descended soul was complemented by his view of sensible matter as entirely good, a material expression of the One itself. Iamblichus thus exorcised the residue of Plotinian dualism with a Pythagorean interpretation of matter as rooted in the divine and indefinable dyad, thereby transforming material "obstacles" into icons capable of uniting the soul with the gods. It should be noted that Iamblichus' critique of Plotinus follows a trajectory of thought initiated by Plotinus himself in his polemic against the Gnostics.

Because the Iamblichean soul was fully embodied, it suffered an alienation unexplored by Plotinus. Following the Pythagorean cosmology of the *Timaeus*, Iamblichus maintained that the soul, made up of divinely numbered proportions (*logoi*), collaborates with the Demiurge and projects these *logoi* outside itself during embodiment, sewing itself into the fabric of the material world. Although immortal, the embodied soul becomes mortal, separated from its own divinity and unable to regain its place in the divine hierarchy without the aid of the gods. To recover its divinity, the soul must perform god-empowered rituals using elements from nature that correspond to the divine *logoi* projected in its embodiment. Because of this alienation, the soul's salvation was no longer to be found in *theōria* and withdrawal from the world but in *theourgia*: divine action that transforms both the soul *and* the world. The theurgist possessed practical knowledge of how to bring the soul into resonance with material or immaterial elements proportionate both to the degree of its alienation and to the presence of the god in each element. Among these elements were stones, plants, animals, and aromatics (*DM* V.23) and less material elements such as prayers and chants (*DM* VII.4-5). Because Neoplatonic theurgists employed ritual techniques also used by Gnostics and late antique magicians, modern scholars, until recently, dismissed Iamblichus as irrational and superstitious, representing a decline in Platonic philosophy. Yet Plotinus already had acknowledged that wise men know how to tap the divine powers hidden in stones and plants (*Enn.* IV.4.35), and he, like Iamblichus, praised the Egyptians for building their temples in proportions designed to secure the presence of the gods (*Enn.* IV.3.1). Iamblichean theurgy was a development of this trajectory of Plotinus' thought: a vision of unbroken continuity from the One to sensible matter, and with a more thorough application of Pythagorean teachings to the alienation of the soul combined with his reading of the *Chaldean Oracles*, Iamblichus

worked out its practical consequences. The soul was not to be saved by escaping an evil world but by ritually transforming it in theurgy, thus completing its collaboration with the Demiurge.

Barbarian invocations and unintelligible sounds were used by theurgists to evoke the presence of gods, but these practices were not uncommon in late antiquity and are also evident in both gnostic prayers and magical spells. Plotinus had condemned the Gnostics for trying to manipulate gods with magical invocations and saw no value in such rites (*Enn.* II.9.14), while Porphyry afforded them only the provisional value of purifying the lower soul. Yet for post-Iamblicheans, including Proclus and Damascius, theurgical chants were understood to awaken the divine presence in the soul. Iamblichus' theory explained the function of theurgical invocations, but their presence in gnostic and magical literature was not due to Iamblichus; he simply provided a philosophical rationale. The soul that chants the sacred sounds does not call the god down but is united with the divine activity (*theia energeia*) of the god through its audible expression. Theurgic tokens (*sunthēmata*), from stones to sounds, functioned as portals of the ineffable magnetism of the One, which is why Iamblichus insisted that theurgical rites surpass human understanding.

The Gnostics did not produce an Iamblichus to explain their ritual practices, but his theory might profitably be used to explain the rites of gnostic communities that shared metaphysical tenets with Neoplatonists. An Iamblican – or Neopythagorean – influence can be discerned in both metaphysical and ritual elements of the late “Sethian” treatise *Marsanes* which presents a remarkably positive view of the material cosmos. Having announced his knowledge of the boundaries of both spiritual and material worlds the prophetic narrator states: ‘in every respect the sense-perceptible world is [worthy] of being saved entirely’ (*NHC X.5.24-26*), a striking description in a gnostic text, possibly reflecting Iamblichus' positive view of matter. As Iamblichus posited an ineffable principle above the One of his predecessors, so *Marsanes* adds an Unknown Silent One above the highest principle of the other “Sethian” texts (*X.4.19-22*), although it is unclear whether these principles functioned in the same way. Perhaps more significantly, the soul's descent into matter – exemplified in *Marsanes*' Self-Begotten One (*Autogenes*) – fulfills a demiurgic function, precisely as described by Iamblichus (*DM VIII.3*), and with similar soteriological consequences: in order to ascend, the soul must learn to descend like *Auto-*

*genes* or, in Iamblichus' terms, like the demiurgic Nous (cf. *Steles Seth*, 127,20-21). In *Marsanes*, these ascents were effected through the ritual use of seals that functioned like theurgic *sunthēmata*, and *Marsanes*' complex instructions for chanting vowels, diphthongs, and consonants to lift the soul into its original spherical body is explained in the context of a Pythagorean reflection on numbers where ‘the [decad revealed] the whole place’ (*X.25-33.1*). Iamblichus similarly explained that theurgical invocations have affinities with the gods and place the soul in its original spherical body – the “shape of the gods” (*DM IV.2*) – designed by the Demiurge. Despite these similarities, the *De Mysteriis* appeared no earlier than ca. 280 – and Iamblichus' other writings as late as 325 – which leaves little time for a direct influence on *Marsanes* (late 3rd or early 4th century). Yet both reflect a Syrian provenience, and a direct influence is not impossible.

The “Sethian” texts (*Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*) all reflect a strong Platonic influence seen, for example, in the prominence of a triune first principle: Being-Life-Intellect and in the introduction of Power (*dynamis*) as a mediating principle of the One, formulations clearly derived from Middle Platonic, Neopythagorean, and possibly Neoplatonic texts. Michel Tardieu has shown that the author of *Zostrianos* (*NHC VIII, 1*) and Marius Victorinus (*Adversus Arium*) both made use of the same philosophical source, which, he argues, is a Middle Platonic treatise. If gnostic texts such as *Zostrianos* were drawing from the same philosophic sources as Plotinus, it is not surprising that their philosophical concepts and terminology were shared by the Neoplatonists. It is unlikely that Plotinus would have bothered to criticize them otherwise. The presence of Platonic conceptual structures and the virtual exclusion of all the Jewish and Christian elements of the earlier “Sethian” corpus suggest that the later “Sethians” were seeking intellectual credibility among pagan philosophers or, more simply, that they appropriated these teachings as being anagogically effective. The *Chaldaean Oracles*, Neopythagorean and Middle Platonic texts, and the anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides* have been identified as sources for Sethian metaphysics. The concepts and terms of the *Commentary*, in particular, influenced these texts, but despite recent discoveries and scholarship there remains significant disagreement on the identity of its author. Pierre Hadot has argued for Porphyry, who was trying to harmonize the teachings of Plotinus with the revelations of the



*Chaldean Oracles*, and consequently, as Ruth Majercik has argued, the *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* of the Nag Hammadi collection would have to be 4th century *revisions* of the texts criticized by Plotinus. Cogent and persuasive arguments have been marshaled both for and against Hadot's thesis and for different chronologies of influence on the "Sethian" texts; there is, however, agreement among scholars that "Sethian" Gnostics conformed their revelations with the teachings of pagan philosophers. If, as Plotinus and Iamblichus maintained, the Neoplatonists were simply passing on older teachings, elements of which can be seen in Neopythagorean, Middle Platonic, and Hermetic texts, then perhaps these Gnostics were simply drawing from the same sources. Whether they dipped into this traditional wisdom upstream or downstream is a question that has not yet been answered definitively.

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## Neoplatonism II: Middle Ages

Platonism is a complex and problematic historiographic category, especially with regard to the Middle Ages. To begin with, only very few original texts by Plato were known to the Latin West: the first part of the *Timaeus*, which was only supplemented by the *Meno*, the *Phaedo* and parts of the *Parmenides* in the middle of the 12th century. The image of Plato cherished by medieval authors was thus to a considerable degree filtered by Middle-Platonic and Neoplatonist lenses. The main channels by which Platonic philosophy was transmitted to the Middle Ages were Calcidius' translation of and commentary on the *Timaeus*, Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*, the works of Boethius and Apuleius, Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, → Pseudo-Dionysius, Proclus and of course Patristic authors, most importantly → Augustine. The African bishop not only provided extensive quotes and paraphrases of Plato's work, but, together with Boethius and others, inaugurated an interpretation of Platonism as a spiritual philosophy that was essentially in agreement with Christianity. For the Middle Ages the name Plato thus implied a syncretistic blend of pagan and Christian sources, ranging from Aristotelian, Stoic and Neopythagorean to Middle-Platonic and Neo-Platonist currents. An additional complicating factor is that a significant part of medieval Platonism did not go under the name of Plato but under that of his pupil Aristotle. From the middle of the 12th century pseudo-Aristotelian works introduced the Neo-Platonism of thinkers like Proclus (the *Liber de Causis*) and Plotinus (the *Theologia Aristotelis*) under the guise of Aristotle's secret teachings. Finally, medieval Platonism was not a static phenomenon but underwent profound transformations in the course of time. With the advent of Latin translations of Aristotle's works in the West from the 12th century onwards Aristotle's star rose while Plato receded to the background, especially with regard to natural philosophy, where commentaries on Aristotle's *libri naturales* replaced discussions of Plato's *Timaeus*. Nevertheless, the picture of an exclusively Platonic domination of the early Middle Ages and a subsequent Aristotelian domination of the later Middle Ages has proved to be too simplistic, not least because the Aristotelianism that the Latin West inherited from Arab commentators such as → Avicenna was deeply tainted by Neoplatonism. Moreover, late medieval theology and metaphysics, for instance that of Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest champions of medieval Aristotelianism, were



heavily influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius and other Neoplatonist sources. There are thus a number of serious difficulties standing in the way of an all-encompassing study of the relation between medieval “Platonism” and → Hermetism, itself a multi-dimensional phenomenon. For this reason we have chosen to investigate the ties between Platonic and Hermetic elements in a limited number of authors that represent three different models of dealing with Hermetism, namely a fusion with Platonism without much relation to Aristotelianism (12th century Platonism), a blend of Platonism, Aristotelianism and Hermetism (→ Albertus Magnus), and finally a mixture of Platonism and Hermetism with anti-Aristotelian overtones (Berthold of Moosburg).

The first group has often been referred to as the “Platonists of the 12th century”, comprising authors such as William of Conches (ca. 1080-ca. 1154), Thierry of Chartres (= after 1156), → Bernard Silvester (ca. 1080-1167), and Alan of Lille (ca. 1128-1203). Against the traditional picture of a common Platonic “School of Chartres”, which most of these authors were claimed to be a member of, scholars such as Southern and Marenbon have tried to make a case for the richness and complexity of their philosophy and theology, downplaying the importance of Platonism as a common philosophical ideology. Nevertheless, the fact remains that these authors underwent a considerable influence of Platonic philosophy. The most conspicuous characteristic of their reception of Plato was the fusion between the cosmology and natural philosophy of the *Timaeus* with Christian theology. The leading idea here was that by means of a detailed investigation of the natural world, the philosopher would be able to gather the power, goodness and wisdom of its Creator. The mythical and allegorical elements of Plato’s cosmology were seen as *integumenta* and *involucra*, words that concealed a deeper, hidden meaning that had to be dug up by the philosopher. This hermeneutical programme not only led to a free interpretation of ancient texts but also inspired a range of cosmologies and cosmogonies that themselves had a poetical and allegorical style that was tributary to the Platonic tradition (see e.g. Bernard Silvester’s *Cosmographia* and Alan of Lille’s *De Planctu Naturae*).

Following Quodvultdeus, Lactantius and other conciliatory sources, 12th century Platonists saw Plato and Hermes [→ Hermes Trismegistus] as protagonists of the same tradition of Oriental-Greek wisdom. Peter Abailard (1079-1142) and Thierry of Chartres, for instance, believed that Plato’s cos-

mological myth adumbrated his prophetic knowledge of the Trinity, in which the Father was the efficient cause of the world, the Son the formal cause and the Holy Spirit the final cause. On the other hand, Alan of Lille attributed the same knowledge to Hermes. Especially in his *Summa Quoniam Homines* and his *Contra Haereticos*, Alan claimed that the *Asclepius* contained *integumenta* referring to the Trinitarian dogma. Thus, against the widespread anti-intellectualism and fideism of the 12th century, authors such as Thierry of Chartres and Alan of Lille saw both Plato and Hermes as paradigms of a natural, rational knowledge of God and central dogmas of Christian faith.

Given this intimate bond between Plato and Hermes, it is no surprise that the 12th century Platonic cosmological-cum-theological framework was permeated by a wealth of Hermetic elements, deriving from the *Asclepius* and apocrypha such as the *Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum* and the *Liber de sex rerum principiis*.

First of all, we recognize Hermetic elements in the way these authors elaborated on the three cosmological principles derived from Plato’s *Timaeus*: God, matter (hylè) and the world soul. For instance, In his *Cosmographia* Bernardus Sylvestris describes matter as an unformed entity, the fecundity of which can give rise to both good and bad creations, thus paraphrasing the *Asclepius*. But the most significant presence of Hermes is found in discussions on the world soul. Like Pierre Abailard, Thierry of Chartres identified the Platonic world soul with the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This in turn he equated with the *pneuma* or spirit of the *Asclepius*, which guides and determines the world. After the Council of Sens (1140) had forbidden the equation of the (created!) *anima mundi* of the *Timaeus* with the Third Person of the Trinity, most authors became more cautious in the way they dealt with spirit. Bernard Silvester, for instance, considered the world soul as Nature itself, the force that keeps the world together as an ordered whole. In this respect, the *Asclepius* was again a major source of inspiration, especially with its Stoic connection between spirit and fate, its insistence on the determinate sequence of causes in the universe and its equally Stoic astral determinism, in which the sublunary world is governed and determined by the stars. Another escape route was taken by Alan of Lille who continued to identify world soul and Holy Spirit, but bypassing allusions to Plato, referred to *Asclepius* 23 with its claim that God created eternal Gods. In this fashion, Alan attempted to avoid the fusion of the finite

Platonic world soul and the eternal Third Person of the Trinity.

Another domain in which Platonic and Hermetic elements were combined concerns the relation between God's immanence in the world and His radical transcendence. 12th-century Platonism was heir to the complexities of late Neoplatonism with its tension between the ineffability of the One and its emanative immanence in the world. Again, this Neoplatonist framework was filled with Hermetic elements. Both Thierry of Chartres and Alan of Lille not only explained God's ineffability with the help of Pseudo-Dionysius' doctrine of divine names, but also on the basis of *Asclepius* 20 which states that God bears all names. According to these authors, God's ineffability is not rooted in His transcendence, but precisely in His radical immanence: because God is all being, He bears all names, which is the same as saying that no name can express the divine source of the totality of being. Most 12th-century Platonists made use of the Hermetic notion of *Un'omnia*: the idea that all being participates in the One gives rise to the conclusion that the One is immanent in all being (God is every stone, every tree etc.). The majority of authors expressly tried to avoid simplistic pantheist conclusions, with the exception of David of Dinant (ca. 1160-1200), whose *Quaternuli* were condemned by the Synod of Paris in 1210. Finally, especially in Alan of Lille we find a strong usage of the definitions of the *Liber XXIV Philosophorum* in determining the relation between God and His creation. The image of God as the monad and the circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere were woven into a basically Neoplatonist metaphysics of unity and participation.

The relation between Platonism and Hermetism underwent substantial change in the works of → Albertus Magnus (1193-1280). The Dominican professor was one of the first to deal with the tide of translations of Aristotle in the 13th century. Hence, most of his work consisted of commentaries on Aristotle's texts. Nevertheless, Albert's Aristotelianism was certainly not uncritical and was combined with a strong Neoplatonist influence mostly derived from Arab and Jewish sources, and, especially in his later life, from the *Liber de Causis*, which Albertus considered to be Aristotelian. In fact, Albertus spoke of three different philosophical schools, the Epicureans, The Stoics, which comprised Plato and the Academy, and the Peripatetics. Hermes was usually grouped with the Stoics and was thus made responsible for inaugurating philosophical idealism. Nevertheless, there are also places in Albert's work, for instance

in *De Causis*, that place the Thrice Great with the "older Peripatetics". In the end, this classification is of small importance, because according to Albert's conciliatory programme true philosophy should reunite Aristotelianism and Platonism. In fact, Albert's "Peripateticism" is largely determined by Averroes, Avicenna, Alfarabi and other authors with a strong Neoplatonist outlook. A number of characteristic Hermetic elements have flown into Albert's mixture of Aristotelianism and Platonism.

First, Hermes is referred to in the context of Albert's metaphysics and theology. Together with Platonism, Hermes is credited by Albertus for inaugurating the idea of a divine *fluxus* in which all forms and all being are derived from the First Cause. Nevertheless, like the Platonists, Hermes errs with respect to the particulars of this process. According to Albertus the causal inflow should not be modelled in terms of an "infusion" of form and being into matter by a higher, intelligent cause. This kind of conception may lead to a dangerous pantheism in which the very ontological hierarchy is abolished, because all things are believed to directly emanate from the highest cause and share in its essence. As an alternative to the Platonic-Hermetic view of causal infusion, Albertus launched his "peripatetic" view of *eductio formarum*: forms are created by Intellects that emanate from the first cause. These Intellects draw the lingering, potential forms out of matter in the sense that they act as a paradigm which is imitated by the created thing that produces a likeness or an image of it. Contrary to what Hermes claims, the *Dator Formarum*, the giver of forms, is thus transcendent to the lower levels of reality and does not directly infuse them with his own being. By stating in the *Asclepius* that all things are full of a spirit which transmits the virtues of the gods, Hermes shows that he has some awareness of this truth, but it remained to the Aristotelians to fill in the details of this conception.

A similar combination of Aristotelian, Platonic and Hermetic elements may be witnessed in the case of Albert's doctrine of the intellect, a central doctrine within his system. Albertus mentions active and possible intellect, impressed species and other Aristotelian jargon, but again inspired by Alfarabi, Avicenna and others he gives a Platonic twist to these terms. According to Albertus the process of philosophical contemplation is a matter of the active intellect joining itself with us, hence creating the *intellecta* in our soul. The possible intellect receives the light of this knowledge and is thus made similar to the intelligible forms. The end result of this process is the *intellectus adeptus*,

which he defines as the presence of the known form within the soul. Philosophical knowledge is thus a kind of contemplation and illumination by means of which the soul gradually unites itself with the One. Again, Albertus introduces Hermetic elements in this Aristotelian-Platonic mixture. First of all, he describes the process of contemplation in terms of asceticism, purification and divination and other concepts derived from the *Asclepius*. Moreover, in his *Liber de intellectu et intelligibili* he adopts the Hermetic image of man as *nexus dei et mundi*. On the one hand, man assimilates himself to God, but by doing so he may also act as the *gubernator* of the lower world. Philosophical → mysticism is thus transfigured into a kind of → magic in which man uses his divine powers in order to rule, transform and purify the lower worlds. In this connection, Albertus also cites the Hermetic trope of man as *imago mundi*, which he interprets in a Platonic sense: by assimilating the intelligible forms within the intellect, the human soul becomes in fact a microcosmos mirroring the macrocosmos.

Albertus was the founder of an alternative philosophical school among Dominicans in the German lands, which not only comprised philosophers such as Ulrich of Strasburg (ca. 1225-1277) and Berthold of Moosburg (= 1361), but also mystics such as Eckhart and Tauler. Insofar as Hermetism is concerned, the most interesting representative of this current is Berthold of Moosburg, who composed a commentary on Proclus, the *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* (1340-1360). In contradistinction to Albertus, Berthold did not aim at reconciling Aristotelianism and Platonism, but opposed the Platonism of Proclus to the dominant Aristotelian culture of the schools. Again, however, these labels should be handled with caution: Proclus's *Elementatio* itself is certainly not free from Aristotelianism and also Berthold's own interpretation in no way amounts to "pure Platonism". Nevertheless, he presents an uncompromising anti-Aristotelian programme, which is based on the distinction between the ontology of the Peripatetics, the *sententia peripateticorum* that only deals with the "terrestrial" doctrine of metaphysics as the science of being qua being, and the true metaphysics of the Platonists, the *supersapientialis scientia platonica* that is gained by the soul's mystical *unitio* with the divine forms. Berthold brought about a complete fusion of this Platonism with Hermetism. Unlike Albertus, Berthold dropped the reservations about the *Liber XXIV Philosophorum*, whose definitions of God as *monas* and as circle he happily quoted. Berthold also revived the ancient idea that the

pagan Hermes would have intuitively grasped the attributes of God, which is proved by his words about the generation of the *Logos* from the Father (*Asclepius* 26) and his doctrine of *pneuma*, which Berthold identifies with the Holy Spirit. It is therefore no surprise that we find a substantial number of references to Hermes in Berthold's work. Hermes teaches God's ineffability, His omnipotence and causality, His presence within the created universe, the processes of *exitus*, *mansio* and *reditus* applied to the trinity and man as microcosm. In this fashion, Hermetic doctrines provide important additions to Proclus' "Platonic" philosophical system.

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### Neoplatonism III: Since the Renaissance

Platonism existed in many guises and at various places in the 13th and 14th centuries, especially in Italy. It was, however, mainly due to one man that Platonism became such a dominant current in the Renaissance: → Marsilio Ficino, who published the first complete translation of Plato in Latin in 1484, outdoing all earlier (partial) translations by Renaissance figures such as Bruni, Filelfo, George of Trebizond and Cardinal Bessarion. Platonism had certainly not been unknown to the Latin West during the Middle Ages [→ Neoplatonism II], but the more than thirty printings of Ficino's *Platonis Opera Omnia* in the 16th century alone gave a new and powerful impetus to the development of the Platonic tradition. In fact, Ficino's translation continued to be read well into the 19th century. Nevertheless, the availability of Plato's complete text did not mean that Ficino and Renaissance Platonists returned to the original and pure Platonism. Byzantine scholars such as Cardinal Bessarion and George of Trebizond not only bequeathed their Greek manuscripts to Italian humanists, but also a set of hermeneutical tools that were employed in reading these texts. Following Bessarion and others, Ficino read (and translated!) Plato through profoundly Neoplatonic lenses. Plato was put into the syncretistic framework of a tradition of *prisca sapientia* and *pia philosophia* [→ Tradition] which was supposed to reach back to → Moses and pagan prophets such as → Zoroaster and → Hermes Trismegistus who had transmitted a sacred wisdom that foreshadowed the advent of Christ. In other words, attention was very much focused on those aspects of Plato's teachings that could be

squared with Christianity. In fact, one of Ficino's key projects was to develop a new kind of scholasticism that would reunite Christian faith with Platonic philosophy as an alternative to what was seen as the heretical and anti-Christian "obscurities" of Averroist and Alexandrist → Aristotelianism. Moreover, since Plato was not seen as an isolated figure but as the head of a unified philosophical tradition, Ficino and others read Neoplatonist philosophy back into Plato's works.

Plotinus in particular was very dear to Ficino's heart. He produced a complete translation of the *Enneads* and considered Plotinus as the interpreter that came closest not only to Plato's meaning but to Christianity as well. During the Renaissance, Ficino's translation of Plato was read together with his renderings of Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus and other Neoplatonist philosophers. With the help of Proclus' and Plotinus' complex conceptual structures Plato was thus interpreted in a highly systematical manner, which left no room for the aporetic and open-ended character of many of his dialogues. The Plotinian One or God was placed at a great distance of the Many of this world, and the gap was filled with the celestial hierarchies of → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, who became as popular in the Renaissance as he had been among Medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. Early Renaissance authors still believed in the myth according to which Dionysius was not only the Areopagite whom St. Paul had converted to Christianity, but also the one that had later become bishop of Paris. Eventually Valla's philological démasqué of this myth in his *In Novum Testamentum Annotationes*, printed in 1505, weakened the authority of the Pseudo-Dionysian writings, but until that time great minds such as Ficino and → Nicolas of Cusa still considered Dionysius one of the greatest theologians of all time. In fact, Dionysian negative theology was a key influence on Cusanus' doctrine of *docta ignorantia*. An even more interesting case of Dionysian influence is → Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who opposes the pure Christianity of Dionysius against the debased philosophies of the Platonists who had supposedly stolen most of his ideas.

On the whole, scholars have come to emphasize the continuities with medieval Platonism, at the expense of the discontinuities that were often stressed by Renaissance thinkers themselves. For one thing, → Augustine remained as important to Ficino as a source of Christian Neoplatonism as he had been to the Middle Ages. Moreover, following 12th-century Platonists, the young Ficino

was excited by the pseudo-Hermetic definitions of God as the monad and as a circle whose circumference is everywhere and centre nowhere (*Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*, defs. 1-2). He used these doctrines in order to bring the Christian idea of divine creation in concordance with both Hermetism [→ Hermetic Literature] and the Platonic account of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, an endeavour which in itself clearly betrays the influence of William of Conches and other 12th-century Platonists. These continuities notwithstanding, the very fact that the entire Platonic corpus was now available did create a powerful new momentum in Renaissance culture. Still, it is important to recognize that although a few special chairs of Platonic philosophy had been created (for example that of → Francesco Patrizi in Rome) and avowed Platonists were present at regular university chairs (for example Francesco Piccolomini at Padua), Neoplatonism remained largely an extra-academic affair. The metaphysical speculations of the Platonists proved to be more attractive to a non-academic public than the strict logic of academic Aristotelianism, inspiring musicians [→ Music], poets and painters as well as statesmen such as Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici.

The link between Renaissance Neoplatonism and Hermetism was as potent as it had been in the works of medieval Platonists such as Alanus ab Insulis or Berthold of Moosburg, and this makes it difficult – indeed, artificial to some degree – to discuss Renaissance Neoplatonism separately from Renaissance Hermetism. Following Lactantius and other ancient sources, all Neoplatonists of the Renaissance subscribed to the myth of a *prisca sapientia* and a *pia philosophia* already referred to above: a current of primordial pagan wisdom, culminating in Platonism, which prior and/or parallel to the Mosaic prophesies had paved the way for Christian revelation. Together with Zoroaster, Hermes was usually seen as one of the first of these pagan sages. Thus, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, whose first complete translation into Latin was also produced by Ficino, was considered a source of the most ancient and most venerable wisdom on earth. Nevertheless, although most Neoplatonists shared this image of Hermes as a venerable prophet, the impact of the works attributed to him on the various protagonists of Renaissance Platonism was certainly not univocal. Recent scholarship has therefore become much more cautious than Frances Yates (1964) with her sweeping claims about a unified “Hermetic Tradition”. Just like in the case of the Renaissance’s Platonisms

and Aristotelianisms, we had better speak of the Hermetisms of the Renaissance.

As for the Platonisms of the Renaissance specifically, in what follows we will discuss them at the example of only a few of the most influential authors, and further restrict ourselves to those who clearly present themselves primarily as philosophers. It must be emphasized, however, that the influence of Neoplatonism was much more widespread than can be demonstrated in a short overview. To give only one example, the famous → Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa – primarily a humanist theologian, cultural critic, and author on magic – consistently attacked Aristotelian scholasticism in favour of a broadly Neoplatonic worldview. Among other things, he lectured on Plato’s *Symposium* in 1512, and he rejected scholastic notions of the relation between reason and faith in favour of a fideism strongly inspired by Neoplatonism.

To begin with Ficino: despite his great veneration for Hermes, the impact of specific Hermetic doctrines on his Neoplatonic philosophy is somewhat limited. True, we find in Ficino the same combination of a pessimist perspective on the world as the dark abyss of materiality with the idea that the beauty and order of the natural world reveals the perfection of its Maker. Moreover, Ficino tries to bring the idea of God as the transcendent One in concordance with His immanence in the world He created. But these are rather vague parallels that can also be found in the various strands of (Christian) Neoplatonism, which moreover applied more philosophical rigour to these themes, a fact which certainly appealed to Ficino’s sharp philosophical, if not scholastic, mind. On the whole, it seems that Ficino’s initial enthusiasm for Hermes later gave way to a deep fascination with Neoplatonism, and with Plotinus in particular. Furthermore, although Ficino emphasizes the pre-Trinitarian character of Hermes’ speculations, he never ceased to emphasize that the Egyptian sage had been granted only a glimpse of God. Ficino, himself an ordained priest, never questioned the need for Revelation. The same conclusion also applies to Plato, who just like Hermes had only glimpsed the Trinity and other basic Christian tenets, which can never be perfectly known independent of the Revelation. In the same context, Ficino sharply repudiated later *Platonici*, such as Numenius, Philo, Plotinus, Iamblichus and Proclus for having stolen most of their ideas from the Gospel of St John, St Paul’s Epistles and the Areopagite. Even his great hero Plotinus did not escape this criticism. Despite his



exposure to Christianity, Plotinus had failed to understand the true nature of the Trinity, even to the extent of reverting to the heresy of Arianism by subordinating the second and third hypostases of his system to the first one. Although Ficino took over many important doctrines of Plotinus and his fellow *Platonici* in his campaign for a Christian philosophy, he was never tempted to exalt pagan metaphysics at the expense of Christian theology.

→ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola subscribed to the concordist notion of *prisca sapientia*, which in his case gave rise to the grand project of his *Conclusiones*, that tried to reunite all pagan and Christian learning. However, during his brief life Pico actually limited himself to the less lofty task of harmonizing Aristotelianism and Platonism, with the metaphysics of *De Ente et Uno* (1492) as the first result. Like Ficino, Pico was a strong admirer of Plotinus – in fact, he urged Ficino to complete his translation of the great Neoplatonist. The only point on which Pico disagreed with the Neoplatonists was precisely the relation between “being” and “one” as predicates of God. He thus rejected the Neoplatonist reading of Plato’s *Parmenides*, which was supposed to confirm the Neoplatonic idea that the hypostasis of the “One” or God is above being, *superessentialis* as the Latin translation of Proclus has it. According to Pico, the *Parmenides* was just a dialectical exercise, whereas in all of his other dialogues Plato was in basic agreement with Aristotle’s thesis concerning the convertibility of being and oneness. Both predicates can be assigned to God and thus stand at the same ontological level. It is, furthermore, not insignificant that Pico’s unfinished *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* unequivocally condemned Hermetism as an inferior kind of learning and opposed it unfavourably to both Platonism and Aristotelianism. The wisdom of the Egyptians, which includes Hermetism, is here portrayed as a practical discipline of worship and not as theoretical science. Hermetism provides at best a first inadequate sketch of the superior physics and metaphysics of Plato and especially Aristotle, since it lacks the defining characteristic of true science, that is to say, rational argument (*Disputatio adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, in *Opera Omnia*, Basel 1557 [reprint Hildesheim 1969], 721–722).

The Franciscan friar → Francesco Giorgio da Veneto’s (1453–1540) main work, *De Harmonia Mundi* (1525), is an amazing amalgam of Neoplatonism, Hermetism, kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III] and Franciscan spirituality. The *Harmonia Mundi* tries to uncover the hidden

unity behind the world’s apparent diversity by means of “musical”, i.e. harmonical, proportions [→ Music III]. Many of these proportions are conceived of in analogical fashion and pertain to → Number Symbolism rather than to mathematics in the strict sense of the word. Giorgio’s key doctrine is that of God as the Hermetic *Monas*, who unfolds His infinite fecundity in the harmonious world He creates. In this connection, he states that both Hermes and Plato beautifully explained the creation of the world, in a way which may help destroy the heresies of Aristotle, Averroes, Epicurus and Alexander of Aphrodisias.

With → Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597) Renaissance concordism changes its character. For Patrizi, the concord is between Hermetism and Neoplatonism on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, excluding the heresies of academic Aristotelianism. Moreover, unlike Ficino, Patrizi attached little importance to Moses and the Hebrew prophets. In fact, contrary to Ficino’s Christian Platonism that sees itself as the culmination of both the Mosaic prophetic current and the Greek philosophical-theological current, Patrizi elaborated a tradition of Hermetic Platonism in which Christian thought appears to play a subordinate part, rather than being its perfection or culmination. Furthermore, unlike Ficino, he did not use the figure of Hermes to legitimize magic. Patrizi was mainly interested in those elements of the *Corpus Hermeticum* that can be squared with Neoplatonist metaphysics, and neglected magical [→ magic] and astrological [→ astrology] doctrines. Patrizi’s threefold Hermetic-Platonic project involved, firstly, a new edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Chaldaean Oracles* and other *Hermetica*. Secondly, the *Discussiones Peripateticae* (1581) takes up Ficino’s idea of a philosophical concord and the tradition of *prisca sapientia* in an anti-Aristotelian manner. Thirdly, Patrizi wrote the *Nova de Universis Philosophia* (1591), an all-encompassing philosophical system that tries to explain the Hermetic “revelation” by means of philosophical, especially Platonist, arguments. This work starts from the premise that man by the sole light of his reason can arrive at the understanding of the central “mysteries” of faith, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, at the centre of Patrizi’s metaphysics we find an exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity which uses Orphic, (pseudo)Zoroastrian and Hermetic teachings as the point of departure, rationally proving the consubstantiality of the three divine persons in a Neoplatonist vein. In this context, Patrizi gave a quite daring interpretation of the

term “fides” (faith). Faith is not the irrational or pre-rational acceptance of certain doctrines on the basis of the authority of the Church; rather, it is the “post-rational”, final “assensio” to divine truth which is bred by rational cognition (“cognitio”). These doctrines make clear that Patrizi’s Hermetic Neoplatonism substantially differed from the Christian Neoplatonism of Ficino and Pico. Patrizi liberated Hermetism from its subordinate role and placed it on the same level as both Christian Revelation and Neoplatonist metaphysics. Hermes is not just used to adorn or legitimize an otherwise Neoplatonist philosophy; instead, Hermetic tenets almost receive the status of articles of faith, that are rationally explained by means of the conceptual apparatus of Neoplatonist metaphysics.

→ Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) gave yet another twist to the concordist tradition. Like Patrizi, he combined a deep mistrust of Aristotelianism with a profound admiration for the pre-Platonic tradition; but unlike his predecessors, he was not in the least interested in the synthesis between old pagan teachings and Christian doctrine. The dignity of *prisca sapientia* does not consist in its having glimpsed the Trinity. The figure of Hermes was far less central to Bruno than has been claimed by Frances Yates in her influential study on Bruno (1964); rather, he put emphasis on the ancient philosophers of his native southern Italy, Pythagoras in particular. (Pseudo-)Pythagorean numerological speculation about the Unity that gives birth to the many is at the heart not only of Bruno’s metaphysics but also of his atomism. He combined this with the typically Neoplatonic dialectics of transcendence and immanence, as found in Plotinus and Proclus. Very importantly, however, he criticized the Neoplatonists for locating the transcendent *Monas* in “another place” beyond this world. Since this world is infinite, there is no spatial “other” to this cosmos. Rather, the One should be sought for in another dimension of reality, in a higher *metaphysical* rather than *physical* realm. Similarly, Bruno grounded the infinity of the world in the Neoplatonist principle of plenitude: the infinite fecundity of the Cause should be reflected in an infinity of effects. But here again, he rejected the idea, found in Patrizi and other Neoplatonists, that infinite space is filled with incorporeal light or ether. Rather, he stressed the physical continuity of this infinite world. In his epistemology, on the other hand, Bruno adopted Neoplatonist speculations concerning the soul’s ascent through the different

grades of reality, ending in adumbrations of the divine intelligence.

The last great representatives of Renaissance Platonism were the so-called Cambridge Platonists, especially → Ralph Cudworth and → Henry More. These philosophers continued to uphold the typical Renaissance idea of *philosophia perennis* and *prisca sapientia*. In this context, they were not too worried about Isaac Casaubon’s dating of the Hermetic writings in 1614, either contesting the conclusions he drew from his arguments (Cudworth) or happily ignoring them (More). These authors again defended a very eclectic mix of Neoplatonism, but tried to distance themselves from an esoteric reading of Plato such as practised by the English hermetic author → Thomas Vaughan. This did not prevent Henry More from defending beliefs in → witchcraft and ghosts. Inspired by Ficino and like-minded Renaissance predecessors, More, Cudworth and the other Cambridge Neoplatonists tried to restore the bond between Christianity on the one hand and philosophy and science on the other, so as to repair the damage done by the materialism and atheism of the modern mechanical philosophy represented by Thomas Hobbes and others. Of crucial importance was their defense of spiritual entities in nature, most notably the “Plastic Nature”, a late descendant of the Platonic *anima mundi*. Thanks to translations of their works, More and Cudworth were especially popular in 18th-century Germany, where Leibniz was one of their most famous admirers. They also influenced Coleridge and, through Thomas Taylor, the English Romantics [→ Romanticism] and American Transcendentalists.

Up to the 18th century, the term “Platonism” generally stood for what was in fact an eclectic mix of Neoplatonism, Hermetism, Christianity and other elements. With a few notable exceptions such as Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, most philosophers and theologians did not make a clearcut distinction between Plato and the *Platonici*. This picture started to change in the beginning of the 18th century, with German Lutheran theologians such as Gottfried Olearius and Johann Lorenz von Mosheim. Both authors describe Neoplatonism as an eclectic mix that has little in common with the philosophy of the original founder of the Academy. This did not mean that these theologians had much sympathy for Plato himself. Especially Mosheim repeated the well-known Protestant invective against the pernicious influence of all pagan learning, and Platonism in

particular, on Christianity. In so doing they continued Luther's campaign for a return to the pure and unspoiled evangelical truth. In this sense, both Olearius and Mosheim reiterated the criticism voiced by the anonymous *Le Platonisme dévoilé* of 1700, which stated that all Fathers of the Church had succumbed to Platonism, thus corrupting the true faith. Although Olearius and Mosheim no longer accepted the identification of Platonism and Neoplatonism found in this book, they largely agreed with most of its conclusions. Their attack against Neoplatonism also had a confessional character. Many Protestant authors claimed that the introduction of papal *bizarrieres* such as the Transubstantiation had largely resulted from the acceptance by theologians of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics. In many cases the onslaught by such Protestant authors on Neoplatonism included an overall rejection of the entire domain nowadays referred to as Western → esotericism: including → alchemy, Paracelsian medicine [→ Paracelsianism], and → magic. The distinction between Plato and Neoplatonism that had been operated by Olearius and Mosheim for theological reasons was adopted by Jacob Brucker in his highly influential *Critical History of Philosophy* (first edition 1742-1744), one of the first modern histories of philosophy. Just like his predecessors, Brucker considered the Neoplatonists as ravingly mad impostors. However, as a historian of philosophy, he not only faithfully described the Neoplatonists' main opinions but also tried to explain their origins, which according to him could be found in Oriental philosophy. Neoplatonist monism, the thesis that all being, including matter, emanates from God, stands in stark contrast to Platonic and Christian dualism. Brucker's epoch-making innovation was to reconstruct Plato's "system" on the basis of his dialogues alone, which he found a difficult task given Plato's notorious obscurity and his poetic style. Although Brucker's reconstruction fails to impress the modern scholar, the very fact that he developed a critical interpretation of Plato independent of Neoplatonist sources is significant in itself. The same project was taken up by Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann in his *System der Platonischen Philosophie* (1792-1795), which can be considered the first modern monograph on Plato. Just like Brucker, Tennemann claimed that Plato had elaborated a philosophical system that could be reconstructed on the basis of the Dialogues. He did not, however, agree with Brucker's particular reconstruction of that system; instead, Tenne-

mann's alternative account is heavily influenced by Kant's critical philosophy, which he strongly favoured. Furthermore, Tennemann subscribed to the ancient idea that Plato had had a secret, esoteric doctrine that had only been transmitted orally to his pupils. Fragments of this *Ungeschriebene Lehre* could supposedly be found in Aristotle and in the (fragmentary) writings of the members of the first Academy. Traditionally, the religious and mystical elements of Plato's esoteric doctrine had been seen as the very core of his teaching, of which the Dialogues were but a faint, popularizing echo. In the Introduction to his groundbreaking translation of Plato published in 1804, Friedrich Schleiermacher strongly repudiated this kind of esoteric reading, urging his readers to interpret Plato solely on the basis of his Dialogues. Schleiermacher thus confirmed the decline of the Neoplatonic reading of Plato that had begun almost a century earlier.

From the period of the early 19th century on, it becomes particularly difficult, if not impossible, to trace the continuation of Neoplatonism as a tradition in its own right. Important is the role that was played by Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), nicknamed "the English Platonist", whose translations of Iamblichus, Plotinus, Porphyry and Proclus brought the works of these philosophers to the attention of English readers. Taylor has been held in great esteem by authors associated with esoteric traditions since the 18th century, from the painter and poet → William Blake to the theosophist scholar → G.R.S. Mead and to 20th-century admirers of Neoplatonic philosophy such as – to give one example – the authors contributing to David Fideler's journal *Alexandria: The Journal of the Western Cosmological Traditions*. In the latter context, Neoplatonism tends to be closely associated with Orphic and Pythagorean traditions, and perceived first and foremost as a "sacred cosmology"; it is admired for its harmonious beauty and is seen as a source of inspiration for those who seek alternatives to the worldviews dominant in contemporary Western culture. Not much research has been done so far on the discreet presence since Taylor's times, and independent of academic philosophy, of such spiritually-inclined enthusiasts of Neoplatonism, or on the influence of their networks and publications.

That Neoplatonism is of central importance for understanding → Romanticism has been recognized by historians for a long time, but only more recently has the recognition gained ground that what was covered under that label actually

included much that would nowadays be associated with hermetic philosophy, the occult sciences, and Western esotericism in general (Abrams 1971; Hanegraaff 1998). The broad cultural influence that Romanticism has exerted in many domains outside philosophy proper – art and literature, but esotericism as well – means that, ever since the early 19th century, one may encounter “neoplatonic” motives and associated modes of thinking in so many places that a synthetic overview becomes a practical impossibility. For example, while Neoplatonism is clearly of the greatest importance for understanding a theosophical worldview [→ Theosophical Society] as presented by → H.P. Blavatsky (see e.g. Ellwood 1983), it is mixed up there in a highly complex manner with so many other elements that the result is, rather, something new. The continuing attraction and relevance of “neoplatonism”, but also its increasing elusiveness, is clearly demonstrated by the publications of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies and the series of collective volumes it has published since 1976: here one finds discussions of Neoplatonism in relation to religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and → Gnosticism, but also applied to subjects as varied as biology, ecology, democracy, psychology, and aesthetics. Finally, “neoplatonic” frameworks are clearly present in various worldviews associated with the → New Age movement, from channeled books such as *A Course in Miracles* and the “Seth Messages” published by → Jane Roberts, to the transpersonal psychology of Ken Wilber (see e.g. Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 120-127, 246-252).

*Lit.:* M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1971 ♦ B. Copenhagen and Ch.B. Schmitt, “Platonism”, in: *Renaissance Philosophy*, Oxford, 1992, 127-195 ♦ Robert S. Ellwood, “The American Theosophical Synthesis”, in: Howard Kerr & Charles L. Crow (eds.), *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983 ♦ G. Garfagnini (ed.), *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone: Studi e documenti*, Florence, 1986 ♦ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996/Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998 ♦ idem, “Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection”, in: Roelof van den Broek & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, 237-268 ♦ J. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991 ♦ Brian Juden, *Traditions orphiques et tendances mystiques dans le*

*Romantisme Français*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1971 ♦ R. Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Munich, 1981 ♦ E.N. Tigerstedt, “The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato: An Outline and Some Observations”, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 52 (1974), 3-108.

CEES LEIJENHORST

## Neo-Sufism

This term is used to refer to religious movements in the West which describe themselves as “Sufi” but are part of the landscape of Western esotericism more than of Islam. Such a use should be distinguished from the standard use of the term in Islamic studies, where it denotes a particular group of Sufi orders which arose in the Islamic world between the 18th and 19th centuries and which has no important connection with the West.

Persons and groups in the West describing themselves as “Sufi” may be placed into one of three categories: Islamic Sufism, non-Islamic neo-Sufism, and partly Islamic neo-Sufism. Islamic Sufism (which falls beyond the scope of this entry) has been present in one form or another in the Islamic world since the 7th century and in the Christian West since at least the 18th century, at which time branches of mainstream Sufi orders existed in some of the small communities of Arab sailors resident in certain European ports. Since the first quarter of the 20th century, there have also been Sufi groups in the West whose membership is not restricted to particular ethnic or immigrant communities, and which may include converts to Islam from Christianity or Judaism. Despite their location in the West and the pragmatic concessions to Western realities that they may make in some details of belief and practice, such groups are Sufi rather than neo-Sufi.

Neo-Sufism first became important in the West in non-Islamic form, presenting Sufism as a “truth” distinct from Islam (for Islamic Sufis, Sufism is an integral part of Islam). The earliest non-Islamic neo-Sufi was Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927), who was born in Baroda, India, into a family of Indian Muslim musicians, and joined the Chishti order in his youth. He travelled to the United States in 1910, at the age of 28, and lectured initially on Indian music in San Francisco. He soon gathered a small group of followers interested more in his spiritual than his musical teaching. After moving from the United States to London, he published *A Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty* in 1914, in 1915 started a magazine, *The Sufi*, and in 1916 established a “Sufi Order”. He continued to

write on Indian music and its spiritual significance, but was best known as a “Sufi” teacher. In 1920 he moved from England to France, and he set up a “Sufi Movement” in Geneva in 1923. In 1926 he moved back to India, where he died the following year. His “Sufi Order” and “Sufi Movement” were by then established in the United States, Britain, France and Switzerland.

Inayat Khan defined Sufism as “the religion of the heart”, something both above and beyond established religions: it was ‘the spirit of Islam, as well as the pure essence of all religions and philosophies’. A believer in the essential unity of all major religions, he instituted “Universal Worship” for his followers, to ‘unite the followers of different religions and faiths in wisdom, so that without having to give up their own religion they may strengthen their own faith and focus the true light upon it’. Universal Worship included texts drawn from six religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Inayat Khan’s followers were also taught various invocations and meditative practices which were sometimes taken from Islamic Sufism, and sometimes from Hinduism or generalized Western spirituality.

After Inayat Khan’s death, his following split between his family in Europe and his two leading followers in the United States, Rabia Martin (?-1947) and Samuel Lewis (1896-1971). Martin and Lewis together led the “Sufi Order” in the United States until 1945, when Martin and some followers left neo-Sufism for the neo-Hindu teachings of Meher Baba (1894-1969), thought to be an *avatar*. This group became known as “Sufism Reoriented”, while the remainder (Lewis’s group) later became known as the “Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society” (“Islamia Ruhaniat”, literally “Islamic spirituality”, being translated as ‘the way of peace through the breath’). In the late 1960s, Samuel Lewis added “Dances of Universal Peace” to the practices inherited from Inayat Khan, attracting large numbers of the “love generation”, and the Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society later added the Goddess Tradition, Taoism, and “the Native Traditions of the world” to the original six religions recognized during “Universal Worship”.

In Europe, Inayat Khan’s following was led by various members of Inayat Khan’s family until 1958 when, on the death of Muhammad Ali Khan (a cousin), the “Sufi Movement” based in Geneva and the “Sufi Order” based in London became independent of each other. The Sufi Movement tended to emphasize “universal mysticism”, while the Sufi Order tended to emphasize its Sufi, Chishti, credentials. Both groups were led until the start of the 21st

century by descendants of Inayat Khan, and both acquired their own following in the United States, especially on the west coast, as well as in other parts of the Americas, Europe and Australasia.

A second major school of non-Islamic neo-Sufism was established by Idries Shah (1924-1996). Shah’s father was an Afghan Muslim from an important family, but though Shah was born in Simla, India, his mother was a Scot whom his father had met whilst studying medicine in Edinburgh, and Shah himself was educated and lived mostly in England. He was described in his *Daily Telegraph* obituary as ‘in speech and bearing . . . the epitome of Englishness’, and was a Governor of the Royal Humane Society and of the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, two eminently “establishment” English bodies. Shah began publishing in 1956 with *Oriental Magic*, followed in 1957 by *The Secret Lore of Magic: Books of the Sorcerers* and *Destination Mecca*. His most important work, *The Sufis*, was published in 1964, with an introduction by the British novelist and poet Robert Graves (1895-1985). Another literary admirer of Shah’s, the British novelist Doris Lessing (b. 1919), described *The Sufis* as ‘the most surprising book I had read, and yet it was as if I had been waiting to read just that book all my life’. In 1965, Shah founded the Institute for Cultural Research ‘to study, educate and publish in the field of human thought’, and then a publishing house, Octagon Press. Octagon published Shah’s books once they had gone out of print with general publishers, as well as a range of translations of major, classic Sufi writers.

Unlike Inayat Khan, Shah never established himself as the leader of a large, formal group of disciples. Although according to some accounts he had joined the Naqshbandi order, Shah laid no stress on receipt of authority from living Sufis. His personal teaching was restricted to periodic “supper sessions” attended by about thirty people at a time, and to an extensive correspondence. His importance lies not so much in his direct disciples as in his books: by the time of Shah’s death in 1996, *The Sufis* and another twenty or so books had sold 15 million copies in twelve languages.

Like Inayat Khan, Shah separated Sufism from Islam, maintaining (in the words of Doris Lessing) that ‘the Sufi truth is at the core of every religion, its heart, and religions are only the outward vestments of an inner reality’. The Islamic Sufi content of his books, however, is far higher than that of the teachings of Inayat Khan. Several of Shah’s books are essentially anthologies of texts chosen from classic Sufi sources (with which he was well



acquainted), supplemented by folk tales which Shah collected from across Asia as a young man, especially the sayings attributed to the mythical Mulla Nasr al-Din. The almost exclusively Islamic content and inspiration of his works might justify the description of Shah as a Sufi writer addressing a Western audience, were it not for Shah's own disavowal of mainstream Islam, the lack of a significant link to an Islamic Sufi order, and the absence of normal Islamic practice from his immediate circle.

Non-Islamic neo-Sufism was also an element in the → Gurdjieff Tradition. Both → George Gurdjieff and → P.D. Ouspensky alluded frequently to their Sufi contacts, as did other Gurdjieff teachers such as the Englishman J.G. Bennett (1897-1974), who visited Sufis in the Islamic world and from 1963-1966 followed Idries Shah, and Oscar Ichazo (1931-), a Chilean follower of Ouspensky who established the Arica Institute in New York in 1971 and was instrumental in the popularization of the Enneagram (often said to have a Sufi origin), first as a technique for personality testing and then in other applications.

Partly Islamic neo-Sufism has always been found in the Islamic world, and emerged in the West only shortly after non-Islamic neo-Sufism. Partly Islamic neo-Sufism is an intermediate category, comprising those groups and individuals which maintain the link between Sufism and Islam, but are nonetheless sectarian in the sense that they have characteristics of belief or practice which would be condemned by the vast majority of Islamic Sufis. Partly Islamic neo-Sufism is often more difficult to identify than non-Islamic neo-Sufism, since partly Islamic neo-Sufis do not declare themselves as such, usually claiming to be part of the Islamic Sufi tradition. A second difficulty is that the difference between partly Islamic neo-Sufism and Islamic Sufism is often one of degree, so that the border between the two is not always clear. In both the Islamic world and the West, Islamic Sufi groups are often accused of beliefs or practices which bring on them general condemnation; some of these groups are really neo-Sufi, and some are not.

The earliest partly Islamic neo-Sufis in the West were individuals who joined Sufi orders in the Islamic world but subsequently used Sufism as one element in a personal amalgam more related to Western esotericism than to Islamic Sufism. Amongst these were Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorff (1875-1945) and Ivan Aguéli (1869-1917). Sebottendorff, a German who took Ottoman citizenship and had previously been active in → Freemasonry, joined a Sufi order in Turkey while in

his mid twenties, probably in 1898-1899. On his return to Germany in 1913 he became involved with a variety of esoteric organizations, notably the Germanen Order. He founded the Thule Society in 1917-1918, and in 1918 gave instructions for the establishment of the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, a political group which in 1919 was joined by Adolf Hitler, who transformed it into the Nazi party. Aguéli, a Swedish painter resident mostly in France who had previously been a member of the → Theosophical Society, joined a very minor branch of the Shadhiliyya order in Egypt in 1907, at the age of 38. On his return to Paris he wrote on aspects of Islam in esotericist journals, and when he admitted → René Guénon into the Shadhiliyya order in 1912 this was more in the spirit of giving an esoteric initiation than in the spirit of Islamic Sufism.

From the time of his emigration from France to Egypt in 1930 at the age of 44, Guénon was a Sufi rather than a neo-Sufi, but both Sufism and partly Islamic neo-Sufism are found amongst the various groups established by adherents of his version of the *Philosophia Perennis* [→ Tradition]. The most important of these groups, the Maryamiyya, is considered by many to display neo-Sufi characteristics. The Maryamiyya was established by → Frithjof Schuon, who joined the Alawiyya order of Ahmad ibn Mustafa al-Alawi (1869-1934) in Algeria in 1932 at the age of 25, and on this basis established a following of his own, principally in Switzerland, France, and the United States. He gradually modified the practice of the Alawiyya and later renamed his own group the "Maryamiyya". Schuon's belief in the "transcendent unity of religions" led to the adoption of concepts and practices from outside Islam, notably Hindu concepts such as *avatar*, Christian imagery such as icons of the Virgin Mary (after whom the Maryamiyya was named), and Native American practices such as the Rite of the Sacred Pipe. Attempts were made to keep these elements separate from the Islamic practice of the Maryamiyya proper, but for at least some of Schuon's followers non-Islamic elements acquired a significance which would justify the appellation of neo-Sufism rather than Sufism. Other followers of Schuon's, many of whom occupied prominent positions in academia and the public eye, have been mainstream Islamic Sufis. Some of these established Sufi groups of their own after breaking with Schuon, among which was the Alawiyya established in France by the Rumanian diplomat Michel Valsan (1907-74), a one-time disciple of Schuon's. This group was a model of Islamic orthodoxy.

Later partly Islamic neo-Sufi groups range from

the barely Islamic to the almost Islamic. At one extreme is the Mauritian merchant Paul de Séligny (1903-?), whose small group in Monaco and the south of France followed him during the 1960s through successive incarnations as neo-Sufi *shaykh*, Hindu *guru*, newspaper proprietor and finally reforming educationalist. At the other extreme are groups which remain close to Islamic Sufism even though they explicitly state that their members need not be Muslim. Prominent among these is the Threshold Society, established in California in the early 1990s by Edmund Helminski (1947-) and his wife Camille Adams (1951-), both translators of Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273), the founder of the Mevlevi order and in the 1990s one of America's best-selling poets. Helminski, who is himself Muslim, joined the Mevlevi order in Turkey and was recognized there as a Mevlevi *shaykh* in 1990, but allowed non-Muslims to join his own Mevlevi group in the United States. Unlike non-Islamic neo-Sufis, Helminski recognized the Islamic nature of Sufism, adopting a subtle position which held that a Mevlevi Sufi need not 'embrace the religion of Islam in its outer, sociological form' so long as, for example, he studied the Quran and the *hadith*. The possibility that a Mevlevi might become a Muslim in form as well as "essence" is not excluded, and Helminski describes the Threshold Society as 'a bridge towards Islamic practice'. Similarly close to Islam was the Sri Lankan Tamil Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (c. 1900-1986), who founded the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in Philadelphia after he travelled, already an old man, to the United States in 1971. Bawa maintained that Sufism was a 'path beyond all religions' but followed and led many of his followers in a practice that was essentially Islamic, including for example the five daily prayers and the Ramadan fast. Neither group has important sources of doctrine or practice from outside Islam, and groups such as these are close to Islamic Sufism.

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MARK SEDGWICK

## Neo-Templar Traditions

If classic historiographical methods are respected, there is no reason to believe that the Order of Templars survived in any fashion after its abolition by Pope Clement V in 1314. The Templars who survived the stake or prison probably joined other knightly or religious orders, or returned to lay status as soldiers or feudal landowners. Absolutely no medieval document suggests even a residual survival of the "Order of the Poor Knights of Christ". It is naturally hazardous to make conjectures about what the Templars' destiny might have been, if it had not been shattered by the joint interests of the pope and the king of France. History cannot be remade! But one may imagine it as being little different from that of similar orders, such as the Hospitallers of Saint John (the Knights of Malta) or the Order of Saint-Lazare. The Order of Malta became in the 17th and 18th centuries what it has remained to this day: an essentially nobiliary and charitable institution. Saint-Lazare was annexed by the French sovereigns and became an order of the King: a national decoration complete with a structure for distributing pensions to his favored subjects. This was what happened to the one and only Templar branch that survived abolition, thanks to the protection of the kings of Portugal. At first only the name changed, but over the centuries the "Order of Christ" was also

transformed into a national decoration. It is nowadays one of the prestigious decorations of the (secular) Portuguese Republic, particularly awarded to foreign dignitaries.

Similarly, for the medievalists there is no document to suggest that the Templars professed anything but the orthodox Catholic faith, for which they had fought hard for two hundred years, and especially no esoteric concepts. The grave accusation of heresy that was first made when they appeared before the tribunals was nothing but the typical trial procedure of the time, in which the accused was condemned in advance. Thus nothing in actual history anticipates the fabulous and legendary destiny that the Order of Knights Templar would enjoy, centuries after their disappearance. The secret survival of the Templars was originally an exclusively masonic myth, but in the course of three hundred years it spread far beyond the world of the lodges. It is a rare example of a masonic legend becoming the direct source of a classic figure of the Western imagination.

The “true” Templars thus disappeared between 1310 and 1320. Chivalry itself, of which they had been among the most illustrious representatives, only survived them for a few decades and gradually faded away during the second half of the 14th century; but the ideal – or to use a neutral term, the imaginary world – of chivalry survived them. This very persistence of the chivalric imagination through the centuries is a most unusual phenomenon in the history of ideas. Whilst the romances of chivalry lost their literary status in the 15th and 16th centuries, they continued to be read, as testified by countless editions up to the 18th century. The other element that illustrates and supports the vitality of chivalry in the French imagination of the 17th and 18th centuries is the steady interest in the military orders and their history, as shown by the copious bibliography of “treatises”. The history of the improbable number of knightly orders, as presented in them, is in fact a unique history: that of the persistent battle waged by certain people throughout the centuries to maintain the ideal of chivalry. If they speak at length about the facts, often epic and sometimes mysterious, which explain the creation of these orders, it is because of what those circumstances teach about the nature of this knight’s battle against human contingencies, the forces of evil or destiny. Another indication of the importance of the symbolic level in these works appears in the long descriptions of coats of arms, chains of office, and costumes attributed to the various orders. In view of the large number of books in this field published up to 1730,

there must have been few 18th-century libraries lacking one or more works on chivalry, whether romances or treatises. Thus one is not surprised to find in the library of the Comte de Clermont, Grand Master of French → Freemasonry from 1743 to 1771, *Amadis de Gaule*, *Histoire du Chevalier du Soleil* (History of the Knight of the Sun), *Histoire de Bertrand du Guesquelin*, and also Abbé Vertot’s *Histoire de Malte* (History of Malta), of whose four large volumes more than one is devoted to the Templars.

Modern speculative Freemasonry, formed in London from 1717 onwards, took root in France around 1725. It probably worked the two degrees inherited from the operative masonry of Scotland, Entered Apprentice and Fellow-Craft, adding in the 1730s a third grade called Master Mason. Between this time and 1760, the French freemasons discovered other degrees and put them into practice. The three first degrees (Apprentice, Fellow-Craft or *Compagnon*, and Master) are called “blue” or “symbolic” in the French masonic tradition, and “craft” degrees in British masonry. The other degrees have become known in France as “*hauts-grades*” or “*écossisme*” (“Scottish”), and as “side degrees” in Great Britain – names which are incorrect in the literal sense, but firmly established by usage. These other degrees became one of the favorite forms of expression in the spiritualist and esoteric currents which developed during the 18th century. Souls in quest of the chivalric ideal, Hermetic secrets, or divine mysteries turned to these rituals with their alluring names such as “Perfect Master”, “Elect”, “Knight of the Orient”, “Rose-Croix”, and of course “Knight of the Temple”. The emergence and nature of these masonic high degrees is one of the most obscure and surprising aspects of the Age of Reason’s hidden side. The high degrees thus became the route by which the chivalric imagination, and consequently the Templar legend, invaded Freemasonry.

In France, the first high degrees probably appeared during the 1730s, from which time some took Freemasonry itself to be a knightly order. Ramsay, in his celebrated *Discourse* of 1736, explained that masons are the descendants of the Crusaders. From the moment that Freemasonry was associated with chivalry, especially if this was the chivalry of the Crusades, the Templars were not far off. In 1737 we read in a gazette: ‘A new Order has been founded in Paris which comes from England and is called . . . Free-Masons. Those of this Order take an oath of fidelity . . . and it is somewhat like the Order of the Templars’. In 1746, *L’Examen de la Société des Francs-Maçons* . . . (Examination

of the Society of Freemasons) explained that ‘The Free-Masons, like the Templars, have points that are so essential and secret between them that they would rather die than reveal them’. In another example of 1752, *Les vrais jugemens sur la société des Francs-Maçons . . .* (The True Judgments about the Society of Freemasons), we read that ‘in considering the last state of [the sect of] the Templars, it seems that it has revived completely in that of the Masons’. Thus from the 1740s onwards, public opinion forged a link between the masonic mysteries which were beginning to be the talk of the town and the Order of the Temple. Lastly, we cite the memoirs of the great archivist of French masonry in the 18th century, → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz: ‘. . . from the year 1752, . . . having been chosen to preside over the [lodge] that had received me, . . . I mysteriously told those on whom I conferred this 4th degree of the [lodge] that they were becoming successors of the Knights T[emplar] and of their knowledge; I repeated it, and have repeated it for ten years, as I heard it from my predecessor, who had heard it himself from an ancient tradition, whose origin he did not know’.

By the 1740s, and perhaps earlier, some masons were claiming a filiation with the Knights Templar, so prestigious and rich in symbolic potential. The appearance of the “Templar” high degrees and the enthusiasm for them on the part of the brethren in turn nourished and amplified the legend. The birth of the Templar degrees is one of the most obscure subjects, on which new information has only just been discovered: it appears that a Templar high degree, the “Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus”, was actually created before 1750 in Stuartist circles. What “rare and precious knowledge” did this archaic ritual of the Knight Kadosh convey? On first reading, the masonic student feels a certain disappointment: far from new revelations, it all has an air of *déjà-vu*. In fact, it is nothing but a ritual of the “Élu des Neuf”, one of the earliest and commonest degrees of the 18th century, which someone has decked out in knightly dress and equipped with a “mysterious ladder” – and a rather curious legend in which the Templars figure. One cannot avoid the feeling that it is a montage, or even cobbled together. But these are the thoughts of a 21st-century analyst. Placed in the masonic context of the 1740s, it is precisely its proximity to the grade of Elu, even in its title, which makes the Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus significant. This ritual then appears as an unveiling, and that is its message and the key to the new perspective that it offers. The grade of Elu is one of the earliest degrees of speculative Freemasonry. It is also closely con-

nected by its symbolic theme to the degree of Master. It was thus known to all masons, perhaps as early as the beginning of the 1730s. Now, the ritual of Knight Kadosh of the Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus gives us something more, revealing a secret part of the degree of Elu: this degree, which everyone in the masonry of the first half of the 18th century thought he knew, is in fact the vestige and the survival of one of the most illustrious orders of chivalry – a Sublime Order, but extinguished through an injustice. On closer examination, the legend of the degree of Chevalier Elu contains several other elements. First, the Chevaliers Elus are the descendants of the Templars who have survived secretly into the 18th century. Secondly, the Order of the Temple was itself nothing but the prolongation of a long line of initiates. The third and most important element is that it was in Scotland, and around the tragic destiny of the House of Stuart, that the Ordre Sublime survived.

This legend reappears in the most famous of the Templar masonic systems of the Enlightenment, the “Templar” Strict Observance which arose in Germany during the 1750s around Baron von Hund (1722-1776), who was its emblematic figure for a quarter of a century. After the three degrees of symbolic Freemasonry, the brethren were invited to join the “Inner Order” with two degrees of Novice and Knight Templar. It was then revealed to them that authentic Freemasonry in fact concealed a survival of the Order of the Temple, governed in an occult manner by “Unknown Superiors”. The Templar Strict Observance enjoyed great success in Germany, where it dominated masonic life during the 1760s and 1770s. Grouped into “provinces”, these new Templars modelled their organization on what they thought they knew of the medieval order’s administration. Thus, interpreting the texts with some freedom, France harbored the Province of Burgundy based at Strasbourg (sic), that of Auvergne at Lyon, and that of Septimanie at Montpellier. The Strict Observance was established in France in 1774, first at Strasbourg, then at Lyon. At the end of the 1770s, the question of the veracity and nature of Templar filiation caused a serious crisis. The Convents of Lyon (1778) and Wilhelmsbad (1782) brought about its mutation into the Régime Ecosais Rectifié. The Inner Order renounced Templar filiation (though in quite ambiguous terms), and the teaching of the system was laid wide open to the theosophic doctrines of the theurgist → Martinès de Pasqually. Nowadays, the ties between the Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus and the Stricte Observance Templière are difficult to discern with precision, but they seem very probable. In any case,

some of those who, like → Johann August Starck, played a role in the turbulent history of the Strict Observance, derived their “Templar” filiation from the Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus. The Grand Priors of the Régime Ecossais Rectifié and the Swedish and Danish masonic orders maintain to this day, in different ways, part of the complicated heritage of the Strict Observance.

The other major masonic current which has claimed descent from the Order of the Temple also issued from the Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus. After an apparent eclipse in the 1750s, the degree of Knight Kadosh became highly successful in Freemasonry during the last third of the 18th century. In 1761, the Conseil Suprême des Grands Inspecteurs Grands Elus, Chevaliers Kadosh constituted the inner circle governing the First Grand Lodge of France. At that time, it crowned a system of twenty-five high degrees which, after many vicissitudes, were increased to thirty-three in 1801. Even today, the Supreme Councils of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite rule a masonic system whose most eminent degrees rest on the Templar legend. The Anglo-Saxon countries have a third variation of Templar masonry, attested to since the 18th century. It is very probably of continental origin, although the question of the origins of the “Knight Templar” is nowadays very obscure, and very little studied.

The success and development of the masonic degrees which, in the 18th century, claimed the heritage of the Order of the Temple, brings us to a veritable legendary cycle in the medieval literary sense. Since 1760, based on the accusation of heresy and on an ambiguous phrase of → Cornelius Agrippa, masons have attributed esoteric knowledge to the Templars. Naturally it concerned their alchemical skill, which supposedly lay at the origin of their immense wealth. Since then, the versions of their history have proliferated, each adding to the story some new details about the dire end of the unfortunate knights, the secrets of their survival, and the mysteries of their occult hierarchy. During the second half of the 18th century, one can see a whole imaginary continent arising.

High-degree Freemasonry, established in the 18th century, transmitted the Templar degrees to posterity, degrees which were very popular among Freemasons throughout the 19th century. For example, the practice of the degree of Knight Kadosh never ceased to increase everywhere in Europe. But while the Templar legend remained much in evidence, it was in quite a different mode from that of the 18th century. In the 19th century, the Templars’ heresy and their opposition to the

King of France often caused them to be represented as precursors of anticlericalism and the democratic movements, while the gnosis that they were supposed to have possessed became assimilated to the religion of nature. Following the trend of the age, esotericism and socialism made excellent companions.

The beginning of the 19th century also witnessed an important event in the destiny of the Templar legend. Until 1805, neo-Templarism had been closely associated with Freemasonry, but in that year there appeared, within the framework of the Grand Orient de France, “Les Chevaliers de la Croix”, an “order of the Orient” which, it was revealed to the initiate, was in fact the survival of the Order of the Temple. All of this was very classical, and this new Templar masonic order – organized by → Bernard-Raymond Fabré-Palaprat – differed from its predecessors only by its taste for a very theatrical Templar ceremony in true First Empire style, and by an especially pompous set of titles. But in the months that followed its foundation, perhaps in consequence of quarrels with the Grand Orient, the Templars of the “Chevaliers de la Croix” proclaimed that the true Order of the Temple had nothing to do with Freemasonry. For the first time, a neo-Templar order claimed a secret survival outside of any masonic framework. This order is at the source of a strange and celebrated document (and of course apocryphal): the *Charte de Larménius* (Charter of Larmenius), which describes the lineage of Grand Masters who secretly maintained the order after the execution of Jacques de Molay up to the beginning of the 19th century. Fabré-Palaprat and his disciples attributed to the Templars a whole collection of secret knowledge, notably a (fifth) gospel forgotten by history: the Levitikon. Against the fanaticism and superstition of the Church of Peter in Rome, the Templars were said to have preserved the Church of John and the original Christian faith in all its purity. Beside the Order of the Temple, a “Johannite Church of Primitive Christians” was organized, complete with bishops and liturgy. The Ordre du Temple was highly successful in France during the first half of the 19th century, spreading to Switzerland, Great Britain, and several other countries. After 1840 it went into decline, fading around 1850 and apparently disappearing completely in the second half of the 19th century. Fabré-Palaprat’s Ordre du Temple is at the source – more mythical than real – of several current neo-Templar orders, notably the one directed from Portugal since the 1950s by de Souza-Fontès.

Having been considered as initiates since the



middle of the 18th century, the “Templars” found themselves implicated in the occult revival of the end of the 19th century. The → “Ordo Templi Orientis,” founded by Theodor Reuss and then expanded by → Aleister Crowley, appears to have been the inner circle of a whole series of occultist organizations. For its promoters, the secret of the Templars consisted in nothing less than sexual magic. The young → René Guénon, during his formative years, participated in an effort to revive the Ordre du Temple, as demanded by the “spirit” of Jacques de Molay in the course of a spiritualist séance. Another Order of the Temple, founded in Germany just before World War I by → Lanz von Liebenfels (Adolf Lanz), was organized on the principle of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and recruited those deemed to be “Aryan heroes”. Lanz was one of the primary representatives of the ariosophic current in Germany [→ Ariosophy], racist and proto-fascist in character. Several neo-Templar orders were created in the second half of the 20th century. There was the Order of the Solar Temple, founded by the disciples of Jacques Breyer in 1952 in a context of paranormal phenomena reputedly observed in the Château d’Arginy, near Lyon. In 1970, Christian Bernard, then Grand Master of the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rose-Croix (AMORC), founded an Ordre Rénové du Temple after meeting a mysterious “Cardinal Blanc”, in a modern version of the mythical “Unknown Superiors.” In the middle of the 1980s, Luc Jouret and Jo di Mambro monopolized two subsidiary branches of these two organizations and, following a terrible sequence of events, led part of the membership to collective suicide.

Today’s neo-Templar organizations are very diverse. A majority of them remains solidly anchored in the masonic body, of which they constitute the high-degree systems. Their neo-Templarism is very mild, consisting mainly in promoting the chivalric ideal, often combined with an interest in gnostic doctrines. Their reference to the Templars is essentially symbolic. Outside Freemasonry, several neo-Templar organizations in fact qualify as fantasy orders of knighthood. Others are attached to the neo-spiritualist movement, or even to the → New Age. Today, outside the esoteric milieu properly so called, belief that the Templars survived by virtue of their secret knowledge is largely sustained in the public mind by popular best-sellers such as *The Temple and the Lodge* (by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, London 1989) or *The Hiram Key* (by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, London 1995).

The prestige of an illustrious order, and the sup-

posed heresy of knights familiar with the mysterious Orient: these two traits met in the 18th century in an unexpected but historic encounter that made of the Templars the heralds of a reviving gnosis. The Templar degrees of Freemasonry served as the framework and support for this “precious and secret knowledge” which, in the paradox of the century, fascinated the men of the Enlightenment who were critical towards religious institutions but dissatisfied with the emergence of modern rationalism. As the historians say, “A false idea is a real fact”. It matters little whether the survival of the Templars is an invention, or not. On the margin of church orthodoxy and secular history, the Templar legend created an area welcoming the most varied speculations. Since the same causes produce the same effects, the Templars lived on for three centuries in literature and eso-steric movements, protecting beneath the folds of their great mantle, for better or (sometimes) for worse, the “quest” of men who, now as then, feel themselves to be strangers in a world grown too profane.

*Lit.:* Serge Caillet, *L’Ordre Rénové du Temple aux racines du Temple solaire*, Paris: Dervy, 1997 ♦ Robert L.D. Cooper, “The Knights Templar in Scotland, the Creation of a Myth”, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, London, 2003 ♦ Antoine Faivre, “*Miles redivivus*: Aspects of Chivalric Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Alchemy, Freemasonry and Literature” (1st ed. 1984), in: *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994, 177-199 ♦ Massimo Introvigne, “Ordeal by Fire: The Tragedy of the Solar Temple”, *Religion* 25 (1995), 267-283 ♦ André Kervella & Philippe Lestienne, “Un haut-grade templier dans les milieux jacobites en 1750: L’Ordre Sublime des Chevaliers Elus”, *Renaissance Traditionnelle* 112 (October 1997), 228-251 ♦ René Le Forestier, *La Franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: Archè-Edidit, 2003 (1st ed. 1968) ♦ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology*, 3rd ed., London, New York: Tauris Parke, 2003, 90-122 ♦ Pierre Mollier, “Imaginaire Chevaleresque et Franc-maçonnerie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Renaissance Traditionnelle* 97-98 (April 1994), 2-19; 99 (July 1994), 128-138; 100 (October 1994), 208-223 ♦ idem, “Des Francs-maçons aux Templiers: Aperçus sur la constitution d’une légende au Siècle des Lumières”, *Symboles et mythes dans les mouvements initiatiques et ésotériques: filiations et emprunts (ARIES, special issue)*, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris: Archè/La Table d’Emeraude 1999, 93-101 ♦ idem, “Les rituels de la Maçonnerie templière, un cycle légendaire au Siècle des Lumières”, *Renaissance Traditionnelle* 129 (January 2002), 29-39 ♦ Peter Partner, *The Knights Templar: Their Myth*, Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books, 1990 (1st ed. 1981), 89-194.

**Nerval, Gérard de (Gérard Labrunie),**  
 \* 22.5.1808 Paris, † 26.1.1855 Paris

French poet and writer. He participated in the “battle of *Hernani*” (1830), associated with “Les Jeunes-France”, and was taken with an invincible passion for the actress Jenny Colon (1808-1842). Suffering a complete mental breakdown in 1841, he traveled to the Middle East (1843) and upon his return survived for ten years on minor jobs in publishing and journalism. He had another breakdown in 1853 and never fully recovered; he was hospitalized several times in Doctor Blanche’s mental clinic in Passy. A few moments of lucidity allowed him to write his masterpieces: *Sylvia* (1853), *Les filles du feu* (1854), and *Les Chimères* (1843-1854). On 26 January 1855, just as *Aurélia* was beginning to be published, he was found hanged from the railing of a staircase in rue de la Vieille-Lanterne in Paris.

Nerval, in the first page of *Illuminés* (1852), chapter “La bibliothèque de mon oncle”, traces his taste for the occult back to childhood. It is possible that some works he had discovered very early could have fed his imagination, but he does not give us any titles and we are reduced to conjectures. Similarly, we cannot trace precisely the various stages of his exploration of esotericism. The reading of → Goethe, whose *Faust* he translated (1828), and his discovery of Hoffmann (1776-1822) doubtless introduced him to → mysticism and awakened his thirst for the infinite; he then had a revelation of the secret → correspondences maintained by poetry, dreams and madness, three experiences that led him to explore invisible and ineffable realities. The milieu Jeunes-France, the Petit-Cénacle and the Hotel du Doyenné that he frequented assiduously between 1830 and 1835 were not foreign to such preoccupations; he let himself be influenced little by little by this ambiguous atmosphere where his latent dementia, which would explode in 1841, found sustenance while leading him imperceptibly toward an esoteric and mystical conception of the world. His friend George Bell (1824-1899) characterized his approach very well: ‘Above all he found infinite joy in teaching himself the mysteries of the occult sciences . . . With scraps of the Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], the mystical reveries of → Cazotte, some theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy] of → Saint-Martin, the scarce works of → Swedenborg that were almost unknown, he composed his own theories to explain everything that could have surprised him . . .’.

Moreover, Nerval himself, in *Aurélia* (1855), mentioned his favorite readings: ‘an odd assort-

ment of the knowledge of all times, history, travel, religion, Kabbalah, → astrology, to make the shades of → Pico della Mirandola, the sage Meursius and → Nicholas of Cusa rejoice’. Indeed his investigations embraced a wide area, but he surely did not devote himself to the deep study of → Martinès de Pasqually, of → Boehme and of → Marsilio Ficino. He was often content to thumb through compilers and popularizers: → Court de Gébelin, Herbelot (1625-1695), Abbot Villars (1635-1673), Bekker (1634-1698), Collin de Plancy, etc. He drew from the best and the worst, gave his fancy free rein and above all looked for material to stimulate his imagination. He was enchanted by strange words and marveled at the most enigmatic engravings; he thus had a high opinion of *Melencolia* by Dürer (1471-1528), *Modestie* by Lefèvre (1798-1864), the astonishing plates in *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* by → Kircher and the striking figures of the → Tarot. Highly interested in etymology and occult geography, he engaged in kabbalistic calculations concerning dates, his age and all sorts of numbers that came up by chance. He moved in the world of symbols, developed imaginary genealogical trees, and drew composite portraits where for example a woman, a giantess haloed with seven stars, could symbolize at the same time Diana, the Virgin Mary, Artemis, Saint Rosalia and Jenny Colon, the beloved actress. These approaches are situated between playful activity and magical operation without it being possible to favor one attitude over another. However, Nerval was especially fascinated by the symbolic richness of → alchemy and there is an obvious connection between *Les Chimères* (1843-1854) and the *Visions hermétiques* of → Nuysement.

Nevertheless, here again, imagination and non-chalance, deep conviction and authentic belief are curiously blended. Gérard uses for example the *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique* of → Pernety the way others would a rhyming dictionary, by gleaning the terms that captivate him in order to introduce them, here and there, in a sonnet: an essentially poetic manner of letting words have the first initiative. Nevertheless, it does not follow from this that alchemy was for him only a glossary of mysterious terms. He connected it with his inner life, and discovered a subtle relationship between his own destiny and that of the philosopher’s stone, whose transmutation, in the image of Christ’s Passion, represented for him the ancient spiritual principle according to which one must die in order to be reborn. In the metamorphoses of the stone, Nerval relived his own drama, as a metaphor of the drama

of the world. Certainly, Nerval was fascinated by → animal magnetism, black magic, → Illuminism, gnosis, arithmosophy [→ Number Symbolism], astrological symbolism and alchemical meanings, but even if he may have been a Mason, his esoteric knowledge did not make of him an adept bound to an immutable doctrine; he was not the faithful disciple of any religion, of any sect, of any obedience, of any theory. The preface of his translation of *Second Faust* (1840), a true spiritual testament, is in this respect very significant; having recourse to illuminist intuitions, he preaches there a syncretism founded on the unity of religious traditions. This quest results in what he calls “modern pantheism”, of which Goethe is for him the purest representative. Gérard then becomes intoxicated with the idea that nothing dies, that eternity concentrates, in a divine synchronism, the whole of universal history, visible through the eyes of the soul. From 1842 until his death, he would not cease to live in a world of mysterious correspondences. His sojourn in the Orient (1843) confirmed him in his convictions by convincing him that they agreed with archetypal realities transcending space and time. Isis, Horus, Antaeus, Prometheus, Pandora, Orpheus, Icarus: all divinities were useful to him, but he retained only what harmonized with his dream, and saw in myth only a tangible expression of the invisible, of which man, intermittently, can perceive the irrefragable presence.

Thus, Nerval borrowed disparate materials from the various secret doctrines. Stimulated by his mental troubles, he retained the most heterogeneous elements and the most varied symbolic systems to develop a resolutely personal myth, whose fulfillment he would pursue until his death. By means of an archetypally Romantic approach, he situated his Self in the heart of his metaphysical concerns and attempted, through the magic of art, to make real his own spiritual accomplishment: a symbol, in his opinion, of universal salvation.

Gerard de Nerval, *Oeuvres complètes*, 3 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1984, 1989, 1993.

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JEAN-LUC FAIVRE

## New Age Movement

1. DOCTRINES AND RITUALS  
(A. HEALING B. CHANNELING  
C. DIVINATION) 2. SOME  
SOCIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS  
3. ROOTS: THE ESOTERIC  
BACKGROUND 4. NEW AGE RELIGION  
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NEW AGE?

The New Age has emerged during the 1970s and increasingly during the 1980s as a common denominator for a variety of quite divergent contemporary popular practices and beliefs. Among other things, healing, channeling, the interest in crystals, varieties of positive thinking and several forms of divination [→ Divinatory Arts] have been linked to this term. The New Age also includes various “alternative” interpretations of history and of the sciences.

The term itself originally arose in theosophical literature and in UFO cults [→ UFO Traditions] after World War II in connection with the millennialist belief that the world stands at the brink of a major evolutionary transformation of consciousness, often identified in early New Age literature as the Aquarian Age. Many of those sympathetically involved in the first years of the New Age movement principally saw the various techniques of healing, divination etc. as tools in this transformation. This sense of the term New Age was in the later 1970s and in the 1980s largely superseded by a new and expanded meaning. It no longer refers to a specific movement that expects the coming of a new age, but refers to a wide array of ideas and practices, largely united by historical links, a shared discourse and an *air de famille*. The two uses of the term have been characterized (Hanegraaff 1996, 94-103) as the New Age *sensu stricto* and *sensu lato*.

### 1. DOCTRINES AND RITUALS

We are frail beings, prey to the fear of an uncertain destiny, the prospect of disease and ultimately death. Questions prompted by such existential concerns are in most forms of folk religiosity answered in an unsystematic fashion, often through a process of bricolage from already available narratives and rituals. Much less commonly, individuals with a systematizing bent will attempt to harmonize the various answers to such questions. In this respect, much of the New Age is indeed a mode of folk religiosity. Illness is

explained by pointing at various doctrines that underlie healing. Astrologers and other diviners attempt to ritualistically foretell the future. Legends of past lives offer the hope that physical death is not the end, but merely a transition to something new and perhaps better. However, the concrete details of various healing systems, the specific views presented by various writers on astrology or the particular theories of → reincarnation found in New Age texts can be left vague, and can differ to the point of being mutually inconsistent. In the New Age culture, attempts have nevertheless been made to construct a coherent whole from these answers. More typically, perhaps, the variety of doctrines and rituals point at an underlying vision that is rarely spelled out in full. An attempt at reconstructing this underlying vision might include the following items:

1. The entire cosmos is not so much a vast set of material objects as a great, interconnected web of meaning.
2. The underlying “stuff” of the cosmos is therefore not matter but something intangible, perhaps identifiable as consciousness or energy.
3. We humans contain a spark of this energy or consciousness within us, a resource that we can tap into in order to change reality and create our own worlds.
4. The human being is thus not only a material body, but also comprises a mind and a spiritual element. When ill, one needs to address all of these elements rather than merely treat isolated physical symptoms.
5. Each of us is embarked on a journey of spiritual development, a development that will not stop at the death of the physical body but will continue over many lives.
6. There are better ways to get to understand the world we live in and our own place in it than via the intellect. Perhaps we can gain spiritual insight in flashes of intuition. Perhaps there are prophetic states in which we can access knowledge from various highly developed beings, or from a divine part of our selves. A variety of techniques such as → astrology or the → tarot can also have this function.
7. Similar insights into the workings of the cosmos and into our own selves were granted to a number of ancient cultures, ranging from Egypt and India to the native Americas.
8. Such insights are confirmed by the most recent developments of Western science, especially quantum mechanics.
9. Spirituality is not a matter of accepting doctrines formulated by others, but rather a highly individual quest, that can (and perhaps should) be based primarily on personal experience.
10. We can either as individuals or collectively change the world into a better place by adopting such a spiritual vision.

Besides comprising a set of doctrinally related

worldviews, the New Age is also an intensely ritualistic form of religion. The belief that body, mind and spirit form a whole and should be treated as such has led to a profusion of systems of holistic ritual healing. The idea that there are states of consciousness in which it is possible to access spiritual knowledge has led to the emergence of ritualized means of reaching such states, generally termed “channeling”. The belief in a plan of spiritual evolution has generated a variety of divinatory techniques to gain insight into this plan. Let us take a brief look at these three aspects of New Age ritual.

#### A. HEALING

Medical anthropology distinguishes disease (which is definable from a biomedical perspective) from illness (which is defined from within a given local worldview). Although Western forms of complementary medicine certainly also attract clients with biomedically definable diseases, the spiritual aspect of healing within a New Age framework typically implies addressing culturally constructed states of illness. Indeed, New Age conceptions of health can imply such a high level of physical, emotional and spiritual functioning that an entire spectrum of social and existential problems, any perceived lack of vitality or creativity, even the “normality” of everyday life, can be understood in terms of a lack of health that stands in need of treatment. The methods employed in healing vary from the laying on of hands to the use of a broad variety of ritual substances and objects. Reiki and Therapeutic Touch involve the use of the healer’s hands. Crystal healing presupposes that gems and minerals possess healing properties. Color therapies and Aura-Soma therapy assume that colors influence physical and spiritual well-being. Bach Flower Remedies attempt to derive similar effects from plants. These ritual methods rely on specific cosmological doctrines as well as theories about the constitution of the human body. In a kind of epistemological circle, the validity of these doctrinal claims is in turn commonly derived from the pragmatic certitude that the various modalities of ritual healing work. Four such doctrines are common to a diverse set of practices. Firstly, it is generally held that there are normally invisible vital forces (“energies”) that surround and/or pass through the human body, and that the therapist is able to manipulate these energies. Secondly, the body is a holistic system. The body as a whole is mirrored in the feet (reflexology), on the outer ears (as in one modern, Western development of acupuncture), or in the eyes (iridology). Theories of Chinese origin, according to which the vital forces

flow through channels connecting the diverse parts of the body into an integrated whole, have been eagerly embraced by New Age healers. Thirdly, body and spirit are also part of a whole. By treating the body, the spirit can be healed. Conversely, by treating the spirit the body is healed. Fourthly, the body has a hidden anatomy. Thus the human aura, a colored sheath said to enclose the physical body, is held to provide clues to the state of the client's health. The hidden anatomy is often understood to comprise seven or more centers of vital force, the *chakras*.

#### B. CHANNELING

In traditional cultures throughout the world religious specialists have functioned as links between human beings and what each culture understands to be spiritual reality. The New Age counterpart of this process of prophetic revelation is generally known as channeling. Channeled messages generally convey a synthesis of psychology and religion, a pattern of syncretism that has permeated much Western religious thought in general over the last century. If there were no experience of fear and guilt, or if the spiritual energy were not blocked, or if rationality and materialism were not the obstacles that they are to intuitive thought, human beings would recognize their true, spiritual natures. A second credo that permeates much of the channeled material of the New Age is that we create our own reality. If guilt or fear burdens us, our world will be dark and frightening. If we bring out our divine selves, the world will become filled with seeming miracles. In some sectors of the New Age, these miracles include the creation of affluence through spiritual means. These basic doctrinal elements were at the core of an early series of channeled messages, known as the Seth material. → Jane Roberts' books containing the messages of the discarnate entity Seth spread through the emerging New Age network throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, and became trend-setting for subsequent channeled messages. They also contain a number of innovative religious ideas and concepts that have been adopted as normative by the wider New Age culture.

A second, very influential channeled text in the contemporary New Age milieu is *A Course in Miracles*. According to the founding legend, this text was received by psychologist Helen Schucman (1909-1981) through dictation from an inner voice. This voice was identified as belonging to Jesus. According to *A Course in Miracles* our everyday image of physical reality is illusory. Our conventional view of the world shows us a place

where human beings are separated from each other and from the divine, and where pain, disease and disharmony exist. However, this worldview is in reality a projection of our frightened egos. *A Course in Miracles* is intended as a manual for people who want to deconstruct this projection.

#### C. DIVINATION

Astrology, which is widespread in the New Age milieu, obviously predates the emergence of the New Age by many centuries. However, the interpretations of the various symbols of the birth chart have changed considerably, and have become steadily more integrated into the New Age worldview. Beside a more traditional predictive astrology, many contemporary astrologers have given their interpretations a strongly psychological imprint. This new mode of interpretation focuses on astrology as a device for inner, spiritual change. The difficulties encountered in life are explained in terms of lessons to be worked on and absorbed in the individual's present life on earth. Tarot cards are possibly the most popular method of divination within the New Age milieu. The tarot deck consists of two main parts. One part consists of a set of 22 numbered cards with pictures, the Major Arcana. The rest of the set, the Minor Arcana, consists of 56 cards divided into four suits: cups, wands, pentacles and swords. Each card is connected with its specific interpretations; in a spread, a number of cards together are said to give a picture of the client's situation as well as his or her direction of change. Other forms of divination with a following in the New Age milieu include consulting the Chinese *I Ching* or Book of Changes, and the use of runes.

#### 2. SOME SOCIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The New Age manifests a number of characteristic splits between emic and etic views of this form of religiosity. Firstly, New Agers can be fascinated by a worldview that to all intents and purposes is religious, but would never accept the term "religion" – associated by them with narrow-minded institutions and dogmatism – for their own belief system. Secondly, they perform rituals without being aware of doing so. Thirdly, many do not understand their own beliefs and practices as part of any wider New Age movement, but see themselves as having embarked on an individual quest. Finally, New Agers will typically understand their own doctrines and rituals as rooted in ancient cultures, although most of these beliefs and practices are demonstrably very recent innovations. Many of



these apparent contradictions can be linked to the basic sociological characteristics of the New Age culture.

How can New Agers practice what to a scholar is so obviously a form of religiosity, yet resist any suggestions that this should be the case? An important reason is the culture critique inherent in the New Age worldview. Much of the New Age was formed by the 1960s counter-culture. For many of the spiritual seekers of those days, the very word religion was hopelessly tainted with what they saw as church authoritarianism. The term "ritual" carried the unpleasant connotation of mere outward appearance and meaningless repetition. Since then a linguistic innovation has set apart more individualistic and fluid beliefs and practices as "spiritual", and the more fixed as "religious".

Other traits can be linked to the fact that the New Age is not an organized body of believers led by a spiritual hierarchy, who have ideally adopted creeds defined by a canon of writings. The loosely adopted New Age beliefs seem to belong to a different kind of religiosity, a cultural "underground" current, named the cultic milieu by Colin Campbell (1972). The cultic milieu consists of all those vast numbers of individuals who have adopted a variety of beliefs that from the majority point of view may seem more or less unorthodox. They have done so with varying degrees of commitment, without expressing them in an organized setting: people who, for instance, believe in the existence of UFOs, but would never consider joining a UFO "cult". Campbell suggested that new religious movements tend to arise out of the cultic milieu and crystallize around some of its ideas. Such movements have their life cycles, are born, thrive for a while and will more often than not pass into oblivion after a few years. The unorthodox ideas of the cultic milieu, however, are considerably more constant.

The cultic milieu can support unrelated and at times even mutually contradictory beliefs, simply because they share certain important characteristics. For instance, the belief in the messages put forth by psychics, in astrology or in the prophecies of Nostradamus constitute minority views, they are ideas that flourish in a society whose institutions take little notice of them, or even attempt to suppress them. Astrology is not taught in publicly funded schools, nor is it applied in health care, enlisted in the process of corporate decision-making or invoked in judiciary procedures. People who want to defend the value of astrology often do so in defiance of the worldview espoused by the majority. Some believers may be tempted to explain their position as the effect of a spiritual awakening that

sets them apart from the more skeptically inclined. Others can accuse a powerful materialistic orthodoxy for suppressing inopportune truths.

People in a minority position may tend to seek each other's support. They find common interests, a social network is built up, and new religious movements may gradually arise around their common views. They also become aware of each other's specialist interests: astrologers meet healers, crystal enthusiasts read texts produced by channelers. Individuals with a firm commitment to these alternative doctrines and a strong creative spirit may then suggest that all of these ideas have something in common. To the extent that an interaction and an ecumenical spirit exist between these groups, creative spokespersons may actively attempt to discover – or invent – common traits uniting their respective interests. This in turn leads to innovative syntheses between previously unrelated ideas from the cultic milieu. Thus, tarot readers and astrologers, crystal healers and aura therapists may well conclude that each of them has found his or her own way to a common goal of spiritual evolution, and will see all paths as more or less equally valid. From there, it is only a small step to creating mixtures between these doctrines and practices. A creative and entrepreneurial New Ager might thus proclaim that the different cards of the tarot correspond to the various signs of the zodiac. Some of these innovations become important new religious trends, while others remain the more or less idiosyncratic products of their originators. Thus ideas, practices and movements are born out of the cultic milieu. Some thrive, while others disappear after a few years to be superseded by new trends.

Since the innovative spokespersons of the New Age are deeply immersed in the cultic milieu, they will rarely build their new doctrines and rituals from nothing. More commonly, available methods of healing, divination or channeling will be reformulated or recombined in new ways. In this fashion, a historical chain of doctrines and their predecessors can be traced back in time. However, New Agers themselves are rarely aware of these historical links. Thus, a lavishly illustrated *Atlas of the New Age* (ed. Garry Maguire Thompson, Hauppauge NY 1999), directed at the New Age market itself, traces contemporary beliefs back to a variety of exotic sources, many of which are entirely spurious. Ironically, the actual chain of events and the existence of a long-standing tradition of alternative religiosity in the West are hardly acknowledged at all. Partly, this can be explained by the importance of constructing a venerable tradition as a source of legitimacy. However, the lack

of historical awareness is also in part due to the characteristics of the cultic milieu. Priests of most Christian denominations will have several years of academic study behind them. They will be reasonably familiar with the historical background of their own faith. Those who practice New Age healing rituals or work as diviners will, on the contrary, typically have no other education in their own field than a few short, privately run courses and varying amounts of practical experience. Legends can flourish in a culture in which there are few established channels of transmission for historically accurate information.

### 3. ROOTS: THE ESOTERIC BACKGROUND

The emic historiography of the New Age will thus highlight a set of exotic cultures as sources. Typically, Egypt, India, China, Tibet, the Native Americas, or even the fabled continents of Atlantis and Lemuria are claimed to be the ultimate origins of one's own methods and creeds. More scholarly historiographies, on the other hand, tend to see the New Age as an eclectic combination of several strands of Western esotericism, with roots stretching back to the Renaissance (Hanegraaff 1996, esp. Chapter 14). These Renaissance forms of esotericism were, however, radically transformed under the impact of modernization. Much of the present New Age is prefigured by the ideas of individuals crucial to this process of modernization, such as Franz Anton Mesmer and → Emanuel Swedenborg.

From the mid-19th century on, there are several main reference points from which the history of the New Age can be traced. The first reference point would be theosophy [→ Theosophical Society] and its heirs. The second would be the harmonial religions that followed the American mesmerist healer Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866). The earliest manifestations of what would emerge as the New Age were an English phenomenon, and were largely influenced by the mystical and speculative elements found in the post-theosophical movements active in the UK. Somewhat later, as these early currents gained a foothold in America, they were integrated with the harmonial religions, leading to an increasing emphasis on personal well-being, prosperity and the idea that we create the world we live in. A third, more recent reference point has been the psychologization of religion. For the purposes of tracing the emergence of the New Age, → Jungism and the → Human Potential Movement are of particular significance.

The syncretism of theosophy, the harmonial reli-

gions and psychology, typical of the New Age movement as such, gave rise to a variety of practices that have shifted in emphasis over time. Roughly, five generations of New Age thought can be correlated with as many decades, beginning with the 1950s. (1) The late 1950s saw the first stirrings within the cultic milieu of a belief in a coming new age. A variety of small movements arose, revolving around revealed messages from beings from outer space and presenting a synthesis of post-theosophical and other esoteric doctrines. (2) These proto-New Age movements might have remained marginal, had it not been for the explosion of the counterculture in the 1960s. The cultic milieu picked up the beliefs of the proto-New Age and eclectically combined them with a variety of other elements, both of Western esoteric provenance and of various Oriental origins. (3) The 1970s were characterized by a increasing self-awareness within the cultic milieu of being a movement with shared goals. With a decade of perspective, journalist Marilyn Ferguson (b. 1938) in her apologetic and highly influential book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980) summed up the New Age as a gentle conspiracy of awakened and transformed individuals. (4) The 1980s saw the increasing dominance of the New Age *sensu lato* over the millennialist New Age *sensu stricto*. Whereas Ferguson's book summed up the hopes and aspirations of the New Age *sensu lato*, the book of the 1980s that indicated where the movement had actually headed was Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* (1987). Here, the author presents her spiritual quest as a series of encounters with New Age elements such as trance channeling and the belief in reincarnation. (5) The 1990s and beyond have seen a gradual assimilation of at least parts of the New Age *sensu lato* into mainstream culture. Characteristically counter-cultural elements of the first generations of New Age have tacitly been dropped. There has been a shift in the New Age constituency from younger people to a larger age group. Moreover, whereas the first generation of New Age spokespersons used "New Age" as a self-designation, the term has become increasingly understood as a pejorative, even meaningless epithet. At the same time, New Age literature is increasingly sold in mainstream book shops and reaches the best-seller lists, and New Age beliefs and practices are prominently displayed in the popular media. The New Age as a definable *movement* may be on the wane, but the wider New Age discourse, i.e. a doctrinally and historically related group of concepts and rituals, shows no sign of disappearing.

To sum up these changes, techniques once seen as

linked by the common ideological core of a major planetary shift (a New Age *sensu stricto*) became part of an encompassing worldview that emphasized personal rather than global transformation (a New Age *sensu lato*), to finally once again become increasingly compartmentalized into a variety of practices and beliefs, of which some have successfully entered mainstream culture.

#### 4. NEW AGE RELIGION AND MODERNITY

Although New Age sources will point at a variety of ancient and distant Others as the ultimate sources of rituals and doctrines, there are good reasons to see New Age religiosity as a quintessentially modern, Western phenomenon. The processes of modernization can conveniently be summed up in two groups. On the one hand, older elements of Western esotericism have been influenced by important shifts in intellectual culture, giving rise to a more general socio-historical phenomenon that can be etically referred to as occultism [→ occult / occultism]. On the other hand, shifts in the social structures of modernity have more specifically influenced the New Age.

The shifts in intellectual culture can (largely following Hanegraaff 1996, esp. chapter 15) be summed up in four points. Occultism remodeled elements of older esotericism in the image of the natural sciences, not least by phrasing them in terms of mechanical links of cause and effect. The emergence of Orientalist discourse, especially through the emergence of academic disciplines such as history of religion and anthropology, partially reoriented esoteric currents toward the East. Evolutionism, one of the key symbols of 19th and early 20th century discourse, entered esotericism and led to the widespread assumption that we are all embarked on a journey of spiritual progress. The syncretism with certain forms of psychology led to increasingly blurred boundaries between the concepts of psychological insight and spiritual development.

The adaptations of New Age to the structural characteristics of modernity can (loosely following the discussion in Heelas 1996) be summed up in terms such as globalization, individualization, reflexivity, commercialization and commodification. The Orientalism of occultist movements has largely been superseded by an eclectic approach typical of a globalized religious scene. Individual beliefs and practices can be picked from anywhere on the globe, from the Native Americas to Egypt, from China to Polynesia, lifted out of their original con-

texts and radically reinterpreted in order to fit the specific preoccupations of the New Age. The palette of practices that arises in this manner is used as a toolkit from which each individual New Ager can pick and combine elements ad lib. The rationale for encouraging such a mix is the characteristically modern individualistic assumption that our personal opinions are more important than the suggestions of any authority. Since contemporary society offers few tradition-bound answers to the question how we should understand ourselves and our identities, many competing models of selfhood coexist. The New Age offers a self-reflexive discourse that enables individuals to understand the shortcomings of their lives as the failure to realize their full potentials. Thus, it is the contention of self-help texts, manuals of divination as well as channeled texts that there is a true self that needs to be unearthed behind the dross of the false ego. Most of these elements become available through processes that reveal a large-scale adaptation to the forces of the market economy. New Age elements in the form of books, workshops, rituals, and so forth are sold and bought in the same way as any other products. Furthermore, such rituals as affirmations and visualizations can be performed with the explicit goal of attaining affluence. Becoming wealthy is at least by some New Ager perceived as a spiritual goal.

The modernity of the New Age is, however, only partial. Thus, New Age understandings of personal experience are in a sense pre-critical. They usually eschew any discussion of the constructed nature of experience, and typically view spiritual experience as a faithful representation of underlying reality. Furthermore, in a characteristic paradox of New Age religiosity, the notion of an entirely individual spiritual quest can imply participating in rituals scripted by others and adopting explanatory frameworks expounded by authoritative spokespersons.

#### 5. WHITHER THE NEW AGE?

As noted above, a number of concepts associated only a couple of decades ago with the New Age, such as the millennialist aspirations, have practically disappeared. Other beliefs, such as the existence of Atlantis, may become increasingly marginalized due to the difficulties in reconciling such views with elementary scientific literacy. At the same time, other sectors of New Age thinking are becoming increasingly aligned with popular culture. Prominent New Age authors such as Deepak Chopra (b. 1947) and James Redfield (b.

1950) sell millions of copies of their books and become celebrities far beyond the confines of an underground cultic milieu. In some cases, esoteric rituals seem even to attempt to move toward full-scale incorporation into the societal and cultural mainstream.

One example of this process comes from the field of nursing. In the United States and Canada, Therapeutic Touch or TT, a method of ritual healing created by theosophist Dora Kunz and her pupil Dolores Krieger in the early 1970s, has been partly accepted by mainstream institutions. Despite the legitimacy thereby accorded to the practice, Therapeutic Touch builds on a view of the human body that departs radically from any biomedical model, and which is conspicuously similar to that of e.g. mesmerism or Reiki healing, i.e. the assumption that there is a human energy field which extends beyond the boundaries of the physical body. Yet another example is found in the world of management. Courses in such techniques as fire-walking and the enneagram (a technique of personality assessment with spiritual overtones) are widely sold to major companies in Europe and America. Practices that were once part of the cultic milieu have become tools in promoting social bonding among employees. Stripped of their controversial New Age label, several such practices and beliefs that have effectively sprung from the New Age milieu are increasingly perceived as part of mainstream culture.

*Lit.*: Christoph Bochinger, “New Age” und moderne Religion: Religionswissenschaftliche Analysen, Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1994 ♦ Colin Campbell, “The Cult, The Cultic Milieu and Secularization”, *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972), 119-136 ♦ Dominic Corrywright, *Theoretical and Empirical Investigations into New Age Spiritualities*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003 ♦ Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996 ♦ Paul Heelas *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996 ♦ James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992 ♦ Steven J. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*, London, New York: Routledge, 2003 ♦ Michael York, *The emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.

OLAV HAMMER

## New Thought Movement

Originally known under many names – such as Mental Science, Divine Science, Spiritual Science, Religious Science, Christian Science, Unity, Mind Cure, Science of Being, Home of Truth – the popular American self-help psychology known as New Thought began to spread during the 1870s and had secured a mass audience by the end of the century. The term “New Thought” itself was introduced in the 1890s and was eventually adopted by its main organizational body, the International New Thought Alliance (INTA; see Braden 1987, 170-229). In spite of such organizational efforts, New Thought has always been an ‘open, eclectic and easily splintered’ movement (Satter 1999, 6), and its basic tenets are by no means limited to groups and individuals affiliated with the INTA; rather, its basic theories, worldviews and practices can be encountered in many places, not least in the contemporary → New Age movement.

All varieties of New Thought are based upon a radical ideology of “mind over matter”, which claims that we create our own reality according to our beliefs. Any limitation in our personal reality is the direct reflection of limiting beliefs; therefore if we change those beliefs, our reality changes. This principle is applied most famously to health and illness, and implies that any illness is based upon negative patterns of thought and can be cured by positive thinking. But New Thought increasingly came to be applied to other domains of human life as well, including money, work, relationships, and spiritual attainment; some of its adherents – including central figures such as Emma Curtis Hopkins – have even claimed that death is a limiting belief, so that positive thinking can lead to physical immortality. The main technique for “reprogramming” the mind is known as “affirmations”: short, positive statements that are ritually repeated until they take the place of their negative counterparts (for example, “I am perfectly healthy” as a counterpart to the implicit belief that “I am sick”). Originally the use of affirmations was combined with the use of “denials” (for example, “I do not have cancer”), but these have eventually grown less popular, probably because the very mention of the negative condition came to be seen as implying its reality. Since New Thought claims to be using the invisible laws that govern the whole of reality, it has often presented itself as a “science”; but this science was clearly a religious one because it was based upon recognition of our “inner divinity” – the power of our mind is ultimately none other than the very

power that creates the universe. Such a concept of “religious science” is sometimes explained with reference to a personal God, but may as well be explained in terms of an impersonal divine “principle”.

From the perspective of the history of “gnosis and Western esotericism” New Thought might be seen as a boundary case, but there are several reasons to nevertheless discuss it within that context. First, New Thought emerged as a reinterpretation of hypnotism, and is therefore part of the complex reception history of → Animal magnetism. Second, even if the foundational principles of New Thought may be seen as not specific to Western esoteric worldviews, many of its adherents and defenders were in fact active within a broader and more complex “cultic milieu” – referred to as that of the American “metaphysical movements” (Judah 1967) or as “Harmonial Religion” (Ahlstrom 1972) –, the literature of which is permeated by elements from e.g. Emersonian Transcendentalism, → Swedenborgianism, → Spiritualism and modern Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society]. And third, New Thought has exerted an incalculable influence on the 20th-century development of popular Western esotericism; as a major aspect of the “psychologization of esotericism and sacralization of psychology” (Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 482-513) it is essential to the contemporary pop-esotericism known as → New Age.

Although the New Hampshire clockmaker Phineas Pankhurst Quimby (1802-1866) should not strictly be seen as the founder of New Thought (his manuscripts did not become available to the public until 1921; Satter 1999, 59), he was certainly its originator. In 1838 he attended a stage performance by the French mesmerist Charles Poyen, and decided to set up his own practice as a magnetizer. During the 1840s he toured through Maine and New Brunswick with an assistant, Lucius Burkmar, who diagnosed diseases while in a hypnotic trance. But when Quimby discovered that he could also heal his patients by direct psychic influence without a medium, and reflected on the absurd simplicity of some of Burkmar’s cures (e.g. herb tea against advanced cancer), he drew the radical conclusion that all such healing methods were equally successful because of his patients’ *belief* in magnetic or electric currents that influenced their vital fluids, and in the accuracy of the medium’s or the magnetizer’s cures. From there he developed a philosophy of healing based upon the radical claim that the beliefs and expectations of patients are *fully* responsible for their medical condition. Quimby kept believing in the existence of a mag-

netic fluid, but now claimed that a person’s beliefs and expectations were the key to manipulating it.

Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), the founder of Christian Science, met Quimby in 1862 and was healed by him of her chronic “neuralgia in the spine and stomach”. She then proceeded to spread the new message; but whereas Quimby had explained his healing method in terms of a religious worldview influenced by ideas from → Swedenborg and → Andrew Jackson Davis, Eddy developed a new religious worldview of her own, in many ways closer to traditional Christianity, called Christian Science and expounded in her *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875). It claims that the universe as created by God or the “divine Mind” is entirely spiritual and good, whereas it is the human or “mortal mind” that creates the illusion of a material world and embodied persons. Illness results from the incorrect belief in the reality of these illusions, but we can be saved by recognizing our “divine within” and acknowledging an entirely spiritual reality. Eddy eventually came to sharply oppose her Christian Science against the ideas and practices of other New Thought leaders, but her religion is nonetheless a clear example of the basic New Thought perspective.

Warren Felt Evans (1817-1889), author of the first mind cure study (*The Mental Cure*, 1869), was healed by Quimby of chronic nervous illness in 1863. Originally a Methodist minister, he joined the Swedenborgian New Church in the same year. While based upon Quimby’s ideas, Evans’ philosophy of healing presents them in a context full of references to Swedenborg, German Idealism, and Hindu monism. Other than Eddy, who bitterly opposed his teachings, Evans did not see matter as intrinsically evil or unreal. Matter is an inherently good reality that becomes evil only if it gains dominion over spirit; it is a passive, plastic force that reacts to emotions, which in turn are shaped by thought. And against Eddy’s traditional emphasis on repentance and sin, Evans spoke much more positively of an inner divine spark (called the “Ego”, the “I Am” or the “inner Self”) which made each human being ‘a God, possessed of all the attributes of its parent source, among which are omniscience and omnipresence’ (see discussion in Satter 1999, 70-78).

New Thought originally flourished in New England, particularly in Boston with its congenial Transcendentalist traditions. But in the decade 1885-1895 the focus shifted to the Western states. The central figure with respect to the spread and development of New Thought in that period was Emma Curtis Hopkins (1851-1925), a renegade



student of Eddy's and revered by New Thought leaders as the "teacher of teachers". In 1883 she met Eddy, who told her about Christian Science, after which her student Mary F. Berry cured her of her sickness. Hopkins joined the Christian Science movement and quickly rose to a position of prominence, until she was evicted by Eddy from her Massachusetts Metaphysical College and was forced to resign from the Christian Science Association in 1885. The main reason was an editorial she had written, in which she claimed to have met God "face to face" – a prerogative that Eddy claimed for herself only. Hopkins moved to Chicago, where she founded the successful "Hopkins Metaphysical Association", which within a few years had established branches in cities all over the United States. From 1887 on the association published a journal (*Truth*, quickly followed by a new one, *Christian Science*) and began an "Emma Hopkins College of Christian Science", later renamed as "Christian Science Theological Seminary". Beryl Satter, in a chapter that is the best existing study of Hopkins, emphasizes the prominence of women on all levels of her organization, in contrast to Eddy, who appointed men in positions of power in her church hierarchy (Satter 1999, 83-84). In her teachings, Hopkins adopted an ambiguous middle ground between Eddy and Evans. She opposed Eddy's teachings about sin and adopted Evans' emphasis on the "God-Self" within. Going beyond the domain of illness and health, she claimed that any negative condition, including poverty, could be 'denied out of existence'. Explicitly advocating self-love as something positive, she no less clearly encouraged the "blame-the-victim" attitude which has always been implicit in New Thought: any negative condition is the victim's own fault. Eventually, the inevitable conflict between Hopkins' promise of godlike omnipotence and the less ideal realities of students' daily experience turned her theological seminary into 'a hotbed of bitter infighting and barely repressed emotional chaos' (Satter 1999, 94), as a result of which Hopkins withdrew from her seminary in 1895, and moved to New York City. For the last thirty years of her life she continued receiving students, but remained aloof from the New Thought movement.

That movement had now gained sufficient momentum to continue, under the guidance of new leaders, most of them female. Malinda E. Cramer († 1907) founded the movement called Divine Science, continued after her death by Nona Brooks (1861-1945). Annie Rix Militz (1856-1924) founded the Homes of Truth movement. Both movements collaborated with one another and

with Myrtle and Charles Fillmore's Unity School of Christianity, their "Society of Silent Help" later renamed "Society of Silent Unity", and their journals (*Modern Thought*, *Christian Science Thought*, *Thought*, *Unity*). The Fillmores' enterprises became enormously successful and proved how New Thought could be made profitable from a business point of view. One could join their Society for free, and thereby become part of a network of people who promised to devote some time to meditation at nine o'clock each evening. Members could send in "prayer requests", specifying their troubles; but in order to benefit from the positive energies collectively channeled by the Society's network, they had to purchase *Unity* magazine, where they would find an affirmation written for them, identified by a personal certificate number.

Apart from organizations and their published teachings, New Thought ideas were also spread by popular novels. Helen Van-Anderson (1859-?), a major New Thought missionary on behalf of Hopkins and minister in the Boston "Church of the Higher Life", published many tracts and books, including the novels *The Right Knock* (1889) and *The Journal of a Live Woman* (1895). Ursula Newell Gestefeld (1845-1921) created her own New Thought system ("Science of Being", later renamed "The Church of 'The New Thought'"), wrote numerous tracts about her beliefs, and two novels: *The Woman Who Dares* (1892) and *The Leprosy of Miriam* (1894). And Alice Bunker Stockham (1833-1912), one of the first women in the United States to practice medicine, and internationally famous for her progressive tracts on medicine, sexuality and women's health, wrote *The Koradine Letters* (1893) about a fictional New Thought Utopia called the "Arcadian Institute of Development".

In 1897 appeared Ralph Waldo Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite*, which was an immediate success and became the first New Thought bestseller. The New Thought movement was now firmly established in popular American culture, and received recognition in the media as a significant new spiritual and healing current. Around the turn of the century, the already mentioned trend of applying New Thought principles to the acquisition of wealth became increasingly prominent, leading to the perception among later scholars and critics of New Thought as primarily a "religion of success". A major representative of this trend was Helen Wilmans (1831-1907), another student of Hopkins, creator of yet another New Thought system called "Mental Science", and author of *The Conquest of Poverty* (1899). After many years of

struggle with poverty and hardship, she finally found prosperity when she began to sell her lessons in Mental Science. She subsequently founded journals (*Wilmans Express*, *Freedom*), teaching institutes (“Wilmans Metaphysical College”, “University of Psychical Research”) and a “Mental Science Association”, and made great sums of money with her mail-order business of Mental Science lessons. Wilmans was a major advocate of the New Thought quest for physical immortality, and developed New Thought into an uncompromising social-Darwinist ideology of ruthless competition for wealth and success: the suffering are only getting what they deserve, and poverty is a sign of inferiority.

During the early decades of the 20th century the theological language and high-minded idealism of the early New Thought movement was gradually replaced by a more pragmatic emphasis on the power of thought through meditation and affirmations, increasingly expressed in psychological terminology. From the 1870s through the 1890s a dominant “anti-desire” school of New Thought had emphasized the need to deny material urges, selfhood and desire, whereas a “pro-desire” minority had presented mind and matter as interactive, had emphasized the value of selfhood and had presented desire as good and even divine (Satter 1999, 14 and *passim*). After 1900 the emphasis began to shift towards the latter perspective, so that New Thought increasingly became a brand of pop-psychology catering to consumers’ need for “success” in all fields of life: health, wealth, and happiness in general. As such the movement remained successful, with hundreds of New Thought centers all over the United States, six major journals, a high profile in mainstream periodicals, and a remarkable number of self-help bestsellers. As early as 1902, William James deplored the growing phenomenon of New Thought literature taking the form of ‘insincere stuff, mechanically produced for the market’, and filled with ‘verbiage . . . some of which is so moonstruck with optimism and so vaguely expressed that an academically trained intellect finds it almost impossible to read it at all’ (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, lect. IV-V). This observation would continue to hold true for much New Thought literature throughout the rest of the century.

While many older New Thought churches have continued to flourish throughout the 20th century, new schools kept being founded during its first decades, such as notably Ernest Holmes’ “Religious Science” (founded in 1927); but as to their

basic ideology they were dependent on the authors mentioned earlier, to which they did not add much news. After what seems to have been a decline of popularity during the years of World War II, New Thought made a strong comeback in 1952 with Norman Vincent Peale’s bestseller *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Peale, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, sold his message so successfully – also by means of lecture tours, articles in magazines, and appearances on radio and television – that in 1954 he was elected one of the “Twelve Best U.S. Salesmen” (Meyer 1988, 260). In his wake, the book market was once again flooded by popular self-help books in the New Thought tradition, and this production has not remained limited to the United States but has spread to Western Europe as well. Louise L. Hay’s bestseller *You can Heal your Life* (1984) is perhaps one of the most famous titles demonstrating the prominence of New Thought within the New Age movement, but the core ideology of New Thought is also basic to the message of many more overtly religious titles such as, notably, the channeled text *A Course in Miracles* (1975), believed to have been dictated by Jesus. Furthermore, strong influences from the New Thought tradition can be found in many New Age authors whose message as a whole cannot be reduced to New Thought; one representative example is → Jane Roberts’ influential series of books channeled by the discarnate entity Seth, who claims that “we create our own reality” but does so in the context of a complex metaphysics that goes far beyond anything found in standard New Thought literature. Finally, the influence of New Thought is by no means limited to the New Age context. It is also strongly present in the sermons of popular preachers closer to the Christian mainstream, such as Robert Schuller or many ministers in the pentecostal tradition.

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Press, 1967 ♦ J. Gordon Melton, “New Thought and the New Age”, in: James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, 15-29 ♦ Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: Popular Religious Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale and Ronald Reagan* (1965), Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988 ♦ Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875-1920*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

**Newton, Isaac,\* 24.12.1642**  
**Woolsthorpe, † 20.3.1727 Kensington**

Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge. Fellow (1672) and later President (1703) of the Royal Society of London. Member of the Convention Parliament (1689). Warden (1696), then Master (1699) of the Royal Mint. Knighted by Queen Anne (1705). Since Newton's seminal achievements in science and mathematics are extremely well known, they will not be discussed in the present short entry, which concentrates exclusively on those aspects of his intellectual development that are relevant to the subject of the present Dictionary.

Newton was born at the family estate in Woolsthorpe three months after his father had died. His mother remarried when he was three. Widowed a second time, she placed him as a boarder to attend school in nearby Grantham when he was twelve. During his six-year stay at his lodger's, an apothecary, Newton acquired and/or developed some of the interests which were to profoundly affect the course of his life: an hypochondriac fascination for the concoction of remedies to cure human illnesses; a tantalizing curiosity for → alchemy (acquired from old books he read in his lodger's attics); and, through the teachings of a local divine, a visceral engrossment with the Puritanical concept of a dual world consisting of God's Works (Nature) and God's Words (the Holy Scriptures).

Newton's latent interest in alchemy took a decisive turn soon after his enrolment in 1661 at Trinity College, at the University of Cambridge, when he made contact with erudite divines who, among other things, aimed at promoting and “rationalising” alchemy in England. Foremost among them were the leading Cambridge Platonist → Henry More, the Oxford “Great Experimentalist” Robert Boyle (1626-1691), and Isaac Barrow (1630-

1677), Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Trinity, who soon became his mentor. Over the years, his protectors regularly provided him (covertly) with alchemical manuscripts which he painstakingly copied in his own handwriting before returning them, thereby establishing for himself an extensive library of contemporary alchemical treatises (it included notably → Ashmole's six-volume *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* as well as works by → Maier, → Llull, Sendivogius, and Philalethes [→ Thomas Vaughan]).

Newton's religious beliefs soon put him to the test. To graduate from Trinity (1665), he had to attest to an acceptance of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church, which ran counter to his Puritanical concept of a religion without an official clergy, as well as his fanatical Arian rejection of the Trinitarian dogma. The problem became acute in 1669 when he inherited the Lucasian chair from Isaac Barrow, who had become King Charles II's Chaplain. Fortunately for him, six years later (probably on advice from Barrow, who had been appointed Master of Trinity College in the meantime), Charles II granted him exemption from the obligation – normally required of the holder of the Lucasian chair – to take holy orders.

At Trinity, Newton attended few classes, if any. He spent much of his time on his own, reading, developing his seminal scientific and mathematical ideas, as well as practicing alchemy and studying religion, two disciplines he believed to be connected. Indeed, he considered the goal of alchemy to be ‘to glorify God in his wonderful works, & to teach a man how to live well’, and asserted: ‘This philosophy both speculative & active is not only to be found in the volume of nature but also in the sacred scriptures . . .’ (*Keynes MS 33:5v*). In 1673, to carry out this double quest, he established a full-fledged alchemical laboratory in the small wooden shed which stood in a garden attached to the rooms he occupied at E-4 Great Court, close to Trinity's Great Gate. He equipped it over the years with elaborate apparatus and furnaces which he used to perform numerous experiments, generally aimed at testing recipes copied from alchemical manuscripts. He had a chance to test his ability to prepare ‘true medicines’ when his mother fell ill in 1679. His failure to save her left him deeply affected. His efforts culminated in 1684 when he thought for some time that he had succeeded in “opening” metals to extract from them the long sought-for “Philosophical Mercury”.

Even as he attempted to read into God's Book of Nature, Newton dutifully studied the Holy

Scriptures, believing that the unravelling of the ‘true past’ (as revealed through a proper understanding of Biblical prophecies) was his ‘duty of the first moment’ (*Yahuda MS 21:2*). He spent a considerable amount of time trying to establish a genuine plan of the Temple King Solomon had built in Jerusalem under the Lord’s guidance: this he saw as an Earthly representation of the universe and a paradigm for the future of the World.

In *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel* (published posthumously in 1733), he expresses the opinion (based on his own elaborate calculations) that the Day of Judgement would come in 1948, forty-nine years after the Jews returned to Jerusalem, a date he was to revise later on several occasions. The conviction that in all cases the Great Event would not occur during his lifetime may have contributed to his decision not to divulge the results of his findings.

Newton’s interest in the Solar system with its planets orbiting around a “central fire”, the Sun, relates in part to his belief that the ancient Cult of Vesta, which consisted in keeping ‘a fire for offering sacrifices that burned perpetually in the middle of a sacred place’ (*Yahuda MS 17.3:8-10*), had been the true religion ‘until the nations corrupted it’ (*Yahuda MS 41:7*). Urged by his admirer, the astronomer Edmund Halley, to expound in writing his *System of the World*, Newton invoked More’s Gnostic “hylarchic principle” which the Platonist had forged to explain natural and supernatural phenomena through the intervention of spirits – which Newton called *Powers, Virtues* or *Forces* – carrying out the will of God. Disguised under the innocuous-sounding designations of *vis insita* and *vis centripeta*, he placed these “active principles”, rooted in hermetic tradition, at the very foundation of his celebrated *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687).

Newton shared Henry More’s belief that ancient philosophers – one of them having been → Moses – had been the depositors of true knowledge (*philosophia perennis*). Consequently, while writing his great treatise, he rejected the use of modern techniques of algebra, developed notably by Descartes, and chose to formulate the numerous *Problems, Propositions, Theorems* and *Lemma* found in his treatise by resorting exclusively to the use of the “Theory of proportions” expounded in Book V of Euclid’s *Elements* (which had been translated from Greek to Latin by Isaac Barrow).

Newton successfully kept his alchemical and theological interests secret during his lifetime, fearing possible damaging consequences to himself if they would become known (on this, he followed

More, who detested “Enthusiasts”). He somewhat recanted this cautious approach when he set out to write his second major treatise, *Opticks* (1704), after he had left Cambridge to serve at the Mint in London – and after his arch-rival at the Royal Society, Robert Hooke (1635-1703), who might have contested it, had died. The *Queries* he appended to the end of Book 3 of his treatise divulge some of his alchemical findings. But when his intimate friend Nicolas Fatio de Duillier and his favourite “disciple” and successor at the Lucasian chair, William Whiston, fell into disgrace after revealing their Arrianism (in 1707 for the former, in 1710 for the latter), Newton cautiously refrained from coming to their rescue. When a destitute Whiston applied for membership in the Royal Society (1716), Newton threatened to resign from the Society if the nomination was accepted.

A lone and complex figure, Newton never travelled outside a small triangle delimited by Cambridge, London and his native village of Woolsthorpe. Universally known and admired for his outstanding contributions to scientific knowledge, it is nevertheless estimated that over two-thirds of his writings concern problems arising from alchemy and religion. To that extent at least, Newton’s name properly belongs in a dictionary devoted to the study of the history of Western Esotericism.

*Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, London, 1687 ♦ *Opticks or A Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Inflections & Colours of Light*, London, 1704 ♦ *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, London, 1728 ♦ *Observations upon the Prophecies of Holy Writ*, London, 1733 ♦ *An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture*, London, 1754 ♦ *Four Letters to Dr. Bentley*, London, 1756 ♦ *Theological Manuscripts* (H. McLachlan, ed.), Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1950 ♦ Newton’s alchemical manuscripts are gathered, for the most part, in the *Keynes Collection* at King’s College, Cambridge. Some of his theological manuscripts (i.e. the *Yahuda Collection*) are kept in the *Jewish National and University Library* in Jerusalem.

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*Making of Modern Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982 ♦ R.S. Westfall, *Never at Rest: A Biography of Isaac Newton*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980 ♦ idem, "Newton and Alchemy", in: Brian Vickers (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 315-335 ♦ M. White, *Isaac Newton: The Last Sorcerer*, London: Fourth Estate, 1997 ♦ Garry W. Trompf, "On Newtonian History", in: Stephen Gaukroger (ed.), *The Uses of Antiquity*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991, 213-249 ♦ Loup Verlet, *La malle de Newton*, Paris: Gallimard, 1993 ♦ David Castillejo, *The Expanding Force in Newton's Cosmos*, Madrid, 1981.

JEAN-PAUL AUFFRAY

## Nicolaitans

A group of deviant Christians denounced in the Book of Revelation in the "letters" to seven churches of Asia Minor written by John the Seer in the name of Jesus Christ (Rev. 2-3). The church at Ephesus is praised for hating the 'works of the Nicolaitans' (2:6). The church at Pergamum is reproved for tolerating the Nicolaitans in its midst, who promote eating food sacrificed to idols (*eidolothuta*) and fornication (2, 14-15). The church at Thyatira is reproved for tolerating a prophetess called Jezebel, who is said to promote fornication and eating food sacrificed to idols (2:20). Probably a Nicolaitan leader, her teaching is also said to include knowledge of the 'deep things of Satan' (2:24).

Various assessments of this information are possible. The eating of meat sacrificed to pagan deities is condemned in the "Apostolic Decree" (Acts 15:20, 29), but regarded as a matter of indifference by Paul (1 Cor. 8), who nevertheless condemns participation in pagan meals and idolatry in general (1 Cor. 10). The "fornication" referred to in Revelation may be taken metaphorically as idolatry, e.g. willing participation in the emperor cult and other civic religious activities, universally condemned in early catholic Christianity. On the other hand, it may refer to sexual license, expressly forbidden in the "Apostolic Decree", and also by Paul (1 Cor. 5-6). The claim to knowledge of the 'deep things (*bathē*) of Satan' may be taken as a claim to protection against the consequences of "Satanic" acts performed by the sectarians. On the other hand, John may have intentionally misrepresented a sectarian claim to knowledge of the 'deep things of God' (cf. 1 Cor. 2, 10).

Nicolaitans are referred to again almost a century later by Irenaeus, in the context of a discussion of

heretics known to him (*Adversus Haereses* I, 26, 3). The Nicolaitans are said to be followers of that Nicolaus who was one of the seven ordained in Jerusalem by the apostles (Acts 6:5). They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence, and are rightly condemned in the Apocalypse of John. In another context (*Adv. Haer.* III, 11, 1) Irenaeus refers to the Nicolaitans as 'an offset of that "knowledge" falsely so called' whose adherents claim that the Father of the Lord is not the Creator. The Creator's son is not the Christ from above; Christ, impassible, descended upon Jesus and then ascended, presumably meaning that Christ did not suffer crucifixion.

For Irenaeus the Nicolaitans are clearly heretics of a Gnostic sort, although he does not expressly claim that Nicolaus himself was a Gnostic. That claim is made by Hippolytus. Relying on Irenaeus' account, Hippolytus points out that there are among the Gnostics diversities of opinion. Nicolaus is singled out as being 'a cause of the widespread combination of these wicked men'. After his appointment by the Apostles, he 'departed from correct doctrine', and promoted licentiousness. His followers were condemned by John in his Apocalypse (*Refutatio* VII, 36).

The author of Pseudo-Tertullian's treatise, *Adversus omnes haereses*, a 3rd-century document possibly based on a lost work of Hippolytus, provides additional information: Nicolaus, one of the seven deacons appointed by the Apostles, taught that Darkness lusted after Light, and there arose as a result various combinations of aeons and other foul beings. His heresy was condemned by John in his Apocalypse (*Haer.* 1). While Ps.-Tertullian's account is brief and somewhat confused, some sort of Gnostic heresy is envisaged.

Tertullian mentions the Nicolaitans three times. In his treatise *Adversus Marcionem* he refers to the Nicolaitans' 'maintenance of lust and luxury' (I, 29). In his *De praescriptione haereticorum* he refers to a contemporary group of Nicolaitans called 'the Caian heresy' who teach a docetic Christology, i.e., who deny that Christ 'has come in the flesh' (1 John 4:2-3; *Praesc.* 33; "Caian" may refer to a sect leader called Gaius; or, perhaps, it is a corruption of "Cainite"). In a discussion of some passages in the Revelation of John dealing with fornication, he refers to the prophetess Jezebel (Rev. 2, 20) as having taught 'what she had learnt from the Nicolaitans' (*De pudicitia* 19).

→ Clement of Alexandria has a different assessment of the traditions relating to the Nicolaitans. He comments on a saying of Nicolaus, 'one must abuse the flesh', which is quoted by those who claim to be followers of this pervert. What Nico-



laus advocated was asceticism, but his supposed followers misinterpret his saying, and abandon themselves to a goat-like licentiousness (*Stromateis* II, 118). Clement here attempts to separate the Nicolaitan beliefs and practices from the “apostolic” Nicolaus. Nevertheless, he does concede a connection between him and the Nicolaitans, even if they are accused of misinterpreting his teachings. Later, Clement expands on these points. He repeats Nicolaus’ saying in the context of a story that his supposed followers tell about Nicolaus and his beautiful wife. After the ascension of Christ, Nicolaus was accused before the apostles of jealousy; so he offered her to anyone who desired to marry her. ‘Those who share his heresy’ (i.e. members of the Nicolaitan sect) interpret Nicolaus’s saying and the story about his wife as a justification for their enormities (*Strom.* III, 25). But, in fact, Nicolaus never had any relations with any woman besides his wife, and his progeny remained virgins to their old age. When he brought his wife before the apostles, on whose account he was jealous, he did so as an act of ‘suppression of passion’. ‘He taught what it meant to “abuse the flesh” by restraining the distracting passions’ (*Strom.* III, 26). Clement is clearly attempting a “whitewash” of traditions relating to the “apostolic” Nicolaus. While he concedes the veracity of the story told about Nicolaus, and the authenticity of the saying attributed to him, he desperately tries to defend Nicolaus by twisting the import of the story of him and his beautiful wife. As for the saying, the Greek verb used (*parachresasthai*) clearly means “abuse”, not “restrain” or “control”.

Clement’s version is followed by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 29. He states that in apostolic times there existed for a short time the heresy of the Nicolaitans mentioned by the Apocalypse of John. These people claimed to be follows of Nicolaus the deacon. There follows a direct quotation of the passage from book III of Clement’s *Stromateis* already referred to. He concludes this paragraph with a remark that the attempts to subvert the truth in apostolic times were quickly extinguished. Eusebius apparently does not know of any survivors of the Nicolaitan sect in his own time (early 4th century).

Later in the 4th century, however, Epiphanius presents a very extensive account of Nicolaitans and heretics allegedly related to them, expanding on the accounts of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Clement of Alexandria. In his *Panarion against Heresies* he first devotes a separate chapter to the Nicolaitans, beginning with Nicolaus the deacon (*Pan.* 25). Although Epiphanius relies on Clement, he does not share Clement’s interpretation of the traditions. Epiphanius’ version of the saying

quoted by Clement is: ‘Unless one copulates every day, one cannot have eternal life’ (*Pan.* 25, 1, 6). He then brings into his account doctrines associated with ‘Gnostics and Phibionites, the so-called disciples of Epiphanes, the Stratiotics, Levitics, Borborites and the rest’ (25, 2, 1), a highly involved mythology featuring Barbelo, Ialdabaoth, Prunicus, etc., all of which is also attributed to Nicolaus. The following lengthy chapter (“Against Gnostics, or Borborites”, *Pan.* 26) goes into great detail in expostulating on the foul deeds ritually committed by these heretics, ‘who sprout from Nicolaus like fruit from a dunghill’ (26, 1, 1). Unfortunately, Epiphanius’ account is so confused and so filled with invective that virtually nothing of historical value can be learned from it, either about Nicolaus or about the sect named after him.

What can be concluded from these accounts? We know from the Book of Revelation that, in the late 1st century, there was a group of Christians called Nicolaitans, whose views regarding pagan associations were rather liberal. They may have traced their beliefs and practices back to Nicolaus, the ‘proselyte of Antioch’ (Acts 6, 5). They may also have claimed a special knowledge of spiritual “deep things”, but whether they were at that time “Gnostics” in the full sense of the term cannot be established with any certainty. By the time of Irenaeus (ca. 185), however, the Nicolaitans’ association with Gnostic heresy has become an established part of the tradition. Although Nicolaus and the Nicolaitans persist in the heresiological catalogs into the 5th century (Theodoret, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* III, 1), it is not clear how long the sect itself lasted. Eusebius, at least, regards the Nicolaitans as part of a history long past.

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BIRGER A. PEARSON

**Novalis** (ps. of Georg Philipp Friedrich von Hardenberg), \* 2.5.1772  
Oberwiederstedt, † 25.3.1801  
Weissenfels

A jurist, philosopher, mining engineer and famous Romantic poet, von Hardenberg was raised in a large family. His father, having gone through a religious crisis following the death of his first wife in 1769, raised his children in the spirit of Herrnhut → Pietism. From 1790 to 1794 von Hardenberg studied law, philosophy, history and mathematics at the Universities of Jena, where he got into contact with Schiller; Leipzig, where he met his lifelong friend Friedrich Schlegel; and Wittenberg. Two other important meetings were with the philosopher Fichte and the poet Hölderlin, both in 1795. The year before, on 17 november 1794, Hardenberg had met the 12-year old Sophie von Kühn, in whom he saw the love of his life; the two got engaged one year later, but Sophie fell ill and died on March 19, 1797, followed one month later by Friedrich's beloved brother Erasmus. Sophie's death is generally seen as a decisive event in Novalis's development: her idealized image henceforth becomes a major inspiration in his poetic work. Still in 1797 he made the acquaintance of → Schelling in Leipzig; and from the end of the year on he studied at the mining academy of Freiberg. Poems and fragments under the name Novalis now began to be published, and in 1798 he began work on his *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* (The Disciples at Saïs). In the summer of the same year he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, but nevertheless he got engaged with Julie von Charpentier in December. In 1799 he worked on his *Geistliche Lieder* (Spiritual Songs, a series of poems), *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (Christendom or Europe, an essay), and his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Having completed his studies, in 1799 he was appointed mining engineer at the

Saxon saltworks. The next year saw the publication of his poems *Hymnen an die Nacht* (Hymns to the Night), but von Hardenberg's health condition declined, and his situation was worsened by the suicide of his brother Bernhard on october 28. While still dreaming of new literary projects, he died less than half a year later.

The mining business ran in the family, and von Hardenberg may have had access to chemical and alchemical texts while still living at home (see HKA IV, 32). Among the hermetic, alchemical and theosophical authors and texts with which he is known to have been familiar are Libavius, Thurneisser, G.W. Wedelius, the Rosicrucian *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreuz* [→ Rosicrucianism I], → Robert Fludd, → Joan Baptista van Helmont, → Jacob Boehme, → J.F. von Meyer, → Karl von Eckartshausen, → Franz von Baader, and → Johann Wilhelm Ritter. Quite some information about esoteric traditions he derived at second hand: thus he learned about → Paracelsus, → Paracelsianism, and the doctrine of signatures notably from Kurt Sprengel's *Versuch einer pragmatischen Geschichte der Arzneikunde* (1792-1799), and Dietrich Tiedemann's *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* (1791-1797) introduced him to such authors as Plotinus, → Llull, → Bruno and → Pordage (in addition to several authors already mentioned above).

Novalis' work can be considered under four broad categories: his aphorisms or fragments, his poetry, his novels, and his essays. In works belonging to the first category the esoteric dimension of his thinking is most explicit. In his *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (The General Draft, 1798-1799) he speculates about a universal encyclopedia of all knowledge, joining together the scientific, literary, philosophical, and artistic domains into an organic intellectual unity. It was to be based upon a semi-otic *Wechselrepresentationslehre*, i.e. a universal system of → correspondences predicated on the intimate "sympathy" between signifier and signified. Novalis also referred to it as "magic" and as "grammatical mysticism": 'Man does not speak alone – the Universe speaks too – everything speaks – infinite languages/doctrine of signatures' (HKA III, 267f.). Novalis' "magical idealism" was the product of these hermetic influences combined with Fichte's transcendental philosophy. Such a combination made it possible to interpret the concept of macro/microcosm in a radical manner (Novalis at one point described his Beloved as the abbreviation of the Universe and the Universe as the elongation of his Beloved): 'it makes no difference whether I place the World-All in myself, or myself in the World-All' (HKA III, 382). Novalis defended an "esoteric" notion of universal

religion, which would not be a matter of grimly repeated outward observance but of inner “scientific” observation and transformation. The highest aim of spiritual education is to master one’s transcendental self, which is ‘the highest principle of all learning and art’.

When we turn to Novalis’s poetry, we find a similar unifying tendency, and the same quest for self-knowledge or gnosis, notably in his elegy *Kenne dich selbst* (Know Thyself): happy is he who has found the (philosopher’s) ‘Stone of Eternal Wisdom’ in himself, for he is the ‘true adept’ who needs no elixirs to turn everything into ‘life and gold’ because he understands the meaning of the delphic maxim “know thyself”. Many of Novalis’s poems allude to a sense of the fragility of life and the nearness of death. In “Der sterbende Genius” (The dying genius), Novalis writes of returning again to his ancient home, of the ‘gates of the primal world’ opening for him, just as in “Der Fremdling” (The Stranger) he imagines ‘the great day of birth’ in the beyond. The character of “the Stranger” appears again in Novalis’s most famous and influential *Hymnen an die Nacht*, the longest poetic work that he wrote. In this beautiful and mysterious work he begins by celebrating the glittering stones, the tranquil plants and the delightful Light of life. But then he turns to the Night, telling the story of how the Gods were vanquished from human life, so that nature was rendered ‘lonely and lifeless’, ‘bound by harsh numbers / and iron laws’ (‘Mit eiserner Kette band sie die dürre Zahl und das strenge Maß’). The Gods were driven into the Night, where they wait until ‘the dawn of the new age’. Novalis’s two novels – *The Disciples at Saïs* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* – represent the more overt expression of his philosophical-religious esotericism in a hybrid form of aphoristic fiction. Of these two works, the more unconventional is *The Disciples at Saïs*, a poetic-prose experiment rather than a novel in any usual sense. Clearly reflecting the doctrine of signatures, it begins by referring to the ‘great manuscript of design’ that we see written upon the clouds and the snow, on rocks and on mountains, and that offers a ‘key to higher things’. The novel tells of a primordial master who understood the conjunction or interrelation of all living things: stars and men, stones and animals, clouds and plants. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is much closer to the conventional form of the novel. It tells of a young man named Heinrich who longs to see a ‘blue flower’ (possibly inspired by the blue flower of wisdom described in an anonymous alchemical text *Pandora* [1588]; see Gebelein 2001, 296) spoken of by a traveling stranger who speaks of

dreams rather than of the events of ordinary life. Heinrich eventually meets a mysterious gnomish hermit, and falls in love with a young and beautiful woman, Matilda. Heinrich discovers that ‘the higher world is nearer to us than we usually believe’ and that, indeed, ‘we already live in it’. This may be called the essential poetic observation at the heart of Novalis’s prose fiction, where dreams, poetry, symbols, and stories within stories all embody it. Among the embedded stories is Novalis’ famous *Märchen* (chapter IX of the novel), replete with terms and notions borrowed from the literature of → alchemy, → animal magnetism, and not least theosophy. Also theosophically tinged is “Astralis”, a poetic jewel which opens the second part of the book. The entity Astralis is of an androgynic nature; he/she is an intermediary being who personifies the astral world, situated between the material and the spiritual worlds. Astralis is also the very symbol of poetry as Novalis understands it.

Finally we must turn to Novalis’s famous essay “Die Christenheit oder Europa” (Christendom or Europe), often cited as evidence of a conservative or reactionary political perspective. Novalis waxes nostalgic about the ‘beautiful, splendid’ times when Europe as a whole was still a Catholic Christian land. Europe ‘fell asleep’ under the dead hand of business and outward-directed activity during the age of Protestantism, although Novalis mentions Zinzendorf, → Jacob Boehme, and unspecified “secret societies” as representing very important ‘sparks of life’ within this general process of decline. Furthermore, the “philantropists and encyclopaedists” are invited to join the ‘friedenstiftende Loge’ (the peace-making lodge), receive the brethren’s kiss, peel off ‘das graue Netz’ (the grey net) and behold the miracle of Nature, History and Man. Perhaps the closest to Novalis’s vision of a unified and renewed, mystical Christianity is that of → William Blake.

While the (al)chemical dimensions of Novalis’ thought have recently begun to receive attention (see e.g. Gebelein 2001; Liedtke 2003), and various other aspects pertaining to e.g. → Christian theosophy or kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] have occasionally attracted the attention of scholars, there does not as yet exist a systematic and comprehensive study that clearly situates Novalis in the contexts of Western esotericism. His influence on later developments in that context, such as e.g. → Anthroposophy, would merit study as well.

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WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF & ARTHUR VERSLUIS

**Novikov, Nikolay Ivanovich**, \* 27.4 [8.5, New Style] 1744 Avdotino (Bronnitsky district, near Moscow, Russia), † 31.7 [12.8] 1818 Avdotino

The best-known Russian journalist, book editor and Freemason of the 18th century, Nikolay Ivanovich Novikov was born in a family belonging to the middle-class nobility, and raised in their modest estate, Avdotino, located near Moscow. He received a quite poor education in the French college of Moscow University and was even expelled from it for repeated absence. Following family tradition, he joined the *Izmailovskij* regiment of the Imperial Guards. During his service the regiment took active part in a military putsch that brought Catherine II to the Russian throne in 1762. Appointed as secretary at the *Legal Committee*, formed by Catherine to prepare a liberal legal reform in 1767, he had a unique opportunity to get an overview of the state of the Russian empire and participate in the nation-wide debate about the 18th century's most acute socio-political questions. This experience could probably explain the fact that in 1768 he retired from the guard, with the firm intention of starting his own magazine.

Novikov's satirical magazines of 1769-1774 have exerted an enormous influence over the emerging Russian public opinion. A legendary quarrel between his first magazine *Truten* (Drone; 1769-70) and the official *Vsiakaja Vsiatchina* (All Sorts and Sundries; 1769) edited by Catherine II herself, where Novikov openly criticized imperial initiatives – especially that of "sponsored" French cultural influence on Russian society – marked the



first public clash between Russian intellectuals and the government. These events stood at the beginning of a process in the course of which Russian autocracy would lose its progressive impetus inherited from Peter I (The Great; reigned 1682-1725) and become a restraining and eventually a repressive force.

Novikov's satirical magazines were followed by a series of Masonic periodicals from 1777 to 1785. The best known among them – *Utrennij Svet* (The Morning Light; 1777-1780) – became one of the most widely distributed Russian periodicals of the 18th century. In 1779, thanks to a eminent Russian freemason, M.M. Heraskov (1733-1807), he obtained a 10-year's lease of Moscow University Press. In 1783 Catherine II issued a decree "On the Free Publishing Houses" which allowed Novikov to realize an old dream, expressed already in one of his satirical magazines (*Zhivopisetz* [Painter]; 1772-1773): a private book publishing company. Between 1783 and 1791 Novikov's "Typographic Company" came to control five publishing houses, issuing 950 book titles (i.e., one third of all books published in Russia at that time). The Company was created by the "Friendly Scientific Society" founded a year before by Novikov and I.G. Schwartz.

From the very beginning, all of these activities were devoted to philanthropic and educational purposes on a large scale, but the "enlightened despot" Catherine II, who intended to keep control over the products of her liberal reforms, could hardly tolerate such a blossoming of private initiative, especially on behalf of Russian Freemasons: if at the beginning of her reign she just considered → Freemasonry a 'childish game', later on she became increasingly suspicious of a Masonic political conspiracy. At several occasions she quite violently countered attempts of Russian freemasons to influence her son Grand Duke Paul (the future Paul I), and she was also concerned about the reports of the secret police revealing far-reaching connections established by Russian lodges with Swedish and, later, Prussian officials. In practice the official attitude was becoming more and more hostile and in 1785 the "Typographic Company" and Novikov's residence were searched by imperial order and several banned titles were requisitioned.

The French Revolution and the execution of Louis XVI, which Catherine II took as a personal threat, seemed to confirm her in her opinion about the political danger represented by Freemasonry. In 1792, the sudden death of the emperor Leopold II of Austria, followed shortly after by the murder of king Gustav III of Sweden, both of which were

attributed by public opinion to the Freemasons, led to a climate close to paranoia at the Russian court. The police reported to Catherine about a secret correspondence of Russian Freemasons with Woellner: at that time a minister of Emperor Friedrich II of Prussia, an enemy of Catherine, and a Freemason. This correspondence revealed that certain Russian lodges were organizationally subordinated to foreign authority. Among the addressees was Novikov, who appeared to hold the key position in Russian Freemasonry during the 1790s.

Novikov and three of his close collaborators were quickly arrested, publishing houses were closed, and books were confiscated. Based on incriminating evidence about secret exchanges with Prussian officials and the Duke of Braunschweig, to whom they had pledged their allegiance, they were convicted for disloyalty towards the Sovereign. They were also found guilty of spreading teachings in conflict with the tradition of the Orthodox Church, and of illegal publication of books prohibited by the Church authorities. Sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment, Novikov was released four and a half years later by Catherine's successor Paul I, on the first day of his reign. Novikov never resumed his public activity and died in 1818.

The major components of Novikov's personal ideology, which would later determine his specific approach to Freemasonry and the original path charted by him, can already be found in his satirical magazines, as pointed out by Pypin in 1916. Monnier's detailed analysis of Novikov's pre-Masonic period (1981) confirms this conclusion and points out the major components of his complex outlook, the most noticeable characteristic of which is Novikov's violent opposition to the foreign (especially French) influence over Russian society. Against the hedonism and eudemonism of the Enlightenment, Novikov preached the virtues of traditional ethics. The concept of Enlightenment philosophy found in his satirical magazines was somewhat limited, and his passionate antagonism against the *Philosophes* was rather naïve and lacking in solid argumentation. These foreign teachings were, according to Novikov, totally alien to Russian society; assuming a not very subtle nationalist position, he therefore developed an apology of Russian "traditional" ways and Russia's "glorious" past. In order to give a more solid foundation to this perspective, Novikov initiated serious research projects and a series of scientific editions, intended to revalorize traditional Russian culture and national history.



It is in Freemasonry that Novikov found an ally in his struggle against the acculturation of Russia by foreign influences: in 1775, his friends convinced him to become a Freemason, and he joined the “English system” lodge “Urania”. He was looking for instruction and spiritual support for his ideas; and henceforth his itinerary as a Freemason would be marked by a pursuit of knowledge as well as moral and spiritual improvement. However, the Russian version of the “English” system in the 1770s could not really satisfy his needs, and like so many other Freemasons, Novikov embarked on a quest for “true” Freemasonry. Already in 1776 he became Grand Master of the Lantona lodge in St Petersburg, a lodge based upon Reichel’s system, that had been introduced in Russia in 1771. The rite was based on Zinnendorf’s (Ellenberg’s) system, and had four high degrees in addition to the blue ones. Close to the Rite of Strict Observance (a quite popular German rite based upon the Knights Templar filiation), this was a Chivalrous system of a Christian nature; but other than in the case of the Strict Observance, the additional four Chivalric Degrees were clearly marked by an emphasis on the occult, including the use of alchemic symbolism [→ Alchemy] of transmutation and some elements of thaumaturgy. The personality and ideas of George von Reichel (a German Freemason, member the Lodge “To the Three Golden Keys” of Berlin, appointed as teacher at the St. Petersburg Military School, and an important founder of Lodges in Russia) exerted a strong influence on Novikov: in fact, during their first exchange of ideas, both men were moved to tears.

Step by step a so-called “Novikov Circle” formed around Novikov, the members of which were to play a role in most major Masonic activities in Russia at the end of the 18th century. They participated in Novikov’s Masonic periodicals, worked as translators, publishers, editors and commentators. While belonging to different Masonic rites, they were all in search of the “True Freemasonry” and shared a common quest for “real” enlightenment, conceived of as a union between Faith and Reason, science and religion, and as a path towards moral and spiritual self-improvement as human beings, patriots and Christians.

The Lodge *Harmony*, founded in Moscow in 1780 by Novikov, I.-G. Schwartz and N. Troubezkoj, was an attempt at transcending the differences between Masonic rites and finding the essence of the Masonic quest. At this time, Russian Freemasons were seeking more independence from foreign Masonic institutions; and at the Congress in Wilhelmsbad (1782), I.-G. Schwartz, as repre-

sentative of Russian Freemasonry, obtained for Russia the new administrative status of “8th Province” within the existing structure (which divided Europe in Provinces according to the ancient Order of the Temple). This meant not only recognition, but also a certain amount of autonomy in research.

During one of his travels, Schwartz joined the “Rosicrucian Order of the Ancient System” that was rapidly expanding within German Strict Observance lodges. At the same occasion he was empowered to promote the Order in Russia and was nominated as its regional supervisor. The membership list of the first Rosicrucian lodge, established in 1782 in Moscow as a result, in fact provides us with the best overview of what can be considered the “Novikov circle”: Novikov himself (he assumed leadership of the new system in 1784, after the death of I.-G. Schwartz), Mihail Heraskov (1733-1807), Piotr Tatischev (1730-1810), Nicolas Troubezkoj (1744-1821), Ivan Tourgenjev (1752-1808), Aleksej Kutuzov (1749-1797), → Ivan Lopukhin (1756-1816), Semion Gamaleja (1743-1822), and Vasilij Chulkov (1746-1807).

Even though the archives contain evidence of disagreements between them, the members of this circle definitely shared a common ideological platform in Novikov’s periodical editions, in which they actively participated: *Utrennij Svet* (The Morning Light, 1777-1780, orig. St. Petersburg; from April 1779 Moscow), *Moskovskoje Ezhemesjachoe Izdanije* (Moscow Monthly Edition, 1781), *Vechern’aja Zarja* (The Sunset, 1782), *Pokojaschijja Troudolubetz* (Resting Worker, 1784-1785). Their specific outlook, as emerging from the set of these publications taken as a whole (they are composed of translations, notes, comments and original texts) still awaits thorough analysis, but even cursory perusal reveals the quite interesting and well-developed esoteric ideology of the members of Novikov’s circle. One of their goals was to make available in Russian the most fundamental writings of Western esotericism (including → Arnold, → Weigel, → Paracelsus, Arndt, → Fludd, and → Boehme), and even to make some of these appear in periodical editions. As emphasized by Novikov in his foreword to *Utrennij svet*, ‘With our work we aspire to touch the very soul of our co-citizens’. Essential to his opposition against the Enlightenment, was his belief that the education of mind and spirit should go along with the transmutation of a person’s entire being.

Novikov’s early nationalism, expressed in his satirical magazines and later shaped by his spiritual

convictions, makes him oppose an idealized “traditional Russian society” of the past to the “corrupted modernity” of the 18th century. But in the course of his spiritual evolution he does not fall under the spell of apocalyptic eschatology and chooses a more optimistic theosophical path. Nowadays his position would be characterized as evolutionist. Novikov and his friends were in fact the major factor in an atmosphere of cultural Renaissance which became evident in 18th century Russia. The arts and sciences were among their primary interests: Novikov’s periodicals also published works by Gellert, Wieland, Young, von Kleist, Gessner, Bacon, Erasmus, and Montesquieu as well as classics such as Plato, Plutarch and Seneca.

Of particular interest in Novikov’s legacy is a fifty-volume collection compiled mostly by Novikov and Gamaleja during the 1810’s and labelled as *Library containing some hermetic, kabbalistic, magical and other books; as well as writings of the true Freemasons of the ancient systems. Collected and compiled in Russian from various translations*. This “library” represents an original perspective by Russian humanists and Freemasons on the basic referential corpus of modern esotericism. Among other things, it contains Russian translations of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Angelus Silesius, → von Haugwitz, Hirsch, Kirchweger, → Llull, Retzel, and → Saint-Martin, followed by numerous original writings by Gamaleja, Novikov, Lopukhin, Scovoroda (1722-1794), and I. Turgenev. Novikov’s life was a practical confirmation of his ideas. While consciously “working on themselves” (which was understood as a form of esoteric *praxis*), Novikov and his friends deeply transformed Russian citizens and society, and thus lay foundations for the blossoming of Russian culture in the 19th century.

A full re-edition of Novikov’s satirical magazines is available in: *Satiricheskiye zhurnaly N.I. Novikova / Satirical magazines of N.I. Novikov*, Moscow – Leningrad: Institut Russkoj Literatury, 1951 ♦ *Utrennij Svet, ezhejesjachnoje izdanije / Morning Light, monthly*, St Petersburg: printed in Land Forces Corps, 1777-1780 (from April 1779: Moscow, University Press of N. Novikov) ♦ *Moskovskoje Ezhejesjachoe Izdanije / Moscow Monthly Edition*, Moscow: University Press of N. Novikov, 1781 ♦ *Vecherniaja Zaria / The Sunset*, Moscow: University Press of N. Novikov, 1782 ♦ *Pokojaschijsa Troudolubetz / Resting Worker*, Moscow: University Press of N. Novikov, 1784-1785 ♦ The re-editions of selected works by N. are available in: *N.I. Novikov: Izbrannyje sochinenija / N.I. Novikov: Selected works*, Moscow – Leningrad: Goslitzdat, 1951 ♦ *Pis'ma N.I. Novikova / Letters of*

*N.I. Novikov*, St Petersburg: Izd-vo imeni N.I. N.a, 1994.

*Lit.*: André Monnier, *Un publiciste frondeur sous Catherine II: Nicolas Novikov*, Paris: Institut d’études slaves, 1981 ♦ A.I. Nezelenov, *N.I. Novikov – izdatel zhurnalov 1769-1785*, St Petersburg: Tip. V.S. Balasheva, 1875 ♦ G.P. Makogonenko, *Nikolas Novikovi russkoe Prosveshenie XVIII*, Moscow: Goslitzdat, 1951 ♦ W. Gareth Jones, *Nicolas Novikov: Enlightener of Russia*. University of Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 ♦ I.F. Martynov, *Knigozdatel Nikolaj Novikov*, Moscow: Kniga, 1981 ♦ S.M. Nekrasov, *Apostol*, Moscow: Russkij Put, 1994 ♦ H. Keipert, *Neue Quellen zu Novikov’s “Utremnyi svet”*, Sonderdruck Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie, Heidelberg, 1984 ♦ M. Longinov, *Novikov i Schwarz*, Moscow, 1885 ♦ idem, *Novikov i moskovskie martinisty*, Moscow, Tip. Gracheva, 1867. A.N. Pypin, *Rousskoje masonstvo*, Petrograd: Ogni, 1916 ♦ G.V. Vernadskij, *Rousskoje masonstvo v tsarstvovanie Ekateriny II*, St Petersburg: Izdatelstvo imeni N. Novikova, 1999 ♦ The only published index of the “Library” compiled by N. and Gamaleja in the 1810s is available as an annex to G.V. Vernadskij, *Rousskoje masonstvo v tsarstvovanie Ekateriny II*, Izdatelstvo imeni N. Novikova, 1999.

ALEX LAZAR-OVTCHINNIKOV

## Number Symbolism

1. PYTHAGOREANISM 2. PLATO AND PLATONISM 3. AUGUSTINE
4. MIDDLE AGES 5. RENAISSANCE
6. FROM THE 18TH CENTURY ON

Number symbolism, also known as the qualitative approach to number and mathematical objects in general, constitutes a universal cultural phenomenon and has existed from time immemorial. As such, it must be envisaged strictly apart from the so-called “numerology” which has emerged as its contemporary offshoot and is really, at best, an illegitimate child and, moreover, a mere waste-product of post-modern consumerism.

Within western culture, to which we shall naturally limit ourselves here, open considerations pertaining to “qualitative number” first appear with the Greeks. As a matter of fact, and difficult to explain though it may seem to us, no Egyptian or Babylonian/Assyrian document featuring explicit “number-symbolical” speculations actually survives (assuming any ever existed). Since some authors find this fact hard to adjust to, the book market is continuously flooded with inept claims to the contrary, that is, for instance, to the discovery of the sacred geometrical meaning hidden in the

structure of the Gizeh Pyramids, or some such fantasy. Needless to say – as is the case with e.g. “the number of destiny in your name” – such claims hardly concern us here.

Even taking into account the lack of material evidence mentioned above, there can in fact be little doubt that, in the field of number symbolism as well as in many others, the Greeks are heirs to earlier, middle-eastern civilizations. The kind of correlative thinking which mathematical symbolism mainly depends on, with its full-fledged use of analogy and its conception of the universe as a multi-layered living organism, corresponding – in terms of structure – to individual human beings and laid out according to a continuous cognitive/ontological scale, pertains to a type of “wisdom” which most certainly predates the era of Pythagoras. For it is Pythagoras (around 570-490 B.C.) whose name has become to our day (and already was in ancient Greece) almost synonymous with “number symbolism” (along with vegetarianism and metempsychosis [= Reincarnation]).

#### I. PYTHAGOREANISM

If the pythagorean school, which is likely to have disappeared as such around the end of the 4th century B.C., is generally well known for its mathematical achievements, it largely owes this reputation to Aristotle’s testimony and to middle- and neoplatonic doxography. It would appear from these sources that the Pythagoreans were in fact mainly concerned with giving a philosophical account of the “first principles”, under numerical guise. But it is frequently impossible to clearly distinguish between the actual origin of certain pythagorean doctrines and the systematic development thereof by later thinkers, just as it is often hard to draw a sharp line between mathematical discoveries proper, in the euclidean or modern sense, and number-symbolical speculations; all the more so since the two were never, for a long time, completely divorced from one another. Moreover, whether such discoveries or tenets corresponded in fact to collective elaborations within the whole school, over a period of time, or rather resulted from the research of individual members, is frequently uncertain. The mixture of “scientific” and symbolic preoccupations which seems to be a trademark of the movement from its inception, resulting in the doctrine of a cosmic harmony based, like the musical one, on a network of numerical → correspondences, is present in both Philolaos of Croton (*fl.* ca 450 B.C.) and Archytas of Tarento (around 430-360 B.C.). These are the two most important figures of the early period, both

quite likely to have influenced Plato. It is in a fragment by Archytas, handed down to us by Porphyry that the arithmetic, geometric and harmonic means are first explicitly treated as relevant to → music. From the notions of Limit/Unlimited, respectively assimilated to the mathematical categories of odd and even, Philolaos derives an entire cosmology in which Nature as a whole (and every single component of it) is merely an aspect of one of these principles, as well as an expression of their mutual complementarity. Both principles are, in fact, viewed as the intelligible manifestation(s) of the supreme and universal One.

According to Proclus (*Commentary on the First Book of Euclid’s Elements*, 24-30), Philolaos also used to establish symbolic correlations between certain olympian deities – three feminine and four masculine – and each respective angle of the square (4) and triangle (3), thus alluding to the sovereignty of the “universal” number twelve ( $4 \times 3$ ), referring to almighty Zeus. Assuming its attribution to Philolaos to be correct, this is perhaps the earliest example known to us of a “geometrical theology” akin, in many respects, to similar speculations elaborated during the hellenistic period. In his classic history of pythagorean literature, A. Delatte underscored the apparent shift from mathematics studied in themselves and with respect to natural phenomena, to the consideration of their mythological transpositions; but whether this shift does correspond to an historical reality, or is merely suggested by the deficient state of our documentation, is difficult to decide. It seems nonetheless hard to imagine a complete absence of such “divine” analogies in the works (most of them lost) of earlier writers of that school, for whom religion and ritual, number theory, ethics, geometry, physics, music and politics were in effect inseparable.

Due to the important focus on cosmology, the most meaningful numbers in this earliest period are, besides the septenary (which represents a basic structural feature) and – possibly – the quinary (see Mattei), the *tetraktys* and the decad, as two levels of expansion from the primordial Unity. Narrowly related (since  $1+2+3+4 = 10$ ), these two respectively correspond to the cosmogonical and synthetic perspectives on Nature, just as they figure the fundamental intervals of the musical scale (1 = tonic,  $4/3$  = fourth,  $3/2$  = fifth, 2 = octave), i.e. the harmony of the world and its immanent presence within the soul (following the macro-microcosm analogy). Philolaos thus avails himself of such correspondences to elaborate a theory of four-fold anthropological principles, and of the cognitive faculties of the soul-harmony – akin in nature to

the Whole and capable of grasping it through the agency of *logos* – which will exert an influence on Plato.

## 2. PLATO AND PLATONISM

Ever since Antiquity, Plato's (428/7-387/6 B.C.) philosophy was often dubbed "pythagorean" and understood as imbued with such conceptions. Such associations are fundamentally mistaken, as Plato is in fact concerned with mathematics conceived of as "the language of cosmology" (L. Brisson); a language relying, in his case, not on hackneyed numerical analogies, but on the fact that mathematical entities detain the power of eliciting a rational description of nature. In order to bridge the gap between the immutable realm and the material world, subject to change, Plato introduces, as manifesting an intermediary order of reality, a series of "musical" proportions structuring the world-soul, which is itself a middle-term between the intelligible Forms and the *corpus mundi*. For him, it is a given fact that physical reality can only be understood, up to a point, inasmuch as it "accepts" and retains some kind of mathematical relation(s). Following the same logic, a precise polyhedral shape is ascribed, in the *Timaeus*, to each of the four elements; and each one of these shapes is in turn composed of invisible and indestructible "particles", of a geometrical nature (triangles). Number, geometry and proportion thus represent a certain measure of order, harmony and causality introduced by the world-soul into the fundamental transiency of tangible things; if this were not the case, the latter would remain inaccessible to discursive knowledge. If it is reasonable to assume that the constituent "harmonic" intervals of the universal soul, or the analogy between elements and geometrical bodies, may well represent platonic echoes of "pythagorean" themes (as does the association of proportional means to justice and/or social order [*Gorgias* 508a, *Laws* V 737c; 744b, etc], as well as to different types of political regimes – a *souvenir* from Archytas), the intent is nevertheless quite obviously different. Plato distances himself from his predecessors by trying to apply mathematics to physics with the aim of laying the logical foundations of a general ontology, and of a rational philosophy of knowledge. Even the famous enigma of the "Nuptial Number" (*Rep.* VIII 548b), dealing with the determination of the cycles commanding divine and human generations, fails to refer us to "traditional" pythagorean arithmology.

Merging the platonic and "pythagorean" outlooks on the interplay between mathematics and philosophy was a prominent concern in the early

Academy. Shared for instance by Speusippus and Xenocrates, Plato's two immediate successors, and frequently underlined by Aristotle (who sternly opposed it), this preoccupation made a strong reappearance in the thought of the later, so-called neopythagoreans of the 2nd century A.D. and onward, such as Numenius of Apamea, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Moderatus of Gades, Theon of Smyrna, or Anatolius, not to mention Iamblichus or Proclus. Each of these writers represents, in his own way, a specific blend of middle- or → neoplatonism and neopythagoreanism, typical of the philosophical eclecticism widespread at the time. Both the symbolic, inductive approach to number and the deductive one, along with "scientific" applications, coexist in their writings. But Iamblichus (around 245-325 A.D.) and Proclus (412-485 A.D.) belong to a later period in which neoplatonism, though established as a long-standing school equipped with a structured course of studies, nevertheless tended to become more and more of a theology. On its theurgic, ritual side, numbers serve as one of the mainstays of a "sacramental" approach to Nature, in which each level of being provides a rung sustaining the gradual ascension of the soul towards direct contact with divine entities; concurrently, numbers represent the intellectual offering *par excellence*, something the soul must eventually sacrifice to the higher deities, in order to transmute all cosmological bonds which fetter its essentially spiritual essence. Geometrical figures, considered as having extension according to the three dimensions of space, participate in this process of salvation, which ultimately includes Nature's physical aspects, through the correlative three-dimensional "universalization" of the soul, which coincides with its repatriation into the divine realm. Other practical facets of such an esoteric use of mathematics seem to have enjoyed less widespread favour, like the association (much more familiar in semitic cultures) of number and letter symbolism (i.e. taking into account the numerical value, and sometimes the geometrical shape or alphabetical rank, of letters) emerging in Plutarch's *On the E at Delphi* (ca. 115 A.D.), in some of the extant fragments of Theodore of Asinea (mainly quoted by Iamblichus – who sharply criticizes such methods! – and by Proclus in his *In Timeum*), in the 4th-century *Theology of Arithmetic* or in passages from Damascius (ca. 470-535 A.D.). On the more scholarly side, in order to exactly understand the mathematical tenets contained in Plato's dialogues (an obviously important part of its curriculum), and in order to ascribe to mathematics their correct place within the general hierarchy of

knowledge and, accordingly, assess the objective ontological status of number, the later strands of neoplatonism consciously “pythagorized” the philosophical approach to reality. Within such a shift, the production of manuals and commentaries on earlier scientific textbooks (by Euclid, Nicomachus or Ptolemy) began playing an important role, and a strong emphasis was put concurrently on number as representing both an image of metaphysical principles, and the intimate pattern of physical reality. It is almost impossible to overstate the influence of these views on the patristic, medieval and Renaissance understanding of mathematics and of their symbolic meaning.

### 3. AUGUSTINE

The general threefold orientation of ancient greek arithmology, consisting of cosmological, ethical and/or theological transpositions of number(s), was retained for the most part by early Christian thought. But obvious adaptations were needed since Scripture, now, above the *rationale* of mathematics or philosophy, had taken over as the novel paradigm of numerical signification. The “divine inspiration” of the books composing the Bible was of course interpreted as implying that the numbers they contained must have a spiritual relevance. Moreover, the inescapable fact that most of these numbers did not by any means remain limited to the primary “Decad”, sacred to the ancient Greeks, meant that the original framework of number symbolism now had to adapt to much broader perspectives and materials. The variety of biblical texts which happen to feature numerical data or measurements (dealing with theology, cosmology, history and chronology, liturgy, eschatology and prophecy), combined with the doctrines of typology and of multi-layered meanings within Scripture, only confirmed the necessity of a wider system of hermeneutics applied to number. To all this should be added the array of different tasks incumbent on the Christian interpreter: catechism, moral edification, preaching, biblical commentary, spiritual teaching or meditations addressing various types of audience.

Even though → Augustine (354-430 A.D.) is obviously not the first example of a strong interest in number symbolism within the Latin Church (one only has to remember Tertullian or Cyprian in Africa, Ambrose of Milan or Jerome in Europe – not to mention some of their Greek predecessors, like → Clement of Alexandria, Origen, or Irenaeus), he offers a remarkable case in point for the new situation outlined above. A bishop first of all, his main goal consists in edifying his brethren

by explaining Scripture and rendering its contents accessible to them; according to his views, nothing may of course be considered superfluous in the sacred text, least of all the numerical passages which, he contends, are essential to a better and deeper grasp of biblical meanings. Based on the triple authority of Scripture itself (as divinely inspired), the Tradition of the Church (which warrants interpretation) and reason (analysis of arithmetical properties), enhanced by his own immense prestige as a preacher and theologian, his exegetical efforts consider number mainly as an interpretative tool, as a *sacramentum* indicative of a subtler, more spiritual significance behind the literal meaning of the Bible. Number-symbolic developments thus appear scattered throughout his many works, generally attuned both to the scriptural context to which they belong and to the particular ends of a specific writing of his. Eventually our man, availing himself of the inexhaustible polysemy of symbols, never hesitates to present several differing explanations of a given number.

One key feature for understanding Augustine’s arithmology is conveyed in the famous sentence: ‘Therefore we cannot say that the number six is perfect because God perfected all his works in six days, but that God perfected his works in six days because the number six is perfect’ (*De Gen. ad litt.*, IV, 7). Another fundamental aspect resides in the frequent trinitarian analogies developed between the Godhead and creation, and exemplified by a well-known quotation from the *Book of Wisdom* (XI, 20): ‘Thou hast disposed all things according to measure, number and weight’. In both cases, the underlying theme is that the participation of creatures in the divine nature implies that a certain order, rhythm, proportion and harmony is imparted to the universe, through the divinely ordained regency of number. Such views are intrinsically not new, as we have seen above. If, seen in this light, the mathematical archetypes are no longer represented by the platonic “Forms and Ideal Numbers”, they become “essences” coexisting within the divine *mens* and, as such, presiding over the creation. However, one may easily observe that, according to both doctrines, numbers nevertheless continue to reflect higher principles, as well as serve as models of the lower levels of reality. Yet, although influenced by neoplatonism like the rest of Augustine’s general thinking, his number-symbolical speculations never depart from an exclusively Christian perspective, structured at least in part around threefold correspondences, and delineated before him by Ambrose in the following way: ‘We do not treat it [i.e. the Septenary]



according to the pythagorean manner or that of the other philosophers, but according to the form and divisions of spiritual grace' (*Ep.* XLIV). Even the classic greek procedure of interpreting numbers by first reducing them to Unity, or at least to one of the digits composing the first decad, is retained, but this reduction is now construed as illustrating both the divine immanence within beings, which warrants their existence, and the eventual final return of these to the Godhead.

Unity, here, is understood not as a number in the quantitative sense but as an immaterial monad, the most perfect entity besides God, its immediate origin; 2 denotes separation and the breaking-up of unity, inherent to both love and knowledge; 3 is of course referred to the Trinity and is, more generally, the heavenly number of the soul, whereas 4 is that of the body and of the material world, a figure of firmness and solidity; 5 illustrates virginity and the five senses, instruments of the soul, and 6 – the first “perfect number” – the accomplishment of creation (by reference to the six “days” of *Genesis*); 7 symbolizes the perfection of creation, imaged by the Sabbath and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; the Kingdom and messianic era are figured by 8, whereas 9 is but the last step before the denary which, as 3+7, introduces the Decalog and expresses the ultimate achievement of all things; 12 is of course the number of the apostles, of the Elect ( $12 \times 12 = 144$ ) and of the spreading of the Gospel (3 Trinity  $\times$  4 corners of the world); 40, of fasting and penance; 50, of the Jubilee; and so on.

In the *De quantitate animæ*, in an attempt at describing the relations between the animating soul and the body, Augustine explores the symbolism of geometrical figures (circular or rectilinear, as two-dimensional images of the corporeal body) and of their respective characteristics (number and symmetry of angles and sides), to end up reducing them progressively to the properties of the immaterial dot, akin in this respect to the soul, and to a “geometrical monad”, equivalent in its order to the numerical unity.

Augustine's overall conception of arithmology has exerted a deep and sustained influence on most later Christian writers on number symbolism, to the point that many of them, including (as we shall see) some authors well-versed in esotericism proper, merely repeat or closely depend on his interpretations. If his explicit wish of having a lexicon of biblical numbers and their symbolic meanings written down in his own time was not fulfilled, partial attempts at such an endeavour may be recognised in the last chapter of Eucher of Lyon's († ca. 450) *Liber formularum*, or in the

much more important and influential *Liber numerorum* attributed to Isidore of Sevilla († 636) – certainly the main treatise of the kind before the work of Eriugena († ca. 870).

#### 4. MIDDLE AGES

One of the foremost theologians of the latin Church, → Johannes Scottus Eriugena stands at the crossing of all cultural currents of his time. His principal work, the lengthy *Periphyseon* (On Nature), as well as his commentaries, bear the influence of three main strands: the greek theology of → Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita (6th c. AD) and Maxim the Confessor (VIIth c. AD), both of whom he actually translated into latin; the western tradition of Augustine, Isidore and the Carolingians (Alcuin, R. Maurus, Hincmar, Hilduin); and finally that of “latin platonism” (Macrobius, Calcidius, Martianus Capella, Boethius). For him, the relations and properties of numbers, the manner in which they emanate from the original monad (unity), constitute a model of the way in which created things gradually come into being. Within the monad, they retain their intrinsic, eternal nature; as they progress (along with the rest of creation) towards material existence, they take upon themselves a created nature. God himself is the uncreated monad, which the arithmetical one mirrors on a lower plane. Such views obviously reflect a strong Christian-neoplatonic bias, within which number is not just a textual metaphor or an interpretative tool, but an actual entity playing a regulating role in the overall ontological process. Eriugena also develops some remarkable analogies about the cube and the number 8 (*Exp. in Coel. Hierarch.* VI, 165-98), or certain cosmological measures (*Periphyseon* III, inspired by Basil's *Hexaemeron* and M. Capella, whose writings he also commented).

The interplay between cosmology and arithmology which certain treatises belonging to “latin platonism” manifest, whether stemming from pagan (Macrobius, E. Favonius, Calcidius, M. Capella – 4th & 7th c. A.D.) or Christian (Boethius, † 524) authors, has had a considerable influence in the Middle Ages. Put forward and given prominence in these texts are the themes of cosmic harmony and the relation of musical intervals to significant numbers, to which is attributed a positive role in structuring the world-soul, the heavenly spheres, the elementary components of physical reality and/or the fundamental cycles of human life into a general unison. The philosophical tenets and arithmetical data found within such works, classic though they are, did much to extol the importance of cos-

mological speculations, and convince medieval thinkers of the necessity to explore the book of *Genesis* along such lines, as well as take into account the “mysteries of numbers” in the study of the fabric of the universe as revealing divine wisdom.

Scriptural hermeneutics, and the elaboration of what rapidly became known as “natural philosophy”, following the scholarly development of the seven Liberal Arts in the wake of textbooks such as M. Capella’s *Wedding of Mercurius and Philology*, are the principal goal of most medieval schools which make use of mathematical analogies. Physics and arithmetic are frequently subjected to theological transpositions, extending – especially within the school of Chartres – beyond the traditional symbolic use of numbers as, for instance, when elementary operations (like addition or multiplication) are globally taken as reflecting the internal “nature” of the Godhead, or the structure of its relations with created beings.

But here, as in the use of the so-called “platonian” means – within the Victorine and Franciscan schools – to illustrate the links between the Persons of the Trinity, the tie with esotericism is relatively slender and difficult to establish properly. At the same time, and contrary to what one might readily think, detailed arithmological considerations as such are seldom present in medieval magical and/or alchemical treatises; but simple geometrical shapes (like the circle, triangle or square, as in Constantinus or ps.-Llull, studied by B. Obrist) are sometimes taken as organizing the material combinations of the elements and leading to the contemplation of the spiritual principles of the Art.

## 5. RENAISSANCE

Renaissance esoteric currents, which make an extensive use of number symbolism, often blend the classic qualitative analogies with an insistence on the immaterial character of mathematical entities, supposedly apt to liberate the intellect from earthly preoccupations and help it reach the intelligible realm, thus leaning on both the ontological and cognitive aspects of number. Such an approach, by assimilating the nature of thought processes to that of arithmo-geometrical tools and procedures, entails some kind of “mathematizing” of reality, and of the dialectics on which its mental apprehension rests. As the supreme warrant of the numerical harmony of reality, the divine sphere itself hardly remains immune to this tendency of applying mathematical objects and reasoning to the whole scale of being, and is therefore assimilated to either unity, or the center, or the circle.

Making use, in various degrees, of these two approaches, and belonging all three to the circle of the famous french Humanist → J. Lefèvre d’Étaples (ca. 1455-1536), who touched on the subject himself in book II of his unpublished *De magia naturali* (written around 1493), C. de Bovelles (1479-1567), J. Clichtove († 1543) and G. Roussel († 1550) published on number symbolism between 1510 and 1521. The first mainly explores a vast array of philosophical and mystical analogies (*Liber de XII numeris*), whereas the second limits himself to an exegesis of numbers found in the biblical text (*De mystica numerorum significatione*), based mostly on authors pertaining to the Christian tradition, and the third adds an arithmological commentary to his new translation of Boethius’ *Arithmetics*. All of them manifest a clear didactic purpose, in the attempt of structuring and harmonizing the spiritual messages which they believe hidden in Christian ontology, in Scripture and in classical thought and cosmology, thanks to the symbolic transpositions of arithmetic.

The major exponents of Renaissance → magic have also put arithmology to an extensive use. From → Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499; *Compendium in Timaeum*, 1496) to → Giordano Bruno (1548-1600; *De monade*, 1591), through → Henricus Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535; *De occulta philosophia*, 1533), → John Dee (1527-1608; *Preface to Euclid’s “Elements”*, 1570) or Fabio Paolini (*Hebdomades*, 1589), number is shown to sustain a key role in the understanding of the fabric of the universe as an expression of divine wisdom and activity, whether understood in a platonian or a Christian sense. The intermediary character of number on the general scale of being concords with that of the human soul, which is preeminent in magical procedures, just like number itself is a fundamental constituent of ritual music and/or invocations and seals, through its shaping of musical intervals and geometrical figures, and the numerical values attributed to letters. Therefore the magus’ “creative imagination”, and the network of dynamic correspondences linking it to the celestial *spiritus* and to the world-soul, are both activated into a universal consonance by the qualitative aspects of number.

In and out of the Paracelsian movement [→ Paracelsianism], mathematical and musical analogies have been applied to → alchemy, in order to illustrate the supposed correspondences with cosmogony and eschatology evinced by the phases and operations of the Great Work. At the same time, certain measures and weights (of temperature, substances, instruments) were given, by way of the

same symbolism, some anagogical significations, and sometimes even paralleled with actual scriptural passages featuring numerical data, or proportioned to the human body. Examples of this may be found in John Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564) or the writings of → Gérard Dorn († after 1584); including the spurious *Aurora* of 1577. Even the geometrical characteristics of the famous “platonian” bodies have been interpreted in alchemical fashion, mostly by W. Davidson († 1669) in his *Philosophia pyrotechnica* (1635), just as the presence of the three paracelsian “principles” and four traditional elements has triggered diverse arithmological considerations.

With writers such as → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), → Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), → Francesco Giorgio (1466?-1540), → Egidio da Viterbo (1465-1532) or → Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), the affinities between Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III] and “pythagoreanism” are given a wide display. Even if not all of them go as far as Reuchlin himself, who bluntly declared them identical (*De arte cabbalistica*, 1517), the themes of divine or angelic names, closely associated with letter/numerical permutations, and of their role in the spiritual ascent of the soul and the cleaving of the intellect to God, are everywhere in evidence. Parallels are drawn between Greek and Jewish traditions, for instance between the *tetraktys* and *merkavah* (Chariot) à propos the quaternary, or between the Decad and the ten *sefirot*. Pico (*Conclusiones*, 1486) has done much for the “formal” (qualitative) aspect of number to regain cultural favour, insisting on its importance as regards “natural philosophy” or theology, as well as highlighting its magical and kabbalistic functions. Egidio da Viterbo stresses the interplay of 3 (Trinity) and 10 (*sefirot*), before interpreting the first ten numbers against a vast mosaic of biblical and kabbalistic quotations (*Scechina*, 1530). Francesco Giorgio (*De harmonia mundi*, 1525) builds up a complex metaphysical doctrine, based on divine, cosmic and musical harmony, and on numbers, in which the One communicates itself to the material world through the angelic and celestial spheres, which constitute a universal scale of 27 (3 × 9) spiritual degrees. Guillaume Postel interprets Plato in the light of Jewish mysticism, in showing how the Nuptial Number and the myth of Er (*Republic*, VIII) are explained *via* the kabbalistic theory of metempsychosis, or how the five platonic bodies, associated with the numbers 3, 4 and 5, actually mirror the structure of the messianic “corner-stone” discussed in Scripture and in the *Zohar*.

The idea of three worlds, composing a universal harmony based on 27, and reflecting hierarchically the divine Unity which manifests itself externally through the number 3, structures the theosophical approach to arithmology featured in → Robert Fludd's (1574-1637) *Utriusque cosmi . . . historia* (1617-1624). Knowledge of the divine sphere is obtainable for mankind through that of the macrocosm, and the concept of proportion is central in the deciphering of the musical and mathematical scales which organize the flow of the “life-force” on the different planes.

In 1584-1585 and 1665, respectively, P. Bongo († 1601) and the jesuit → Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) published two great arithmological “summae”, ultimately considered textbooks of this particular *genre*. Under the titles *Numerorum Mysteriorum* and *Arithmologia*, they assert the divinely assigned regency of number upon the creation and examine its manifold applications (exegetical, magical, cryptographic, divinatory, etc.).

#### 6. FROM THE 18TH CENTURY ON

The shift in intellectual and spiritual perspective which affected the European world-view in the aftermath of the “scientific revolution” and during the “pre-Enlightenment” era contributed to the gradual estrangement of number-symbolical speculations from the mainstream of western culture. Its long-standing partnership with esoteric currents resulted in the name and practice of arithmology becoming a near synonym of “magic” and/or “kabbalah”, two disciplines henceforth considered as obsolete and reeking of “superstition” and “obscurantism”. It is therefore not to be wondered at that “mystical arithmetic” was rather shunned in academic circles and its cultivation mainly restricted to illuministic [→ Illuminism] or pietist [→ Pietism] circles. Perhaps the most telling example of this evolution is J.C. Lange's (1668-1756) *Theologia christiana in numeris* (1702, <sup>2</sup>1734), a learned esoteric dissertation published, *under a pseudonym*, by a professor of logic and mathematics at the University of Franfort. The *Theologia* is in fact an erudite attempt at ordering and interpreting some of the main articles of the Christian faith according to the pythagorean Decad, adorned with symbolic drawings of a declared theosophical nature.

At the same time, and interestingly enough, the bulk of the literary production, in the domain of 18th-century arithmology, no longer comes from the “latin” countries, but belongs predominantly to the German *Sprachraum*. One of its foremost exponents is → Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-

1803; *Aufschlüsse zur Magie* [t. IV], 1792; *Zahlenlehre der Natur*, 1795; *Proboscologie*, 1795), who treats numbers essentially as “traces” of divine wisdom within Nature, with a view to conjoining scientific and theosophical thought, as well as number symbolism and kabbalah, in a dual effort towards illuminating the interplay of “life” and “spirit” which make up the natural manifestations of the creative Word. For → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803), who resorts to numbers in most of his works (*Des erreurs et de la vérité*, 1775; *De l'Esprit des choses*, 1800; *Des nombres*, 1843), mathematics – scientific as well as theosophical – are linked to order and harmony; but, as such, they only represent a combination of signs, a language which, left to itself, only describes the outer crust of reality and is bound to remain superficial, unless one endeavors to retrieve its original form and actively expand on it. Like bodies, numbers mediate, as it were, between the visible and the invisible and are linked, moreover, to the “life-force”, the productive energy in Nature; this situation enables them (mostly the primary Decad) to express the laws and actions of all living beings. The numerical language is also an aspect of the divine Word and of its expression(s), present as such on all levels of existence, and which requires an active effort of combination(s) and interpretation on the theosopher's part, so as to become a *living* and truly spiritual translation of the cosmic order. In other words, to fulfill their potential as vital intermediaries and theosophical *signs*, numbers must first be “assimilated” by the dynamic process of imagination and then “acted upon”, so to speak, by way of certain privileged mathematical operations, thus paving the way to more than a mere “reading” of the world: to cooperation in its “writing” as well.

From → Martines de Pasqually (1727-1774) or → Cagliostro (1743-1795) to P. de Joux (1752-1825) and many others, masonic authors have not neglected the use of arithmology. In his *Traité de la réintégration des êtres*, grounded in “kabbalistic” and Christian theosophical doctrines, Pasqually develops a complete and somewhat personal *exposé* of cosmogony, of the Fall of man, and of the path leading to the recovery of Adam's spiritual prerogatives. These are linked to the number 3, as is also the case with the divine “essences” presiding over the production of forms, which are in turn synthesized by 4, 8 and 10, or the plenary expansion of Unity. Biblical themes (Solomon's Temple) and ritual/theurgic considerations interlace and, more often than not, hinge on the symbolic qualities of numbers and geometrical figures, a topic synthesized for instance in P. de Joux's “Exposition

succincte de la valeur symbolique des nombres” (in appendix to his *Ce que c'est que la Franche-Maçonnerie*, 1802).

But unquestionably the most meaningful expression of number symbolism in the same period (and up to our own time) is found in German Romantic → *Naturphilosophie*. Among many examples, J. Malfatti's *Studien über Anarchie und Hierarchie des Wissens* (1845) insists on the dynamic interpenetration of metaphysics and quantitative science, under the guise of a dual denary, divine and manifested, where creation reflects the triune deity and its seven “powers”, symbolized by the first ten numbers. But → Franz von Baader (1765-1841) stands foremost, as he develops in his works some remarkable spiritual intuitions about the decad and the interplay of 3 and 4 within Nature (*Fermenta cognitionis*, 1822-25; commentaries on Martines de Pasqually's *Traité* and Saint-Martin's *Des nombres*). With this eminent thinker and Christian theosopher, we meet with some of the very last, truly original speculative elaborations on the dynamics and interactions of life and spirit in the micro- and macrocosm, reconciled with contemporary scientific and philosophical perspectives through the partial agency of numerical analogies. Seen in this light, Romantic philosophy may also be interpreted as an attempt to override a well-known general tendency of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, which is to extend the concepts of (quantitative) measure and calculus to most areas of knowledge (including ethics, psychology or politics), and counterbalance it with the dynamics of natural sciences, allied to an aesthetic theory of the human perception of signs and qualities.

As for the evolution of number symbolism during the late-19th and 20th centuries, it thoroughly confirms the obliteration of the worldview inherited from the Renaissance, notwithstanding the obstinate persistency of a certain amount of *idées reçues* associated with it, and their more or less substantial transformation by the growing secularization of modern thought. Obviously, in a universe which may no longer be perceived as an organic, animated being, the intellectual plausibility of “living” correspondences and world-harmony – not as mere literary metaphors but as actual epistemologic categories – vanishes for the most part. Consequently, numbers can only with the greatest difficulty remain considered as privileged intermediaries between the essence and structure of reality. Analogy as a valid aspect of causality, and the notion of the “unicity” of Nature, both being reduced to the status of antiquated and naïve views, the capacity hitherto recognised in

mathematical entities to figure actual “signs”, henceforth tends to become meaningless; furthermore, an homogeneity of nature between knowledge and reality being refuted, numbers can no longer represent “formal causes”, or an “expression” of things, but necessarily become mere logical instruments, limited to quantitative uses.

Given this situation, some exponents of our subject do not bother to convey much more than trite *topoi* (A. M. Fax, *Des nombres mystérieux*, 1850; A. l'Esprit, *Histoire des chiffres . . . au point de vue . . . occulte*, 1893), occasionally festooned with borrowed occultistic views, whereas others actually publish much more ambitious universal overviews, in which mathematics (including their symbolic side) are naively purported to offer a synthetic, “scientific” key to all available knowledge (M. Etchegoyen [† 1843], *De l'Unité*, 1836-42 [4 vols.], grounded in ontology and metaphysics; → P.-F.-G. Lacuria [† 1890], *Les harmonies de l'Être exprimées par les nombres*, 1847 [2 vol.]). A talented attempt at reviving neoplatonic arithmology is that of Thomas Taylor († 1835; *The Theoretic Arithmetic of the Pythagoreans*, 1816, and reprints), while the Catholic tradition is upheld (amongst others) by Canon Auber (1804-1892) in his *Histoire et théorie du symbolisme religieux*, 1870-72 [4 vol.; reprint 1977]. Masonic and occultistic compilations live on with Rd. G. Oliver († 1875; *The Pythagorean Triangle*, 1875) or → W.W. Westcott (1848-1925; *Numbers: Their Occult Power and Mystic Virtues*, 1890). Apart from giving birth to the inept “numerology” alluded to at the outset of these pages, the 19th century has also – and more interestingly – fostered a series of anglo-saxon and german works dealing with the interpretation of biblical numbers, with more or less esoteric undertones; the most notable representatives of this (still extant) undercurrent, which stretches from the mid-1860's to our time, being – besides E.W. Bullinger's *Number in Scripture* (1894; sev. reprints) – W. Begley's *Biblia cabalística* (1903; rep.), T.S. Lea's and F.B. Bond's *Gematria* (1917, rep.), A.Q. Heller's *Biblisches Zahlensymbolik* (1936), and L. Stalnakier's *Mystic Symbolism in Bible Numerals* (1952).

Most of the above trends have continued into the 20th century, giving birth until our day to a relatively steady flow of publications which, however, generally offer but little novelty. Very few contemporary writers dealing with number symbolism actually display any originality at all, moreover allied to a real consistency of thought; they either present “spiritual” overviews of the field (R. Allendy, *Le symbolisme des nombres*,

1921) or apply numbers to other, different purposes (→ R. Schwaller de Lubic's *Etude sur les nombres*, 1917 – to natural cycles; D. Néroman [M. Rougié], *La plaine de vérité*, 1951 – to → astrology), whereas V. Capparelli (*La sapienza di Pitagora*, 1940-1944) tries to retrieve the ultimate spiritual meaning of ancient pythagorean number philosophy. Nowadays, works of this kind increasingly manifest, it must be noted, an attempt at somehow integrating all kinds of scientific and historical data, taken from the various academic fields of research, including scholarly works on the origins and development of number symbolism itself (beginning with the german philological school of H. Usener, W.-H. Röscher, F. Boll, O. Weinreich)! Both the last two centuries have also witnessed the appearance of a strong academic interest in “numerical criticism”, i.e. the mathematical structuring of literary texts and poems (from Virgil to Hermann Hesse, but mainly about medieval documents, with a peak of publications during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s); but, as with the applications of number (and proportions – e.g. the “Golden Section”) to art in general, music and architecture in particular, or even liturgy, the relation of these speculations to arithmology proper is in fact often problematic (less so, of course, during the Middle Ages and Renaissance), enough at least for us to have left them outside the scope of this article.

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JEAN-PIERRE BRACH

**Nuysement, Clovis Hesteau de,**  
\* between 1555 and 1560 place  
unknown, † after 1624 place unknown

Secretary of the chamber of Henri III (1551-1589) and of the Duke of Anjou (1555-1584), disciple of Jean Dorat (1508-1588) and member of the Academy founded by Antoine de Baif

(1532-1589), Nuysement is first of all a perfect courtly poet of the end of the 16th century. His *Œuvres poétiques* (1578), which essentially consist of love poetry, earned him some notoriety at that time. But as W. Kirsop has shown, emphasizing the court of Valois' sympathy for spagyric doctors and devotees of → Paracelsus, Nuysement soon seems to have developed a solid knowledge in the domain of alchemy as well. Several decisive encounters led him, according to his own statements, on the arduous path of the quest for the philosopher's stone. First there was his meeting with François de Foix, count of Candale [→ Foix-Candale], who initiated him into the Hermetic doctrine. Then there was his meeting with the famous adept Sendigovius (1566-1636), whom he mentions several times in his works. After a long literary eclipse, and while exercising as a protégé of the duke of Lorraine the function of collector general for the county of Ligny-en-Barrois, Nuysement once again took up the pen, this time to put his talents as a writer in the service of alchemy. The result was, successively, a *Traitez du vray sel* (1620), a *Poème philosophic de la vérité de la phisique minerale*, followed by *Stances* and *Visions* (1620), and finally a *Poème sur l'Azoth des philosophes* (1624). These various works are marked by a syncretic philosophy: Nuysement quotes Plato and → Hermes Trismegistus as authorities while subscribing to Aristotelian ideas (the theory of the four elements, matter and form, generation) or stoic ones (the role of the spirit or the *pneuma*). Nuysement's work is also marked by the influence of Paracelsus (he notably takes up his doctrine of the three principles, while insisting on the importance of salt, and develops a primarily medical concept of alchemy). Finally, constantly blending references to Holy Scripture with hermetic arcana, his attempt is to make his art into an instrument in the service of God's glory. This boldness would earn him the wrath of Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) who, in *La Vérité des sciences* (1625), ironically surnamed him "Nuisance". These polemics do refer us to one of the main motivations of this alchemical writer. In an era when Paracelsianism was in open struggle with official science, Nuysement, as his *Poème philosophic* shows explicitly, intended to provide the Hermetic art with a defense and illustration that should definitively reduce its enemies to silence. A few years later this would also be the ambition of Pierre-Jean Fabre (1588-1658) in his *Propugnaculum alchemiae* (1645).

*Poème Philosophic de la Vérité de la Phisique Minérale, Où sont refutées les obiections que peuvent*

*faire les Incredules & ennemis de cest Art*, Paris: J. Périer & A. Buisard, 1620 ♦ *Traitez du vray sel secret des philosophes et de l'esprit general du monde, contenant en son interieur les trois principes naturels*, Paris: Jérémie Périer & Abdias Buizard, 1620 ♦ "Poème Philosophic sur l'Azoth des Philosophes", in: (pseudo) Basile Valentin, *Azoth ou le moyen de faire l'or caché des Philosophes*, Paris: J. & C. Périer, 1624 ♦ *Les visions hermétiques et autres poèmes alchimiques suivis des Traitez du vray sel secret des philosophes et de l'esprit général du monde* (S. Matton, ed.), Paris: Retz, 1974 ♦ *Les oeuvres poétiques* (R. Guillot, ed.), 3 vols., Geneva: Droz, 1993 & 1996.

*Lit.*: H. Blemont, "Nuysement", in: *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, Paris: Letouzey, 1933-1995, vol. 17, col. 1168-1169 ♦ F. Greiner, *Les métamorphoses d'Hermès: Tradition alchimique et esthétique littéraire dans la France de l'âge baroque (1583-1646)*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000, 410-426 and 428-438 ♦ W. Kirsop, *Clovis Hestean, sieur de Nuysement, et la littérature alchimique à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> et au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (unpublished thesis: bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, 1960) ♦ V.L. Saulnier, "Nuysement", in: *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1951, 377 ♦ A.M. Schmidt, *La poésie scientifique en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1938), Lausanne: repr. Rencontre, 1970, 410-433.

FRANK GREINER

## Occult/Occultism

1. OCCULT QUALITIES
2. OCCULT FORCES
3. OCCULT PHILOSOPHY
4. OCCULT SCIENCES
5. OCCULTISM
6. THE OCCULT

Although the various terms and expressions based upon the latin "occultus" ("hidden, secret", from *occulere*, "to cover over, hide, conceal") tend to be used indiscriminately and are often confused in common parlance, they are the reflection of a historical development in the various stages of which they refer to different things. It is of particular importance to distinguish between the original adjective "occult", and the substantive "occultism" that made its first appearance in the 19th century.

### 1. OCCULT QUALITIES

In the context of the medieval reception of Aristotelian natural philosophy, a distinction was made between the manifest, directly observable qualities of things (such as colors or tastes), and their occult qualities, which were not directly observable and could not be accounted for in terms of the four elementary qualities. Important examples were the force of magnetism, the influences

emanating from the stars, and the curative virtues of herbal, animal and mineral substances. Although their effects could be observed in nature and found out by experimental means, occult qualities could not be understood or explained according to the canons of logic and natural philosophy. For this reason they could not be objects of scientific knowledge as understood from a scholastic medieval perspective; their activity could be known indirectly, but not investigated directly.

In his pharmacological writings, Galen (2nd cent.) wrote that many substances (medical drugs, poisons, → amulets etc.) worked by virtue of ‘undescribable properties’, of which no systematic account could be given and whose manner of working was unknown. Medieval thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas (*De occultis operibus naturae*, written between 1269–1272), came to understand them in terms of Aristotle’s doctrine of form: the occult qualities or virtues of things were based upon their “specific” or “substantial form”. The latter was imperceptible to the senses and could not be reduced to the qualities of the elements or their combination.

In their discussions of occult qualities, the great representatives of Renaissance → neoplatonism and hermetism [→ Hermetic Literature III] remained dependent on scholastic categories. Thus, in describing how certain stones can attract celestial influences, → Marsilio Ficino emphasizes their “occult properties”, which are ‘hidden from our senses, and hence only with difficulty known to our reason’; and he points out that ‘a material power requires much matter if it is to achieve much; but a formal power even with a minimum of matter avails very much’ (*De Vita* III, ch. 12). Likewise → Cornelius Agrippa describes the occult virtues as ‘a sequel of the species and form of this or that thing’ and points out that they have much greater efficacy than elementary qualities precisely because they ‘have much form and little matter’. He explains that they ‘are called occult properties because their causes lie hidden, so that man’s intellect cannot in any way reach and find them out; wherefore philosophers have attained to the greatest part of them by long experience rather than by the search of reason’ (*De occ. phil.* I: 10).

The new philosophies associated with the “scientific revolution” of the 17th century have often been portrayed as rejecting occult qualities; it is more accurate, however, to say that they accepted their reality but sought to account for them in mechanical terms (Hutchison 1982). Whereas the scholastic approach implied that occult qualities fell beyond the scope of science, philosophers and scientists in the wake of Descartes claimed that

occult *and* so-called manifest qualities could both be explained scientifically in terms of an insensible mechanism. In fact, since our sense perceptions never give us a direct picture of reality, *all* qualities were “occult”; but this did not imply, as for the scholastics, that they were unknowable. The ambition of the new science was, precisely, not to restrict itself to the domain of what could be perceived by the senses, but to go deeper and explore the invisible workings of nature. In this respect there is a continuity between the *magia naturalis* of Renaissance philosophers and the new science of the 17th century: although the former remained dependent on scholastic categories while the latter went beyond them, both refused to leave occult qualities in the domain of inscrutable and irrational mysteries and instead approached them as a domain of reality that could be scrutinized by the human mind and put to practical use.

Pejorative statements since the 17th century about the occult qualities as ‘that ill-contrived sanctuary of ignorance’ or ‘that infatuating opium of ignote qualities’ (Walter Charleton) were actually directed not against the reality of occult qualities as such but against the scholastics, who were blamed for using the doctrine as an intellectual refuge that blocked inquiry instead of stimulating it (Hutchison 1982, 245). Eventually, however, the subtleties of the debate were forgotten and any belief in occult qualities came to be perceived as incompatible with science. Nevertheless, even in Diderot & d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* the lemma “occulte” still carefully distinguishes between “occult sciences” and “occult qualities”; whereas the former are simply rejected as vain and superstitious, about the latter we read that if the ancient philosophers understood by an occult quality ‘*a cause whose nature and manner of acting is unknown*, one must admit that their philosophy is, in several respects, more sane than ours’ (emphasis in original).

## 2. OCCULT FORCES

But while the kinds of phenomena traditionally referred to as occult qualities were increasingly demystified in so far as they could be assimilated into “normal science”, their traditional understanding as mysterious and perhaps even divine forces lived on as well. From the 18th century on, those who rejected the hegemonic claims of Enlightenment ideologies increasingly focused on such “occult forces” in their efforts to prove the limitations of the mechanist and materialist science. Moreover, in reaction against the perceived threat of “fragmentation” (implied by a

mechanicist worldview), it was increasingly claimed that there is ultimately only *one* such force, which permeates the world the way an organism is permeated by an invisible life force. Major candidates for this occult force from the 18th century on are “electricity” and “magnetism” [→ animal magnetism], and these were discussed in terms of theoretical frameworks directly rooted in Renaissance *magia naturalis*. Theories of magnetism and of electricity (as well as these very terms) were largely interchangeable – the founder of animal magnetism Franz Anton Mesmer hesitated which term to use for the invisible fluid postulated by his theory – and had their Renaissance origins in the work of Rudolf Goclenius the younger (1572-1621) and → Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680). Goclenius discussed magnetism as a manifestation of the universal forces of sympathy and antipathy; he wrote that *magia naturalis* consists in the investigation of ‘these abstruse properties and forces, deeply hidden in the majesty of Nature’, and presented the entire universe as a living organism. Kircher in his *Magnes sive de arte magnetica opus tripartium* (1643) associated magnetism with the presence of God himself as an ‘all-pervasive, radiant power, which gives life, forms and sustains everything’. On such foundations, a complete “theology of electricity” was later developed by Swabian pietists, notably → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, Prokop Divisch (1696-1765) and Johann Ludwig Fricker (1729-1766).

Theories along these lines were continued by esoteric thinkers throughout the 19th century and beyond, and easily assimilated other but apparently related concepts, such as “ether” or the “Od”-force of Karl von Reichenbach (1788-1869). Such attempts at syncretizing various theories about a universal occult force found their culmination in → H.P. Blavatsky’s “Fohat”, described in her characteristic style as the ‘occult, electric, vital power’, ‘the personified electric vital power, the transcendental binding Unity of all Cosmic Energies, on the unseen as on the manifested planes’, and ‘the Solar Energy, the electric vital fluid . . . the animal soul of Nature, so to say, or – Electricity’ (*The Secret Doctrine* I, 109-112). The original program of Blavatsky’s → Theosophical Society mentioned as its fourth objective ‘To oppose materialism and theological dogmatism in every possible way, by demonstrating the existence of occult forces unknown to science, in nature, and the presence of psychic and spiritual powers in man’; this objective was later reformulated as ‘To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man’. The “psychic and spiritual

powers in man” referred primarily to the miraculous human abilities demonstrated by animal magnetism and its follow-ups, hypnosis, → spiritualism and psychical research, all of which were originally explained with reference to the universal occult force of magnetism or its many cognates (although eventually psychological explanations tended to take over). The core idea was and remained that occult forces in man and nature cannot be explained by mainstream materialist science, and therefore furnish empirical proof that the latter should be replaced by a more comprehensive worldview or “occult philosophy”.

### 3. OCCULT PHILOSOPHY

The notion of an “occult philosophy”, as distinct from *qualitas occulta*, seems to have originated in 1510 with → Agrippa’s first draft of *De occulta philosophia* (followed by the publication in 1531 of book one, and of the complete version in three books in 1533). From his dedicatory letter to → Trithemius and his *Ad lectorem*, it is clear that for Agrippa the term was synonymous with “magic”: he called his book “de occulta philosophia” merely because he hoped that title would be less offensive. But magic, for Agrippa, stood for the sublime religious philosophy of the Ancients, the *prisca theologia* [→ Tradition] which had fallen into disrepute and now needed to be restored. Such a close association between magic and *prisca theologia* was quite logical: → Zoroaster was considered not only the chief of the ancient Persian *magi*, but was also believed to have authored the *Chaldaean Oracles* and was mentioned by Ficino as the very first of the ancient sages, earlier even than → Hermes Trismegistus. The *prisca theologia* therefore had to be equivalent with a *prisca magia*, exemplified by the theurgy of the *Chaldaean Oracles*; and even more so, given the adoration of the Christ child by the “magi”, as found in the gospel.

Characterized by Will-Erich Peuckert as ‘a neoplatonic credo’ (*Pansophie*, 114), Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia* discusses in detail the elementary, celestial, and intellectual worlds, through the various levels of which man may “rise up” towards the divine as well as “draw down” superior forces. In this context Agrippa discusses the various arts and practices of natural → magic, → number symbolism, → astrology, and (Christian) kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], the latter pertaining to e.g. theories about spirits, angels and demons, prophecy and religious practice. The term “occult philosophy” therefore stands for the entirety of the “occult sciences” (see below), provided that these are understood not only as practical disciplines but as



integral parts of a comprehensive religious philosophy and cosmology on neoplatonic, hermetic and kabbalistic foundations. This sublime philosophy/cosmology was obviously understood as eminently compatible with the Christian faith.

In later periods, the meaning of the term has not fundamentally changed: adherents as well as critics have used it to indicate a perspective that sees the “occult sciences” not only as practical disciplines but as essential parts of a comprehensive religious philosophy. Since the Enlightenment in particular, any such reference to an “occult philosophy” is loaded with ideological import: modern Theosophists and occultists use it to characterize their own worldview in opposition to materialism, positivism and dogmatic Christianity, whereas for critics it is roughly synonymous with a worldview based upon pre-scientific and irrationalist error and superstition. Since both sides in this debate claim their own philosophy to be “scientific”, it is not surprising that, again since the 18th century, the term “occult science” (in the singular) is often used in exactly the same sense as “occult philosophy”. Such usage must be distinguished from the term “occult sciences” in the plural.

#### 4. OCCULT SCIENCES

The notion of “occult sciences” seems to have originated in the 16th century, around the same time as that of “occult philosophy” (Secret 1988, 7). Usually three main occult sciences are distinguished, i.e. astrology, → alchemy and (natural) magic; but the list can be expanded by seeing e.g. the various → divinatory arts as a separate category instead of subsuming them under that of magic. Although these various “sciences” have mutually influenced one another in various ways and there are clear areas of overlap (such as e.g. astral magic), they have distinct histories and it was not unusual for practitioners of one occult science to reject another one as false. The idea of a “unity of the occult sciences”, suggested by influential scholars such as Keith Thomas and Brian Vickers, is therefore hard to uphold (Newman & Grafton 2001); most probably it reflects a failure to distinguish between occult sciences on the one hand and the synthesizing Renaissance project of an occult philosophy on the other.

It is nevertheless easy to understand why astrology, alchemy and natural magic were grouped together under a common umbrella. Each one of them engaged in systematic investigation of nature and natural processes, in the context of theoretical frameworks that relied heavily on a belief in occult qualities, virtues or forces; this combination makes

the term “occult sciences” an appropriate one. But similar to what happened to the notion of an occult philosophy, and for very much the same reasons, the notion of “occult sciences” became ideologically charged since the Enlightenment; in the wake of what happened to the notion of “occult qualities” (see above), and in a context that insisted on science as a public and demonstrable rather than secret and mysterious knowledge, the very notion of “science” came to be seen as incompatible *ex principio* with anything called “occult”. As a result, any usage of the term “occult science(s)” henceforth implied a conscious and intentional polemic against mainstream or establishment science. Such polemics are typical of occultism in all its forms.

#### 5. OCCULTISM

The substantive “occultism” (*l'occultisme*) seems to have appeared for the first time in Jean-Baptiste Richard de Randonvilliers' *Dictionnaire des mots nouveaux* (1842), in an article by A. de Lestrangé about “Ésotérisme chrétien”. It was used by → Éliphas Lévi in the “Discours préliminaire” of his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (1856), and from there was picked up by many later authors. It seems to have been introduced in the English-speaking world by → H.P. Blavatsky in 1875 (“A Few Questions to ‘Hiraf’”, *Spiritual Scientist*, 15 & 22 July 1875, 217). Mainly in older studies, the term has sometimes been used quite generally as a synonym of → esotericism (for example by Robert Amadou, *L'occultisme* [1950/1980]), or more specifically as equivalent with the occult sciences (see for a prominent example Copenhaver, *Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France*, 1978). The latter approach has also been defended for some time by Antoine Faivre, who described the occult sciences as the practical dimension of esotericism and referred to them as “occultism” (1994, 33-35). In this he seems to have followed the sociologist Edward Tiryakian, who distinguished between occultism as consisting of certain practices, techniques or procedures, and esotericism as the religious/philosophical belief systems on which such practices are based; a distinction that has been rejected as ‘nonexistent’ by Robert Galbreath (Tiryakian 1974, 265; Galbreath 1983, 17-18), and was later dropped by Faivre as well (1998, 8). A different type of distinction between esotericism and occultism derives from the works of → René Guénon, who opposed his own concept of an esoteric metaphysics, to be found at the core of the esoteric religions, against occultism, understood as



a quasi-materialist perversion exemplified by e.g. → spiritualism, the doctrines of the → Theosophical Society and the many secret societies of his day. Such distinctions, which have been adopted by many later authors (see e.g. Serge Hutin, Luc Benoist), are obviously based on Guénon's own Traditionalist convictions [→ Tradition], and cannot be accepted as scholarly valid; but his observation that "occultism" in his sense is deeply influenced by 19th-century materialism is correct and relevant, as will be seen.

In current scholarly usage, in fact, the term occultism tends to be used as referring specifically to 19th-century developments within the general history of Western esotericism, as well as their derivations through the 20th century. In a first, purely descriptive sense, it is used as referring to the specifically French currents in the wake of Éliphas Lévi, flourishing in the "neo-martinist" context of → Papus and related manifestations of fin-de-siècle esotericism. In a second, analytic and typological sense, it can be seen as referring not only to these currents as such, but to the *type* of esotericism that they represent, and that is also characteristic of most other esoteric currents from ca. the mid-19th century on (such as e.g. spiritualism, modern Theosophy, or new magical currents in the lineage of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, up to and including such recent developments as the → New Age movement). From such a perspective, occultism has been defined as comprising 'all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted world' (Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 422). Occultism in this sense has its pioneers in 18th-century authors such as, notably, → Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Anton Mesmer, and covers the great majority of esoteric currents from at least the mid-19th century on.

## 6. THE OCCULT

Mention should be made, finally, of the term "occult" used as a substantivized adjective. Colin Wilson's 1971 bestseller *The Occult* is undoubtedly a major influence on the popular currency of this usage, particularly among sociologists and journalists. It may well be seen as the example *par excellence* of how a variety of currents and phenomena that do not seem to fit the categories of "science" and "religion" are therefore lumped together in what is best described as an intellectual waste-basket filled with left-overs (Hanegraaff 2004): the popular category of "the occult" seems to contain everything that partakes of "the charisma of the unexplained", from the belief in

spirits or fairies to parapsychological experiments, from UFO-abductions to Oriental mysticism, from vampire legends to channeling, and so on. In this sense, "the occult" can actually be defined as 'rejected knowledge' (Webb 1974, 191). Understood as such, it refers to a field that includes occultism but is much broader than that field according to any of the definitions discussed earlier; and it must not be confused with Western esotericism as understood in modern academic usage.

*Lit.:* Ernst Benz, *Theologie der Elektrizität: Zur Begegnung und Auseinandersetzung von Theologie und Naturwissenschaft im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1971 ♦ P.R. Blum, "Qualitas Occulta", in: Joachim Ritter & Karlfried Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 7, Darmstadt, 1989, 1743-1748 ♦ William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 210-217, 291-300 ♦ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, 33-35 ♦ idem, "Questions of Terminology Proper to Study of Esoteric Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe", in: Antoine Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, Louvain: Peeters 1998, 1-10 ♦ idem, *Philosophie de la Nature: Physique sacrée et théosophie XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1996 ♦ Robert Galbreath, "Explaining Modern Occultism", in: Howard Kerr & Charles L. Crow (eds.), *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983, 11-37 ♦ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, "The Esoteric Uses of Electricity: Theologies of Electricity from Swabian Pietism to Ariosophy", *Aries* 4:1 (2004), 69-90 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden etc./Albany: E.J. Brill/SUNY Press, 1996/1998, 411-442 ♦ idem, "The Study of Western Esotericism: New Approaches to Christian and Secular Culture", in: Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz & Randi Warne (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion (Religion and Reason)*, Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 2004 ♦ John Henry, "Occult Qualities and the Experimental Philosophy: Active Principles in Pre-Newtonian Matter Theory", *History of Science* 24 (1986), 335-381 ♦ Keith Hutchison, "What happened to Occult Qualities in the Scientific Revolution?", *Isis* 73 (1982), 233-253 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1992, 19-48 ♦ idem, *L'ésotérisme*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1993, 15-65 ♦ Joseph Bernard McAllister, *The Letter of Saint Thomas Aquinas De Occultis Operibus Naturae Ad Quemdam Militem Ultramontanum*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1939 ♦ Ron Millen, "The Manifestation of Occult Qualities in the Scientific Revolution", in: Margaret J. Osler & Paul Lawrence Farber (eds.), *Religion, Science, and Worldview: Essays in Honor of Richard S. Westfall*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 185-216 ♦ William R. Newman & Anthony

Grafton, "Introduction: The Problematic Status of Astrology and Alchemy in Premodern Europe", in: William R. Newman & Anthony Grafton (eds.), *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge Mass. & London: The MIT Press, 2001, 1-37 ♦ François Secret, "Du 'De Occulta Philosophia' à l'occultisme du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle" (orig. 1973), *Charis: Archives de l'Unicorne* 1 (1988), 5-30 ♦ Edward A. Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture", in: Tiryakian (ed.), *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult*, New York etc. 1974 ♦ James Webb, *The Occult Underground*, La Salle: Open Court, 1974 ♦ Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

**Oetinger, Friedrich Christoph**  
(pseudonyms: Halatophilus Irenaeus,  
Bibliophilus Irenaeus), \*2[?].5.1702  
Göppingen, † 10.2.1782 Murrhardt

1. LIFE 2. INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND MAIN WRITINGS 3. OETINGER'S  
MATURE THEOSOPHY

1. LIFE

From 1717 to 1720 Oetinger was a pupil at the Monastery School in Blaubeuren, where he came into contact with August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), who visited the town in 1717. He then transferred to the Monastery School in Bebenhausen, near Tübingen (1720-1722). At the University of Tübingen, he was a scholarship student at the "Stift" (Theological Seminary). Here, he first studied liberal arts from 1722 until completing the requirements for the master's degree in 1725, after which he studied theology until 1727. After the completion of his studies, Oetinger first attended to the education of his brothers Wilhelm Ludwig, Johann Christoph und Ferdinand Christoph. During the period from September 1729 to June 1737 he undertook a series of journeys in order to broaden his intellectual horizons, interrupted by employment in Tübingen: he was a tutor ("Repetent") at the Stift from 1731-1733 and 1737-1738, having been given leave from this office in the interim. In 1738 he received his first appointment as a pastor in Hirsau, and on April 22 of the same year married Christiane Dorothea née Linsenmann (1717-1796). In 1743 he became Pastor in Schnaitheim. In 1746 he transferred to Waldorf, near Tübingen. In 1752 he was promoted to the office of superintendent (dean) in Weinsberg, near Heilbronn on the Neckar. This was to be an extremely tumultuous period in his life: the con-

gregation complained about his "abstruse" sermons; a sexton circulated a false rumour to the effect that the piano teacher of Oetinger's daughter had gotten both this daughter and Oetinger's wife pregnant. In 1759 Oetinger transferred in the office of superintendent to Herrenberg, near Tübingen. In 1765 he was named ducal councillor, prelate, and abbot in Murrhardt, and took over his duties there in 1766. Duke Carl II Eugen of Württemberg, who planned to establish a salt-works near Murrhardt, had appointed Oetinger to this office because of his knowledge of chemistry. In 1766-1767 Oetinger's book on Swedenborg was confiscated at the behest of the Duke's Consistory, and in 1767 his publications were placed under the control of the censor – both within and without the borders of the Duchy of Württemberg. Oetinger henceforth evaded this measure by publishing his works anonymously or under other names, by suppressing the name of the printer, or by having his works printed outside Württemberg (e.g. in the free Imperial cities Schwäbisch Hall and Heilbronn), partly withholding the name of the printer here as well. In 1772/1773 Oetinger was governor of the silver mine "Unverhofftes Glück" at Wüstenrot, near Murrhardt. This enterprise failed because he was deceived by the fraudulent machinations of the mining counsellor, Gottlieb Riedel, from Saxony. Towards the middle of 1776 Oetinger, who sympathized with the Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] as well as with the later Rosicrucians [→ Rosicrucianism] (he was particularly venerated by those in Amsterdam and by the group around → Nikolay Ivanovich Novikov [1744-1818] in Moscow), travelled to Nuremberg to visit a group of presumably Rosicrucian-oriented Christians. On April 19, 1778, he gave his last sermon; but he remained in office, assisted by his son, the Vicar Johann Friedrich Oetinger, until his death.

2. INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND MAIN WRITINGS

Already as a child Oetinger had evinced a pronounced religious sensibility. According to his autobiography, at night he often had extremely disturbing dreams concerning the dungeons of the unfortunate after their deaths, and his interest in the spiritual was thus awakened early in life. While at school in Blaubeuren, one of his teachers was Philipp Heinrich Weissensee (1613-1767), a 'deeply mystical theologian'. In Bebenhausen he was influenced by the preceptor Israel Gottlieb Canz (1690-1753), an adherent of the Enlightenment philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1754). It was during this period that Oetinger also became acquainted with the thought of *Die Inspirierte* (the

Inspired), the followers of Johann Friedrich Rock (1678-1749) from Oberwälden, near Göppingen. During his studies in Tübingen, influenced by the professor of philosophy Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (1693-1754), he was originally an adherent of Leibniz (1646-1716), whose monadology he had encountered quite early in his studies, and of Christian Wolff, but around 1725 a powder maker in Tübingen, Johann Caspar Obenberger (1673-1744), encouraged him to study the writings of → Jacob Boehme. He also studied rabbinical scholars and the Church Fathers. Of the latter, he particularly respected (Pseudo-)Macarius and → Augustine (354-430), whose treatise *De spiritu et littera* he especially valued.

The study of school philosophy, the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and Boehme increasingly led the theologian Oetinger toward what was to become his major philosophical project: the attempt to reconcile epistemology and theology with a sacred philosophy (*philosophia sacra*). In the autumn of the year 1727, after having passed the Konsistorialexamen, Oetinger left the Stift as a *Candidatus ministerii* and took up private lodgings in the town of Tübingen. In 1728 he was a frequent visitor at the home of the alchemist Johann Friedrich Metz, Sr., whom he even lent money. Metz's son, Johann Friedrich Metz, Jr. (1721-1782), was a medical doctor; he established his practice in Frankfurt am Main in 1765, and in 1768 was the personal physician of the young → Goethe.

Three journeys were of importance for Oetinger's further intellectual development. In the course of the first (1729-1730), he met in Frankfurt am Main with Maria Katharina Schütz (1687-1740), the spinster daughter of the separatist lawyer Johann Jakob Schütz (1640-1690). In 1670 this relative of → Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654) had founded, together with Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705), the *Collegium pietatis* in Frankfurt. Miss Schütz presented Oetinger with a copy of the *Kabbala denudata* by → Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689), who had been a friend of her father. This volume contained, among other things, excerpts from the *Zohar*, and had as its purpose a Christian interpretation of the kabbalah. While in Frankfurt, Oetinger also met with the Jewish kabbalistic scholar Koppel Hecht († 1729), who called his attention to the similarities between the teachings of Jacob Boehme and parts of the kabbalah. In Berleburg and in Schwarzenau respectively, Oetinger met with the mystical spiritualists Johann Conrad Dippel (1673-1734) and Charles-Hector de Saint-Georges de Marsay (1688-1753), and in Jena with the Moravian Brother

August Gottlieb Spangenberg (1704-1792). As a lecturer (*magister legens*) at the University of Halle an der Saale, in whose theological Faculty he had matriculated on October 24, 1729, he met Gotthilf August Francke (1696-1769), the son of the previously mentioned theologian A.H. Francke. In Halle, Oetinger furthered his knowledge of Jewish mysticism through instruction received from a Jewish kabbalistic scholar, primarily in the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria (1534-1572) of Safed in Galilee. For his studies, he procured a valuable manuscript of the work *Etz chayyim* (The Tree of Life) by Luria's disciple Chayyim Vital (1543-1620). In 1730, in Herrnhut, he made the acquaintance of Nikolaus Ludwig Count of Zinzendorf (1700-1760), who, to be sure, was also interested in esoterica, but not in Oetinger's interpretation of the totality of the Bible, including the Old Testament. Under the influence of the more conservative exegete Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), with whom Oetinger had corresponded since 1727, Oetinger later (1736/37) rejected Zinzendorf's idiosyncrasies (criticism and "atomizing" analysis of the Bibel, onesided Christ-orientation). In Herrnhut, Oetinger wrote his work *Aufmunternde Gründe zu Lesung der Schriften Jacob Boehmens* [An Exhortation to the Perusal of the Works of Jacob Boehme] (1731), which also contained texts by the Silesian lawyer and Boehme-supporter Hans Dietrich von Tschesch (1595-1649). Here already, Oetinger's acceptance of the doctrines of Jacob Boehme and → Isaac Newton, as well as of the kabbalah (primarily in the version according to Luria) becomes apparent. As opposed to Leibniz's doctrine of independent monads, which excludes an interaction between body and soul, Oetinger emphasizes the relatedness, the "oneness" of all things. Like Boehme, Oetinger is of the opinion that all spiritual entities also possess bodies and "figures". In opposition to static knowledge, Oetinger emphasizes dynamic, or "living knowledge". He derived his bipolar chain of reasoning from Boehme and Newton; but wishing to see in Boehme an original prophet, he refused to recognize that the cobbler from Görlitz had also been influenced by Paracelsus and the kabbalah.

During his tenure as a tutor at the Stift, Oetinger completed two more books. In these works he elaborated on suggestions which he had received from his uncle, Elias Camerer (1672-1734), a professor of medicine in Tübingen who also had an interest in mysticism. According to Oetinger, this uncle possessed the gift of *Zentralerkenntnis* (Central Recognition), the direct comprehension of a totality. The high veneration in which the

young Oetinger held Roman Catholic mysticism is evidenced by his interest for the Carmelite Marie de Sainte-Thérèse (also known as Marie de la Rose, 1640-1717); his work *Die Verklärung Jesu* (The Transfiguration of Jesus; 1734) contains excerpts from two books by Charles abbé de Brion (1647-1728): her biography *La vie de la très-sublime contemplative sœur Marie . . .* (Paris 1720), and his edition of her letters: *Lettres spirituelles* (2 vols., Paris 1720). As a counterpart to the above-mentioned work, but this time from the perspective of Protestant mysticism, Oetinger published his *Abriß Der Evangelischen Ordnung zur Wiedergeburt* (1735), which he had contemplated since 1725 and committed to paper in 1733.

Oetinger's second journey (1733-1735) again took him to Herrnhut (1733/34), and over Leiden to Amsterdam; the third (1735-1737) to Halle (1736) and to Homburg vor der Höhe (1737), where he visited the private medical academy of Dr. Johann Philipp Kämpf (1688-1753). Some results of these restless years of travel and study, during which he underwent the most diverse influences, were a renewed dedication to the church of Martin Luther, a renunciation of his perfectionistically inspired separatism, a rehabilitation (since 1736) of fragmentary recognition through reason (as opposed to central recognition), and his decision to marry and take up the duties of a pastor, first in Hirsau, where Zinzendorf visited him in 1739.

In order to have direct and continuous access to the calculations concerning the Apocalypse produced by his friend Bengel, Oetinger moved to Schnaitheim, in his direct vicinity. Bengel was a proponent of a special form of Chiliasm (cf. Revelation 20), the so-called "Dischiliasm": prior to Judgment Day, two periods of one thousand years each were expected to pass. The first of these, the blissful millennium called by Oetinger the *Guldene Zeit* (Golden Age), was to begin, according to Bengel's calculations, in the year 1836.

In Walddorf, Oetinger conducted his famous melisse-experiment: in the oily solution of the melisse-essence which he had prepared, he recognized the shapes of countless melisse leaves, whose "outline and signature" had been preserved in the solution. From this he concluded 'that God must be physically present, but not perceived by earthly beings, in all passive agents and births'. This experiment (which could not be replicated) was for him symbolic of the regeneration (palingenesis) of plants from the ashes, and indeed, of the resurrection of man as a result of the "life-giving power of God". In Walddorf, he received (c. 1748) a visit from the "Chymicus", "Graf St. Germain de

Fonti" (also "Marquis de Fonti de St. Germain"), obviously the famous adventurer the → Count of Saint Germain, who had made a name for himself as an alchemist.

Also in Walddorf he wrote his *Inquisitio in sensum communem et rationem* (1752), which contains in an appendix an essay on musical theory by Oetinger's younger friend, Johann Ludwig Fricker (1729-1766). A version in German for laymen appeared during Oetinger's term of office in Weinsberg as *Die Wahrheit des Sensus Communis* (1753-1754). These two books emphasize the importance of the *Sensus communis* – prerational (intuitive) *common sense* or practical judgement in the quest for ultimate truth – primarily in the rediscovery of forgotten troves of wisdom in the ideas of the Ancients. Christoph Martin Wieland was so impressed by the *Inquisitio* that he expressly mentioned 'the Abbot of Murrhard' in his *Musarion* (1768, 62). While in Weinsberg, Oetinger entered into correspondence with the Moravian premonstratensian Prokop Divisch (1698-1765), who also experimented with electricity – a contact which had been brought about by Fricker when he visited Divisch.

Oetinger's period of office in Herrenberg was for him particularly auspicious. His work *Die Guldene Zeit* (1759-1761) belongs to the genre of the social utopia, and received a natural-philosophical supplement with *Die Philosophie der Alten* (1762). This work advocates a more just social order, which should be based on greater equality, more equitable distribution of property, and liberty; the realization of this goal would not be achieved by means of revolution, but rather through a process of evolution. Its influence remains discernible right up to Friedrich Hölderlin's (1770-1843) *Friedensfeier* (about 1802).

The first draft of an autobiography, *Genealogie der reellen Gedancken eines Gottes-Gelehrten*, dated 1762, covertly quotes the title of an alchemical treatise: Carl Herrmann Gravel (ed.), (Bernardus Trevisanus), *Fontina Bernhardi revelata . . . worinnen . . . in ganz reellen und zuverlässigen Gedancken über die Bereitung des Steins der Weisen veroffenbaret*, Erlang[en] 1750.

Oetinger's principal work on the subject of the kabbalah is his *Offentliches Denckmahl* (1763), to which both Jakob Friedrich Klemm (1733-1793; from 1782-1793 Hölderlin's dean in Nürtingen), and Karl Friedrich Harttmann (1743-1815; later Friedrich Schiller's professor at the *Karlsschule* in Stuttgart) contributed. Taking as his starting point a colourful emblematic-kabbalistic picture (*Lehrtafel*, i.e., teaching-table), dating from 1663,



which Antonia princess of Württemberg (1613-1679) had donated to the church in Bad Teinach (1673) – a spiritual painting in the form of a triptych, believed to have been influenced by Johann Valentin Andreae's *Ein Geistlich Gemäldt* (1615) – Oetinger presents a kaleidoscopic view of the kabbalah, the natural sciences and the philosophy of his age (Boehme, Newton, Malebranche, Leibniz, Wolff, → Swedenborg, Zinzendorf, Spener, as well as the “Philosopher of Sanssouci”, that is, Frederick the Great). This volume, which was later to be found in the library of Goethe's *schöne Seele*, Susanne Catharina von Klettenberg (1723-1774), was esteemed by Hölderlin's private tutor, Nathanael Köstlin (1744-1826) and by Schelling, as well as by Eduard Mörike (1804-1875) and Hermann Hesse (1877-1962). The edition which had appeared in Stuttgart in 1858 was later found in Hermann Hesse's own library, and in 1934 he depicted the figure of Oetinger in preliminary studies for his *Glasperlenspiel* (Glass Bead Game).

Oetinger's major systematic work is entitled *Theologia ex idea vitae deducta* (1765). Here the universal scholar and theosopher Oetinger, who strove for a leading position in the church hierarchy, attempted, in the form of a dogmatic compendium, to clearly and distinctly demonstrate his Lutheran orthodoxy. This work, which was also to be found in Herder's library, had a profound influence on pietistic thought [→ Pietism] in the immediate vicinity of Hölderlin and Schelling (for example, on J.F. Klemm), as well as on the natural philosophy of → Romanticism (→ Franz von Baader [1765-1841], → Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert [1780-1860], Julius Hamberger [1801-1885]), and on *Vermittlungstheologie* (Richard Rothe [1799-1867], Isaak August Dorner [1809-1884]).

*Swedenborgs und anderer Irrdische und himmlische Philosophie* (1765; 2nd ed. Frankfurt am Main 1773), of which Goethe in Weimar had a copy purchased for his own library in 1776, includes, amongst other things, excerpts from Emanuel Swedenborg's *Arcana coelestia*. Here Oetinger comes out quite decidedly, although not without qualifications, in favour of Swedenborg's conception of the reality of the realm of spirits, thereby probably influencing Goethe's *Faust*; later, because of Swedenborg's allegorical Bible interpretations, Oetinger came to disassociate himself from him.

*Procopii Divisch Theorie von der meteorologischen Electricite* (1765) contains the German translation of the *Magia naturalis* of the above-mentioned Prokop Divisch, from which Oetinger

develops a “theology of electricity”; he interprets the shining light of the metal chashmal (LXX: “elektron”; Vulgata: “electrum”) in Ezekiel's vision (Ez 1,4. 27; 8,2) as electric fire.

*Die Eulerische Und Frickerische Philosophie Ueber Die Music* (1767) underscores – in adherence to the ideas of Oetinger's friend Johann Ludwig Fricker, and as a reaction against Leonhard Euler (1707-1783) – the importance of discord as opposed to concord in → music, analogous to the concept of struggle (*principium luctae*; cf. *certamen, concert*), seen as a characteristic feature of life.

*Die Metaphysic in Connexion mit der Chemie* [1770] deals with the close relationship between mind and matter: the book contains not only extensive texts on chemistry, but also on other fields of knowledge, such as medicine, Fricker's theory of music, and philosophy. The influence of → Paracelsianism becomes obvious when one notes that mention is made of the doctrine of signatures of the Paracelsus-follower Oswald Crollius (c. 1560-1609). The work was to be found in the libraries of Susanne Catharina Freiin von Klettenberg (1723-1774), Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

In his *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch* (1776), partly a reaction against Swedenborg's allegorical exegesis of the Bible and against the rationalists, one may find (p. 407) Oetinger's famous saying *Leiblichkeit ist das Ende der Werke Gottes* (Corporeality is the ultimate goal of God's works). Oetinger emphasizes a realistic exegesis of the Bible, even more consistently than his former mentor Bengel, for example when he interprets images from Revelation literally, and not symbolically.

### 3. OETINGER'S MATURE THEOSOPHY

Having provided a synopsis of Oetinger's intellectual development, we will now attempt to briefly summarize the theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy] of the mature Oetinger. As a theosopher, Oetinger characteristically strives to coordinate his encyclopedic knowledge: for his *philosophia sacra* he utilizes not only philosophy and theology – including a Christian interpretation of the kabbalah –, but also the natural sciences (primarily alchemy and the physics of Isaac Newton), emblematics (which he uses to construct a *theologia emblematica*), medicine, mathematics, music, and jurisprudence. He seeks to maintain coherence in this encyclopedic multiplicity by means of a principle of bipolar attraction that avoids both a monistic uniformity and a dualistic rift. According to the divine doc-



trine of salvation, all things in the universe are in dynamic interaction: “above” and “below”, heaven and earth, the invisible and the visible, body and soul, the internal and the external, the Word and the works of God, both in nature and in history, the Holy Scriptures (which are to be taken literally according to the Biblical realism of Johann Albrecht Bengel) and the Book of Nature. Nevertheless, God and his Word are given supreme authority (Oetinger uses the French word “supériorité”). God is, like life, indissoluble; and He is the origin of all life, as differentiated from His Creation. Accordingly, the central idea of Oetinger’s *Theologia ex idea vitae deducta* is the eternal life of God, which radiates into six *loci*: the doctrines of God, of man, of law and sin, of grace, of the Church, and of the last things. God in His actions, or as a life-giving entity (*Deus actuosus, vel ut vita vivificans*), is the source of life. He wants to reveal Himself to man as the ‘receptacle of the breath of life’ in the person of Jesus Christ. Sin is alienation from the existence of God; Grace is the promise of new life; the Church is the Society in which the spirit of life is active. The arrival of the “last things” will mean the end and termination of life: the transitory life of the human creature will be changed into eternal life when the unity of body and soul is indestructibly restored as *Geistleiblichkeit*. At the end of time will come the universal reconciliation through Christ, the “salvation of nature”, in accordance with the doctrine of the “restoration of all”. Oetinger finds fault with Leibniz’s theory of monads because for Leibniz God is the supreme monad, criticizes his concept of harmony as atomistic, and emphasizes that, according to Acts 17:28, life and activity take precedence over mere existence. The *Sensus communis* makes the experiences of daily life in nature and society accessible to interpretation by the Holy Scriptures, and allows us to communicate on the basis of living, clearly evident experiences of faith (dogmas). Oetinger’s emphasis on experience is a heritage of authors like Paracelsus, J.V. Andreae and → Gottfried Arnold.

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*sophie der Alten wiederkommend in der güldenen Zeit*, 2 pts., Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1762 ♦ *Offentliches Denckmahl Der Lehr-Tafel einer weyl[and]. Württembergischen Princeßin Antonia*, Tübingen, 1763 ♦ *Theologia ex idea vitae deducta in sex locos redacta*, Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1765 ♦ *Swedenborgs und anderer Irrdische und himmlische Philosophie* (2 pts.), Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1765 ♦ *Procopii Divisch . . . längst verlangte Theorie von der meteorologischen Electricite*, Tübingen, 1765 ♦ *Die Eulerische Und Frickerische Philosophie Ueber Die Music*, Neuwied 1767 [critical edition by R. Breymayer in: *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* 76, 1976, 130-175] ♦ *Die Metaphysic in Connexion mit der Chemie*, Schw[äbisch]. Hall [1770] ♦ *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch*, [Heilbronn am Neckar], 1776.

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REINHARD BREYMAYER

**Olcott, Henry Steel**, \* 2.8.1832  
Orange, New Jersey, † 17.2.1907  
Adayar (India)

President-Founder of the → Theosophical Society, which he helped inaugurate in 1875 and of which he remained President until his death. After distinguishing himself in the field of agricultural reform early in life, Olcott became an assistant editor on the New York *Tribune* in those areas. At the outset of the Civil War he enlisted, eventually becoming an investigator for the War Department. By the time of the founding of the Theosophical Society he was a well-connected New York lawyer. The accounts of his investigation of a family of mediums in rural Vermont, serialized in the New York papers, drew → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky to meet him. Their idea of a Society to investigate the hidden mysteries of nature did not flourish in America, and in 1879 Olcott transferred the headquarters to India where he would spend the rest of his life. Establishing over a hundred branches of the Society throughout the subcontinent during the 1880s, he also agitated for the Buddhists of Ceylon.

While the Theosophical Society became an effective means for the transmission of eastern philosophy to the west, it served the reverse function in Asian countries, being the major means of importing western hermeticism and

occult philosophy [→ occult/occultism]. Olcott was keenly aware of the budding field of psychical research and claimed a number of the pioneers of that movement as personal friends. He was especially interested in → animal magnetism and had considerable success as a healer in India. He translated Adolphe d'Assier's *Posthumous Humanity: A Study of Phantoms* (1887) and was interested in the French psychologist Charcot's work, visiting his laboratory. His great contribution to the field of esoteric literature is his rambling narrative of his life in Theosophy, *Old Diary Leaves*. Originally serialized for over a decade, it contains his meetings with some of the major figures in the 19th century occult revival as well as tales of things witnessed with yogis and swamis of India. Although he had eagerly promoted Mme. Blavatsky at the beginning of their work, he later became critical, though still regarding her as a genuine agent of a secret school.

Olcott remains an important witness for the existence of the Mahatmas, Blavatsky's Indian teachers. He claimed to have met some of them while in India and to have received letters from them independently of Blavatsky. He was suitably impressed by some of these incidents. In 1888 on a trip from India to confront Blavatsky in London about her decision to start an esoteric school in the Society, he received a letter in his cabin from one of the Mahatmas describing his thoughts on deck a few minutes before and advising to take a less combative role with Blavatsky, which he acceded to. He is usually portrayed as a dupe not confederate of Blavatsky's, but he felt that his past record 'proves me to have been neither the one nor the other'.

Under his presidency the position that the Theosophical Society had no dogma or creed was emphasized. When the Vice-President of the Society, William Q. Judge (1851-1896), was charged with circulating letters from the Masters, Olcott adjourned the committee that had convened in 1894 to hear testimony. Although he was convinced about the reality of the Masters, any pronouncement by the organization on such matters would 'violate the most vital spirit of our federal compact, its neutrality in matters of belief'. His insistence on democratic resolutions of the institution's problems has continued to make his Society unique among esoteric groups.

Aside from his part in helping establish modern Theosophy, Olcott is remembered in South Asia as one of the pioneers in the Buddhist revival. He fostered Buddhist unity in Ceylon and encouraged dialogue between their co-religionists in Thailand, Burma and Japan. He traveled throughout the

region getting the different groups to sign a common declaration of Fourteen Fundamental Buddhist Beliefs that they all agreed on. At one point he even contemplated retiring from the presidency of the Theosophical Society to devote all his time to work for a united Buddhist world.

For Olcott Theosophy was not some ‘sort of far-away sunrise that we must try to clutch’, but ‘a lamp to light our feet about the house and in our daily walks’. While he was not a leading theorist for the movement he more than made up with his organizational skills, and his stress on the practical side of theosophical ethics helped impart a staid respectability to the Society. When he died at the age of 74 at the Society’s headquarters at Adyar, Madras, his cremation was attended by representatives from the different regional religions.

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MICHAEL GOMES

## Ophites

The Ophites, also called “Ophians”, are a group of Gnostic Christians [→ Gnosticism] discussed by several of the church fathers, so named because they honored the “snake” or “serpent” (Greek *ophis*) as a revealer of saving gnosis. Another group of Gnostics has a similar basis for their name, → “Naassenes”, based on the Hebrew word *nahash* (“snake, serpent”). “Ophians” are associated with other heretics called “Cainites” by → Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* VIII, 17) and Hippolytus (*Refutatio* VIII, 20), but those writers provide no discussion of the sect’s teachings. The author of Pseudo-Tertullian’s treatise,

*Adversus omnes haereses*, a 3rd-century document possibly based on a lost work by Hippolytus, is the first to describe a system of teachings explicitly ascribed to the heresy of the “Ophites” (c. 2). In his account he claims, first, that they honor the serpent for providing the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3). That serpent was recognized by → Moses in the desert when he made the bronze serpent (Num. 21), and Christ compared himself to the serpent (John 3:14). The author adds that the Ophites introduce this serpent into their eucharistic services. Second, the Ophites’ system of doctrine is laid out: from a single Aeon several others were emanated, to which was opposed another being called Ialdabaoth, who produced seven angelic sons and claimed to be the sole God. The inferior angels made man, who remained powerless and worm-like until he was given a spark from the Aeon above. Ialdabaoth emitted the serpent, who introduced Eve to the forbidden tree, and thus conferred upon humankind the saving gnosis.

The first part of the account in Ps.-Tertullian consists of what appears to be a brief summary of a gnostic midrash (biblical exegesis) on the serpent of Genesis 3, probably of Jewish origin, such as is embedded in the third tractate of Nag Hammadi Codex IX, the *Testimony of Truth* (45, 23-49, 7). The second part is a highly abbreviated summary of a system described in considerable detail by Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*). There Irenaeus adds to his account of the system of the “Gnostics” (*Adv. Haer.* I, 29) related material ascribed to unnamed ‘others’ (I, 30). It is these ‘others’ who are later identified as “Ophites” by Ps.-Tertullian and other heresiologists (e.g., Theodoret, *Haer.* 14: ‘the Sethians, whom some call Ophians or Ophites’). A strict reading, in context, of Irenaeus’ account of these “others” can be taken as referring to a sub-group of the “Gnostics” earlier described by him (*Haer.* I, 29) in an account which was clearly based upon a primary Gnostic text, and which closely corresponds to a passage now found in the *Apocryphon of John* from Nag Hammadi (NHC II, I; III, 1; IV, 1; BG 2).

The system of the ‘others’ described by Irenaeus posits a first Light, Father of all, from whom emanates a series of aeonic beings including Christ and, finally, Sophia-Prunicos. Caught up in the waters of Chaos she produces a son who produces a son who produces a son, etc. These beings add up to a total of seven, each of them ruling over a heaven (i.e., a heavenly sphere). The first is Ialdabaoth (son of Sophia), then come Iao, Sabaoth, Adoneus, Eloeus, Oreus, and Astaphaeus.

Ialdabaoth also produces a snake-like being, associated with all manner of evil. Ialdabaoth claims to be the only God, but is rebuked by his mother. Ialdabaoth and his companions create man, breathing into him the residue of their spiritual power, of which they are now bereft. Adam and Eve, thanks to the snake, eat of the forbidden fruit and achieve knowledge of the Power above. Eventually Christ descends into this world, entering Jesus, who is killed through the machinations of Ialdabaoth and his henchmen. Christ, who has departed from Jesus before the crucifixion, raises Jesus up to a position in the heavens where he gathers the souls of the elect. The end will come when all of the traces of the spirit of light have been gathered.

Epiphanius of Salamis provides another account of the Ophites (*Panarion* 37, 1, 1-7, 6), based on Irenaeus and Pseudo-Tertullian, and spiced with numerous vituperations. Epiphanius adds one interesting detail: they keep an actual snake in a basket. When it is time for their “mysteries” (Eucharist) the snake crawls onto the table and coils up on the loaves (*Panarion* 37, 5, 6). This may be nothing more than a fanciful elaboration of the cryptic statement in Pseudo-Tertullian regarding the role of the serpent in the Ophite Eucharist.

The 2nd-century pagan writer Celsus wrote an attack on Christianity (the *True Doctrine*) which is known only from excerpts and refutations produced by Origen in his treatise *Against Celsus*. In the context of a discussion of the soul’s journey through the seven heavens, Celsus describes a diagram said to be in use by certain Christians in their “Mystery” (Origen, *Cels.* VI, 24-38). Origen informs us that the diagram in question, which he himself has seen, is not that of Christians at all but of the sect of the Ophians (already mentioned at *Cels.* III, 13). The extensive description of the diagram in Origen’s text is partially that of Celsus, and partially that of Origen, who adds details based on his own alleged examination of it.

The diagram ‘contained a drawing of ten circles, which were separated from one another and held together by a single circle, which was said to be the soul of the universe and was called Leviathan’. It also featured another beast called Behemoth, said to be ‘fixed below the lowest circle’. The diagram depicted Leviathan again on the outer circle of the diagram as a snake with its tail in its mouth (VI, 25-26).

Celsus’ description of the diagram was evidently followed by a discussion of the uses to which it was put by the sect that owned it. Celsus mentions

a ritual called “the Seal”, featuring a dialogue in which a leader called “Father” imparts instructions concerning seven ‘angels of light’ and seven ‘archontic angels’. The archontic angel’s chief, identified as the Creator and ‘God of the Jews’ (VI, 27), is said to be accursed ‘because he cursed the serpent which imparted to the first man knowledge of good and evil’ (VI, 28).

Origen returns to a description of the diagram, and identifies the seven archontic angels, who were evidently depicted on the diagram as theriomorphic beings named Michael (lion), Suriel (bull), Raphael (serpent), Gabriel (eagle), Thauthabaoth (bear), Erathaoth (dog), and Thaphabaoth or Onoel (ass) (VI, 30). He then reports what the initiates are taught to say at the ‘gates of the Archons’ in their ascent through the heavens, giving the text of the prayers to be directed to each of the archons. These archons are named: Ialdabaoth (lion-like), Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Astaphaeus, Ailoeus, and Horaeus (VI, 31).

There follow in the text further details regarding the diagram, featuring additional circles, a rectangular figure somehow connected with the ‘gates of paradise’, ‘the trees of knowledge and life’, and certain words inscribed (‘Love’, ‘Life’, ‘Wisdom’, ‘Knowledge’ (*gnosis*), etc.).

The complicated diagram described by Celsus and Origen is hard to envisage, though there have been scholarly attempts to reconstruct it with drawings. It was probably inscribed on papyrus or vellum, and the zoomorphic archons and angels were presumably drawn on the diagram. The cosmology reflected in it is closely related to that of the Gnostics described by Irenaeus and the *Apocryphon of John*. Indeed, the names of the seven archons of the Ophite Diagram are the same as those given by Irenaeus in his description of the “other” Gnostics (*Haer.* 1.30). It is clear that the diagram was associated somehow with rituals, especially such as were meant to promote the soul’s safe journey to heaven. The actual function of the diagram itself may have been that of a mandala, an aid to mystic contemplation and meditation.

“Ophite” Gnostics evidently used other artistic talismans as well. Two “Gnostic” gems deserve mention here. The first is an oval pendant of green jasper (No. 188 in the Bonner collection). On its obverse is carved a lion-headed god with the names Ialdabaoth and Aariel (Heb. “lion god”) on the right and left edges respectively (it should be noted that Ialdabaoth and Ariel are equated in the treatise *On the Origin of the World*; NHC II, 100, 23-26). The reverse has an inscription of 8 lines: Ia (undoubtedly an abbreviation of Ialdabaoth), Iao,



Sabaoth, Adonai, Eloï, Oreos, Astapheos, i.e. the names of the seven archons of Irenaeus' "other" Gnostics and of the Ophite Diagram.

The second gem is a pendant of black steatite. On its obverse is carved the figures of Adam and Eve on either side of a tree with a coiled snake. The Hebrew letters *beth* (for *hayyim*, "life") and *daleth* (for *da'at*, "knowledge") also occur. On the reverse is a circular band with 12 sections, each with a boss in it. The band, representing the Zodiac, encircles an "omphalos" around which coils a snake with open mouth. On either side of the band are a crescent moon accompanied by *beth* (for *hodesh*, "moon") and a *shin* (for *shemesh*, "sun"). Below the sun are seven small bosses, presumably representing the planets. These two gems probably functioned as amulets, reminding their wearers that it is gnosis, revealed by the serpent, that enables the elect to traverse the heavenly spheres and finally attain true life.

The evidence thus far considered raises an interesting question: were there actually people in Antiquity who called themselves "Ophites" or "Ophians"? We have seen that the names "Ophite" and "Ophian" were given by the church fathers to certain heretics on the grounds that these heretics honored the knowledge-revealing serpent. But we have also seen that the earliest system actually described in any detail of doctrines later identified as "Ophite" was not so labeled at all by the heresiologist in question, i.e. Irenaeus. Was Irenaeus unaware of the true identity of those "others"?

The matter becomes more complicated when we note the claim made by Origen that these impious heretics take pride in referring to themselves as "Ophians", taking their name from the snake that they revere (*Cels.* VI, 28). He also adds the following interesting detail: 'they boast that a certain Euphrates was the man who taught them their impious doctrines' (*ibid.*). This is interesting because Euphrates is the person who is said by Hippolytus to have been a founder of the sect of the "Peratae" [→ Perates] (*Ref.* V, 13, 9). The system described by Hippolytus is quite different from that described by Irenaeus (*Haer.* I, 30). However, there is one passage in Hippolytus' discussion of the Peratic system (*Ref.* V, 16, 7-14) that contains now familiar material: the 'true perfect serpent' was shown to the Israelites by Moses in the desert (*Num.* 21). This universal serpent is 'the wise word of Eve' (*Gen.* 3) that finally appeared in the form of the Son of Man who, like the bronze serpent in the desert, was to be 'lifted up' (*John* 3, 14). Are the people who according to Hippolytus 'call them-

selves Peratae' (*Ref.* V, 16, 1) really "Ophites" (or "Ophians")? Or are they, simply, "Gnostics"?

To arrive at a satisfactory answer to these questions we turn, finally, to two tractates of the Nag Hammadi library: the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 4) and the treatise *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II, 5). *Hyp. Arch.* is a tractate that is usually included among those labeled by scholars as "Sethian", reflecting a Gnostic system whose most important witness is the *Apocryphon of John*. In one interesting passage paraphrasing and interpreting the biblical paradise narrative (*Gen.* 2-3) it is said that the 'Spiritual Woman' (the heavenly Eve = Sophia) comes into the serpent and gives instruction (*gnosis*) to the fleshly Adam and Eve (II, 89, 30-91, 3). A more expansive parallel is found in *Orig. World*, where the origin of the "Instructor" is discussed. His mother is Eve-Zoe, who is 'the Instructor of Life'. The Instructor himself is referred to by the archontic authorities as the 'beast' (Gr. *therion*), wiser than all others are (cf. *Gen.* 3:1). When the archons command Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge, the Instructor advises Eve to eat of it anyway. She eats and instructs Adam to do so as well (II, 113, 21-116, 8). This passage reflects word-plays possible only in Aramaic ("serpent" – "Eve" – "life" – "instruct"). Here we have material of the sort that is attributed by some heresiologists to a supposed "Ophite" or "Ophian" sect.

We can conclude this discussion with the following observation: it might be useful for scholars to refer to an "Ophite" type of Gnosticism when describing material featuring the serpent as revealer. But that kind of Gnosticism is found in texts and testimonies that are not restricted at all to an "Ophite" sect. That Gnosticism was widespread, and may have lasted in Eastern Syria until the end of the 8th century, at least according to the testimony of the Nestorian writer Theodore bar Konai (*Liber Scholiorum*, memra 11).

What is important, finally, is not the heresiological label, but Gnosis itself, whatever the revelatory mediation might be, whether the serpent, Sophia in her various manifestations, Seth and his avatars, or (in Christian Gnosticism) Jesus Christ. There may or may not have been people who called themselves "Ophians" (as claimed by Origen). There certainly were Gnostics, i.e. adherents of that multi-faceted phenomenon called "Gnosticism" or "the Gnostic religion".

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## Ordo Templi Orientis

Occultist organisation and initiatic Order, sometimes also spelt as "Order of Oriental Templars". The OTO was founded at the beginning of the 20th century and has remained, up to the present, an important vehicle for the transmission of esoteric ideas and practices. One of its major features is the practice of sexual magic, which is considered the core of its teaching. The role accorded to Eastern doctrines and sexual magic makes the OTO different from several other magically-oriented, occultist societies, and especially from the only one comparable to it in terms of influence and visibility: the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (GD).

It is extremely difficult to assess the history, struc-

ture, and doctrinal content of the OTO: in fact, practically all the major events in its complex history – and especially its foundation, the succession of its leaders, and the emergence of several offshoots from the original branch – have been a matter of dispute and remain controversial. As is often the case with esoteric organizations, the OTO has produced its own historical account of its origins and development; but unfortunately, much of it is based on scanty or unverifiable evidence. Thorough scholarly research, drawing a clear line between fact and fiction, has started to develop only recently. Given these problems, what follows is an account of this organisation based on what is at present available both in primary and secondary sources, with the qualification that several details may eventually have to be revised if more documents and scholarly research become available.

The origins of the OTO can be traced to the activities of a group of German-speaking occultists, who gathered, by the turn of the 20th century, around three main figures. One was the Austrian citizen, paper chemist and industrialist Carl Kellner (1850-1905). The other two were Germans: the noted theosophist → Franz Hartmann, and the ex-opera singer, radical political activist, and journalist Theodor Reuss (1855-1923). The evidence concerning their relationship and collaboration dates back at least to the 1890s, when it appears that they were all actively involved in the occultist scene then developing in the German-speaking countries, and especially in Vienna. Kellner and Hartmann in particular had a close relationship.

Kellner was a wealthy man, whose business activities caused him to travel widely in Europe and America. Like most of the early protagonists in the history of the OTO, he was a Freemason, and had many interests in what was then loosely defined as the "occult", especially yoga, → alchemy, and high-degree masonry [→ Freemasonry]. In 1896 he published a pamphlet on yoga (*Yoga: Eine Skizze über den psycho-physiologischen Teil der alten indischen Yogalehre*; Yoga: A sketch upon the psycho-physiological part of the ancient Indian Yoga teaching) which focused mainly on *hatha yoga* practices, and can be considered as one of the earliest essays on the topic by a Westerner from a practitioner's point of view. There is no evidence, although it has sometimes been asserted, that he ever travelled to India or the Far East (unlike Hartmann, who was in India with → H.P. Blavatsky between 1883 and 1885); but it is very likely that his knowledge of yoga was also based on first-

hand sources. In fact, he appears to have come in contact, in the same period, with two Indian gurus, Bheema Sena Pratapa and Mahatma Agamy Paramahansa (who were then touring through several European countries, in search of disciples) and with an Arab fakir, Hadji Soliman ben Aïssa. The evidence concerning these relations is too scant to allow for any definite conclusion concerning their real import, and especially concerning the nature of any spiritual technique that Kellner might have learned through them. Nevertheless, the issue has some importance, because Kellner has traditionally been presented as the original source for the fundamental teaching of the OTO, i.e. sexual magic. However, neither in Kellner's extant papers nor in his published writings are there clear and explicit references to practices involving a sexual element. Indeed the notion itself of "sexual magic" would appear for the first time in Reuss's publications only after Kellner's death.

As for Reuss, already as a young man he was involved in theosophical, Wagnerian and *Lebensreform* circles in Germany and England, and he was a keen supporter of the then burgeoning feminist movement. Even if his interests at that time seem to have been primarily political, it is likely that he became acquainted with the occultist ideas then freely circulating in those milieus. He spent long periods in England, while not residing in Germany, and in 1876 he was initiated into a regular masonic lodge in London. During the 1890s he began to be seriously interested in occultism and fringe masonry. Whatever may have been the role of Kellner and Hartmann in the creation of the OTO, to which we will return below, it is clear that Reuss was the real motor behind the creation of a vast fringe-masonic network, which would prove a fundamental step toward the foundation of the Order. In the years around 1895-1902 he first attempted, together with Leopold Engel (1858-1931), to revive the Order of the → Illuminaten of Adam Weishaupt (1748-1830). However, the relationship with Engel soon came to an abrupt end; in 1902 the two parted ways, and the Order remained under Engel's direction. In the same period Reuss also got acquainted with Gérard Encausse (→ Papus), then a prominent figure in the European esoteric and fringe-masonic scene, who introduced him to his Martinist Order (→ Martinism: Second Period). But the important turning point in Reuss's fringe-masonic career came when he got in contact, around 1901, with two Englishmen, who were the depositories of a large number of fringe-masonic filiations then active in Europe: → William W. Westcott (Supreme Magus, i.e. chief,

of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia [SRIA], among other things) and, most importantly, the masonic scholar John Yarker (1833-1913), who had been at the centre of most fringe-masonic activity in Great Britain during the last quarter of the century. From Yarker and Westcott, Reuss obtained charters, between 1901 and 1902, to create German sections of several high-grade masonic rites: first the Rite of Swedenborg (6 degrees), then Cerneau's version of the Ancient and Accepted Rite (33 degrees), and finally Yarker's version of the combined rites of Memphis and Misraim (97-90 degrees). From Westcott alone, furthermore, he obtained a warrant to found a College of the SRIA in Berlin. In the same year Reuss also started to publish his periodical, the *Oriiflamme*, which would serve in the following years as the official organ for all his fringe-masonic and initiatic organizations. At first Reuss's masonic activity met with a certain success. High degree freemasonry had not been particularly active in Germany during the 19th century, and some curiosity was aroused in masonic circles by Reuss's Rites. At its peak, around 1905, Reuss's masonic network in Germany, although "irregular" from the point of view of mainstream masonic obediences, could count on several hundred members and/or affiliates. It appears that both Kellner and Hartmann were actively involved in Reuss's masonic activities, also contributing occasionally to the *Oriiflamme*. The pages of the *Oriiflamme* contain some hints at the existence of an "Inner" or "Occult Circle" within this masonic network, very probably led by Kellner, Hartmann and Reuss (a sort of triumvirate referred to as the "Inner Triangle"); but no further details are given about e.g. the teachings which may have been imparted in this context.

The relationship between Reuss and → Rudolf Steiner also falls in this period. In 1906, Reuss granted Steiner an authorization to form a section of Yarker's Antient and Primitive Rite, called "Mystica Æterna". Steiner, then the leader of the German section of the → Theosophical Society (Adyar), was in fact looking for some traditional ritual setting that he might use to frame the teachings of his inner group, the Esoteric School. He had come to the conclusion that high-grade masonry might provide it. In this context, it has often been assumed that Steiner became a member of the OTO, and that *Mystica Æterna* was indeed but a section of this Order. However, the available evidence suggests otherwise: at the time when Reuss gave this authorization to Steiner, the OTO simply did not exist as an organization proper.

Rare hints to “Oriental Templars” in the pages of the *Oriflamme* (to which we will return), or in the charters Reuss was then delivering, are the only evidence that might have some relation to what will later manifest itself as the OTO. No evidence subsist of a particular, distinct structure, or of specific teachings connected to the “Oriental Templars” label at the time. Nevertheless an important point must be noted: whereas Reuss’s masonic Orders had generally followed, so far, the traditional masonic policy in accepting only male members, Steiner’s section admitted both men and women. This did actually anticipate what would later be one of the main features of the OTO, i.e. mixed membership. It seems that, apart from the charters and the rituals he received from Reuss, Steiner was not otherwise interested in Reuss’s masonic activities or ideas, and there is no evidence of a relationship between the two after 1907.

We now come to one of the turning points in the early history, or rather prehistory, of the Order. Despite Reuss’s initial success, around 1905 the tide suddenly turned. Kellner, who may have been a source of financial support, died; and Reuss’s masonic empire started to crack. Some high ranking members of his lodges became disillusioned with his credentials and claims to masonic regularity, and started to attack him in masonic periodicals. There were also lurid rumours about initiations performed by Reuss that allegedly involved homosexual elements. Whatever the truth behind these allegations (strongly denied by Reuss), he left Germany and moved to London in early 1906. It would appear that, as a result, he lost control of most of the lodges belonging to his masonic network, and relatively few members continued to work under his authority, in Germany or elsewhere. It is interesting that in relation to these events the expression “sexual magic” appears for the first time in the pages of the *Oriflamme* (it would remain the only instance until 1912), but expressly to *deny* that Reuss’s high-grade masonic rites had anything to do with it. The reference was ambiguous in so far as there were also hints that something of the kind was possibly taught and practised in some inner structure, which would of course be the “Occult Circle” already referred to.

But this was not all. The rumours about sexual initiations may have been false, exaggerated, or based upon misunderstandings, but clearly in Reuss’s vision the sexual element was by now explicitly assuming a central role. In the same year 1906, while the rumours were on the way to becoming an utter scandal in the international masonic press, he published a book entitled

*Lingam-Yoni*. This was actually little more than the German translation of a book by → Hargrave Jennings, *Phallicism* (1884), in which the inner meaning of all religious traditions was explained through, and reduced to, sexual symbolism. It is also in 1906 that the Belgian spiritualist and occultist Georges Le Clément de Saint-Marcq (1865-1956) published his essay *L’Eucharistie*, which would become one of the most important sources for Reuss’s ideas on sexual magic. Moreover, again in 1906, vague allusions to an unspecified Order of “Oriental Templars” appeared in the pages of Reuss’s *Oriflamme*, although totally unrelated to the issue of “sexual magic” or the alleged sexual initiations. But the main reason why 1906 has been considered by some authors to be the actual year of foundation of the OTO, is the existence of two pamphlets dated that year, which contain an English and a German version of the first constitution of the OTO. We come here to one of the many mysteries in the history of the Order. While the problems related to these two publications cannot be discussed here in detail, there are reasons to believe that they were actually published later, probably between 1910 and 1912. In sum: all the – admittedly garbled – evidence seems to point to the possibility that in or around 1906 a project was taking shape in Reuss’s mind, and that this project was aimed at the teaching, in the context of an inner circle of disciples, of ideas strongly connected with sexual symbolism, and possibly also of psycho-physical techniques involving a sexual element. It is also likely that this project came soon to a stop due to the scandalous rumours that began to be spread by the members of his Orders. This would explain why the references to sexual magic (and, incidentally, to the Oriental Templars), disappeared again from Reuss’s publications until 1912. Whether or not such a project ever existed in Reuss’s mind in 1906, it cannot be related in this period to any particular, recognisable structure or organisation calling itself OTO.

In 1908 an international conference of spiritualistic masonic rites was organised by Papus and his group in Paris. Reuss was among the invited masonic dignitaries. This meeting certainly led to another exchange of charters and authorisations, and it was probably at this occasion that Reuss was introduced to Joanny Bricaud’s (1881-1934) Gnostic Catholic Church (Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, EGC; later renamed by Bricaud Universal Gnostic Church), to which Papus and his close collaborators also belonged. This was an offshoot of the → Gnostic Church, a neo-Gnostic group founded around 1890 by Jules Doinel (1842-1902). It is

important here, because in subsequent years references to → gnosticism would become a common feature of OTO documents, and the Order would often be presented as organically linked to the EGC. Starting from around 1918, this connection would be strengthened further, as some of Reuss's publications seem to refer to an EGC autonomous with respect to Bricaud's Church. From this moment on, the EGC connected to the OTO could be considered a new, independent offshoot, stemming from the branch of neo-Gnostic organizations. Leadership in the OTO would often automatically imply leadership in this branch of the EGC.

Sometime between 1910 and 1912, Reuss, who was then living in London, met → Aleister Crowley, the other figure who would make a fundamental contribution to the birth and the early development of the OTO. According to the traditional history of the Order, based mainly on Reuss's and Crowley's own accounts, Kellner and Reuss would have founded the OTO long before the latter met Crowley. In 1910 Crowley would have met Reuss for the first time, and would have been introduced by him into the Order as a simple member. Then, in 1912, when Reuss would have realised that Crowley had come very close to discovering, on his own, the secret of sexual magic, he would have appointed him head of a newly created section of the Order for Great Britain, called *Mysteria Mystica Maxima* (M.:M.:M.:). However, a reconsideration of the available evidence, and especially of the timing of the events, suggests that some parts of this story may not be accurate. In fact it seems more likely that the decision to (re-)launch his project of the OTO was taken by Reuss only *after* having met Crowley. Reuss probably decided to revive his old project once he realised that he could avail himself of Crowley's enthusiastic collaboration; and if so, the two collaborated on the project right from the start. Reuss evidently found in Crowley a person who might sympathise with most of his radical ideas on religion, society, and politics; who already disposed of a circle of followers and disciples, but for various reasons was looking for another structure beside his own initiatic Order, the A.:A.:; and, finally, who had the intellectual and literary skills to expand Reuss's initial fringe-masonic structure and develop a complete magical doctrine out of Reuss's elementary sexual techniques. The existence of the OTO was announced in the second half of 1912 both in the *Oriflamme* (in the so-called "Jubilee" issue) and in Crowley's own periodical *The Equinox*. At least as far as the organisational aspect is concerned, 1912 may therefore be seen as

the actual year of foundation of the OTO. Hartmann died in the same year, before the announcements appeared. He does not seem to have been particularly involved in Reuss's activities after Kellner's death and he may not have approved of the plans of the former; but officially he had kept his position in his high-grade masonic Orders. Possibly his death was not unrelated to the sudden appearance of the Order.

In the Jubilee issue the name of the Order finally appeared unequivocally as OTO. The very name can perhaps help us understand the nature of Reuss's project. It obviously places the organization in the tradition of neo-templarism (→ Neo-Templar Traditions), but the OTO's reference to the Templar myth may have had a particular meaning less evident in other neo-Templar groups. A certain neo-Templar tradition had come to see the Templars as a revolutionary force opposing both secular and religious institutions. From that perspective, traditional accusations to the effect that the Templars had indulged in magic and in illicit sexual practices, and venerated an exotic idol of unknown origin named Baphomet, could also be seen in a positive light. This "countercultural" image of the Templars was certainly congenial to Reuss's and Crowley's radical ideas concerning social, political, and religious reform. Their project, including of course a major role for sexual and occultist aspects, could therefore find a convenient vehicle in an organization claiming a link with the Templar legacy. As to the "Eastern" component in the Order's name, apart from a possible reference to the traditional, symbolic image of the masonic "Orient", it obviously pointed to the alleged origin of some of the Order's teachings, particularly yoga and/or sexual magic.

In the Manifesto published in the *Oriflamme*, the OTO presented itself as a sort of super-Order that synthesised the structure and the knowledge of a large number of initiatic organizations. Prominent among them were, of course, the high-grade masonic rites in which Reuss had a position of authority. In this sense Reuss called the OTO an "Academia Masonica" (although he attributed the definition to Kellner). However, the Order was not conceived as a mere synthesis of high-grade masonry. Beyond a certain level, the member was supposed to receive a complete course in "hermetic science" (the expression was probably borrowed from Papus), as well as to learn about this mysterious secret of "sexual magic". Reuss of course also offered his version of the history of the Order, and Kellner was referred to as the "spiritual father" of the OTO. The available evidence does not permit

us to conclude that Kellner ever thought of creating an Order like the OTO, but it is not inconceivable that the idea was originally suggested by him, perhaps in the context of the “Occult Circle”. The same remark would also apply to Reuss’s statement concerning Kellner as the original source for the teachings of “sexual magic”.

Another interesting element, which has given rise to much speculation, is Reuss’s reference to a Hermetic Brotherhood of Light with which Kellner had supposedly been in contact, and of which the OTO would merely be the continuation under a new name. The history of this (possibly fictitious) occult fraternity, and its relationship with the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor remain unclear. It has been argued that it might have been an offshoot of → Paschal Beverly Randolph’s Brotherhood of Eulis, and that Kellner might have been in contact with it. The link to Randolph could then be construed as a possible source for Kellner’s supposed notions of sexual magic. But unfortunately there is no evidence in support of this possibility. In any case, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light (also under its Latin name: *Fraternitas Lucis Hermetica*, FLH) has remained, to this day, an important mythical reference in the literature connected to the OTO. There is, on the other hand, evidence that Yarker himself was in possession of some unpublished writings by Randolph, containing an exposition of his sexual ideas and techniques, and that Randolph’s writings were in fact circulating more widely than has been supposed in English occultist milieus at the turn of the century. Yarker may then have been a possible medium for Randolph’s ideas to influence Reuss, if not directly Kellner.

From the very beginning, Crowley, who significantly took the name “Baphomet” in the Order, put a lot of energy in recruiting new members for his M.:M.:M.: and in developing the system. Women were admitted in his section from the very beginning. He set up a lodge in London and was able to establish some bodies in other countries under his jurisdiction, such as South Africa and, later, Canada and Australia. He also started writing new rituals and re-writing the old ones provided by Reuss. In 1913, during a visit in Moscow, he wrote the “Gnostic Mass”, which was to become one of the most important rituals performed in the Order, and the central ceremony of the EGC. Its sexual symbolism is evident, but, unlike the initiation rituals, it was conceived as a public ceremony, open to non-members.

Apart from writing rituals, Crowley made two main contributions to the OTO. The first one is the development of sexual magic. We have seen that

the concept was already present before Crowley, and he always admitted that its “secret” had been transmitted to him by Reuss. But very little is known about what Reuss really meant by “sexual magic”, and what kind of techniques he taught or practised before meeting Crowley. We know a great deal more, on the other hand, about how Crowley interpreted the idea, which he developed and systematised considerably during the rest of his life. It is no exaggeration to say that, for him, the discovery of sexual magic was a kind of new revelation, which substantially modified his way of understanding and practising magic. In 1914 Crowley started to experiment methodically with it, and soon afterwards he began writing a series of instructions, which have become part of the standard curriculum for the highest degrees in most contemporary OTO filiations. At the basis of OTO’s sexual magic (which differs from Randolph’s) is the idea that the male and female bodily fluids produced during sexual intercourse may be “energised” through a particular kind of mental concentration. During the operation, the mind must remain steadily focused on its goal, be it of a material or spiritual nature. The mixing of semen and female secretions produces an “elixir”, which is ingested by the practitioner or smeared on talismans to produce the desired effect. But it should be noted that, in Crowley’s version, the Order taught also other forms of sexual magic, based on masturbation and anal intercourse. All these forms correspond to degrees of the Order, to which we will return below.

Crowley’s second contribution was, unlike the first one, radically new. It was his own religious message called “Thelema”, based on the text of a revelation he had received in 1904. Crowley, who by 1912 had already convinced himself of his role as the prophet of a new spiritual age, evidently saw the OTO as a convenient tool to spread his religious message. It is interesting to note that in accepting Reuss’s invitation to take a leading position in the OTO, he did not abandon his own Order, the A.:A.:. He saw the aim of the two orders as fundamentally different: while the OTO was meant to be the utopian model of a future society based on the principles of Thelema, the A.:A.: remained an esoteric school which offered the means to attain individual self-realisation, basically along the lines of the Golden Dawn system. Reuss seems to have reacted favourably to Crowley’s suggestions and innovations. Some features of Thelema, such as the rejection of the Christian notion of sin and the advocacy of sexual freedom, certainly appealed to him.



The structure of the Order was defined in several documents published by Reuss and Crowley, especially between 1912 and 1919. While there have been changes and revisions later, the essential elements have remained unaltered. The OTO is based on a scale of ten degrees, indicated by Roman numerals. The first nine degrees are split into three triads. In Reuss's version, the first triad is composed of an outer circle of probationers, and its last degree (III°) is equated with masonic Craft; the second triad is composed of students and lay-brothers, and is considered as equivalent to the combined degrees of those high-grade masonic rites over which Reuss held authority; finally, the third triad is composed of the real initiated members of the OTO, and the implication is that it begins where all other masonic rites end. Subsequently, Crowley added some elements, in particular attributing a name to the different triads (1: Man of Earth, 2: Lover, and 3: Hermit), and attenuated the emphasis on the equation of grades between the OTO system and high-grade masonry. Crowley's additions would be largely adopted during the subsequent history of the OTO, all the more so as the Order increasingly abandoned most of its masonic claims.

Ever since Crowley's involvement in the Order, but possibly even before, the teachings concerning sexual magic have been associated with the VIII° (techniques based on masturbation) and, especially, the IX° degrees. Theoretically, only on attaining this latter degree the central secret of the Order, consisting in the use of the mixture composed of male and female bodily fluids, is revealed completely to a member. Therefore, there appears to be a sort of equivalence between the degree in the Order and the practice of this kind of magic. The final degree (X°) does not correspond to an initiatic advancement, but rather to an administrative office. It is attributed to the Grand Master, or "Supreme King", of a national body of the Order (Crowley in the case of Great Britain, for instance). The whole Order, including all its national bodies, is ruled by an international leader, called "Outer Head of the Order" (OHO, the name was probably borrowed from theosophical parlance). Obviously the first OHO was Reuss himself. Other degrees have been sometimes added to the basic structure of the Order. The most important is the XI° degree: an addition by Crowley, concerned with the knowledge and practice of sexual magic based on anal intercourse (whether homo-, or hetero-sexual). The fact that the XI° numerically follows on the X° does not imply that its holder has greater authority: its attribution is explained not with reference to the degree scale, but with the fact that, in Roman

numerals, XI represents an "inversion" of IX, just as anal intercourse may be seen as an "inversion" of vaginal intercourse.

In the early years, Reuss's masonic network was exploited to promote the new Order. Charters were delivered on that basis to bodies and individuals in various countries, such as Italy and France, with whom Reuss had friendly relations. However, it is unclear to what extent those who received these charters, and who could now claim a degree in the Order, were aware of its inner teachings; and there is scanty evidence that any of them did actually practice its system or rituals. In any case, most of these international relationships were shattered by the storm of World War I. Crowley spent this period in the United States, whereas Reuss, after a first period in Germany, preferred to move to neutral Switzerland. There he joined the progressive community inspired by *Lebensreform* theories, which was then flourishing on Monte Verità, close to Ascona. In 1917 he sponsored there the foundation of an OTO Lodge. The activities of the group of persons associated with Reuss in this period, which included the famous Austrian dancer Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958), then also residing at Monte Verità, are at the origin of one of the branches, still based in Switzerland, that presently claims a direct filiation from the original OTO. In 1920 Reuss was involved in the organization of an international masonic conference, along the lines of the one held in Paris in 1908. Probably he thought he could revive his masonic network of the pre-war period. But the attempt failed, and he was unable to stir the same interest that the Order had enjoyed before the war.

Nevertheless, Reuss was still in contact with several figures of the occultist and fringe-masonic scene who showed an interest in the OTO. The first and most famous of them was → Harvey Spencer Lewis, the founder of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC). For some time, Lewis partly based his controversial Rosicrucian claims on the charters he received from Reuss. A second important figure was Arnaldo Krumm-Heller (1876-1949), whom Reuss had already met in 1908 at the Paris masonic conference. Krumm-Heller was German by birth, but spent long periods of his life in Latin American countries, especially in Mexico. He probably received a charter to run a body of the OTO in Latin America, but he does not seem to have ever worked along the lines of the Order. He preferred to found, in 1927, his own organization, the *Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua* (FRA), which he considered as allied to the OTO and the EGC. The FRA is still active

today in many Spanish-speaking and South American countries. Krumm-Heller's initial introduction to the OTO had been through Reuss, but in the early 1930s he met Crowley as well, with whom he collaborated for some time when they were both residing in Berlin. Another important contact of Reuss's in these last years of his life was with the German occultist and bookseller Heinrich Tränker (1880-1956), who was then trying to assemble in Germany a neo-Rosicrucian movement called "Pansophia".

During Crowley's stay in the United States, his collaboration with the pro-German propaganda had a negative effect on the Order in England. The London lodge was raided by the police in 1917, and as a consequence most of the members resigned or dispersed. The OTO would not be able to reconstitute an organized body on English soil again during Crowley's lifetime. Crowley returned to Europe in 1919. He probably did not meet Reuss again, but they initially kept in contact, although their relationship was getting increasingly strained. Perhaps Reuss felt his leadership threatened by Crowley's strong personality and influence, and they finally broke off any further communication. Reuss died in 1923, and it is unclear whether he left any instruction as to who was to succeed him as head of the Order. Crowley later claimed that Reuss had suffered a stroke in 1921 and, unable to take care of the Order's administration, had decided to resign in his favour. But this claim is extremely unlikely: Crowley was never able to produce the alleged document of appointment, and what remains of the Crowley-Reuss correspondence rather indicates that Reuss did not consider Crowley a valid candidate for his succession at all. However this may be, after Reuss's death Crowley appears to have had no serious competitor for his claim. Two of the remaining X<sup>o</sup>s gave their approval to Crowley's taking the position of OHO. They were Charles Stansfeld Jones (1886-1950), who had been an old disciple of Crowley's but had also been chartered as an X<sup>o</sup> for the United States by Reuss, and Heinrich Tränker, X<sup>o</sup> for Germany. However, Crowley's claim to leadership had yet to pass another test. During a conference in 1925 in Weida, Germany, some prominent members of Tränker's Pansophic movement, which included the German OTO as well, gathered to discuss the issue in the presence of Crowley himself. Among them was the businessman Karl Germer (1885-1962), who would later become a close collaborator of Crowley's, and play an important role in the subsequent history of the Order. The outcome of the meeting was

not a complete success for Crowley, and the Pansophic movement split into different factions. Some decided to accept Crowley as leader, but others did not, since they refused to adopt the religious message of Thelema. From these events originated the → *Fraternitas Saturni* (FS), which was founded by a former member of the Pansophic movement, Eugen Grosche (1888-1964). Its practices and doctrines are strongly indebted to the OTO, but the FS also stressed from the very beginning its organisational independence from it.

If immediately after the war Reuss had been unable to reconstitute his masonic network, Crowley, during his subsequent leadership, did not even try. His interest for the masonic aspects of the OTO had already been very limited, and was even further reduced after he took over the leadership. During the inter-war period most of his followers were also OTO members. They were concentrated first in Germany and later in the United States, but very few of them, if any, had a masonic background. The political situation, with the spread of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in many countries all over the European continent, was then less favourable not only to the international relationships between masonic or fringe-masonic bodies, but in some cases to the very existence of these organisations. This is certainly an important factor for understanding the gradual loss of the OTO's masonic character after Reuss's death.

During the last years of Crowley's life, the activities of the Order decreased considerably. The nazi regime wiped away what remained of the Order in Germany, and, in the last years of Crowley's life, the only functioning body of the OTO was the Agape Lodge, a body established in California under the leadership of Wilfred Talbot Smith (1885-1957), and later of the chemical engineer John Whiteside Parsons (1914-1952). In his will, Crowley named Karl Germer, then living in the United States, to be his successor as OHO. After Crowley's death, and during Germer's leadership, the Order did not develop considerably. It did very little to publicise its existence or to recruit new members. When Germer died, in 1962, the Order was on the brink of extinction. The Agape Lodge had died out in the 1950s, and most of those who had been involved with the Order in the United States were scattered and did not seem interested in furthering its activities. Moreover, Germer had left no clear dispositions as to his succession.

From this point on, it becomes extremely difficult to follow closely the vicissitudes of the Order. Only a short outline will be given here. Four main

branches have claimed an exclusive filiation from the OTO. All of them have been involved in controversies about their respective primacy over the other ones. Without entering into the details of these controversies, it can be said that all four may be considered to represent a legitimate continuation of the ideas and the practices of the original OTO, in so far as they can all claim a more or less direct link with one of the first three OHOs, i.e. Reuss, Crowley, and/or Germer.

The most important and most visible among them is undoubtedly the branch based in the United States and usually referred to as the “Caliphate” OTO. At its origin, we find a direct disciple of Crowley’s, Grady Louis McMurtry (a.k.a. Hymenæus Alpha, 1918-1985), who had met Crowley several times in the 1940s, while he was posted in England as a US officer. Soon after the end of the war the Californian Lodge was experiencing a period of difficulties and turmoil, and Crowley sent McMurtry two letters appointing him as his representative in the United States, under the authority of Germer. After Crowley’s death, McMurtry distanced himself from Germer for several years, due to disagreement about the latter’s policy. As we have seen, Germer died in 1962, but McMurtry only learned about this by the end of the 1960s. He then decided to avail himself of Crowley’s letters to proclaim his authority over what remained of the Order in the United States. He presented himself as “Caliph”, rather than OHO, because in a letter to him Crowley had used the term in relation to his (i.e. Crowley’s) succession, implying an obvious analogy with the notion of “Caliph” in the history of Islam. Helped by some old members of the then defunct Californian Lodge, McMurtry proceeded to re-organise the Order in the United States. The group was incorporated as a religious, non-profit organization in 1979. After McMurtry’s death, in 1985, he was succeeded by William Breeze (Hymenæus Beta, b. 1955), who presently runs this branch of the Order. Under his leadership the organization has developed considerably, creating a large network of new bodies outside of the United States, including Europe. At several occasions this branch’s claim to exclusive ownership of the name OTO (at least in the United States) and of Crowley’s copyright has been confirmed by court judgements. The Caliphate OTO, availing itself of the ownership of Crowley’s copyright, has set as one of its priorities the publication of new editions of Crowley’s works. This branch has by far the largest membership, and is present in many countries all over the world.

Another branch is the so-called “Typhonian”

OTO. It originated from the activities of another direct disciple of Crowley’s, the Englishman Kenneth Grant (b. 1923). He had served as Crowley’s secretary during the last years of his life. Grant, who presently still runs this branch, had received in the early 1950s a charter from Germer to create an OTO Lodge in England. Later, dissension between the two men had arisen, and in 1955 Germer had expelled Grant from the Order. Soon afterwards, Grant, who now denied the validity of the Crowley-Germer succession and consequently the latter’s right to expel him, claimed the position of OHO for himself. In the early 1970s Grant began his career as an independent writer and published the first volumes of a series of three *Typhonian Trilogies* (completed in 2002). In these works Grant has put forward an original interpretation of Crowley’s writings, partly based upon his direct experiences in the workings of his lodge. Unlike the Caliphate OTO, which represents a somewhat “orthodox” wing in the nebula of Crowleyan movements, Grant has added several elements which were absent in earlier OTO traditions. They include the results of communications from “extra-terrestrial entities” (which are also at the basis of his claim of authority), and a renewed emphasis on Eastern doctrines, Tantrism in particular. Grant’s system is also marked by a strong influence from the works of other occultists such as Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), and sometimes even from literary themes, such as the Cthulhu mythology of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937).

A third OTO branch, usually referred to as “Swiss OTO”, is based in Switzerland and may be considered an inheritor of the lodges Reuss had established in that country between the end of the 1910s and the early 1920s. The group was organized in the early 1950s under the leadership of Hermann Joseph Metzger (Paragranus, 1919-1990), who had been in contact with some of Reuss’s old disciples. Metzger was also in contact with Germer during the latter’s leadership, and his group was officially recognised by the OHO at that time. After Germer’s death, Metzger claimed to have been elected as new OHO by the ranking members of his group. One interesting feature of Metzger’s branch is the fact that, in his version, the OTO is tightly linked with the Order of the Illuminati (IO), the other Order revived by Reuss and Engel at the turn of the century. After Metzger’s death, in 1990, the leadership has passed to Annemarie Äschbach (b. 1926).

The fourth branch is perhaps the smallest one, and is the result of the activities of Marcelo Ramos Motta (1931-1987), a Brazilian citizen and former

disciple of Germer's in the 1950s. After Germer's death, Motta claimed the title of OHO, and for some time was supported in this by Germer's widow. Motta and his followers tried to set up a viable organization in Brazil and in the United States, which took the name "Society Ordo Templi Orientis" (SOTO) and started to publish new editions of Crowley's writings with Motta's commentaries. In 1985 the latter's position was challenged by McMurtry's group, which successfully sued him for copyright infringement. Motta died two years later, while several of his ex-disciples had already joined the Caliphate branch. Nevertheless, some of his followers, based mostly in Australia and Brazil, have taken up his legacy and still continue some activity under the SOTO label.

Finally, brief mention should be made here of other groups whose origin is somewhat related to the OTO, but which have developed into new and different directions. We have already encountered Grosche's *Fraternitas Saturni* and Krumm-Heller's *FRA*. Another significant group is the *Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua* (OTOA), also called "Franco-Haitian OTO", created and led by Michael Bertiaux (b. 1935). Bertiaux, a well known figure in the contemporary American occultist scene, claims a direct filiation from Reuss's OTO through Papus and a family of Haitian occultists, although no documentary evidence has been offered to back up this claim. His organization, which has also attracted some following outside the US, notably in Spain and Italy, is characterised by an original mixture of Crowleyan magic and voodoo traditions.

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*Lit.*: John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex-Magician*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997 ♦ Ellic Howe and Helmut Möller, "Theodor Reuss: Irregular Freemasonry in Germany, 1900-23", *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 91

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MARCO PASI

## Orientalism

1. DISCOVERY OF ORIENTAL TRADITIONS
2. ENTHUSIASM FOR ORIENTAL TRADITIONS
3. ECLECTICISM AND SYNTHESIS
4. TRADITIONALISM

In the current acceptance of the term (based on Said 1979), Orientalism is an attitude towards "the Orient" on the part of a self-defined "Occident" which may or may not correspond with realities in the regions in question. This attitude has prevailed in the religious field, where the distinction between Christian and non-Christian has long carried an emotional charge, and, in the minds of missionaries, a responsibility. It also continues to define the academic discipline. However, when viewed from the point of view of esotericism, a contrary tendency emerges in which the commonality of Orient with Occident is more important than their differences.

### I. DISCOVERY OF ORIENTAL TRADITIONS

The following survey concentrates on the regions of Asia east of the River Indus. They first entered European consciousness after the Indian campaign of Alexander the Great (327-325 B.C.). An increasing curiosity, especially about the Brahmins, surfaces in the writings of Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl.* ii), Strabo (*Geog.* xv), Arrian (*Indike*), Apuleius (*Florida*), → Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* i, vi), Philostratus (*Vit. Ap.* ii-iii), Porphyry (*De abst.* iv), and, most extensively, Palladius (*De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, sometimes attributed to St. Ambrose).

Not much more was known of Oriental philosophy and religion until the epoch of the Jesuit



missionaries (16th-17th cents.). Their reports were collected by → Athanasius Kircher in *China monumentis . . . illustrata* (1667), but Kircher's derivation of all Oriental religions from Egypt distorted his presentation. Further information came from the Protestant missionary Abraham Roger (in B. Picart, *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses*, 1728, vol. II, i), the travelers François Bernier (1620-1688), John Holwell (1701-1788), Paulinus a Sancto Bartolomeo (1764-1806), Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois (1765-1848), and the first translator of the Upanishads, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-du Perron (1731-1805).

With the British colonization of Bengal (1765), Oriental studies moved into a more scholarly mode. Sir William Jones (1746-1794) founded the Bengal (later the Royal) Asiatic Society (1784) and the journal *Asiatic Researches* (1788). Sir Charles Wilkins (1750-1836) translated the *Bhagavad-Gita* (1785). In Germany, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) prepared the ground for an acceptance of India as a source of wisdom (*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 4 vols., 1784-1791), and his friend Johann Friedrich Hugo von Dalberg (1760-1812) made translations from the English orientalists. German Sanskrit scholarship was founded by the brothers August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845; translations of *Bhagavad-Gita*, 1823, *Ramayana*, 1829) and Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829; *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*, 1808).

Accurate knowledge of Buddhism arrived later, especially with B.H. Hodgson on Nepal and Bhutan (*Asiatic Researches* 16, 1828), Alexander Csoma de Korös (1784-1842) on Tibet (*Ibid.*, 20, 1836/39), and the reports of missionaries to China and Japan in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1843-80). The scholars Eugène Burnouf (1801-1852), Max Müller (1823-1900), and Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire (1805-1895) were expert philologists, but uncomprehending of Buddhism. Müller, Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford, edited the series *Sacred Books of the East* (1875-1901), which for the first time made the Confucian and Taoist classics available in reliable translations.

While Romantic novelists and belle-lettrists found in the newly-discovered Orient an attractive stimulus to their imaginations, they shared the attitudes and assumptions of these early scholars. The Orient might be fascinating, its discovery a great enrichment of knowledge, but it was seen as irrevocably different from the Occident. Any virtues found in Oriental beliefs and practices were a cause for condescending surprise, as if a child had shown unwonted brilliance and maturity.

## 2. ENTHUSIASM FOR ORIENTAL TRADITIONS

Three events facilitated a transition from curiosity about Oriental religions (whether literary or scholarly) into enthusiasm and admiration for them. The first was the reforming effort of Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), who tried to apprise Hindus of the virtues of (Unitarian) Christianity, and Europeans of that of Vedanta. Rammohun's example and his translations of Hindu works had a strong influence on the American Transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). The second was the immense success of *The Light of Asia* (1879), by Sir Edward Arnold (1832-1904). This poetic exposition of Buddhism was the first to make it seem attractive to the West, and compatible with a liberal Christianity. The third event was the move of the → Theosophical Society's founders, → H.P. Blavatsky and → H.S. Olcott, to India (1878) and their formally becoming Buddhists. The popular interest in Buddhism due to Arnold's book paved the way for a reputed "esoteric Buddhism" revealed by the Theosophical Society's Mahatmas, supposedly resident in Tibet (A.P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism*, 1883).

The connections of the 20th-century propagators of Buddhism to the West are instructive. Alexandra David-Neel (1869-1969) was a Theosophist in London and in Paris before she made her intrepid journeys to Tibet that informed her best-selling works. Allan Bennett (1872-1923), was a magical companion of → Aleister Crowley before he became a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka (1902). Bennett returned to London in 1908 as a missionary for the Hinayana or Theravada School. W.Y. Evans-Wentz (1878-1965), translator of the classics of Tibetan Buddhism for Oxford University Press, emerged from the Theosophically-influenced "Celtic Twilight" (*The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 1911). Christmas Humphreys (1901-1983), as a High Court judge and prolific author the most visible of English Buddhists, edited the *Mahatma Letters* (3rd ed., 1962). Nikolai Konstantinovich Roerich (1874-1947), the great painter of Himalayan landscapes and devotee of the Shambhala myth, was married to the Russian translator of *The Secret Doctrine*. In a way, it can be said the Theosophical Society also brought the genuine "esoteric Buddhism" to the West.

After World War II, an interest in Japan brought new visibility to the work of Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966), the preeminent scholar of Zen Buddhism and the Mahayana School. Suzuki had lived in America (1897-1909), and was also an admirer



of the Western mystical and theosophical tradition, particularly Meister Eckhart and → Swedenborg. His work now became the unintended parent of a pseudo-Zen Buddhism among the Beatniks and in the arts. A more significant trend was the importation, from the 1970s onwards, of various schools of Tibetan Buddhism, aided by the prestige of the exiled 14th Dalai Lama (b. 1935). The Karma Dzong community in Boulder, Colorado, led by Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987), was the first of many such centers.

Among Hindus, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was the first since Rammohun Roy to gain a following in America, which he visited in 1893-1895 and 1899-1900. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), who was selected as “World Teacher” by the neo-Theosophists → C.W. Leadbeater and → Annie Besant (1847-1933), declared his independence from them in 1929 and spent the rest of his life as an unattached writer and lecturer. A great number of Indian “gurus” followed in the 1960s and 1970s, many of them finding success in California.

→ C.G. Jung made his own contribution to Orientalism by writing forewords to the *I Ching* and the Taoist *Secret of the Golden Flower*, though he warned that yoga and other Oriental practices were inadvisable for those born in the West. Apart from these works and the *Tao Te King*, the influence of Taoism in the West came less through literature than through martial arts. The national Japanese religion of Shinto also inspires some martial arts, and imparts its aesthetic coloring to Zen Buddhist culture. The influence of the Jain religion entered unawares, via the great admiration felt in the West for Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1947), and thus indirectly influenced the peace movements.

### 3. ECLECTICISM AND SYNTHESIS

Once the traditions of the Orient were made accessible, it was possible to believe that at the esoteric level, East and West shared the same wisdom, both being branches of a primordial trunk. This was but an extension of the Renaissance idea of a *prisca theologia* [→ Tradition]. → Fabre d'Olivet (*Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, 1824) was perhaps the first to include the Orient in an esoteric synthesis, and the notion was taken up at the *fin-de-siècle* by → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre and → René Guénon. It had less success in the German-speaking lands, where Ariosophists [→ Ariosophy] cultivated fantasies of ancient European esotericism, and → Anthroposophy an esoteric Christianity to which other religions were merely preludes. In Italy the main proponent of the esoteric unity of

East and West was → Julius Evola, one of whose earliest works was an edition of the *Tao-Te-King* (1923). Another was Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984), authority on Tibet, who edited the English-language journal *East and West* (1950-), to which Evola was a frequent contributor.

The impulse to seek the underlying harmony of all esoteric traditions, irrespective of geography, was especially strong in English-speaking lands. Some prominent figures are → G.R.S. Mead and → W.B. Yeats, the inspirational writers Paul Brunton (1898-1981) and → Manly Palmer Hall, the poet and → Blake scholar Kathleen Raine (1908-2003), and many members of Raine's Temenos Academy. For these eclectics, the journey to the Orient, whether literal or only in the mind, was an essential initiation, but it led them away from “Orientalist” attitudes.

In a class of their own were four men whose contribution to scholarly Orientalism was beyond question, yet who made no secret of their own commitment to esoteric doctrines. One, the Zen master D.T. Suzuki, has already been mentioned. Another was the English judge Sir John Woodroffe (1865-1936), who as “Arthur Avalon” translated the major works of Hindu Tantra. Woodroffe was a Shaivite initiate, as was Alain Daniélou (1907-1994), author of *Hindu Polytheism* (1964). As a musicologist, Daniélou was responsible for UNESCO's series of recordings of non-Western music. His work in comparative religion promoted the pre-Vedic, Dravidian civilization of India over the better-known Aryan invaders: he saw the Dravidian god Shiva as equivalent to Dionysus. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was an Anglo-Indian trained as a geologist, who became a curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Coomaraswamy's monumental work ranges over Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, Christian esotericism, Platonism, and many lesser-known schools and traditions.

### 4. TRADITIONALISM

Coomaraswamy's name has often been coupled with that of his sometime correspondent René Guénon. Known (by others) as “Traditionalists”, and currently in the USA as “Perennialists” [→ Tradition], they developed a kind of esoteric syncretism which they called “metaphysics”. They found its clearest exposition in the language of Vedanta, which then served as a key, or a touchstone, for all other esoteric philosophies. The Traditionalism of Guénon and his admirers differed in one important regard from the eclecticism of Theosophical inspiration: it held that the life of the

esotericist must be complemented by the practice of an *exoteric* religious tradition. The majority of Traditionalists chose, like Guénon, to become Muslims and to seek initiation in a Sufi lineage. To those who were drawn to Eastern religions, such as the Buddhist traveler and musician Marco Pallis (1895-1989), the claims of revealed religion were of less interest, and their “traditionalism” less strict.

Guénon, Coomaraswamy, and all the later Traditionalists were harshly critical of the modern West, as having renounced its own traditions and infecting the rest of the world with its deviances. Thus they erected another sort of Orientalism, contrasting a “traditional” Orient that now included the Muslim world with a “counter-traditional” Occident. Only, unlike those responsible for forging the original attitudes of Orientalism, they identified themselves with the alien side. → Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) was probably the last of them to have a truly global outlook, writing with equal facility about Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, while gravitating, with his later disciples, from Muslim to Native American practices. With the net thrown so wide, the East-West division was irrelevant, and Orientalism no longer at issue. Instead, it was “Tradition” that had come to represent the other realm, exotic and almost unattainable.

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York: Columbia University Press, 1984 (orig. French ed. 1950) ♦ Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 ♦ Brooks Wright, *Interpreter of Buddhism to the West: Sir Edwin Arnold*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1957.

JOSCELYN GODWIN

**Orléans, Louise Marie Thérèse Bathilde d', Duchess of Bourbon-Condé,**  
\*9.7.1750 Saint Cloud, † 10.1.1822  
Paris

Bathilde d'Orléans was born in the château of Saint-Cloud just outside Paris. Her father was Louis-Phillipe d'Orléans, Duke of Orléans; her mother, Louise-Henriette de Bourbon, was the daughter of Louis-Armond II, Prince of Conti. She was a cousin of Louis XVI and the aunt of Louis-Philippe, who was to become “Roi des Français” in 1830. Louise-Henriette died when Bathilde was nine. Three years later, the child was sent to school at the Convent de la Magdeleine de Ternel where she remained until 1769. It was there that she began to spend protracted periods in prayer and develop the spiritual tendencies that would characterize the rest of her life. In 1770, her father obtained a papal dispensation enabling her to marry her fourteen-year-old cousin, Louis-Henri-Joseph de Bourbon; thus, Bathilde became Duchess of Bourbon. In 1772, she gave birth to their only child, Louis-Antoine-Henri de Bourbon, the Duke of Enghien. During this period, her husband began a series of indiscreet affairs, some with women from Bathilde's personal entourage. All her attempts to save the marriage failed. The couple was legally separated at the end of 1780, and her husband gained sole custody of their son, although Bathilde managed to retain the right to see him frequently. After the separation, Bathilde went to live with her father and his second wife, Madame de Montesson, in Saint-Assise, but her father soon gave her two residences of her own – the Hotel de Clermont in Paris and a summerhouse in Petitbourg. From this time on, her focus was definitively changed, and she consciously began to forge a new life for herself.

The three most important influences on Bathilde were → Freemasonry, → Christian Theosophy and → animal magnetism. The participation of women from the high nobility in “Adoption Freemasonry” (so called because of its “adoption”, i.e. acceptance, of women as members) was common in this period and Bathilde entered Freemasonry in

1775 at the latest, joining the Masonic lodge Saint-Jean de la Candeur (established in 1775) in Paris. “Lodges of Adoption” had begun to appear in France in the 1740s; their members were therefore both men and women, but they were directed by men. Saint-Jean de la Candeur was one of twelve Lodges of Adoption in Paris, and the foremost among them in terms of aristocratic recruitment (it was comprised mostly of people of high nobility). Bathilde was to be more than only one Sister among others; hardly had she entered Freemasonry when her brother, the Duke of Orléans, in his capacity (since 1771) of Grand Master of the Grande Loge of France, made her “Grande Maîtresse” of all the French lodges of Adoption. Once separated from her husband, she became an active Freemason, and at the same time, began to assemble a highly eclectic, sometimes politically controversial circle around herself.

The great Christian theosopher → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was an important influence as well; his *Ecce Homo* (1792) was written specifically for Bathilde. Along with other favorites, among them Franz Anton Mesmer and Bacon de la Chevalerie, he was installed from time to time at her château in Petitbourg, where her confessor Pierre Pontard celebrated mass. Saint-Martin was an intimate of → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, who practiced mesmerism and was helped in deciphering the hieroglyphic messages he allegedly received from God by Saint-Martin. In striking contrast to Willermoz, however, Saint-Martin (described by one contemporary historian as a ‘metaphysical consultant to mesmerists’) sought to spiritualize mesmerist principles. He combined them with more mystical ideas because he thought mesmerism too materialistic and liable to make persons vulnerable to what he termed “astral intelligences”; it is against such “magical” practice that he wrote *Ecce Homo*. Bathilde’s closest friend was the Baroness d’Oberkirch of Strasbourg, who frequented mesmerist groups in Paris.

As early as 1789, Bathilde had espoused revolutionary ideas, along with her brother, Philippe Egalité, and around that time became involved with two other mystics, Suzette Labrousse and Cathérine Théot (the so-called “Mother of God”), who combined → mysticism with political ideals. Bathilde underwrote the publication of Labrousse’s *Journal Prophétique*, containing prophecies and criticisms of the nobility and the clergy, and edited by Pierre Pontard.

She did a great deal of charitable work; e.g., in Petitbourg she founded a hospice, where frequently she personally attended to patients. She

also studied intensely, and produced two original works, including a book length study based on her experience of administering a fifteen-month long treatment of animal magnetism to a patient in Petitbourg, and her *Opuscules*. The latter contain an account of how she was attracted to the life of the spirit while young, was later led astray, and how, after her marriage ended, she sought out a confessor and renewed her interior journey. From that time on, it is clear that Bathilde conscientiously attended to the details of daily life simply because she believed them important to her spiritual well-being. She believed that one always has a choice with respect to the quality with which one does even ordinary things, writing for example that ‘. . . at each moment we breathe and we are able to pump in [pomper] life or death by all the movements which constitute our physical, moral and spiritual being’.

In the Introduction she says that on the advice of a ‘wise man’ (possibly Saint-Martin), she ‘abandoned herself to prayer . . . while practicing good works’. In a statement characteristic of her attitude, she writes: ‘I received some inner illumination and consolation which detached me more and more from all of creation, in order to live only in and for God . . . this precious pearl . . . is enough . . .’. According to her, it was Providence that had helped her to find the works of Mme. Guyon, which led her to the ‘heart of my religion’. She regarded ‘all terrestrial nature’ as ‘an open book in which we can read the secrets of spiritual nature’, describes the passage of angelic spirits into human beings at the moment of our birth, and adopts the Christian theosophical [→ Christian Theosophy] idea that Adam was originally an androgynous being who was separated into two sexes as a result of original sin. The *Opuscules* contain an original and carefully elucidated articulation of the difference between the “visible” or “teaching” church and the “invisible” or “working” church. It must be noted that the term “interior Church” is never used by Saint-Martin nor by his friends, and first came into use in 1798 through the publication in French of *Quelques traits de l’Eglise intérieure* by → A.V. Lopukhin. Bathilde may have borrowed it from there. But quite as interestingly, Bathilde does give it a sense very different from Lopukhin’s: ‘The visible Church is . . . in my view the schism which broke out since the Apostles, against the true interior Church which is almighty and all pure in the bosom of her divine Master’. She writes that she does not have ‘a conviction that the visible church of our day, which is headed by the Pope, would be the same church

that Jesus Christ wanted to establish'. Closely linked to this distinction is the one she makes between the "teaching church" and the "working church": the former 'is visible to the eyes of the body', whereas the latter is visible 'to the eyes of the soul'. She also says that once one 'possesses the Word in one self' one is enabled 'to truly effect divine works'; here again, she shows she is more concerned with what one does than with what one says.

Bathilde would not escape the wrath of the Revolution. Her wealth and property were confiscated; she was imprisoned in 1793, then released in 1795. Relegated to the provinces, she settled in Petitbourg, until a decree of exile in 1797, when she was banished to Spain. Bathilde refers to a certain Ruffin as one of the guards who escorted her to the Spanish border, and writes that during the journey a great spiritual understanding sprung up between the two. The identity of this man, whom Bathilde usually addresses as 'mon bon ange', has never been definitively established. Two volumes of her voluminous correspondence are devoted to letters sent to him while she was in exile; they were published in 1812.

Although Bathilde had been something of an accomplished harpist, it would appear that she later came to see → music as a kind of indulgence: in one of her letters to Ruffin she strongly advises him to beware of music, because it 'turns us away from the pure and saintly source' and makes us 'run the risk of losing precious time'. In these letters we can also read her theosophical interpretations of the Fall of Lucifer and Adam, her arithmological views [→ Number Symbolism], and quotations from various theosophers to be read by Ruffin, e.g. → Dutoit-Membrini and → William Law. She gives Ruffin her opinion about the French Revolution, which she saw as part of the workings 'of the great machine of the universe', a means for God to save 'as many people as possible'; and using an almost alchemical image, she writes that 'it is God who purifies the water, and who by his action on it liquefies all the parts'. Unwavering in her view of earthly trials as unimportant in the face of the heavenly future, she adapted to greatly reduced circumstances. Her life became more embittered after her son, the Duke of Enghein (born in 1772), had been executed in 1804 upon an order given by Napoleon. Finally granted permission by Napoleon to return to France, she went back to Paris in 1814, where she more or less reconstituted her old circle. On January 10, 1822, she suffered a stroke and died later the same day.

Bathilde d'Orléans' life and work is worth fur-

ther study. The great historian Auguste Viatte may have been instrumental in creating the impression of Bathilde as being somewhat naive, almost certainly neurasthenic, and superficial. His account implicitly compares her to the "prudent" Saint-Martin, who warned her against over-involvement with somnambulists and advised her to abandon herself to prayer, Bible reading, and good works. While Viatte's account is valuable inasmuch as she is otherwise neglected in the literature, delving deeper into the primary sources indicates she was more formidable than one might otherwise surmise. She undeniably deliberately and consciously attempted to embody her spiritual convictions, by trying to make what she said and did in daily life correspond to those convictions. Bathilde deserves a more visible place in the history of theosophy than she presently enjoys.

*Correspondence entre Mme de Bourbon et M. (Ruffin) sur leur expressions religieuses*, 2 vols., Barcelona, 1812 ♦ The second volume is entitled: *Correspondance entre . . . opinions religieuses et divers petits contes moraux de Madame de Bourbon: Opuscules ou Pensées d'une âme de foi sur la religion chrétienne pratiquée en esprit et en vérité*, n.p., 1812 ♦ *Le Propagateur du magnétisme animal*, n.p., n.d.

*Lit.:* Janet Mackay Burke, *Sociability, Friendship and the Enlightenment among Women Freemasons in Eighteenth-century France*, Arizona State University: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1986 ♦ Ducos (Comte-), *La mère du Duc d'Enghein*, Paris: Plon, 1900 ♦ La baronne d'Oberkirch, *Mémoires sur la cour de Louis XVI et la société française avant 1789*, Paris: Gratiot, 1853 ♦ Auguste Viatte, *Les sources occultes du romantisme (Illuminisme – Théosophie, 1770-1820)* (1928), vol. 1, repr. Paris: Champion, 1965, esp. 238-245.

KAREN-CLAIRE VOSS

**Ouspensky [Uspenskii], Piotr**  
Dem'ianovich, \* 5.3.1878 Moscow,  
† 2.10.1947 London

Russian author, spiritual philosopher and teacher who is now remembered chiefly for his deeply influential book, *In Search of the Miraculous*: the most authentic account, written by a pupil, of the teaching of → G.I. Gurdjieff. Ouspensky was born and grew up in Moscow. His mother was a painter. His father, who died when Ouspensky was quite young, was a railroad surveyor and also a mathematician interested in the problems of the fourth dimension, a theme that became one of the central elements of Ouspensky's philosophical and spiritual work. Ouspensky seems to have had an

exceptionally vivid sense of himself even at the age of two and three and, at the age of six, is said to have been reading the works of Lermontoff and sensing that there must be something beyond the world of everyday reality, which he felt was filled with 'absurdity and lies'. He is said not to have participated in children's games.

Distrusting all forms of academic science, Ouspensky broke away early from formal scholastic training with a firm decision never to pass any examinations and never to take the academic degrees for which he was qualified. 'The professors', he wrote, 'were killing science in the same way as priests were killing religion'. He studied deeply on his own, traveled widely and made his career as a writer and journalist, being careful to distance himself from all social and political movements, including the secret revolutionary parties which attracted many members of the Russian intelligentsia.

At the age of 29, he discovered the literature of the → Theosophical Society (→ H.P. Blavatsky, → H.S. Olcott, → A. Besant. etc.) and was profoundly influenced by the idea of secret wisdom, which gave him a new impulse for the study of religion, → mysticism and "higher dimensions". In the following year, 1908, he traveled to Asia Minor and the Middle East. When he returned to Russia, basing himself in St. Petersburg, he undertook an intensive study of occult literature, initiating numerous, psychological experiments on himself in order to test the ideas he was finding in the books of mysticism and → magic. These pioneering experiments on consciousness strongly influenced his subsequent writings. Throughout his life, Ouspensky remained scientific and empirical about the inner world and could not rest content with speculative metaphysics alone.

The first fruits of his philosophical and experiential study of esoteric ideas was a haunting novella about eternal recurrence, *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, and his major philosophical work, *Tertium Organum*, published in St. Petersburg in 1912 and in New York in 1920. *Tertium Organum* became an international best-seller and established Ouspensky's worldwide reputation as a pre-eminent visionary philosopher. Intended to take its place alongside the *Organon* of Aristotle and *Novum Organum* of → Francis Bacon, and rooted in Ouspensky's personal experiments in changing states of consciousness, it calls for and projects a new level of thinking about the fundamental questions of human existence. Although the book is little studied today, *Tertium Organum*, along with Ouspensky's other philosophical writ-

ings, comprises one of the most serious and original philosophical visions of 20th-century esotericism. By arguing that the central problems of philosophy – such as the questions of the nature of the self and consciousness, the structure of space and time, the meaning of history and the perennial questions of good and evil in human life – cannot be answered in the state of consciousness in which they have been approached in science, philosophy and conventional religion; and by showing the cognitive power of authentically higher states of consciousness, his writings offer themselves as a bridge between esoteric teaching, considered as hidden knowledge accessible only to the few, and the concrete needs and problems of the human family. His treatment of the idea of higher dimensions of time and the idea of eternal recurrence are meant to provide a response to many seemingly unanswerable questions inherent in the opposing disciplines of theology, art, science and mainstream academic philosophy, based as the latter is on the modernist critique of religion and spiritual knowledge. The ideas and arguments of *Tertium Organum* are developed, clarified and more widely applied in *A New Model of the Universe*, a collection of his essays, published in English in 1930. Although some of the material in these essays may have been revised in the light of Ouspensky's years with Gurdjieff, most of it was originally written before he met Gurdjieff and stands as testimony to the depth of his own thought and its remarkable resonance to the all-encompassing knowledge that he discovered in the Gurdjieff teaching.

Ouspensky's first meeting with Gurdjieff took place in St. Petersburg in 1915. He had recently returned from the Orient and was attracting large audiences to his lectures about his "search for the miraculous" in India, Ceylon, Egypt and elsewhere (among his listeners was Sophia Grigorievna Maximenko, who became his wife and, later, also one of the leading figures in the transmission of the Gurdjieff teaching in England and America.). At the urging of some pupils of Gurdjieff who had sought him out at his lectures, he reluctantly agreed to meet Gurdjieff. He recognized at once that Gurdjieff had discovered many things for which he had been looking in vain. 'I realized', he wrote, 'that I had met with a completely new system of thought, surpassing all I knew before'. He began to help Gurdjieff gather people together to study his ideas and from that moment on, for the rest of his life, the study and practical application of these ideas remained Ouspensky's overriding aim.

As the Russian Revolution closed in, Ouspensky joined the small group of Gurdjieff's pupils pursu-



ing their study of the teaching under difficult and dangerous political conditions. This period of work included the year in Essentuki (1917) in which Gurdjieff poured forth the formulations of his ideas about man and the universe with great energy and intensity. Ouspensky soon began to feel, however, that a break with Gurdjieff was necessary. Although he had no doubts about the truth of Gurdjieff's ideas, Ouspensky separated himself from him and continued his own work first in Constantinople and then settled in London where, with the help of Lady Rothermere, A.R. Orage and other influential individuals, he lectured and guided the work of numerous pupils until he moved to America during the Second World War. *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, published in English in 1952, contains the lectures which Ouspensky composed during this period for the purpose of introducing interested people to the psychological ideas of Gurdjieff. Early in 1947, he returned to resume his work in London, where he died later in the same year. Concerning his break with Gurdjieff, Ouspensky writes only that at a certain point he 'ceased to understand him'. John Pentland, a close pupil of Ouspensky, and, later, of Gurdjieff, and who became a central figure in the transmission of Gurdjieff's teaching in America, poignantly characterized this event: 'The break between the two men, teacher and pupil, each of whom had received much from the other, has the elements of a classical tragedy and has never been satisfactorily explained. It was not made final until 1930 when Ouspensky visited Gurdjieff for the last time in Paris' (Pentland 1987).

*Talks with a Devil* (1916), New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973 ♦ *Letters from Russia* (1919), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 ♦ *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought. A Key to the Enigmas of the World*, 2nd ed., revised (1922), New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981 ♦ *A New Model of the Universe: Principles of the Psychological Method in Its Application to the Problems of Science, Religion and Art* (1930), New York: Random House, 1971 ♦ *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* (1947), Baltimore: Penguin, 1971 ♦ *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949 ♦ *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (1950), New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974 ♦ A Selection of transcripts of Ouspensky's meetings with his pupils was published as *The Fourth Way: A Record of Talks and Answers to Questions Based on the Teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff*, New York: Random House, 1971 ♦ Additional selections of transcripts have been published as *A Record of Meetings* (1992) and *A Further Record: Extracts from Meetings 1928-1945* (1986). Transcripts of all Ouspensky's meetings are preserved in the Yale University Library.

*Lit.*: Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt, *With Gurdjieff in St. Petersburg and Paris*, New York: Weiser, 1978 ♦ Rom Landau, *God is My Adventure: A Book on Modern Mystics, Masters and Teachers*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964 ♦ John Pentland, "P.D. Ouspensky", in: *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York: Macmillan, 1987, vol. 11 ♦ J.H. Reyner, *Ouspensky: The Unsung Genius*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1981 ♦ Merrily E. Taylor, *Remembering Pyotr Denmianovich Ouspensky*, New Haven: Yale University Library, 1978 ♦ James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky and Their Followers*, New York: Putnam's, 1980 ♦ For more complete bibliographical information consult corresponding entries in *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography* by J. Walter Driscoll and The Gurdjieff Foundation of California (New York, 1985) and *Gurdjieff International Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 ([www.Gurdjieff.org](http://www.Gurdjieff.org)). The latter also contains several useful, brief studies of Ouspensky's ideas and life.

JACOB NEEDLEMAN

**Papus** (ps. of Gérard-Anacleto-Vincent Encausse), \* 13.7.1865 La Corogne (Spain), † 25.10.1916 Paris

His father Louis, a self-taught man originally from the South of France, had married a Spanish woman, Iñes Perrez-Vierra, and at the time of Gérard's birth was trying to sell a medical apparatus of his own invention to the physicians of the Basque region: the "Encausse Generator", a bath allowing the cutaneous absorption of medications. A lack of success impelled Encausse Sr. to settle in Paris, near Montmartre, where he was able to open a clinic in partnership with a certified physician. Gérard was a child with a fertile imagination, but mischievous and undisciplined. He was obliged to quit the Rhetoric class of the Collège Rollin, while dreaming of getting even with his luckier comrades (he did not earn his baccalaureate until 1893). He worked towards medical studies in evening classes, then volunteered for military service. It was in 1885 that he discovered the classics of occultism [→ occult/occultism]: Louis Lucas (1816-1863), → Lacuria, → Eliphaz Lévi, and → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre; he would consider the latter as one of his masters. Two years later he published his first article in *Lotus*, the new review of the → Theosophical Society in Paris, and was active in the "Isis" Lodge directed by Félix Krishna Gaboriau, where Papus set out to play a primary role. His intrigues led to the closing of the lodge and to the opening of a new branch, "Hermès", where he held a more advantageous position. However, the field of Parisian Theosophy alone did

not suffice to satisfy either his energetic activity or his ambition. In 1888 he had founded his own review, *L'Initiation*, followed in 1890 by *Le Voile d'Isis*, which gave priority to publishing his own lectures and writings.

The creation of a kind of occultist university, the “Groupe indépendant d'Études ésotériques” (Independent group of esoteric studies, soon renamed “École Hermétique” [Hermetic school]), marked an important stage in the transformation of occultism, hitherto dominated by the personality of Eliphas Lévi, with the entry of societies of “esoteric character” into the public realm. Beside its lectures for the public, the school offered examination-based courses modeled on those of official education, comprising a baccalaureate, a licentiate, and a doctorate – which might cause surprise when subjects such as, for example, Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → Magic, hypnotism, → magnetism [→ Animal Magnetism], and → alchemy figured on its syllabus, as well as the study of Sanskrit and Hebrew. Papus set the example by publishing, like a new → Pico della Mirandola, in fields as various as *La kabbale (tradition secrète de l'Occident)* . . . (Kabbalah, secret tradition of the West, 1892) or *Premiers éléments de lecture de la langue sanscrite* (First elements of reading the Sanscrit language, 1898), even though he was as ignorant of Hebrew as he was of the Indo-European mother tongue. His best works were devoted to popular exposition, such as the *Traité élémentaire de science occulte* . . . (Elementary treatise on occult science, 1888), or his study on → Tarot, the following year: *Clef absolue des sciences occultes, le tarot des Bohémiens* . . . (Absolute key to the occult sciences, the Tarot of the Bohemians). Most of the Parisian occultists taught at the École Hermétique: → Sédir, → Barlet, Marc Haven (real name Dr. Emmanuel Lalande, 1868-1926), and the alchemist François Jollivet-Castelot (1874-1937), while the director and founder particularly explored the medical field, devoting about twenty titles to it. Papus had in fact obtained a title of Doctor of Medicine by equivalence during his military service, and had tried to participate in the experiments on hysteria of Dr. Charcot (1825-1893) in the Salpêtrière Hospital, Paris, taking advantage of the closeness of this state to those of trance and hypnosis. There was a strong demand for healing among those who frequented occult societies, and who tended to associate bodily health with spiritual progress; Papus published in 1913 his *Premiers éléments d'homéopathie pratique* (First elements of practical homeopathy). A friend of his, the bookseller and publisher Chamuel

(real name Lucien Mauchel, 1867-1936), completed the literary side of the enterprise. Its literary soirées attracted the great names of literature interested in the occult, such as Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (1838-1889), poets from the cabaret “Le Chat noir”, and Catulle Mendès (1841-1909), who all published in *L'Initiation*. The best-known occultists of the Belle Époque, from → Guaita to → Péladan, had cherished an ambition for a literary career. The remarkable success of the “Papusian” enterprises, for all their apparent lack of seriousness, is explained by the fact that public opinion strongly desired to see scientific legitimacy conferred on speculations of the esoteric type, and hoped for a harmonization of intellectual life with the arts and the religious life.

After resigning from the → Theosophical Society in 1891, Papus tried to crown his organizations by means of a network of initiatic societies that would recruit members in his “schools”. The foundation of a Supreme Council of the Martinist Order [→ Martinism: Second Period] in the same year gave him the opportunity. It was a matter of giving an institutional framework to an ancient initiation that → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin had supposedly founded, and whose transmission had come down to Papus as early as 1882 through the mediation of Henri Delaage (1825-1882), a specialist in animal magnetism. As the new head of the order, Papus tried to justify the legitimacy of his creation in 1899 in a brochure *Martinésisme, Willermosisme, Martinisme et Franc-Maçonnerie* (Martinezism, Willermozism, Martinism, and Freemasonry), in which the functioning of his institution was compared to that of a masonic lodge, in a Christian → Freemasonry that was the heir to the Réau-Croix of → Willermoz, with the grade of “Supérieur Inconnu” (Unknown Superior, S.:I.:) as the ultimate initiatic degree. The Council contained twelve members, including writers as eminent as Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) and Paul Adam (1862-1920), as well as Papus's occultist friends Chamuel, Barlet, Guaita, and Péladan. It developed rapidly in Europe, especially in Russia. By the time of Papus's death, 160 lodges existed in the U.S.A. and Latin America. The setting up of the network also made use of Freemasonry. Twice, in 1899 and 1907, Papus had tried without success to have himself admitted to the recognized major obediences; instead, he had had to enter via minority groups and so-called “fringe” masonry. First of these was the Swedenborgian Rite of → John Yarker in England, which issued a patent in 1901 for the opening in Paris of the “Inri” Lodge, which, thanks to a new patent from Yarker, became the

Grand Mother Lodge for France in 1906. In Spain, the National Rite opened a lodge, "Humanidad", still within the framework of organizations controlled by Papus, which then transformed itself into the Mother Lodge for the Rite of Memphis-Misraïm, an obedience whose Grand Mastership Papus occupied from 1908 to 1916.

The exuberant activity of this born organizer was marked by some rough moments: the trips to Russia at the invitation of the imperial family, in the company of the Lyonnais healer → Anthelme Nizier Philippe, and the Masonic and Spiritualist Congress of 1908. The success of Martinism in Russia, where Freemasonry had always been suspect, facilitated the presentation of the magus to the Tsar in 1901 and his activities in Russia during his visits in 1901, 1905, and 1906. Philippe, whom Papus considered as his master, had preceded him, then accompanied him to the court, where his healings had a great impact. Meanwhile Papus's friends let it be known that the magus's theurgical operations had been responsible for the failure of the 1905 revolution; but the presence of the healer, whom the French authorities considered a quack, and Papus's influence over the imperial family caused their departure. The Congress of 1908 involved all the representatives of the esoteric currents that Papus had been able to collect around himself in Paris; but his attempt to juxtapose fringe masons, spiritualists, magnetizers, disciples of → Anna Kingsford, and mystics of socialist bent such as Albert Jounet (1863-1923) did not work, and quarrels proliferated. The Martinist Order had already nourished rivals in its bosom, such as Guaita's *Ordre kabbalistique de la Rose Croix* and Péladan's *Rose-Croix catholique*, while → René Guénon, for his part, tried to take power in one of its lodges in 1909. Papus's lack of a firm doctrinal axis explains the multiplicity of paths followed by him, but his capacity to assimilate and adapt the philosophical systems of those he admired, from Philippe to Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, and to bring them into his synarchic synthesis, endowed him with real creativity, producing more than 90 published works. Papus never failed to rebound. Even his death from exhaustion as an army doctor during World War I was not devoid of panache.

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JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Paracelsianism

Treating Paracelsianism as a set of ideas or as an intellectual tradition in some way linked to the thinking of → Paracelsus presupposes a non-existent conformity of opinion about what those ideas actually are and about the extent to which Paracelsus himself can be considered the legitimate author of them. Recent commentators have observed the frequency with which Paracelsus expropriated notions found in earlier authors and have discerned both medieval and Renaissance traditions represented in "Paracelsian" texts. Moreover, problems abound in identifying later texts that claim to make use of Paracelsus's medical, cosmological, and chemical ideas with what is actually contained in his own writings. Some indeed did invoke Paracelsus as a forerunner, especially in applying chemical principles to medicine and in turning away from ancient humoral pathology, but it was not necessary to do so since traditions of chemical medicine and even reference to the cosmological *tria prima* of Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury existed as well within other contexts, including traditional → alchemy as well as ancient and Arabic medicine. Already at the beginning of the 17th century the German physician, chemist and gymnasium director, Andreas Libavius (c. 1550-1616) was able to make a crucial distinction, distinguishing between the writings of Paracelsus himself and those texts composed by a group which he preferred to label "Neoparacelsians".

Discrimination in all the occult disciplines is important for anyone who would wish to grasp the historical meaning of terms. Suitably one historian (Stephen Pumfrey) has taken note of a split in historical tendencies between those who attach

the term Paracelsian to a matrix of core doctrines and those who individualize commitments, preferring qualifications such as “moderate” or “semi-paracelsian” to designate writers who retain the more practical parts of Paracelsus’s medical/chemical philosophy while eliminating traces of → magic or → mysticism. Yet, even here, an increasing number of scholars recognize that to separate theory and practice, or to label all those as Paracelsians who align chemistry with medicine, is to build the foundations of a definition upon historical quicksand. Samuel Johnson noted that the writers of dictionaries were required ‘to remove rubbish . . . from the paths of learning’, and with this in mind it is important to acknowledge that, apart from being a category of historical convenience, Paracelsianism possessed a local meaning that was intended as a term of abuse. According to this meaning, the label “Paracelsian” functioned to describe a category of otherness – one that was forged by antagonists anxious about the loss of control over traditional intellectual and linguistic standards, particularly in medicine and philosophy, and who feared the dismantling of trusted coordinates of knowledge. Paracelsianism, in this sense, represented a subversive natural philosophy and medical cosmology in which the human being, viewed as a condensation of the macrocosmos, could both know and operate upon the natural world by recognizing the signatures and → correspondences of creation. The result was a view of nature alive with magical forces and a therapeutic system dependent upon their use. Each individual, Paracelsus thought, comprised within him/herself all existence. Each was a synthesis of physical body, immortal soul, and sidereal, or astral spirit. For some “Paracelsians” such an arrangement meant that the powers and virtues operating in the world at large were also at work within the human body. These were vital forces, penetrating each thing in nature and making them part of a universal living structure. To practice medicine one had, therefore, to comprehend the structure and operations of the greater world in order to understand the vital functions of the body. Paracelsianism, then, stood for a specific type of cognition viewed by some as part of the larger episteme of magic and the occult [→ occult/occultism].

Paracelsus considered nature as *Magierin* and also thought of the human being as *Magier*, or “magus”. Thus philosophical experience worked in harmony with nature. On the one hand, nature broadcast her secret messages in signs which the magician/physician could learn to read through

the study of human disciplines like astronomy, alchemy, medicine, philosophy, physiognomy, and chiromancy, and which, guided by the light of nature, allowed the doctor to recognize individual illnesses as well as specific cures. In addition, nature also impressed upon things a heavenly power which the magus could pull to himself and even transfer to the benefit of those whose constitutions were weak or who had fallen ill.

Two works of the German physician Oswald Croll (ca. 1560-1609), the “admonitory preface” to his *Basilica Chymica* (1609) and a sometimes accompanying treatise on the doctrine of signs, reflect especially well aspects of the magical universe linked to Paracelsus. Even though the two tracts no longer escorted later editions of the *Basilica*, observers like Libavius remained mindful of their magical presence. Indeed, a review of the preface to Croll’s book unlocked for Libavius several features of Croll’s magical thinking which he considered intertwined with Paracelsian philosophy and epistemologically dangerous. According to Croll, one could not learn medicine simply by reading books since only nature could truly instruct the physician. In that regard, it was necessary for the physician to know the internal, invisible or astral structures of things in the greater world and to understand how these related to the organization of the body. Intellectual discovery followed thus not by interpreting the books of human hands, nor from accumulated experience or structured reasoning, but in reading the “book” of nature and by experiencing the divine. If, however, personal inspiration satisfied for cognitive innovation, Libavius wondered, how could one avoid a multitude of opinions being expressed as a result of personal fantasy. ‘Take away teachers and books, and allow anyone to philosophize on his own [and] you will have a lovely philosophy indeed’. Paracelsianism, from this point of view, meant something diabolical. ‘This very thing moreover is one of the devil’s enterprises, so that he may either abolish or pervert every system of learning, and he himself may rule at his own pleasure’. All this was enough for Libavius to place “Paracelsians” into the ranks of ‘Pyrrhonists, Sceptics, Heraclitus, Plato and their like’, who considered that man was the measure of everything.

Thus Paracelsianism, like early Platonism, and other mystical strategies which coalesced realms of matter, spirit, and soul into a single divine unity, became yet another magical tradition which reified the figurative and transmuted analogies into expressions of identity. Like them, it blended spirit



and matter, mixing the sacred and the profane. For Aristotelians there was certainly much to complain about, not the least being the disarray brought by the medley of spiritual, magical, and empirical conviction to the long standing symmetry of traditional disciplines. Accordingly Paracelsianism commanded a strange place in the intellectual geography of the 16th and 17th centuries. It came into existence as a new, and dangerous continent, reports of which drew attention to native habits which ignored Aristotelian customs and confused theological, natural philosophical, metaphysical, and empirical approaches to knowledge – all of which posed a presumed threat to other knowledge habitats and to their established religious and political hierarchies.

The problem was that, especially upon the globe of medicine, the inhabitants of the land of Paracelsus, i.e. those who were supposed to practice Paracelsianism, were often reported as having been seen in other locations. Libavius, tried to deal with the problem by constructing a new cartography drawing lines around different areas of medical custom and commitment. Boundaries were easy to draw around those who followed the teachings of Hippocrates and Galen. These he called dogmatists. Only slightly less precise were the lines delineating a realm of “chymiatrists”, i.e. those who added to ancient method chemical pharmaceuticals prepared by means of alchemy. Here had resided earlier figures like → Avicenna, Mesue, Rhases, and Bulcasis, who were followed by more recent inhabitants, among them Albert, Arnold, → Llull, and Ulstadius. There were troubles in the land of the chymiatrists, however, that required, out of regard for ethnic sensitivity, new lines to be drawn and new names to be created. For some chymiatrists had accommodated the chemical discipline to ancient teachings in such a way as to disclose Galenic principles in terms of chemistry or by reference to the macrocosm. These were to be called “parabolici” and “hermetici”, or even “natural chymiatristi”. But there were others whom Libavius labeled “sophistici” who had long mixed sophistic opinion with Hippocratic references and who thereby had occasioned much disorder throughout the map. The third empire was that of the Paracelsians. However, this too needed to be divided into two parts. For, he says, when novelty became pleasing it enticed the soul to very strange habits so that some began to embrace impious magic. Some rejected alchemy. All rejected Aristotle and Plato while replacing these with a type of philosophy that Paracelsus called “sagax” and which embraced

magic – not the natural sort, but the type linked to the black arts, necromancy, vain → astrology, geomancy, and the art of signs.

Native meaning, as far as Paracelsianism was concerned, was largely constructed of contemptuous components. According to Libavius, to want to be a Paracelsian was 1) to want to injure all the arts, 2) to despise all the ancients and moderns, 3) to force upon people promises for a long life and for curing incurable diseases, 4) to cure by chance or, if by art, in no other way than that of Galenic doctors, 5) to recommend magic along with kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and to practice magic through the methods of signs, words, and characters, 6) to attack Galen’s medicine with reproach, 7) to declare oneself the monarch of *arcana* and medicine, and 8) to make oneself an accomplice in shameful deeds. “Paracelsian”, like “Anabaptist”, was a useful category of condemnation – so useful that even Libavius himself was accused of Paracelsian enthusiasm, in this case because he advocated separating pure from impure in making chemical medicines. But simply commending efficacious essences separated from useless dregs did not, Libavius noted, make one a Paracelsian. If it did, he explained, one would have to include Avicenna, Bulcasis, and even some of the doctors at the arch-Galenic school of medicine in Paris within that company.

The continent of chymiatristia may have drifted apart from the region of Paracelsianism on Libavius’s globe, but at the University of Paris many continued to think that the two were inseparable. Foremost among them was the Galenist physician and censor of the medical faculty, Jean Riolan (the elder) (1539-1606). Riolan’s vision countenanced a narrow horizon. For him, even chymiatristia was unnecessary to good medicine. Nevertheless, he permitted freedom of choice for those who were curious about chemical remedies and zealous for novelty, just as long as such physicians made use of pharmacists to prepare their new medicines. New remedies, in themselves, did not require an altered medical philosophy. However Riolan saw in Paracelsianism, aside from philosophical chaos, a threat to established social roles. At Paris, surgery and pharmacy were arts subaltern to the “science” of medicine. If a doctor came by an arcane remedy, preparing the medicine at home did not detract from medical decorum. But his house, Riolan noted, should never become a *pharmacopolium* where remedies were sold. Social and physical distance from prepared medicines was, after all, what protected those who prescribed them. The point is



that, for Riolan, one element of the definition of Paracelsianism was social. Reversing professional tradition, Paracelsian physicians, he determined, made medicines themselves and sold these medications from their own shops.

Something that might be called Paracelsianism, then, involved the perception of a break with the social, textual, educational and linguistic medical continuum. Libavius himself noted that after claiming for himself the monarchy of chemistry, Paracelsus had decreed that he should found a new alchemy as well as a new medicine. In doing so, however, he opened doors to fashioning cures by all sorts of methods and to proclaiming all manner of chemical and medical *arcana*. In this case, Paracelsianism became coupled with an enthusiasm for novelty, and once again Libavius observed that it had thus come about that hardly anyone agreed with anyone else, each person wishing to bring forth something new. By this reasoning Paracelsianism meant intellectual fraud since it allowed a person to agree with no one, while, at the same time, granting him license to contradict everyone else and to condemn all the writings, sayings, and deeds of others.

Intellectual novelty, of course, occasioned a wide variety of sometimes contrasting opinions. Those who might willingly have been attracted to a Paracelsian camp comprised a diverse group and attitudes varied not only over the years but also from region to region. Reactions also differed in Germany, England, France, Italy, and other places depending upon local medical traditions, religious histories, institutional authorities, and the professional rights and privileges demanded by doctors and apothecaries. Such diversity produced what has been called *paracelsismes particuliers*, and paying attention to such particular expressions of Paracelsianism is the most judicious way to gain insight into the local meanings of the term itself. Early editors of Paracelsus's works helped establish particular flavors for Paracelsian ideas. The published collections of Johann Huser (c. 1545-c. 1600) and Michael Toxites (c. 1515-1581) fueled early Paracelsian fervor by combining elements of medical reform with what Joachim Telle has called "transconfessional theo-alchemy". → Gérard Dorn's (c. 1530-1584) edition of Paracelsian texts went further and more firmly established Paracelsus within the cultural context of medieval and Renaissance alchemical writers. In France, Paracelsian medical philosophy appeared as a result of new texts and old wars. The texts were those of two institutional figures, the translator of Galen and teacher of Andreas Vesalius, Johannes Guin-

therius von Andernach (ca. 1497-1574) and the Danish university professor, natural philosopher, and physician, Petrus Severinus (1540-1602). Severinus's text, the *Idea Medicinae* (1571), sought to place itself within the scholarly tradition of learned medicine by connecting the doctrines of Paracelsus with those of Hippocrates and Galen. There emerged a more systematic and less eccentric presentation of Paracelsian notions which succeeded so well in altering the complexion of Paracelsus that even the well known anti-Paracelsian physician and theologian Thomas Erastus (1524-1583), could commend the text to his readers. In Severinus's hands Paracelsianism became eclectic and more obviously neoplatonic, and it was this sort of interpretation that affected the thinking of other notable Paracelsians such as the professor of medicine at Basle, Theodore Zwinger, and the English physician, Thomas Moffett (1553-1604).

For his part, Andernach emphasized a more practical approach to Paracelsian therapeutics. As a prominent medical humanist, a translator of Galen, and, with experience as a professor of medicine at Paris, he prepared, in 1571, an enormous text concerning the old and new medicine strongly supportive of chemical medicines. In other places he argued that the chemical principles Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury could be considered to differ only slightly from ancient elements and judged that chemical procedures could transform poisonous matter into wholesome substances. A further impulse toward Paracelsian and chemical medicines came about as a result of a famous commentary on the works of Dioscorides written by Pietro Andrea Matthioli (1500-1577). The text was published in Latin in 1544 and a French translation appeared in 1561. The book included reference to the use of stones, minerals, and metals, and explained how antimony, which had been described by Paracelsus, could be rendered into an effective purgative. At Paris the debate over the internal use of antimony inspired attacks upon suspected followers of Paracelsus, and the fear of clandestine support for Paracelsian ideas within the university there led to the prompt condemnation of an early advocate of antimony, Roch le Baillif (fl. 1578-1580). It also opened up further debate about the rights of physicians who were not educated at Paris to practice in the city.

Just as Paracelsianism represented for some a radical break with medical authority, it stood for others as an attack upon the intellectual jurisdiction of Aristotelian philosophy, and especially Aristotelian logic. The logical reforms of Peter Ramus (1515-1572) sometimes cohabited with Paracel-

sian medical philosophy. In his *Basilea*, an oration addressed to the city of Basel in 1570, Ramus exclaimed that ‘this man [Paracelsus] has forced his way so deeply into the innermost parts of nature . . . that one could say that with Theophrastus medicine has been born for the first time and is perfected’. In Ramus, logic combined with politics and religion and, as the chemical physicians of Henri IV and Louis XIII would later demonstrate, Paracelsianism, in the guise of practical chemical/medical procedures, would find a source of both social legitimation and financial encouragement within the political institutions of Europe, particularly within the patronage systems linked to royal, imperial, and princely courts.

Paracelsus was certainly a leading social, political, and religious dissident. Paracelsianism, however, became in part associated with aristocratic circles. Paracelsian physicians gained court appointments and the publication of Paracelsian texts was made possible in large part by means of court patronage. One of the first publishers of Paracelsus’s works, Adam von Bodenstein, was court physician to the German Duke of Neuburg, who later became Elector of the Palatinate, Ottheinrich. The early definitive collection of Paracelsus’s medical and natural philosophical texts brought together by Johann Huser and Paul Link began to appear at Basle in 1589 with the financial support of the Archbishop of Cologne. Libavius noticed the court connection and asked at one point, ‘If you are real doctors and do not flee from the light [of wisdom], why do you not teach in the academies? You are occupied at courts where I believe you accomplish more by flattery than by speaking the truth, and advance more by begging than by curing’. In France the political success of Huguenot aspirations at the end of a long period of civil war contributed to a more open, and court supported, Paracelsian presence. Le Baillif was himself a physician in ordinary to the French king Henri III, but other chemical physicians admitting various aspects of a Paracelsian medical philosophy appeared in Paris several years later, arriving there in the company, and with the protection, of the Huguenot turned Catholic, Henry of Navarre. Prominent among this new medical entourage were Jean Ribit (ca. 1571-1605), Theodore Turquet de la Mayerne (1573-1655), and Joseph Duchesne (ca. 1544-1609), also called Quercetanus. Although each stirred controversy in his own right, the writings of Duchesne, which expressed a particular variety of Paracelsian thinking, ushered in an intense period of debate.

Duchesne’s positions were well known for over a

quarter century before the debate about his books began at Paris. In answer to Jacques Aubert in a debate about chemical medicines and the origins of metals, Duchesne admitted that the ignorance and faults of some had caused the “chymici” to fall into disrepute, but that this was no reason to condemn the entire art by which God had revealed so many secrets of nature and so many preparations of herbs, animals and minerals. As concerned Paracelsus, Duchesne did not propose to acknowledge his “patronage of theology” and neither did he agree with him in all other matters. Nevertheless, he confessed, ‘I dare to say and uphold that that man teaches many things pertaining to medicine almost divinely, which a grateful posterity can never sufficiently praise and admire’. Much of the dispute with Aubert centered on a defense of Aristotle’s explanation of the origins of metals against Aubert’s criticisms; but it also involved Duchesne in a defense of alchemy and, more specifically, in an apology for metallic transmutation.

Duchesne’s Paracelsianism would be attacked and defended at Paris and a good indication of the confusion surrounding the issue of definition can be found in the fact that Libavius, who wished to defend the place of alchemy in medicine, ultimately joined the debate as a Duchesne supporter. Regardless of how the intervention was seen by others, especially by Riolan who viewed the intrusion as a sign that Libavius had joined the Paracelsian faction, Libavius remained no friend of Paracelsus. He could, however, stand with other chemical physicians at Paris, and commented about another participant in the dispute, the Paracelsian Turquet de la Mayerne, that Mayerne’s dignity, like his own, was preserved, not by defending Duchesne, but by the sweat rendered in combining Hippocratic and chemical medicine and in picking out good remedies from Paracelsus’s manure.

Medical chemists need not have been Paracelsians, unless, of course, it was convenient for their enemies to label them as such. In the case of another medical doctor named Nicolas Abraham de la Framboisier, the medical faculty at Paris during the reign of Louis XIII seems to have worried about Paracelsian leanings even though the physician himself rejected ‘the sect of Paracelsus’ and argued that he had derived all his chemical remedies from Galen and Hippocrates. Here the multidimensionality of Paracelsianism gave credence to the barest suspicion. Since Paracelsians were aligned with Protestantism in France, the faculty of medicine was alert to the strategy which officially rejected Paracelsus, no matter what one’s private beliefs, while seeking advancement and favor from

royal and ecclesiastical patrons. Definition became clouded by uncertainty as intellectual priorities themselves were obscured by the social and political facts of life.

Despite the problems in France, Duchesne and other French Paracelsians continued to play important roles in the interpretation and transmission of Paracelsianism. After leaving France Mayerne became chief physician to the English king, James I. Elsewhere in England, John Hester († 1593) translated the tracts of Duchesne as well as others, promoting chemical preparations included in works by the Italian physician Leonardo Fioravanti (1518-1588) and the German Philip Herman. Another Englishman, a minister named Thomas Tymme († 1620) also translated large sections of Duchesne's works, especially his discussions of Paracelsian cosmology, into English. Tymme, like R. Bostock, who defended Paracelsian principles and the macrocosm-microcosm analogy in a work of 1585, drew something spiritual from Paracelsus's works and found there as well an anthropology and natural philosophy removed from, and consequently not indebted to, ancient, heathen texts.

Depending upon one's point of intellectual origin, Paracelsianism might mean chemical philosophy or even practical chemical medicine. However, another reading of Paracelsus, especially based upon Paracelsus's theological writings, inspired a far more mystical definition. This interpretation was especially convenient to religious radicals like → Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) and his pseudo-Weigelian imitators, as well as the early Rosicrucian enthusiast → Adam Haslmayr. To Haslmayr, Rosencreutz and Paracelsus both had promised evangelical freedom to a future world and Haslmayr proclaimed accordingly a new religion, the *Theophrastia Sancta*, viewed as a kind of perennial religion practiced in occult circles until Paracelsus had publically proclaimed its meaning. The basis of the religion was the *tria cabalistica prima*, the three cabalistic principles of *Bitten*, *Suchen*, und *Anklopfen* [asking, seeking, and appealing] which Paracelsus had designated in the *Philosophia Sagax* as the means to all natural knowledge. The living word of God sealed within the human being was, on the basis of this theology, far more important than what was written in Scripture. In fact, without the human spirit to enliven them, the Bible itself was merely a collection of dead letters. To the external trappings of Christendom some advocated a renewed "church of the spirit", and it is just such a view of the real church which brokered between Weigel and Paracelsus a theological alliance.

The story of "Weigelian" theology is, in part, a

Paracelsian legacy. As early as the 1570s Weigel, the pastor of Zschopau in east Saxony, had composed treatises and sermons whose content could by no means be considered reflective of either Catholic or main line Protestant opinion. In the early 17th century several publishers busied themselves with the printing of "Weigelian" books. Some, however, were not actually written by Weigel and sorting out the genuine from the possibly apocryphal has become a primary task of Weigelian scholars ever since. Of those texts linked to Weigel, influences stemming from medieval mystical traditions and, after 1578, from Paracelsian natural philosophy predominated. Other "Weigelian" books had a more apocalyptic message, insisted upon inward knowledge, and conflated Paracelsus, kabbalah, and magic. Institutionalized Protestantism needed to make no distinction concerning authorship. It viewed all the writings as depending upon a theology of the inner word well situated to the subjective epistemologies of religious radicals.

In Paracelsus, Weigel seems to have encountered such notions as the *light of nature* and the *light of grace* and to have used them when fashioning his own apprehension of the process of human understanding. He also found in Paracelsus ideas of man as microcosm, produced from *limus terrae*, and depicted as the *quinta essentia* of creation. By contrasting a heavenly flesh, which is eternal, to an earthly mortal flesh, Weigel judged that the flesh of Christ was not that of Adam. The flesh of Christ, therefore, was not from the earth, not from the seed of man, but from heaven. Christ had a heavenly body born of Mary, a heavenly Eve. In Paracelsus's text *Liber de Sancta Trinitate*, which seems to have had an active life in manuscript, Paracelsus described how God was originally alone and without any beginning. Thus the divine separation into three persons was not eternal, and initially there was only one being, one divinity, one person. God remained alone until he wished to multiply and manifest himself, at which point there came into being three persons, three beings, three qualities and forms, all the while remaining, nonetheless, one God, one creator. Paracelsus also described how God separated a female form from himself, represented as a *himmlische weib* or *frau gottes*, which was understood not as a separate divinity, but through whom God the Father produced the second person of the trinity. Embedded here, as well as in the Christologies of other religious writers like Melchior Hofmann († 1543) and Caspar Schwenkfeld († 1561), was a revolutionary and millennial conception of the church. By distancing Christ's flesh from human flesh, Weigel joined

those who cast into doubt the possibility of reforming the old Adam. There had to be a new covenant in which the heart would replace the external Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God. To this end, Weigel recognized three stages of the world ending finally in the age of the Holy Spirit. '[Then] the outer will be brought into the inner. Man himself will be Jerusalem and the temple in which God dwells. Then one will have no need for ordained preachers or other teachers . . .' Such thinking was dangerous. At Marburg, in 1619, two teachers in the city's *paedagogium* named Homagius and Zimmermann, inspired in part by Weigel and Paracelsus's book concerning the trinity, tossed from their windows shredded copies of Greek and Latin *lexica* (among other books) claiming that one should also throw out academic degrees, logic, and the arts as well. No one, they contended, should any longer study Latin, but everyone should read the writings of Weigel and Paracelsus (Theophrastus). These authors had provided the key to scripture. And what was this key? It was that all of scripture was to be understood allegorically, and that the word of God was not to be found strictly in the Bible, but was to be derived from an inner spirit, an internal light. The Bible contained only "dead letters" which could only be comprehended through revelation. Thus, they believed, all those were repugnant who attempted to blow into such dead letters a living soul and who therefore only ended up believing what they wanted to believe.

Paracelsianism could be aligned with spiritualists like Schwenckfeld and Weigel, but it also has been shown to have been appealing to some taking part in the more orthodox theological debates surrounding the symbolic interpretation of the Eucharist. Views of Paracelsus in this regard seem linked to the Swiss reformation, especially to the thought of reformers like Bucer, Zwingli, and Oecolampadius. In this variety of Paracelsianism, it has been argued, Paracelsus became a kind of "Christian Magus" developing a knowledge of God through the study of nature, or as a combination of natural philosopher and religious thinker, gaining special revelation through grace. Nevertheless, Paracelsianism was never officially part of any reformation religion, but existed there, as in many other contexts, as a part of the heritage of neoplatonic and mystical Renaissance philosophy.

Aside from making chemistry relevant to medicine, other themes, philosophical, mystical, and religious, connected later writers to the works and thoughts of Paracelsus. One tradition connected Paracelsus not only to an explanation of disease as specific entities with specific etiologies, reject-

ing thereby the ancient doctrine of humors, but annexed Paracelsian notions to explications of physiological processes in the idiom of chemistry. This aspect of what later became known as iatrochemistry developed especially in the 17th century in the writings of → Joan Baptista van Helmont (1579-1644), Franciscus de le Boë Sylvius (1614-1672), Raymond Vieussens (ca. 1635-1715) and many others. Expressing a natural philosophy in terms of vitalism and macrocosmic influences, and upholding chemical analogies related to the human being inevitably involved reference to Paracelsus, however. Many alchemical texts as well continued to enlist Paracelsus, and the *tria prima*, as influential antecedents to discussions of transmutation. In large part, however, Paracelsus lent himself to mystical cosmologies as one member of a lineage of magical savants aware of inner relationships and forever maneuvering between matter, spirit, and soul. The religious mystic and *Philosophus Teutonicus*, → Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), combined Neoplatonic and Paracelsian themes in numerous prophetic and mystical writings. Currents of → Christian theosophy and → *Naturphilosophie* carried both Paracelsus and Boehme along for years thereafter. Both were influential in shaping the theistic philosophy of → Franz von Baader (1765-1841), who sought to combine realms of matter and spirit in opposition to strictly mechanical explanations of nature, and to post-Romantic writers like the poet-chemist Alexander von Bernus (1880-1965), who insisted upon a spiritual dimension within the natural sciences, and → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who continued to describe the threefold nature of the human being in terms of body, soul, and spirit.

*Lit.:* Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Paracelsian Movement", in: *Renaissance Essays*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 149-199 ♦ Allen Debus, *The English Paracelsians*, New York: F. Watts, 1965 ♦ idem, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, New York: Science History Publications, 1977 ♦ idem, *The French Paracelsians: The Chemical Challenge to Medical and Scientific Tradition in Early Modern France*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 ♦ Giancarlo Zanier, "La Medicina Paracelsiana in Italia: Aspetti di un'accoglienza particolare", *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 4 (1985), 627-653 ♦ Jole Shakelford, "Paracelsianism and Patronage in Early Modern Denmark", in: Bruce T. Moran (ed.), *Patronage and Institutions*, Rochester: Boydell, 1991, 85-110 ♦ Major contributions to the subject by Stephen Pumfrey, Ole Grell, Carlos Gilly, Didier Kahn, Stephen Bamforth, Joachim Telle, Heinz Schott, Gundolf Keil, Wolf-Dieter Müller-Jahncke, Kurt Goldammer, Ute Gause, and Wilhelm Kühlmann may be found among

the individual articles in the following collections: *Acta Paracelsica*, München, 1930-1932 ♦ Brian Vickers (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 ♦ Joachim Telle (ed.), *Parerga Paracelsica: Paracelsus in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991 ♦ Roland Edighoffer et al. (eds.), *Paracelse et les siens (ARIES 19)*, Paris: La Table d'Emeraude, 1995 ♦ Volker Zimmermann (ed.), *Paracelsus: Das Werk – die Rezeption*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995 ♦ Ole Peter Grell (ed.), *Paracelsus: The Man, his Reputation, His Ideas and Their Transformation*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998 ♦ Heinz Schott and Ilana Zinguer (eds.), *Paracelsus und seine internationale Rezeption in der frühen Neuzeit: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Paracelsus*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998 ♦ Allen Debus and Michael Walton (eds.), *Reading the Book of Nature: The Other Side of the Scientific Revolution*, Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1998 ♦ Wilhelm Köhlmann and Joachim Telle (eds.), *Der Frühparacelsismus (Corpus Paracelsisticum, 1)*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001.

BRUCE T. MORAN

**Paracelsus (ps. of Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim), \*1493 or 1494 Einsiedeln, † 24.9.1541 Salzburg**

1. LIFE 2. MEDICAL WORKS  
3. ASTRONOMICAL AND DIVINATORY WORKS 4. THEOLOGY 5. MAGIC

1. LIFE

Paracelsus was the son of the physician Wilhelm Bombast von Hohenheim and an unnamed bondswoman of Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland. The meaning of the name "Paracelsus", first attributed in the 1520s, is not certain, but could have arisen through the Latinisation of "Hohenheim"; the sense of "beyond or surpassing Celsus" is unlikely. About 1502 Paracelsus moved with his father to Villach (Carinthia). Little is known about his schooldays or studies. According to his own statement, he took his doctorate in medicine at Ferrara (c. 1515). He then made his "great peregrination" through Europe in the capacity of field surgeon. In 1524/25 Paracelsus can be traced at Salzburg. In 1525 he was involved in the Peasants' War. His role is unclear but he had to flee the city. On 5.12.1526 he registered as a resident in Strasbourg and evidently wished to settle here. In March 1527 he was appointed town physician and university lecturer at Basle. He caused a sensation by lecturing in German as well as Latin and attacked the ancient medical authorities. Disputes with the medical faculty, apothecaries, and the Town Council, compounded

by a patient's complaint of excessive fees, led to his flight from Basle at the beginning of 1528. After brief residence in Colmar and Esslingen he lived in Nuremberg for a short period. Documentary sources place him at Beratzhausen in 1530, at St. Gallen in 1531, and after numerous further stations he reached Augsburg in 1536, but even here he stayed only a while. In 1537 he travelled to Mährisch Kromau to treat Johann von Leipa, the hereditary Marshal of Bohemia, and was also resident at Vienna the same year. In 1538 he was briefly in Villach and St. Veit. Relatively little is known about Paracelsus in 1539-1540, but he was in Salzburg in 1541. Severely ill, Paracelsus wrote his will on 21.9.1541 and died three days later.

2. MEDICAL WRITINGS

Paracelsus left an extensive opus. An initial observation concerning his most important medical works, is that the early writings raise special problems. It may be assumed that he composed medical works even before his Basle period. Yet all medical works usually classified as "early" works (all unpublished during his life) cannot be dated with any certainty. A precise chronological ordering, attempted by Karl Sudhoff in preparing his standard edition (and since widespread), such as "Works c. 1520" or "Works c. 1525/26", is unsupported. The book called "Archidoxis" belong to those writings which can be attributed to his pre-Basle period. This is Paracelsus's major "alchemical", i.e. pharmaceutical-chemical text. Here he presents a medically applied → alchemy, whose goal is the separation of the pure from the impure chiefly through methods of distillation. It also treats of "chemical" remedies derived from metals and minerals (e.g. quintessences, arcana, magisteria, elixirs) associated later on with the name of Paracelsus. It is evident that Paracelsus knew the pertinent late medieval alchemical works of → Ramon Llull, → Arnau de Vilanova and especially John de Rupescissa [→ Jean de Rocquetaillade]. However, it is also clear that he did not identify himself with their tradition (nor the academic medicine based on ancient authorities). Many of Paracelsus's recipes in this work were almost incomprehensible for the reader, partly due to deliberate blinks and partly due to careless presentation. This question needs closer examination, as the so-called *Volumen Paramirum* (not to be confused with *Opus Paramirum* c. 1530) is also regarded as an "early" writing. In this text, five causes of disease are described (*Ens astrale, Ens venenale, Ens naturale, Ens spiritale* and *Ens deale*), an obvious deviation from the ancient



medicine of Hippocrates or Galen. The so-called *Treatise on Miner's Disease* also probably dates from this period. Here the various occupational diseases of the miners are described, explicitly stating that the ancient authors do not mention these diseases. All works mentioned so far remained unprinted during Paracelsus's lifetime. Paracelsus's first published medical text did not appear until 1529, a work on syphilis, *Vom Holtz Guaiaco gründlicher heylung*. Here Paracelsus objected to the uncritical use of guaiac wood, a contemporary wonder-cure. In 1530 (possibly even in 1529) a further syphilis text appeared *Von der Frantzösischen krankheyt Drey Bücher* at Nuremberg. In 1530 Paracelsus was working at Beratzhausen on *Opus Paragranum*. Here he introduced the pillars of his new medicine: Philosophia; Astronomia; Alchimia and – last but not least – the Virtue of the physician (Proprietas or Virtus). In 1531 Paracelsus wrote his *Opus Paramirum* comprising four books at St. Gallen. In its first book Paracelsus dealt with the *Tria prima* of Mercury, Sulphur und Salt, the three fundamental Principles, which constitute all bodies, including the human being. Paracelsus explained the *Tria prima* by comparison with a burning piece of wood: that which burns, is Sulphur; that which smokes, is Mercury; that which becomes ashes, is Salt. On the basis of the *Tria prima*, Paracelsus also developed a new pathology, whereby he attributed a significant role to the stars besides bodily causes in the origin of diseases. The “spark of fire” from the stars could for instance make the Sulphur “ill”, and in consequence the whole body would suffer disease. The second book of *Opus Paramirum*, the *Tartarus-Buch*, relates directly to the *Tria prima* of the first. According to Paracelsus the *Tria prima* carry “excrement” (*Kot*) with them, and this excrement can also cause diseases in the body, called tartar-diseases by Paracelsus. The *Opus Paramirum* identifies the stomach as the seat of tartar production. The third book of the work dealt with women and gynaecological diseases under the title *De matrice*. In the beginning Paracelsus distinguished between the macrocosm, man and woman as three different worlds. Men's diseases were thus distinct from women's diseases. The fourth book of *Opus Paramirum* is entitled *Buch von den unsichtbaren Krankheiten und ihren Ursachen* (Book of Invisible Diseases and Their Causes). Its content was not psychiatry in any modern sense, but rather magic in the broadest sense. In the first part Paracelsus described how the Devil could gain influence through “false belief” over humans and their state of health. Like the

Devil, man could also work curses through “belief”. Some remarks show that Paracelsus assumed the existence of witches. He treated this topic more extensively in *Philosophia de divinis operibus et factis*, which was probably written between 1529 and 1532, and where he distinguished between the marks and works of witches [→ Witchcraft]. Witches who have not yet committed evil deeds can still be cured through Christian remedies such as prayer and fasting. Paracelsus gave no indication of the procedure against witches deemed to be active by their community. It may be assumed that he would have supported drastic measures including the death penalty in such cases. In 1535 Paracelsus's balneological text, *Vonn dem Bad Pfeffers . . . Tugenden* (The Virtues of Bad Pfäfers) was published, followed in 1536 by his *Grosse Wundartzney* (Great Book of Wound-Surgery), in which Paracelsus expounded internal diseases rather than surgical principles. Here Paracelsus also touched on the doctrine of signatures, which is often associated with his name. Many passages contain instructions for “magical” remedies, so that it is not entirely incomprehensible that Paracelsus was suspected of sorcery in his own lifetime. His *Astronomia Magna* (c. 1537/38) is a comprehensive medical anthropology and cosmology, yet remains in a fragmentary form. Here Paracelsus distinguished between a terrestrial and heavenly “part” of the human being, whereby the terrestrial is subject to the stars, while human freedom is of heavenly origin. The Christian aspect of *Astronomia Magna* is evident. The influence of neoplatonic thought [→ Neoplatonism] in this writing is a matter of debate among scholars.

### 3. ASTRONOMICAL AND DIVINATORY WRITINGS

Paracelsus also wrote astronomical and divinatory works, of which twelve were published (some in several editions) in his lifetime. On closer examination these prove to be thoroughly heterogeneous. The first prophetic exercise of Paracelsus was his *Practica . . . gemacht auff Europen/anzufahren in dem nechstkunfftigen Dreyssigsten Jar/Biß auff das Vier und Dreyssigst nachvolgend* (Almanac for Europe for 1530 until 1534). Seven editions of this very successful almanac were published in 1529-1530 alone; it is not certain whether the first edition appeared in Strasbourg or Nuremberg. Paracelsus substantiated the publication of a four-year almanac in a postscript, stating that one need not only take the chief planetary ruler of today's skies as the basis of prediction. The constellation of the planets also had an effect over

time. Moreover, he did not think it necessary to adduce the specific constellations of the year. The prognostications are relatively ambiguous. Closely linked with the four-year almanac was *Pronosticatio . . . auf dis gegenwertig jar, betreffend ein Confederation, so von andern Astronomis und Practicanten dis jar ausgelassen und ubersehen ist*, printed in 1530. A grand political future was predicted for this unspecified confederation, which would endure for a long time. This prognostication was connected with the so-called *Auslegung über ettliche Figuren Johannes Liechtenbergers*, which has survived only in fragmentary form. In 1488 Johannes Lichtenberger published a prophetic astrological work with 45 woodcuts, in which he prophesied the appearance of an angelic shepherd and a Kaiser of Peace. In his own unpublished text, Paracelsus violently contradicted Lichtenberger on account of his pro-French and pro-Habsburg stance. The Kaiser of Peace would come from "German blood". A further magical pictorial commentary was written about 1529/30. This so-called *Auslegung der Nürnberger Figuren* also remained unprinted. It was a response to a work of the Nuremberg reformer Andreas Osiander of 1527. Osiander prophesied the end of the Papacy in his commentary on a series of pictures of the Pope (at this time ascribed to Joachim von Fiore, the 12th-century Calabrian abbot and prophet). He also saw the advent of Luther the reformer in the pictures. Paracelsus criticised the Papacy vehemently in his own commentary of the pictures, but he firmly rejected Osiander's Lutheran partisanship. No one individual nor group could introduce the necessary reformation. At this time Paracelsus evidently no longer had any hopes of the Wittenberg reformer. In several writings of the period 1531-1534 Paracelsus interpreted natural phenomena and events (e.g. comets) as divine omens. Man must read the Bible, in order to understand these signs (he did not reveal how the text should be read). His *Prognostication auf xxiiii jar zukünfftig* of the year 1536 is a mantic text based on personal inspiration and makes no reference to the stars. Paracelsus adopted the scheme of annual predictions in his last prognostical writings of the period 1536 to 1539. He gives no information regarding his methods of prediction.

#### 4. THEOLOGY

However opposed → magic and theology may seem, they form an inseparable unity in Paracelsus's worldview. He understood magic as a method of using the secrets or fundamental laws of nature, while theology provided him with a philosophical

basis to pursue the welfare and resurrection of the soul along the path of eternal ideas. Moreover, the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles in healing the sick stimulated Paracelsus to postulate a new apostolic medicine, which even went beyond his first reformation of medieval medicine, proclaimed by him at the University of Basle in 1527.

Paracelsus became interested in religious subjects at an early time. His mother had served at the great Benedictine abbey of his native Einsiedeln and he retained a lifelong and faithful devotion to this place. Paracelsus tells us there were several abbots and clergymen among his teachers from different places in his *Grosse Wundartzney* (Great Book of Surgery). The debate initiated by Martin Luther in 1517 about the need for a reformation of the Church must have exerted a strong influence on the youth, who always questioned the traditions and theories of the ancients. These attempts at reform found their way into Paracelsus's first theological writings which stem from the years 1524/25, when trying to establish himself as a physician in Salzburg. *De septem punctis idolatriae Christianae* (Seven Points of Christian Idolatry) gives a harsh critique of the *Mauerkirche* (walled church), which symbolised a church paralysed in outer splendour and empty rituals, in contrast to an inner spiritualistic church. Paracelsus stated: 'The way to bliss needs stillness, it shuns clamour, but proceeds from the innermost heart'. At this time he composed his works on the Holy Trinity and on the Virgin Mary. Paracelsus also wrote an important commentary on the first five chapters of St. Matthew. This was the starting point of a lifelong and intensive study of the Gospels, especially St. Matthew, to which he would dedicate several lengthy commentaries. It is evident that Paracelsus largely derived his ethics, be they personal, social or medical, from the Gospels and above all from the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. 5). The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount contained guidelines for a righteous life leading to eternal bliss, which Paracelsus carried to their far-reaching but logical conclusions: he demanded not only the avoidance of quarrel and wars, but also strict social justice, in which the rich would share with the poor. These radical or even revolutionary social attitudes may have led Paracelsus to join with the revolting Salzburg miners, an act assumed to have been the cause of his sudden flight from the town in the summer of 1525.

In the following years Paracelsus concentrated on his reformation of medicine, based on a system of natural philosophy, astronomy and alchemy. After several frustrations and set-backs in his

career – including expulsion from Basle and loss of his university position, Vadianus' snub in St. Gallen, and his censorship at Nuremberg – he seems to have developed a habit of regularly withdrawing to the Appenzeller country of Switzerland while pondering religious subjects, even to the point of completely giving up medical practice. Only the verse from St. Luke 5:31, as reported in the *Grosse Wundartzney*, that only the sick would need a physician, moved him sufficiently to return to his proper profession. This is but one example of how much the Gospels gave him solace and were a continuous source of inspiration. As he further tells us, he began to address the common people as a lay preacher in 'taverns, inns and public houses'. In this period from 1529 to 1535, Paracelsus wrote the bulk of his theological writings. He wrote an extensive commentary to the Psalter, which remains his most voluminous work, even though only part of it has survived. From the same period we also have commentaries on the Ten Commandments and on the prophets Daniel and Isaiah, several minor monographs about ethical, social and political subjects, three large commentaries on the Gospel of St. Matthew, and several sets of sermons. Another two series of tracts are characteristic of Paracelsus's theology: the writings on the Eucharist and on the *Vita Beata* (Beatific Life). The Eucharist played a central role in Paracelsus's idea of the *neue kreatur* (new creation) bestowed on the world by Christ, which enabled the faithful disciples to perform the same works and miracles as their master. The *Vita Beata* comprises tracts concerning the attainment of the beatific life, and also on the eternal religion, the highest good, the grace of God, happy-mindedness, the martyrdom of Christ, the remission of sins, Christian duties, the honoured and the rich, the churches of the Old and the New Testament, the resurrection and glorification of the body, and baptism. The *Vita Beata* writings are also known as the *Philosophiae Magnae Pars Altera* (Second Part of the Great Philosophy), whereas the first part of the *Philosophia Magna* consists of tracts regarding popular magic (see below).

Towards the end of his life Paracelsus entered a third phase of literary production in his theological works. In his famous *Astronomia Magna* (Great Astronomy, 1537/38) he again summarised the central points of his theology and emphasised the difference between the "light of the nature" and the light of the Holy Ghost. Some years later, around 1540, reviewing the two decades that had elapsed since he first started to write, he laid down his *De secretis secretorum theologiae* (The Secrets

of the Secrets of Theology), where he expounded his mature views on beatific life. Three further sets of sermons date from the same period: *De antichristo*, *In incantatores* (about sorcerers), and *In pseudodoctores*.

The preserved theological writings consist of 40 monographs or single tracts, 16 Bible commentaries, 20 sermons, 20 writings on the Eucharist, and 7 Mariological tracts. As a whole, these writings make up a corpus quite as extensive as the medical and philosophical works, but to this day only half of them have found their way into print. The remaining and so far unedited works, most of them dealing with the New Testament, especially important to Paracelsus, are now being prepared for a scholarly edition.

At first sight, Paracelsus's theological style seems quite orthodox and not so different from traditional religious thought. For the true Christian there are laws and commandments to be followed, the remission of sins has to be attained, and righteous behaviour will pave the way to eternal life. How does this Christian theology relate to the Hermetic and alchemical thought of his medical writings? On closer investigation, the peculiarities become apparent. In contrast to many contemporary religious thinkers, Paracelsus's theology is based on direct exegesis of the Gospels rather than on St. Paul's epistles. The attainment of eternal life plays a role of the utmost importance. Paracelsus does not refer to a somewhat remote future: in "beatific life" man is given the opportunity to achieve a foretaste of eternity. God's laws and teachings as laid down in the Bible must be observed, but also consist in an active belief in God, respect for God, charity, knowledge and hope. Mere outward observance is not enough: the Commandments have to become alive in Christ and should lead to perfect love of God and one's neighbour.

Another marked feature of Paracelsus's philosophy and theology becomes apparent in his speculation on the double body. Man has a mortal and an immortal body, one visible and one invisible, the former confined to the realm of nature, the latter ruled by the stars and tending to eternity. Accordingly, there is an inside and an outside, an above and a below, a microcosm and a macrocosm. This notion of a double corporeality may have been partly inspired by I Corinthians 15, but can also be found in the Middle Ages, in Neoplatonic and Hermetic philosophy, and in alchemical lore. Paracelsus's bipartition also forms one major difference with the perspective of → Agrippa of Nettesheim who with his "mundus triplex" advocated a

tripartite conception of the world. One might think that Paracelsus's concept of the *Tria prima* consisting of Mercury, Sulphur and Salt would lead to a ternary philosophical system. However, this does not hold for Paracelsus's view of the spiritual composition of man and the universe, but only for the composition of matter, or more precisely, of metals, minerals, stones, wood, herbs and all growing things. Paracelsus regarded these three principles as workmen (*werkleut*) in the process of creation helping the superior creative principle, the *archeus*, in differentiating and molding the classical four elements fire, air, water, and earth, which themselves constituted the building blocks of matter. The combustible Sulphur was bestowing a characteristic form upon things, the incombustible Salt was giving the solidity, and the volatile and mediating Mercury was taking care of the nutritional requirements. When alchemy proceeds to decompose a thing into its constituents, the mercurial principle will flee as a fume or manifest as a volatile liquid, the sulphurous principle is separated as a combustible oil or resin, and the salty principle remains as a crystalline or amorphous indestructible matter. The idea of *Tria prima* was highly influential on the conceptual development of chemistry, dominating chemical perceptions until the mid-18th century, and also on iatrochemistry, representing a promising attempt to explain bodily functions in terms of alchemy. Paracelsus had himself speculated in *Opus paramirum* (c. 1531) about the operating of *Tria prima* in the body. However, there is no firm evidence that an equation of the three Paracelsian principles Mercury, Sulphur and Salt with the corporeal tripartition Spirit, Soul and Body respectively, nor even with the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, was already part of Paracelsus's own doctrine. These and further philosophical speculations in interpreting the universe chemically have their origin among Paracelsus's followers.

In his early *Volumen paramirum* (c. 1520), where he tries to give a new classification of the causes of disease, Paracelsus is well aware of his "pagan style" in explaining nature and disease in terms of alchemy and magic, but hastens to emphasise that he is a true Christian. It is possible that Paracelsus understood "pagan" philosophy not only as synonymous with ancient, but also in a narrower sense with Hermetic or Neoplatonic philosophy. On the one hand, Paracelsus felt obliged to study nature in its light as well as dark aspects, while on the other, he had to observe a framework of Christian philosophy. An attempt to combine the two viewpoints produced an inevitable ten-

sion. One might say he was bound to Mother Nature as well as to his Mother Church, and this dual allegiance may have been one cause of his personal failure during his lifetime. His *Astronomia Magna* attempts to give a late synthesis of these obviously conflicting worldviews, whereby Paracelsus exhorts man to become a *centrum* between his earthly origin and his heavenly destination.

As an alchemist, Paracelsus was deeply impressed with the mystery of the immaculate conception of Christ and its implications. He was familiar with medieval theories of creation and had written a tract on the generation of man (*Das Buch von der Gebärung*, c. 1520). He obviously attempted to apply these ideas to the heavenly birth described in the New Testament. He adopted the medieval notion of "limbus" as the womb from which God had created man. Paracelsus saw the limbus as a kind of primordial seed or clay which was handed down from generation to generation starting with Adam, and so constituted the very core of man's spiritual potentialities. The "limbus" of Adam came from below, from nature, and was thus limited. The birth of Christ represented a *neue kreatur* coming into the world, a new eternal "limbus" from above, which transferred to man unprecedented possibilities. By the power of this "new creation" Jesus and the apostles were able to perform miracles, such as curing the sick, healing the blind and the lame, and even expelling evil spirits and raising the dead. Paracelsus regarded the power to perform such miracles as the cornerstone of a new and supreme apostolic medicine, surpassing even his own earlier medical reformation. The new "limbus" was bestowed on a person in baptism and renewed during the Last Supper. The Eucharist assumed the utmost importance to Paracelsus, inspiring an entire set of tracts conceived as a complete *Philosophia de limbo aeterno*. In soteriological terms, his central theme was not so much Jesus' death on the Cross, but first and foremost the birth of this new heavenly body.

For Paracelsus, the true Christian Church was not an external institution with its buildings, priests, bishops and human laws, but rather an inner church based on continuous personal revelation. Paracelsus took the foundations for this spiritualistic view of what it meant to be a true Christian from the Gospels. Here St. Peter played a major role, because he was the first to recognise Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. According to Paracelsus, this was not revealed to Peter out of the lower light of nature, but out of the light of the Holy Ghost. Thus Peter became the prototype of the mystic, illumined by God; and obviously it

was on him – Peter the rock – that Jesus wanted to build his new Church. Paracelsus suggested that the keys to heaven will be handed to “every Peter” who attempts to let himself be guided by the inner light. This is why for Paracelsus there were “two churches”, one being St. Peter’s living church of ongoing revelation, and the other one the *Steinkirche* (stony church) for the blind believers made by man and founded on human laws.

### 5. MAGIC

From his study of the Bible Paracelsus was able to make a direct link to magic. The period of antiquity, and with it the world of the New Testament, was swarming with ghosts, demons, devils, gods and magicians, and thus provided an ideal setting to discuss this topic. Paracelsus followed → Albertus Magnus in identifying the three kings or magi from the Orient, who had found the Christ child with the aid of the stars, as ideal references for the vindication of magic. Paracelsus repeatedly commented on this passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew. The model of the three kings gave him the opportunity to define a magus as someone who interprets the prophets and performs miracles in front of the people, and foretells events by the help of spirits or the stars. Only a prophet (in later years Paracelsus would prefer to speak of a “divine magician”) can accomplish more: he speaks and acts by direct divine assistance and inspiration, as seen in the case of → Moses, who opposed the Egyptian sorcerers. Paracelsus thought that the three magi were also proficient in medicine, commenting that their gifts were of direct medicinal use. Frankincense helped to protect mother and child from “flying ghosts”, and myrrh, by way of the mother’s milk, freed the baby from threatening worms. This kind of interrelation of medicine, philosophy, astronomy and magic was quite commonplace in the Middle Ages, as can be seen in → Peter of Abano. In his later years, Paracelsus interpreted magic as the art of drawing down the powers of the stars, which he considered proxies of celestial ideas, and to make them work for man. Unsurprisingly, he used the term “astronomy” as a synonym for, or even saw it as superior to magic.

At the turn of the 16th century, the learned discussion of natural magic was in full flood, but Paracelsus remained relatively silent about his sources. Among the abbots mentioned in his *Grosse Wundartzney*, there was one ‘von Spanheim’, which may be identified with → Johannes Trithemius, the authority on demonology, witchcraft and cryptography. Paracelsus called → Marsilio Ficino the ‘best Italian physician’, and there is evidence that he

knew the German translation of Ficino’s *De Vita*. But in the authentic writings of Paracelsus there is no direct reference or even allusion to → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, → Agrippa of Nettesheim, or any other representative of the Renaissance tradition of *magia naturalis*. However, Paracelsus was deeply indebted to his father who himself was a physician and who had instructed him in the “philosophia adepta”, by which Paracelsus may have meant Hermetic or Neoplatonic philosophy. In view of this paucity of direct references, the question of the sources of his magic arises, which is a matter of debate among specialists on Paracelsus. Will-Erich Peuckert, Walter Pagel and Kurt Goldammer were firmly convinced that Paracelsus had involved himself in the already-existing tradition of natural magic, to whose theories he gave further elaboration. Pagel even believed that Paracelsus was indebted to sources from antiquity, → Gnosticism in particular; as his main evidence he pointed to Paracelsus’s ideas on the eightfold nature of Adam. Charles Webster, in contrast, largely denied the Neoplatonic and Gnostic origins of Paracelsus’s magic, pointing instead to his extensive Biblical references. The truth of the matter may lie somewhere between these two extremes. Paracelsus’s dependence on biblical sources and his theological arguments have already been discussed above. On the other hand, in Paracelsus’s time knowledge was frequently passed on by oral teaching rather than the study of books, and Paracelsus, who had been to Italy himself, was certainly well informed about the prevailing philosophical trends and may have looked upon them as common knowledge. He was obviously influenced to some degree by Gnostic ideas, because Western alchemy, being the art that had motivated him most, went straight back to Hellenistic Egypt and was related to Gnosticism. Paracelsus was deeply convinced that all things – minerals, plants, animals and even man – had their invisible counterparts in the macrocosm, where they existed as “astra”, which represented their essence. This notion of something like eternal ideas lying behind all things, which is basic to Paracelsus’s theory of signatures, can certainly be called quintessentially (neo)platonian.

Another problem in studying the magical works of Paracelsus is that some of them are certainly spurious. Although they reflect a thorough familiarity with Paracelsian thought, they lack the originality characteristic of the genuine works. They often contain a wild mixture of magical concepts and ideas. These spurious magical writings, combined with spurious alchemical tracts, were accepted as



authentic by posterity for at least three centuries, thus giving rise to the false academic perception of Paracelsus as a gold-making alchemist and a heretical magician consorting with demons and the Devil.

In this context it is useful to itemise some spurious magical works. The tract *De occulta philosophia* touches on various magical subjects. Although rejecting ceremonial magic as un-Christian, it advocates the magical use of pentacles and characters. It contains a discussion of visions and dreams, and earthly ghosts referred to as gnomes. It reviews the power of the → imagination, which, when used with malicious intent, may even provoke pestilence or wars; and it treats of possession by spirits and the magical background of thunderstorms. *De pestilitate* contains a further disquisition on the imagination as causing diseases, and plague in particular. In this context it develops a complicated system of alchemical speculation, including the four elements and the three principles, and continues by discussing the meaning of Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], imagination, magic, the poison from the stars and the magnetic power of human “mumia” which may either cause or heal pestilence. The *Liber principiorum* deals with the magical and medicinal meaning of venomous animals such as snakes, worms, spiders, crayfish and suchlike. The book *Archidoxis magica* instructs in the use of magical seals, numbers and signs. The *Liber Azoth* contains a kabbalistic theory of the “linea vitae” (the line of life). Although spurious, all these tracts played a certain role in the reception of Paracelsian thought that began in the late 16th century and exercised a decisive influence on the spiritualistic and mystic currents of the early modern period (see → Paracelsianism).

In his genuine writings Paracelsus discussed magic from an early date on. In his *Volumen Paramirum* (c. 1520), alongside his theory of the cause of disease, Paracelsus also discussed the use of evil spells and enchanted images by “nigromancia” (black magic), which may evoke an illness in the victim. Already in his *Elf Traktat* (Eleven Tracts), written around the same time, he hinted that there were two theories in medicine, corresponding to his double body speculations: the “physica” for the visible world and the “magia” for the invisible realm. Only on the basis of the latter could one find the true cause and cure of an illness. In his early years Paracelsus did not elaborate this medical aspect of magic. In his famous *Paragranum* (1529/30) Paracelsus built his house of medicine not on magic but on the four pillars of natural philosophy, astronomy, alchemy and virtue.

From about 1530 onwards, however, Paracelsus evinced a growing interest in magical issues. He first hinted at a scientific view of natural magic in his important five books *Von den unsichtbaren Kranckheiten und deren Ursachen* (The Invisible Diseases and Their Causes, 1531/32). He not only pondered the impact of belief and imagination on the origin of disease and its cure, but also discussed the medical and magical effect of *mumia* and characters at some length. *Mumia* was a medicinal preparation derived from an embalmed human corpse (the Latin word is cognate with the mummy of ancient Egyptian funerary practice). Paracelsus believed that the quintessence of the invisible human body and its vital force clung to *mumia* even after death, and could thus be used for marvellous purposes. Paracelsus sought to explain the power of pilgrimage sanctuaries harbouring a sepulchre in terms of the *mumia* of the saint’s corpse attracting the pilgrims.

Paracelsus did not regard characters as the spells of medieval magic. In his view, magical words and phrases embodied the very language of angels and spirits, who in turn had received their powers from God. This subjection to heavenly forces signified a strong vindication of magic to Paracelsus. The magician was allowed to perform his art as long as he was strictly adhering to the good. Consequently, characters were the only way to retrieve the heavenly powers. Like the physician administering herbs to heal a patient, the magician attained his goal with the aid of characters. Regarding theories of magic, this represents an important shift from the medieval idea of a demonic influence to that of an impersonal and quasi-natural agent, and thus can be considered as an attempt to establish natural magic on a scientific basis. In the early 1530s Paracelsus produced a set of writings (if, indeed, they are genuine) called *Philosophia de divinis operibus et factis, et de secretis naturae* (Philosophy of Divine works and Actions, and of the Secrets of Nature), but also referred to as the first part of the *Philosophia Magna* (the second part being the set of *Vita Beata* writings mentioned above). Here Paracelsus offers what is in fact a lengthy collection of independent tracts on various aspects of popular magic, such as witches, demons and cases of possession, lunatics, sleep, prophets and fortune-tellers, elementals including fairies, gnomes and salamanders, apparitions, the imagination, characters, homunculi and monsters, invocation and necromancy.

In his *Erklerung der ganzen astronomiei* (Explanation of All Astronomy, c. 1536) Paracelsus made a further attempt at elevating magic to the status of

a comprehensive philosophy of nature. Man and nature had to rely on the “astra” or stars referred to above as variation on the theme of celestial ideas. This led Paracelsus to define magic as the art of bringing the power of the heavens down into stones, herbs, words and characters. Magic also taught one how to transmute one thing into another, and demonstrated the significance of the stars, comets and other celestial bodies. Thus he used “astronomy” as a notion superior to magic, since the essence of things was hidden in the stars. The seven subdivisions of astronomy according to this tract were “astrologia” (the art of knowing the course and the properties of the stars), “magia”, “divinatio” (divination), “nigromantia” (the art of controlling astral bodies), “signatum” (the art of detecting man’s individual star), “artes incertae” (the arts of imagination), and “manualis” (the art of making magical instruments and talismans). Within the existing tradition of natural magic there were no models for such a subdivision, so we may assume that it was his own invention.

At the end of his life, Paracelsus attempted to summarize his teachings and describe its key points as clearly as possible. Thus in his *Labyrinthus medicorum errantium* (Labyrinth of Erring Physicians, 1537/38) he once again set forth the foundations of his medicine. As in the earlier *Paragranum*, he emphasized the importance of understanding nature, the firmament and alchemy, but this time he also philosophised about the process of attaining knowledge. He spoke about experience, science, and the role of magic. The medical art should not be grounded in mere speculation, but in a certain revelation; then it would be a “magica inventrix” that revealed to the physician all he needed to know. Thus Paracelsus advocated a scientific method that included intuition as a legitimate way of attaining knowledge.

The crowning of his philosophical endeavours, however, was his voluminous *Astronomia Magna* or *Philosophia Sagax* [Great Astronomy or Philosophy of the Wise, 1537/38], that has remained incomplete. Here he tried to outline a scientific system that should explain nature as well as the supernatural world, that combined his medical and his theological convictions, and that showed the way to knowledge and its application. In this sense, the immense philosophical edifice of the *Astronomia Magna* can be seen as standing at the turning point between the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, and comprises an early but so far only poorly appreciated contribution to the rise of scientific thinking. In the first chapters Paracelsus summarized his philosophy of the two worlds and

of the eternal limbus, which in fact constituted the very foundations of his belief and served him as tools to make magic and the biblical wonders plausible or even accessible to the true physician. Thus, for him, “astronomy” in the sense of magic was the cornerstone of medicine, and indeed the mother of all arts. But Paracelsus also stated that where astronomy ended, there religion should start. The conveyance of knowledge takes place by the two corresponding lights: the light of nature, being the light of the firmament, in the natural world, and the light of the Holy Ghost in the eternal, divine world. Paracelsus continued by proposing a sophisticated classification of astronomy that surpassed his former division in the *Erklerung*. The “mother astronomy” is split into four subdivisional “astronomies”: one that is called “naturalis” and reigns in the realm of nature; one that is called “supera” and springs from Christ; one that is called “olympi novi” and comes from faith; and finally one that is called “inferorum” and is used by the infernal spirits that dominate black magic. Each of these four astronomies is again divided into nine “membra” (members): “magia”, “nigromantia”, “necromantia”, “astrologia”, “signatum”, “artes incertae”, “medicina adepta”, “philosophia adepta”, and “mathematica adepta”. There are even more refined subdivisions, not enumerated here. In this complicated system of philosophy, magic played only a restricted role. According to the definition given in the *Astronomia Magna*, magic was the means to induce the heavenly powers to come down to man, who served as a “centrum” or “medium” to receive and control them. As the physician was able to extract medicinal virtues from herbs and plants, the magician could likewise summon the astral powers, and he could do even more: he could transform them and lead them to a higher state, thus becoming a master alchemist who perfects creation. If man taps into the infernal realm, he is a sorcerer; if he depends on nature and interprets the light of the firmament, he is a magus or wise man; and if he relies solely on the Holy Ghost and heaven, then he is a divine magus or prophet, capable of performing the same wonders as Christ. Thus at the end of his life, Paracelsus succeeded in uniting his conflicting doctrines derived from “pagan” and Christian sources into one great synthesis.

Paracelsus’s teachings exerted a powerful influence on posterity. In chemistry, the notion of the *Tria prima* became predominant for two centuries. The attempt to interpret bodily functions in terms of chemical processes stimulated the development of iatrochemistry with → Joan Baptista

van Helmont and Franciscus de le Boë Sylvius as important representatives of the 17th century. In pharmacology, after years of ardent debate, the Paracelsian way of preparing chemical remedies by extracting the active medicinal principle finally grew to general acceptance. No less important was Paracelsus's sway over various currents in Western esotericism and religious movements, and here only a few can be mentioned. It has been shown that the *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (Four Books on True Christendom), written by the eminent Pietist precursor Johann Arndt (1555-1621) and a source of religious edification until the 19th century, is full of allusions to Paracelsus. There are also interconnections between Paracelsus and the theosophic writer → Valentin Weigel (1533-1588), and the same is definitely and extensively the case in the works of the mystic → Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). In turn, the Christian theosophy of → Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710) was deeply influenced by Boehme. Needless to say, Paracelsian philosophy plays an important role in the esoteric literature of the 18th century, including alchemical, Rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism] and partly Masonic [→ Freemasonry] sources.

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UDO BENZENHÖFER (SECTIONS 1-3)  
URS LEO GANTENBEIN (SECTIONS 4-5)

**Pasqually, Martines de, \* 1709/1709 or 1726/1727 Grenoble, † 20/21.9.1774 Port-au-Prince**

It has been well said of Martines de Pasqually that he was a "living enigma". The mystery begins with his surname. Gérard van Rijnberk, in his work on Pasqually, takes two pages (I, 14-15) to list the variations of his name, whose diversity far exceeds the loose orthography of the time (it was only at the French Revolution that the registration of names was normalized and fixed). However, from comparison of official documents (registry and military certificates) it seems very likely that his full name (with many orthographic variations) was *Jacques de Lyoron* (or de Livron) *Joachin Latour* (or de Latour) *de la Case Martines de Pasqually* (or else: *Jacques de Lyoron Latour de la Case Joachin Martines de Pasqually*). This name appears to consist of two successive surnames, each preceded by a Christian name (Jacques, Joachin). Van Rijnberk suggested that Martines de Pasqually was a "hieronym": a sacred name attached to the function of

"initiativ chief" with which Pasqually had been endowed, following his father. But this ingenious hypothesis has been eliminated by the military certificates discovered and published by Christian Marcenne in the *Bulletin de la Société Martines de Pasqually* (no. 6, 1996; a society based in Bordeaux). From these, it appears that an uncle, designated as "doux [sic] Pasqually", commanded in 1737 a company of the regiment of Edinburgh Dragoons in the service of Philip V of Spain. As for Pasqually himself, the Spanish title of nobility "Don" (or "Dom") almost always precedes the second part of his name (Martines de Pasqually), and before the first part of his name (Latour de la Case) it is often duplicated by the French title, also indicating nobility, of "Messire" or "Sire". There is no doubt about Pasqually's noble status, attested by many official documents, nor of his title, which was that of *écuyer* (esquire). He almost always signed himself "Don Martines de Pasqually".

The next enigma is his date of birth. The Société Martines de Pasqually, in its Bulletin no. 9 (1999), compared two chronologies deduced from existing documents that are totally incompatible with each other. One, calculated from the death certificate among other documents, has Pasqually born in 1726 or 1727. But it appears to be invalidated by the military certificates mentioned above, which show that Pasqually had a military career in the service of the King of Spain for at least ten years, from 1737, when he was a lieutenant, to 1747 – which cannot have started when he was ten years old. On the other hand, these certificates accord with the masonic letters patent that Pasqually produced as having been issued to his father in 1738, which mention him (the son) as being twenty-nine at the time. This would indicate a birth date of 1708 or 1709. The probabilities thus support an early chronology, which Van Rijnberk already favored (II, 9-10).

Pasqually's place of birth was almost certainly Grenoble; all the official documents agree on this point. His family certainly originated in Spain. In fact, the letters patent of 1738 which he produced in 1762 indicate that his father was born in Alicante in 1671. This Spanish origin, on which all specialists agree, is reinforced by the certificates relating to his military career in the service of the Spanish crown. Several contemporaries close to him bear witness to the fact that his native language was not French (the purely phonetic orthography of his letters also points to this, though that in itself is not a proof).

His origin was not only Spanish, but Jewish. This was already apparent to many of his



contemporaries. The denials on this point in a very late letter (1821) of → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz are not enough to cast doubt on Pasqually's Jewish origins. Besides, on closer reading Willermoz's denials apply to religion, much more than to race. In fact, Martines not only declared himself a Roman Catholic, producing in support a certificate of catholicity, but he also required postulants for entry to the → *Ordre des Elus Coëns* to belong to this confession. This is the very reason why several members of the Reformed Church (e.g. Du Roy d'Hauterive) had to abjure their membership of the latter. Robert Amadou, after studying the question for some fifty years, concluded (cf. Introduction to his 1995 edition of the *Traité sur la Réintégration*) that 'his paternal family was . . . of Spanish Jewish Marrano origin, or, more precisely, semi-Marrano'. The term "semi-Marrano" is used because the authentic Marranos only pretended to be converted to Christianity, to deceive their countrymen, whereas Christianity is inherent in Martines' doctrine, and he always professed it himself. This Christianity, as it appears in his works, is peculiar but nonetheless authentic. According to Amadou, who thoroughly analyzed it (in the Introduction cited above, and in the Preface to his 1999 edition of the *Leçons de Lyon*), Pasqually belonged to a very particular and very archaic category of Christianity, which one would have thought extinct for over a thousand years: "Judeo-Christianity". This would seem to confirm his own constant contention that the knowledge he possessed had been transmitted to him by succession. Willermoz, echoing this, states that 'in his ministry, he had succeeded his father'. The possibility of an "esoteric transmission" inside or outside the family had already been aired by → René Guénon, whom the "enigma of Martines de Pasqually" provoked to the point of writing at least four articles, some of them long ones, between 1914 and 1936.

Be that as it may, nothing is known about Pasqually's youth except his recently discovered military career. We do not even know his biography before his entry onto the masonic stage – and the historical stage – during the decade 1750-1760. The first chapter founded by him seems to have been the *Chapitre des Juges Ecosais* in Montpellier, 1754. He then travelled through France, mainly in the south but also in Paris and Lyons. At Toulouse, where in 1760 he explained before the "united lodges of Saint John" what seems from the minutes to have already been a sketch of his system, he failed to convince the brethren. He had more success in Guyenne, which is important for what follows.

Starting on April 28, 1762, Pasqually settled in Bordeaux, where he resided (except for a few months in Paris in 1766-1767) until his departure for San Domingo on May 5, 1772. He won over the lodge *La Française*, within which he set up a "Temple particulier" (private temple): a lodge which, after wranglings with the other Bordeaux lodges, especially *L'Anglaise*, flew its true colors by taking in 1764 the title of *La Française Elue Ecosaise*. It was especially the regiment of *Foix-Infanterie*, which, after a five year tour of duty in San Domingo, returned to take up quarters in Bordeaux in July 1765, that became a privileged field of activity for Pasqually. He founded there a "Temple coen" called "des Elus Ecosais", under the aegis of the military lodge *Josué* which was probably created for this purpose. Among other masons, he initiated two officers, P.A. de Grainville and G.A. de Champoléon, who would later become his official collaborators and his voluntary secretaries. It was through them that → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, assigned to the *Foix-Infanterie* in the very month of its return to France, became acquainted with Pasqually – a decisive encounter for both men – and was speedily admitted to the Order.

As the Grand Lodge of France became caught up in the quarrels between *L'Anglaise* and *La Française*, Pasqually addressed to it a copy of the translation of the "constitution and patent", written 'in the English idiom', as he said, granted to his father on May 20, 1738, and transmissible to himself by 'Charles Stuard [sic], King of Scotland, Ireland, and England, Grand Master of all the Lodges on the surface of the earth'. This patent makes mention of 'Don Martinez Pasqualis, Esquire, aged 67 years, native of the town of Alicante in Spain', and of 'Joachim Dom Martinez Pasqualis, his elder son, aged 28 years, native of the town of Grenoble in France'. This document is generally considered as apocryphal, though Robert Amadou suspends judgment on this point. In any case, no decisive argument has been produced either to confirm or to disprove its authenticity. The question of the Stuarts' relations with → Freemasonry, whether overt or veiled (a question also relevant to the charter granted to Baron Karl von Hund, founder of the system known as "Strict Observance") is currently under research in the North of England and in Scotland. Finally, the Grand Lodge of France took a step of general import: in August 1766 it decreed the abolition of the high degrees. It rescinded this order in October, but not before it had excluded Pasqually from the lodges under its control, calling him a "sectarian". However, being itself prey to



persistent troubles that sometimes involved acts of violence, the Grand Lodge was dissolved by royal edict on February 21, 1767.

Henceforth, Pasqually had a clear field to set up his own system, the Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus Coens de l'Univers (originally called Ordre des Elus Coens de Josué). During a several months' stay in Paris (end of 1766 to beginning of 1767), he admitted many masons, including Willermoz – an encounter that would be as important as that with Saint-Martin, though of a very different kind – and also Bacon de la Chevalerie. The latter was a mason of great skill, whom in the following year Pasqually made his “universal Substitute”, at the same time (spring equinox, 1767) as he founded the Sovereign Tribunal and promulgated the statutes of the Order.

Returning to Bordeaux, Pasqually married in September 1767 the niece and sister of two officers of the regiment of Foix Infanterie. She bore him a son in June 1768, whom he counted on as a successor (using this term in a letter to Willermoz) at the head of the Order, and wrote to Willermoz that he had admitted him as Grand Master Coën right after his baptism. The Abbé Pierre Fournié (see below) was his tutor for a time. But thanks to the turbulences of the revolutionary period, this son ended as a simple police superintendent under the name of De La Tour (or Latour) de la Case (“Pasqually” having disappeared). Serge Caillet (in the journal *L'Esprit des choses* 7, 1994), and the Société Martines de Pasqually (*Bulletin* 8, 1998) have traced the drab career of this son from 1814 to 1830. Another son, born in 1771, died in 1773. In 1768 Saint-Martin, then aged twenty-five, was introduced to Pasqually by Grainville and Champoléon, while in the same year Willermoz was ordained Réau-Croix by Bacon de la Chevalerie in Paris. Willermoz was re-ordained “sympathetically”, meaning at a distance, by Pasqually himself in 1770.

From 1767 to 1772, Martines organized his Order, furnishing it with instructions, rituals, and various recommendations. He started writing the *Traité* with the enthusiastic but disordered assistance of the Abbé Pierre Fournié as secretary, then, from 1771, with the much more methodical and effective help of Saint-Martin (whom he ordained Réau-Croix in 1772). His faithful disciples Grainville and Champoléon acted as occasional collaborators. Despite this, things were far from being finished when Pasqually embarked on May 5, 1772 for San Domingo, in order to sort out matters of inheritance (the Société Martines de Pasqually has passably explained the latter; see *Bulletin* 6, 7, and

8, 1996-1998. Incidentally, this society has published a calendar, year by year, of all the events relating to Martines' life).

From 1772 until September 20 (or more likely 21), 1774, the date of his death in Port-au-Prince, Pasqually was actively engaged with his Order: much more so than has been claimed, indeed almost “feverishly” according to Van Rijnberk. He sent out rituals, instructions, messages of all kinds. As his successor as Grand Souverain de l'Ordre, since his son was not yet old enough, he had named his cousin by marriage Cagnet de Lester. But the latter died in his turn on December 11, 1778, and was replaced by Sebastian de Las Casas, who is supposed also to have been a relative of Pasqually's. Meanwhile the Order disintegrated, and in 1781 Las Casas set all the members at liberty. But the history of the Elus Coëns was far from over.

At the height of its prosperity, the Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus Coëns de l'Univers had counted scarcely a dozen temples, enrolling about 100 members. Most of the temples fell into decline, and the members changed their allegiance. However, at least two temples remained active until the revolutionary epoch. The Toulouse temple, as revealed by the Du Bourg papers, continued working under the direction of Du Roy d'Hauterive; that of Lyons, under Willermoz. It was in Lyons, from 1774 to 1776, that occurred those “rehearsals” of Martinesian doctrine already noted by Vulliaud and Guénon, first published by Antoine Faivre in 1975 under the title *Conférences des Elus Cohens de Lyon*, and in a more complete edition by Robert Amadou in 1999 under the title *Les Leçons de Lyon aux Elus Coëns*.

This document is of capital importance, and an indispensable complement to the unfinished exposition which is the *Traité sur la réintégration des êtres dans leur première propriété, vertu et puissance spirituelle divine* (Treatise on the reintegration of beings in their first property, virtue, and divine spiritual power; edited by Robert Amadou in 1995 from a manuscript of Saint-Martin), or *Traité de la réintégration des êtres créés dans leurs primitives propriétés, vertus et puissances spirituelles divines* (Treatise on the reintegration of created beings in their primitive properties, virtues, and divine spiritual powers; ed. R. Amadou in 1974 from two other texts). To these should be added the numerous rituals and instructions made available by the discovery of Fonds Z (derived from Saint-Martin) and the correspondence of Pasqually published by → Papis, by Van Rijnberk, and in the journal *Renaissance Traditionnelle*. Among the

notable interpreters of Pasqually's thought are Saint-Martin, who developed it in his works *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (On errors and truth, 1775) and the *Tableau naturel des rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'homme et l'univers* (Natural table of the relationships existing between God, man, and the universe, 1782); and Willermoz, who expounded it in the *Instruction secrète au Profès* (Secret instruction to the Profès) and especially in the *Instruction secrète aux Grands Profès* (Secret instruction to the Grands Profès), both written shortly before 1778. There is also the work of Abbé Pierre Fournié, *Ce que nous avons été, ce que nous sommes, ce que nous deviendrons* (What we have been, what we are, what we shall become; 1801): a confused and diffuse work but not lacking in original inspiration.

If one combines the last title with that of the *Traité sur la réintégration*, one has a first glimpse, partial but faithful, of Pasqually's doctrine. "Doctrine" is the right term, because he taught "with authority", like a master, not like a thinker expounding a theory of his own invention. Pasqually presented himself as the heir and the transmitter of a long tradition, of supra-human origin: he declared in a letter to Willermoz: 'The science that I profess is certain and true, because it does not come from man'. Pasqually was confident of having been taught or inspired from above; in one place in the *Traité* he writes: 'I will explain it to you as clearly as the truth of wisdom has dictated it to me'. It is clear that for him, the wisdom in question was not human or mundane.

The doctrine taught by Pasqually is thus a science, a "science of man" as → Joseph de Maistre would later write (he who never reneged on his original Martinesism, on this point as on many others). It is a science of man in his 'relationships with God and with the universe', as Saint-Martin expounds it in his *Tableau naturel*. Taking as its point of departure man and the world in their current state, this science goes back to their origins and anticipates their final ends. It begins by speaking of the primitive state of immediate proximity, even of unity, with God of man created in God's image. It goes on to the present state of "privation", of rupture and separation from God. It anticipates a state of reconciliation with God, followed by "reintegration", a return to God. For Pasqually, sacred anthropology and cosmology are thus inseparable, each explaining the other. They are tributaries of a certain "science of God" which is not theology properly speaking, but rather theosophy, because what the theosopher grasps of God, or what grasps him, is Divine Wisdom.

This science is a Judaeo-Christian gnosis, or rather one that is both Jewish and Christian: a gnosis not descriptive, but active. It does not merely obtain knowledge of the reasons for the original fall of man, of his "prevarication", but urges and helps him to repair the consequences of this fall. To this end it obtains the "motor" or instrument of a reconciliation of man with God, then of his 'reintegration in his primitive properties, virtues, and divine spiritual powers'. For Pasqually, the Ordre des Chevaliers Elus Coëns de l'Univers was supposed to provide this "motor" or instrument.

If this Order seems to resemble other high-degree masonic systems or regimes flourishing at the time, Pasqually thought, on the contrary, that those belonged to the "apocrypha", to the "profane". For him, his system was the only authentic one. Thus he wrote, in his rather peculiar style: 'I am only a feeble instrument which God wishes to use, unworthy as I am, to recall men, my fellows, to their first masonic state, which is to say spiritually man or soul, so as to make them see truly that they are really man-God, being created in the image and semblance of this all-powerful Being' (letter to Willermoz, August 13, 1768).

The Order created by Pasqually consisted of a sequence of ten degrees, if one includes the three "blue" degrees of Apprentice, Companion, and Master, outwardly similar to those of regular → Freemasonry which he called "profane" (an understandable epithet in this context, since the term etymologically refers to that which is "outside the Temple"). But the similarity is limited to the names of these three degrees. As for the actual Coën degrees, they are seven in number, distributed in four classes (these numbers are important, for the Martinesian doctrine is accompanied by a precise and complex numerology). Though their names vary with the sources and epochs, their divisions remained unchanged: (A) Maître Grand Elu (or Maître Parfait Elu), transitional degree (somewhat like the Maître Ecossais de Saint-André in the Régime Ecossais Rectifié). (B) Classe du Porche, comprising the degrees of Apprenti Coën, Compagnon Coën, and Maître Coën (or Maître particulier). (C) Classe du Temple, with the degrees of Grand Maître Coën (or Grand Architecte), Chevalier d'Orient (or Grand Elu de Zorobabel), Commandeur d'Orient (or Apprenti Réau-Croix). (D) The degree of Réau-Croix, which constitutes a class of its own. Pasqually conceived of these seven degrees as referring to the seven gifts of the Spirit, and as leading progressively and pedagogically to the ever more advanced and integral practice of a ceremonial cult. This cult was a theurgy, in that it

involved and activated the divine energies. It was also a liturgy, the “common work” of masons (a word synonymous, for Pasqually, to “men”) who are involved in it and of “spiritual and intelligent beings” (namely angels) who cooperate in it. The first man, priest-king of the universe, was originally consecrated to this “primitive cult”. Pasqually thus proposed to his disciples that they should apply themselves to it again, following new methods appropriate to the new state of man, who carries the stigmata of his original fall; and this so as to “operate” his personal reconciliation and the universal reconciliation (that of all creation): the “reintegration”. These views are not dissimilar to those that some Fathers of the Church called “transfiguration” and “deification”. Meanwhile, the cosmic liturgy proposed by Pasqually does not intend rivalry with the church liturgy, nor to substitute for the latter (Pasqually required his disciples to assiduously follow the services of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the daily practice of a ritual of prayers modelled, with due adaptation, on the monastic “hours”).

This is why the *Ordre des Elus Coëns*, which is (to quote the recent title of an article by Serge Caillet in *Renaissance Traditionnelle*) ‘a school of virtue and prayer’, finally appears as a sort of religious order. Its theurgical ceremony was not magical, in the often negative sense of the word. It was not aimed at acquiring natural or supernatural powers. The famous “passes” or “luminous glyphs” (that is, the tangible manifestation of a “presence” in the chamber of theurgical operation) were not, as is sometimes thought, the actual goal of the operations. Pasqually saw in these passes nothing more than symptoms or signs indicating to the theurgist that his reconciliation was in progress. Theurgy, he wrote, is ‘a ceremony and a rule of life to enable the invocation of the Eternal in holiness’. This rule of life, an indispensable condition, demanded a rigorous hygiene of body, soul, and spirit that is almost ascetic. The ceremonial was precise, exacting, and religious: it was destined to ensure the communication with good spirits and to prevent communication with the “perverse spirits” (i.e., demoniac). The “pass” was thus the manifestation of what Pasqually called *la Chose* (the Thing), by which he meant Wisdom personified, the divine Sophia. According to the discriminating analysis by Robert Amadou (in a radio broadcast of March 4, 2000 devoted to the *Elus Coëns*), ‘the Thing is not the person of Jesus Christ . . ., the Thing is not Jesus Christ; it is the presence of Jesus Christ’, just as the *Shekinah* was the presence of God in Solomon’s Temple. In the Martinesian cult,

the Thing was not summoned, for it could not be; it manifested, it caused an epiphany, to express its satisfaction and benevolence. That having been said, the cult itself did not have as its goal the manifestation of the Thing; it was only the occasion for it. This cult had another object, which is sacrificial: it was a matter of “operating”, or at least of advancing, the reconciliation of man and that of the universe. As Willermoz summed it up, it was a cult of expiation, of purification, of reconciliation, and of sanctification.

The time seems to have passed when Martines was decried as a charlatan and an impostor, or else as merely a fantasist full of muddled and bizarre ideas. One is entitled to re-read today, with new eyes, the concordant witness of two of his disciples: ‘This extraordinary man, of whom I have never known the like’ (Willermoz); ‘This extraordinary man is the only living man I have known whom I have not fathomed’ (Saint-Martin).

Martines de Pasqually, *Traité de la réintégration des êtres créés dans leurs primitives propriétés, vertus et puissances spirituelles divines*, Paris: Chacornac, 1899 ♦ new eds.: (A) Robert Amadou (ed.), Paris: Robert Dumas, 1974 (on the right-hand page, copy of the 1899 edition, on the left-hand page, reproduction of one of the original manuscripts) ♦ (B) Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1988 ♦ (C) Le Tremblay: Diffusion rosicrucienne, 1993 (which presents the facsimile of a manuscript different from that of A) ♦ (D) Le Tremblay: Diffusion rosicrucienne, 1995 (scholarly ed. of the 1993 manuscript).

Pierre Fournié, *Ce que nous avons été, ce que nous sommes, et ce que nous deviendrons. Première partie* (the second part was not published), London: A. Dulau, 1801.

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Papus (Gérard Encausse), *Martinès de Pasqually, sa vie – ses pratiques magiques – son oeuvre – ses disciples, suivi des catéchismes des Elus Coens*, Paris: Chamuel, 1895; reprinted Paris: Dumas, 1976; Paris: Demeter, 1986 ♦ Michel Taillefer, “Les disciples toulousains de Martinès de Pasqually”, in: *Le Temple cohen de Toulouse (1760-1792)*, Cariscript, Paris: Documents martinistes 25, 1986 ♦ Gerard Van Rijnberk, *Un thaumaturge au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Martinès de Pasqually (sa vie, son Oeuvre, son Ordre)*, vol. 1, Paris: Alcan, 1935; vol. 2, Lyon: Derain-Radet, 1938 (several reprints).

JEAN-FRANÇOIS VAR

**Patrizi, Francesco** (Frane Petric’),

\* 25.04.1529 Cherso d’Istria,

† 6.02.1597 Rome

An original case of a (partly self-taught) scholar, with an unconventional career and adventurous existence, Patrizi was born in the borderland between the Venetian Republic and what would nowadays be Croatia. During the first half of the 1550s, he studied at Ingolstadt and Padua and probably became acquainted there with both the peripatetic and neoplatonic philosophical traditions, including the writings of → Ficino. The end of the same decade he spent in Venice, trying to make a name for himself as a poet and, like so many other *letterati* of his time, establish his status as an accomplished text editor and a kind of “publishing consultant”, possibly in view (or in *lieu*?) of a still elusive academic tenure. It certainly does come as a surprise to find him residing mostly in Cyprus during the years 1562-1568, in the quite different role of a steward of agrarian estates and a civil administrator for the Contarini and Mocenigo families. His return to Venice, just before the outset of the 1570s, was followed by several sojourns in Spain, where he served as philosophical advisor (to the Viceroy of Catalogna), counselor (more or less self-appointed, it seems) and agent for greek manuscripts to King Philipp II. He does not appear to have been very successful in any of these activities; but back in Italy again, circumstances became more favorable and eventually enabled him to finally secure some considerably more congenial positions. This turn for the better took place from 1576 onwards, first in Modena (in the service of a learned noblewoman), then (1578) at the Court of Alfonso II, last Duke of Ferrara, where Patrizi was created (at his own request) professor of platonic philosophy at the local University. Better still, on becoming Pope Clement VIII, his friend Cardinal I. Aldobrandini called him to the University of Rome (La Sapienza), again to teach pla-

tonic philosophy (1592). Patrizi died there a few years later, in the process of revising his *Nova de universis philosophia* (Ferrara, 1591, <sup>2</sup>1593[4]) in order to try and win the approval of the Congregation of the Index, which had first asked for emendations and subsequently condemned the book.

It would be hard, even among Renaissance writers, to discover an author whose life and work were more intricate, and who published on a wider range of subjects – including, in Patrizi’s case, some on which he does not seem to have received formal training. As a poet and “man of letters”, Patrizi took part in the literary controversies of his time, like the dispute opposing Ariosto to T. Tasso (he sided with the former), as well as in the activities of learned circles like the “Accademia Veneziana della Fama”, well-known for its “encyclopedic” and innovative interests, much akin to his own. The obvious links between memory [→ Mnemonics] and rhetorics, history and the political and spiritual powers of language (themes dear to 16th century Humanists), he dealt with in his dialogues *Della Historia* (Venice, 1560) and *Della Retorica* (*ibid.* 1562; a *Della Poetica* was partially published later in 1586), in an attempt to substitute Aristotle’s views with a new philosophy of discourse and of history (preceding J. Bodin in this last respect). His criticism of Aristotle he developed in his famous *Discussiones peripateticæ* (1st part Venice, 1571; complete ed. Basel, 1581), and in the *Nova de universis philosophia*, although this last work does retain several peripatetic conceptions (as regards mathematics, for instance). The contents of two late scientific treatises (*Della nuova geometria* and *De rerum natura*, 1587; there is even another writing on ancient roman strategy, of machiavelian inspiration) were subsequently more or less incorporated into the relevant parts of his *Nova de universis philosophia*. This *magnum opus* consists in an imposing fourfold *exposé* of metaphysics and natural philosophy, structured according to the themes of light (both immaterial and corporeal); the universal scale of being (from the plotinian One downwards) and its links with the Trinity and the divine attributes in Christian garb; the world-soul (and the status of individual human souls); and the physical world (resting in turn on the four basic principles of space, light, heat and humidity).

Patrizi’s interest in number [→ Number Symbolism] and geometry applied to cosmology (principally in view of the distinction between “pure”, mathematical space and physical bodies), and in light metaphysics, clearly reflect (as pointed out long ago by P.O. Kristeller) the strong neopla-



tonic and ficinian inclinations which eventually made him famous. His latin translations of Proclus' *Theological and Physical Elements* (1583), of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Chaldaean Oracles* (1593), of the spurious *Theology of Aristotle* (1591), and his compilation of an arithmological (and hitherto unpublished) *De numerorum mysteriis* (1594) obviously reflect the same perspective, which incited him repeatedly to declare Aristotle's philosophy contradictory and inferior to Plato's, and furthermore incompatible with Church doctrines. In doing so, Patrizi not only intended to distance himself from the kind of "concordism" dear to Pico and others, but aimed at nothing less than uprooting the scholastic traditions of learning, which were currently being given new prominence by the Counter-Reformation. His bold request to the Pope, to make the study of his *Nova de universis philosophia* compulsory in the Faculties of theology of Christendom, is a clear indication of his high hopes to change the course of catholic cultural politics, and have his own brand of rational synthesis between Plato, the *prisci theologi* (mainly → Hermes Trismegistus) and Christian doctrines promoted to official status.

For Patrizi is essentially not concerned with the more practical esoteric aspects of late → neoplatonism and hermetic philosophy [→ Hermetic Literature], like theurgy or → astrology, although he does acknowledge their existence; his real pursuit is to establish proof of some of the more theoretical issues of the Christian faith by means of hermetic-platonic arguments. Thus applied, the *pia philosophia* seems to lend a sound rational basis for the development of a new Christian metaphysics, apt moreover to be successfully preached to all non-Catholics, on account of its logical effectiveness. One can hardly avoid having the impression that, in Patrizi's estimate (and quite contrary to Ficino's), the core of truth which was eventually to receive the shape of Christian doctrine had in fact been much more satisfactorily expressed by the ancient sages (→ Zoroaster, Orpheus, Hermes, Pythagoras), whose words and wisdom operated "divine" miracles. This *catena sapientum* having been almost interrupted by the Flood, and later polluted by Aristotle's deviation, it falls to Patrizi's "new philosophy" to retrieve the true signification and spiritual efficacy of Christian dogmas, by restoring their concord with the universal and primordial *religio* (but how the rational side squares with the miracle-working one, is not explained). Such a didactic and theological purpose was bound to be greeted with suspicion and ill-favour by contemporary catholic authorities, notwithstanding the

author's many influential relations within and outside the Church.

Francesco Patrizi da Cherso, *La Città felice*, Venice: Griffio, 1553 ♦ *Della Historia dieci dialoghi*, Venice: A. Arrivabene, 1560 ♦ *Della retorica dieci dialoghi*, Venice: F. Senese, 1562 ♦ *Procli Diadochi Elementa theologica et physica*, Ferrara, 1583 ♦ *Discussiones peripateticæ* [Basel: P. Perna, 1586] (Z. Pandzic ed.), Köln-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1999 ♦ *De rerum natura libri II*, Ferrara: V. Balduino, 1587 ♦ *Nova de Universis Philosophia*, Ferrara: B. Mammarelli, 1591 [reprint Zagreb 1979] ♦ *Magia philosophica*, Hamburg, 1593 [separate ed. of the *Oracles and Hermetica*] ♦ *Della poetica* (D. Aguzzi Barbagli, ed.), 3 vols., Florence: Olschki, 1969-1971 ♦ *Lettere ed opuscoli inediti* (D. Aguzzi Barbagli, ed.), Florence: Olschki, 1975 ♦ *De spatio physico et mathematico* [V. Balduino, Ferrara 1587] (H. Védrine, ed.), Paris: Vrin, 1996.

*Lit.*: L. Bolzoni, *L'universo dei poemi possibili: Studi su Francesco Patrizi da Cherso*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1980 ♦ P. Castelli (ed.), *Francesco Patrizi filosofo platonico nel crepuscolo del Rinascimento*, Florence: Olschki, 2003 ♦ L. Deitz, "Space, Light and Soul in Francesco Patrizi's *Nova de universis philosophia* (1591)", in: A. Grafton and N. Siraisi (eds.), *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge (Ma.): MIT Press, 1999, 139-169 ♦ J. Henry, "Francesco Patrizi da Cherso's Concept of Space and its later Influence", *Annals of Science* 36 (1979), 549-575 ♦ P.O. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance*, Stanford (Ca.): Stanford University Press, 1964, 110-26 ♦ C. Leijenhorst, "Francesco Patrizi's Hermetic Philosophy", in: R. van den Broek & W.J. Hanegraaf (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1998, 125-146 ♦ T. Leinkauf, *Il neoplatonismo di Francesco Patrizi come presupposto della sua critica ad Aristotele*, Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1990 ♦ M. Muccillo, "Marsilio Ficino e Francesco Patrizi da Cherso", in: G.C. Garfagnini (ed.), *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone: Studi e documenti*, Florence: Olschki, 1988 (2 vols.), 615-679 ♦ eadem, "Aristotelismo, platonismo ed ermetismo ne 'La Città felice' di Francesco Patrizi da Cherso", in: G. Saccaro del Buffo & A.O. Lewis (eds.), *Utopie per gli anni Ottanta: Studi interdisciplinari sui temi, la storia, i progetti*, Rome, 1987, 553-577 ♦ eadem, *Platonismo, Ermetismo e "prisca theologia": Ricerche di storiografia filosofica rinascimentale*, Florence: Olschki, 1996 [on Patrizi, 73-193] ♦ M. Mulsow, "Philosophia Italica' als reduzierte prisca-sapientia-Ideologie: Antonio Persio und Francesco Patrizis Rekonstruktion der Elementenlehre", in: M. Mulsow (ed.), *Das Ende des Hermetismus: Historische Kritik und neue Naturphilosophie in der Spätrenaissance*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 253-280 ♦ A.L. Puliafito Bleuel (ed.), [F. Patrizi] *Nova de Universis Philosophia: Materiali per un' edizione emendata*, Florence: Olschki, 1993 ♦ eadem, "Hermetische Texte in Francesco Patrizis *Nova de Universis Philosophia*", in: Mulsow, o.c., 237-251 ♦ F. Purnell, "Francesco



Patrizi and the Critics of Hermes Trismegistus”, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976), 155-178 (repr. in Mulrow, o.c., 105-126 ♦ E. Rosen, “Francesco Patrizi and the celestial Spheres”, *Physis* 26 (1984), 305-324 ♦ P. Rossi, “La negazione delle sfere e l’astrobiologia di F. Patrizi”, *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane: Società e cultura*, Bari: Laterza, 1977, 401-437 [2 *Immagini della scienza*, Rome, 1987, 109-147] ♦ K. Schuhmann, “Francesco Patrizi en de hermetische filosofie”, in: G. Quispel (ed.), *De hermetische gnosia in de loop der eeuwen*, Baarn, 1992, 339-355 ♦ C. Vasoli, “Francesco Patrizi e la tradizione ermetica”, *Nuova Rivista Storica* 1980, 25-40 ♦ idem, “L’idea della ‘prisca sapientia’ in Francesco Patrizi”, in: M. Fagiolo (ed.), *Roma e l’Antico nell’arte e nella cultura del Cinquecento*, Rome, 1985, 41-56 ♦ idem, “L’hermétisme à Venise, de Giorgio à Patrizi”, in: A. Faivre (ed.), *Présence d’Hermès Trismégiste*, Paris: Albin-Michel, 1988, 120-152 ♦ idem, *Francesco Patrizi da Cherso*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1989 ♦ M. Wilmott, “Aristoteles Exotericus, Acroamaticus, Mysticus: Two Interpretations of the Typological Classification of the ‘Corpus Aristotelicum’ by Francesco Patrizi da Cherso”, *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* 1 (1985), 67-91 ♦ P. Zambelli, “Aneddoti patriziani”, *Rinascimento II*° S., 7 (1967), 309-318 ♦ Website: <http://core.ecu.edu/phil/ryanel/fphp.htm> [dedicated to F.P.].

JEAN-PIERRE BRACH

**Péladan, Joseph-Aimé (Joséphin),**  
28.3.1858 Lyon (Rhône), † 27.6.1918  
Neuilly-sur-Seine

Descending from a Protestant family of the Cévennes that had converted to Catholicism, Joséphin grew up in Lyons in the zealous atmosphere of recent converts. His father, Louis-Adrien (1815-1890) was a publicist in the legitimist newspapers, specializing in the interpretation of prophecies that linked the return of the king, the *Grand Monarque*, to the secret of the end of time. His writing of a rejoinder to Renan’s (1823-1893) *Life of Jesus* earned him a papal decoration and the right to the title of *Chevalier*. Péladan Sr. passed on this vision of an exalted, exotic Catholicism to his two sons. Adrien (1844-1885), the elder, was a polygraph interested in Chinese philology, botany, and homeopathic medicine. According to Joséphin, who admired him enormously, Adrien was the last holder of the initiation of the Rose-Croix of Toulouse, and it was he who interested his younger brother in occultism [→ occult/occultism] and Hermetism [→ Hermetic Literature]. In 1870 the family moved to Nîmes, where Joséphin discovered art and literature, which induced him, as it did most of the occultists of his time, to try his luck in the Parisian literary world in 1881.

Péladan became known through the publication of articles on Renaissance and classical painting, and through the connections of his mistress, Henriette Maillat (1849-?), a veritable Egeria of the literary types who gravitated around Léon Bloy (1846-1917) and → Huysmans. Péladan’s *Le Vice suprême* (The supreme vice, 1884) was published with a preface by Barbey d’Aureville (1808-1889), and, being the first occultist novel, brought him notoriety. He attempted to pursue a double career as littérateur and spiritual master in the Parisian occultist world by combining a series of “classic” novels – *A coeur perdu* (Lost heart, 1887), *La Gynandre* (The man-woman, 1891), *Pérégrine et pérégrin* (1904) in the series “La décadence latine” (Latin decadence) – with a series on occult themes. He called the latter “L’Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes” (The theater of dead sciences), including *Comme on devient mage* (How to become a magician, 1892) and *L’Occulte catholique* (The Catholic occult, 1898). It was in the field of art that Péladan was most successful in joining action with the intellectual life, by organizing the Salons de la Rose-Croix, extravagant shows appealing to high society which began in 1892 and featured most of the symbolist painters of the time: Felicien Rops (1833-1898), Alexandre Séon (1855-1917), Armand Point (1860-1932), Fernand Khnopff (1858-1929), Odilon Redon (1840-1916), Jean Delville (1867-1953), Emile-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929), Felix Vallotton (1865-1925), Charles Filiger (1863-1928), and the composer Erik Satie (1866-1925). Only Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) remained aloof. Péladan inaugurated this “aesthetic exploit” in the extravagant costume of Grand Master of the Ordre de la Rose Croix du Temple, and adorned with the Babylonian royal title of “Sâr”. A quarrel with his financial backer, Antoine de La Rochefoucauld, whom he had made a high dignitary of the order, put an end to this enterprise, precipitated by another break: that of Péladan with the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix which he had created along with → Stanislas de Guaita. Fidelity to the Church, of which Péladan claimed to be an obedient son, had motivated this attitude, but it did not prevent him from claiming to exercise a spiritual authority even over the clergy, based on the distinction between what belonged to occult science, the domain of the magus, and what belonged to religion in the strict sense. → Magic, according to the Sâr, combined the concepts of → Eliphas Lévi with the eschatological prophecy developed by Péladan Sr. Joséphin Péladan’s contribution to the field of esoteric thought was slight, but he had decided literary

gifts, and his works were a publishing success up to World War I, though unfortunately marred by his provocations and extravagances that made him an easy prey to columnists and caricaturists. He died during the war from food-poisoning, at the moment when, returning to the interpretation of prophecies, he was proclaiming his country's victory.

*Le Vice suprême*, Paris: Librairie des auteurs modernes, 1884 ♦ *La décadence esthétique: le salon de J. Péladan*, 10<sup>e</sup> année. Avec l'instauration de la Rose-Croix esthétique, Paris: Dentu, 1891 ♦ *Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes I: comment on devient mage, éthique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1892 ♦ *Constitution de la Rose-Croix, le Temple et le Graal*, Paris: Au secrétariat, 1893 ♦ *Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes V: l'occulte catholique, mystique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1898.

*Lit.*: Christophe Beaufile, *Joséphine Péladan: Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme*, Grenoble: Jérôme Million, 1993 ♦ Ed. Bertholet, *La pensée et les secrets du Sâr Joséphine Péladan*, Lausanne: Editions rosicruciennes, 1952, 4 vols. ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant & Victor Nguyen (eds.), *Les Péladan*, les Dossiers H, Lausanne: l'Age d'Homme, 1990.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Perates

The Perates are a gnostic group whose name is first mentioned by → Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, VII, 108, 2). Hippolytus identifies two otherwise unknown persons as their founders (*Refutatio*, V, 13, 9): Akembes (IV, 2, 1; Kelbes: V, 13, 9; Ademes: X, 10, 1), who is called *ho Karystios* (Karystos is a town in Euboia), and Euphrates, who is called *ho Peratikos* (also mentioned by Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI, 28 as a teacher of the → Ophites). Clement opines that the name Perates is derived from their place of origin. Different suggestions have been discussed: Euboia, the Euphrates region, the Asiatic coast of the Hellespont (cf. le Boulluec, 433, note 221). Hippolytus seems to quote the Perates with an allegorical explanation of their self designation: it defines them as those who claim to move beyond (*perasai*) the realm of corruption (V, 16, 1. 5. 6).

Hippolytus maintains that the Perates derive their wisdom from the astrologers (V, 13); his description of their doctrine in *Refutatio* V (Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 17 is a mere rehearsal) has a peculiar structure. First, he introduces a system which focuses on the tripartite structure of the kosmos. There is one origin (*archê*), which is like a great source and which

admits of infinite divisions. The first division is the "trias"; and the first, unbegotten part of this trias is called the perfect good, the "fatherly greatness" (*megethos patrikon*). The second, "self begotten", part is an infinite multitude of powers, while the third, "begotten" part is called special (*idikon*). This trias with its second self-generating principle seems to cite a metaphysical scheme which also occurs in other Gnostic and Neoplatonic texts (cf. *Pistis Sophia* 2,2f./24,38f. [ed. Schmidt-Till]; Porphyrius, *fr.* 223F [ed. A. Smith]). Each compartment of this tripartite kosmos has its own gods, minds, men etc. In the days of Herodes, Jesus Christ, who is of three natures, three powers and three bodies, has descended into this world from the first unbegotten part of the kosmos. Through his descent he wishes to save and restore everything, i.e. all the seeds (*spermata*) that have been brought down from the first two parts of the kosmos into the lowest and third part. This third part of the kosmos, they say, will perish, whereas the other two parts are not subject to corruption (V, 12). In V, 14, Hippolytus seems to quote verbatim from a book called the *Proasteioi up to aether*. It is difficult to make any sense of either the extended quotation or the title; it seems to deal with heavenly powers, winds and stars that influence the life below. In V, 16-17, Hippolytus provides additional information about the Peratian doctrine: it amounts to a sustained scripture-based meditation on this world of corruption and on the possibility of escape from it. Kronos is the power that rules over generation and destruction. The exodus story is allegorized: Egypt is the body, the Red Sea is a symbol of destruction (Kronos), the desert is a realm beyond generation, the dwelling place of both the gods of destruction and the god of salvation (V, 16, 5). The serpent (Num. 21:8) which is subsequently identified with the wise word of Eve (Gen. 3:1ff.), the mystery of Eden, the river flowing out of Eden and the sign of Cain, is a symbol of salvation. A radical reinterpretation of salvation history is proposed: Cain is the hero whose offering the god of this world rejected in favour of Abel's bloody sacrifice. He is the one who appeared as a man in the days of Herod and was born in the image of Joseph and Esau (V, 16, 9ff.; cf. the → "Cainites" in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 31, 1-2). Jakob received the blessing of the blind one, but later on he saw the face of Esau 'as if a man sees the face of God' (Gen. 33:10). In V, 17, Hippolytus attempts a final sketch, according to which the Peratian doctrine teaches three principles: Father, Son and Matter. The Son (who is identified as the serpent, the salvific principle) is

placed in the midst between Father and matter. He takes the ideas/powers/types from the Father and transmits them to matter. This Platonist model of demiurgical creation is put into a soteriological perspective: those who wake up and realize that they are from above, a type from the father, the perfect copy, the consubstantial race, will return to the father and thus be saved.

It is difficult to assess the authenticity of Hippolytus' doxography: his section on the "Perates" has parallels in other sections dealing with other gnostic groups. Some scholars, notably Salmon and Stähelin, came to the conclusion that Hippolytus derives his information about the Perates and other gnostic groups from a collection of forged documents. If this judgement is probably too pessimistic, Hippolytus' sources still await a thorough and comprehensive exploration.

*Lit.*: G. Bareille, "Euphratès", *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 5 (1924), 1521-1525 ♦ R. Baxmann, "Die Philosophumena und die Peraten, eine Untersuchung aus der alten Häresiologie", *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie* 2 (1860), 218-257 ♦ A. Hilgenfeld, *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums*, Leipzig: Fues, 1884 (reprinted Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1963, Olms: Hildesheim, 1963, 1966), 263-267 ♦ A. le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, II<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècles* (2 vols.), Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985 ♦ F. Legge (trans.), *Philosophumena or the Refutation of All Heresies* (2 vols.), London & New York: MacMillan, 1921 ♦ G. Salmon, "Euphrates (1)", *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, 2 (1880), 296 ♦ idem, "The Cross-References in the 'Philosophumena'", *Hermantrena* 11 (1885), 389-402 ♦ H. Stähelin, *Die gnostischen Quellen Hippolyts in seiner Hauptschrift gegen die Häretiker* (Texte und Untersuchungen 6), Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1890 ♦ A. Torhoudt, "Euphratès le Pératique", *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* 15 (1963), 1414-1415 ♦ J. Whittaker, "Self-Generating Principles", in: B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. I: *The School of Valentinus* (Studies in the History of Religions, 41), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980, 176-193.

WINRICH A. LÖHR

**Perennialism** → Tradition

**Perennial Philosophy** → Tradition

**Pernety, Dom Antoine-Joseph**,  
\* 13.2.1716 Roanne, † 16.10.1796  
Paris

Little is known about Pernety's early life. In 1732 he entered the Benedictine Order, and from 1746

onwards he lived in the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris. His first publication, a translation of a German book on mathematics, appeared in 1743. It was followed shortly after by some pious treatises, including a *Manuel bénédictin* (1755, containing a.o. a commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict), and a *Dictionnaire portatif de peinture, de sculpture et de gravure* (Portable Dictionary of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts; 1757). His interests began to shift after he had found in the library of his monastery a work on → alchemy: the *Histoire de la philosophie hermétique*, published in 1742 by Abbot Lenglet-Dufresnoy, which inspired him to write his two most famous works, *Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées et réduites au même principe* (Egyptian and Greek Fables Unveiled and Reduced to the Same Principle; 2 vols.) and *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique* (Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary) both published in 1758. The latter is a combination of a glossary and an index to the former, giving a list of symbols, concepts and key-terms with explanations as well as references to his *Fables*. The *Fables*, on the other hand, were written in a tradition of alchemical works starting in the early Renaissance, coming to a head with → Michael Maier's *Arcana arcanissima, hoc est Hieroglyphica Aegyptio-Graeca* (1614), and followed by such works as → Athanasius Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1653), and Jacob Toll's *Fortuuta* (1687). Pernety heavily borrowed from these three books in particular, but also added much of his own. Throughout his book, Pernety interprets all mythological stories as coded descriptions of the alchemical Great Work, understood in its more "concrete" operative aspect of chrysopoeia. This is the "single principle" mentioned in the title, to which all the myths can be reduced (see further discussion in Faivre 1993). Both *Fables* and *Dictionnaire* soon became a standard reference in alchemy, a position they have enjoyed to the present day, thus popularising the idea that the antique myths of Egypt and Greece were entirely conceived by alchemists, who wanted to cryptically describe the process of metallic transformations which took place in their laboratories. Since the Philosopher's Stone was supposed to represent the final accomplishment of such procedures, the latter had to be disguised. What interested Pernety was not so much the making of gold, but rather finding a universal remedy for all illnesses. This passion for alchemy remains characteristic for most of Pernety's life.

In 1763, Pernety left his monastery in order to travel as chaplain with L.A. de Bougainville on his expedition to the Falkland Islands. Partly due to

that expedition, France officially took possession of the land in 1764, and on that occasion Pernety celebrated a mass there. He kept a detailed diary in which he described everything he encountered, especially all kinds of plants and animals which were new to him. He brought back a collection of them for the gallery of natural history in his monastery. He also recorded the medicines prepared by the Indians; later, in Berlin in the years 1769-1771, Pernety took a strong stand in favour of them, against the views defended by such authors as Cornelius de Pauw, a believer in “progress” who saw the Indians as primitive compared to the Europeans. Conversely, Pernety – similar to Jean-Jaques Rousseau’s concept of the “noble savage” – saw in them the very proof of an original purity of mankind.

Having lived so far from his monastery for a year and a half, he found it difficult to readjust himself, and this may partly account for his subsequent involvement in a reform movement within his Order. In 1765, together with twenty-seven other monks, he submitted to the king a project designed to mitigate the severity of the Benedictine Rule. The initiative failed miserably, and even resulted in Pernety being confined for a short time. Surprisingly, he was nevertheless appointed as member of the committee composed of four monks, charged at that time with elaborating and submitting new constitutions for the monastery, a task to which he devoted himself with zeal. But severe disagreements arose among the four committee members, two of whom were rather conservative; as a result, the more liberal-minded Pernety decided to leave Paris.

According to J.M. Ragon (*Orthodoxie Maçonique*, 1854), whose perspective has been widely adopted by handbooks of → Freemasonry, Pernety first went to Avignon, where he arrived in 1766. Here he supposedly created a new Masonic Rite, the Rite Hermétique, consisting of six degrees above the three symbolic ones; and one more degree added shortly afterwards, that of Knight of the Sun, would be the origin of one of the current degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. But Ragon’s statements are extremely disputable. In 1996 a membership list was found of the Lodge “La Royal Yorck de l’Amitié”, existing in Berlin in 1782, which mentions Pernety as a member who had received most of the higher degrees in France (Snoek 2003, 30). It is the only proof we have that Pernety was a Freemason, and since he did not return to France between 1766 and 1783, we may conclude from it that he probably was one when he left Paris. Furthermore, there was no Masonic

activity in Avignon between 1764 and 1772, due to the activities of the Inquisition against Freemasonry during that period. Besides, the practise of hermetically inspired side degrees above the three symbolic ones is not documented in Avignon until 1774. On the other hand, the rituals of the degrees of the *Rite Ecossais philosophique*, which evolved out of the Rite Hermétique, do show affinity to the ideas found in Pernety’s *Fables*. It could therefore be argued that the marquis d’Aigrefeuille, who is now believed to have created the Rite Hermétique, drew on some elements he found in the *Fables*. Like the degrees of the Rite Hermétique, also the degree of Knight of the Sun, now known to have existed as early as 1751, is not likely to have been created by Pernety.

In 1767 Pernety, aged fifty-one, arrived in Berlin; and according to all his biographers he did not return to France until 1783. As soon as he arrived in Berlin, Frederic The Great, King of Prussia, mistaking him for his cousin Jacques, appointed him as his librarian and as a member of the Royal Academy of Berlin. In 1768 he was appointed Abbot of Burgeln (Saxony) by the Pope, but he kept spending most of his time in Berlin. At the Royal Academy he read several essays, starting in 1769 with his attack on De Pauw, which was followed in 1773 by an essay on → reincarnation, in which he defended the affirmative Pythagorean perspective. In 1776 he published a book on physiognomy, *La connaissance de l’homme moral par celle de l’homme physique* (Knowledge of moral man by knowledge of physical man), a subject which had recently become popular through the work of → Lavater but on which Pernety had published already earlier. Among other things he argued that, before birth, souls are competing over the body of the new child. *La connaissance* proves that Pernety was well acquainted with some of the so-called “occult sciences”; but like his *Observations sur les maladies de l’âme* (Observations on the maladies of the soul), published the next year, the book is also an inquiry into psychology and is part of his polemic in the Academy with Le Cat, from 1776 to 1778. In sum, during his first ten years in Berlin Pernety lived the life of a respected scholar. But then things changed.

Probably in 1779 or shortly before (although Pernety himself claimed a date as early as 1771), he borrowed some works by → Emanuel Swedenborg from another scholar, who had received them from the widowed Queen of Sweden, sister of the King of Prussia; and with the help of the brothers Auguste and Carl Frederic Nordenskjöld, and the Swedish consul in London, Christophe Springer,



Pernety managed to get hold of some further writings by Swedenborg. He immediately enthused over the writings of the Swede, and started translating two of them from Latin into French: *Les merveilles du ciel et de l'enfer et des terres planétaires et astrales* was published in 1782, and *La sagesse angélique sur l'amour divin et sur la sagesse divine* in 1786, both in Berlin. Although Pernety did not consider himself a Swedenborgian ('I am a disciple of Jesus-Christ, and not of Swedenborg', he wrote in 1782), he was strongly influenced by Swedenborgian ideas. Apart from these two translations, Pernety published only one more work after 1778. His main line of activity took on a different direction: he became involved into a movement pertaining to what is known as → Illuminism.

In 1779 he became one of the first members of a group later known as the → Illuminés d'Avignon, and he soon moved on to a position of leadership. In 1783 Frederick II discharged him, albeit reluctantly, from his professional obligations. Pernety, now sixty-seven years of age, left Berlin in search for a new dwelling place for his group. After his arrival in Paris, Mgr. De Beaumont tried to persuade him to reenter into his monastery, but after many negotiations and a decree by the Parliament of Paris, Pernety received permission to continue living as a secular priest. Eventually, he settled with his group in Avignon. In 1786, Pernety was secretary of the "Société Académique et Patriotique" of Valence, and he again took up his earlier scholarly activities. Following the dispersion of the Illuminés d'Avignon after 1792, Pernety seems to have returned from Illuminism and alchemy to his Benedictine roots: his last book (1790) was about Mary, and he authored another work, still unpublished, of *Extraits des Epîtres de saint Paul*. Pernety died 16 October 1796, at the age of eighty.

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JAN A.M. SNOEK

Pessoa, Fernando, \* 13.6.1888 Lisbon,  
† 30.11.1935 Lisbon

Portuguese poet and esotericist. After the death of his father when he was five years old, Pessoa's mother took him with her to Durban, South Africa, where she settled with her new husband, the Portuguese Consul of that town. After high school, Pessoa returned to Portugal, where he soon began to work as a commercial correspondent in English and French. He became involved in the Portuguese modernist literary movement, publishing a considerable number of poems, in Portuguese as well as in English, in several short-lived reviews. The only book to be printed during his lifetime was *Mensagem* (1934). After Pessoa's death, a trunk full of manuscripts was found; they were written under several "heteronyms", i.e., literary *personae* who wrote both poetry and prose, in a variety of styles. Each of them had been assigned a specific biography of his own. The most important among them were Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis and Bernardo Soares. Pessoa is nowadays considered one of the major poets of the 20th century.

Esotericism stands out as one of the most continuous threads to be used when working our way through Pessoa's scattered works. About 1914, he began to attend the séances of → spiritualism organized by one of his aunts. Later on, in 1915, he translated from English into Portuguese several books by authors linked to the → Theosophical Society (→ H.P. Blavatsky, → C.W. Leadbeater, →



Annie Besant). He was very much impressed by the theosophical doctrines, which he at first thought were likely to open for him the doors of Mystery.

Pessoa's early poems (*The Mad Fiddler*; 1911-1916) were written in English under the heteronym Alexander Search. They were strongly influenced by both the Elizabethan metaphysical poets and 16th-century esoteric currents. Platonist as well as pantheistic elements had already left their imprint on his philosophical thought, and this influence would remain through the rest of his life. Pessoa was keenly interested in → astrology, a field in which he reached considerable expertise. The English magician → Aleister Crowley paid him a visit in 1930, after an exchange of letters bearing on astrology. While in Portugal, Crowley, with Pessoa as an accomplice, hoaxed people into believing that he had vanished, in a rocky place near the sea called *Mouth of Hell* – an event which stirred a great sensation.

*Mensagem*, the most famous of Pessoa's works, can be seen as a crucible, as it were, in which various elements of an esoteric character – rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism], gnostic [→ Gnosticism], alchemical [→ Alchemy] etc. – are welded together. It also contains a very elaborate form of Portuguese messianism, known more specifically as *Sebastianism*. It has its roots in the history of King Sebastian, who disappeared on a Moroccan battlefield in 1578. The myth of his impending return, linked to the restoration of Portugal's glory, is one of the most fertile myths in Portuguese culture. *Mensagem* bears witness to the fact that poetry was for Fernando Pessoa a form of initiation, a quest into that realm of the Unknown which throughout his life he struggled to reach. It also shows that he tried to turn his literary work into an *Opus magnum*. For him a man of genius was “an initiate of the left-hand”, like Shakespeare and perhaps he himself. He beautifully defined initiation as ‘admission to the conversation of the Angels’ (a clear reference to Crowley, whose influence on Pessoa has traditionally been underestimated).

Pessoa was also familiar with a number of esoteric orders. He carefully studied masonic [→ Freemasonry] rituals and symbols, even though he was not himself a Freemason. In a number of newspaper articles published in 1935 he publicly took the defense of Masonry and other secret societies, against the attempts of the Portuguese government to outlaw them.

In Pessoa's poetry, God appears as a ‘vision that won't be seen’ (Beyond God): He is the Unknown of an apophatic mysticism (‘Being, Universe, Not-Being is the triple manifestation of the Unknown’).

This Supreme Being unfolds Himself in an infinity of theophanic manifestations. Angels belong to one of these and are considered as guides, like in the Christian tradition. Pessoa declared himself a “gnostic Christian”, and was of the opinion that Catholicism did not give enough importance to the symbolic meaning of Christ's life and death. A form of Christian esotericism indeed lies at the core of Pessoa's religious thought and deeply influenced his poetry. A cosmology tinged with elements borrowed from gnostic traditions pervades his *First Faust*, a work which is embedded in dualism and evinces a pluralistic notion of the Godhead. Fate stands out above all the other gods. Christ is considered as one of these gods, in what Pessoa refers to as “Supreme Polytheism” – a perspective that corresponds, at a metaphysical level, with the plural quality of life itself. Such a system also ties up with the psychological multiplicity which lies at the heart of Pessoa's poetic creation. He was and staunchly remained in search of some kind of philosophical cementing anchorage which might help him to integrate the different parts of his self.

Pessoa's metaphysical quest was centered in the great mystery of God and Life, and his poetry was the main instrument of that search for a “final truth”. *Tremendum* and *fascinans* at the same time, mystery is ‘the Absolute Voice, the Voice Without Mouth’ (*Poems*, published under the heteronym Alvaro de Campos), in whose depths the poet tends towards his own annihilation: ‘I dissolve myself in darkness and universe’ (*First Faust*). Pessoa describes a mystical experience, full of terror and despair, of a descent into the Abyss: ‘And silently I receive / the mystery and horror of the world / In my deep abyss’ (*ibid.*). This experience, which he calls his ‘supreme intuition’, was for him a source of great anguish and melancholy. Gradually, the poet's life ‘became a metaphysical fever, while he constantly discovered occult meanings in things, and played with the fire of mysterious analogies’ (*Book of Disquietude*, published under the heteronym Bernardo Soares). From time to time the experience is interrupted in order for the mind and soul to rest: ‘In the shade of Mount Abiegnus / I rested from meditating. / On the top of it, I saw the high castle / Which I dreamt to reach’ (*Poems*). Pessoa was convinced that “Unknown Superiors” were leading him towards spiritual and literary achievement, but some form of neurotic inertia prevented him from successfully carrying through most of his projects.

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*Mensagem*, Lisbon: Atica, 1967 ♦ *Poesias*, Lisbon:

Atica, 1967 ♦ *Livro do Desassossego por Bernardo Soares*, Lisbon: Atica, 1982 ♦ *Obra Poética e em Prosa*, Porto: Lello e Irmão, 1986 ♦ *Fausto, Tragédia subjectiva (Fragmentos)*, Lisbon: Presença, 1988 ♦ Translations into English: *Sixty Portuguese Poems* (F.E.G. Quintanilha, trans.), Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973 ♦ *Selected Poems* (Jonathan Griffin, trans.), New York: Penguin Books, 1982 ♦ *Always astonished: Selected Prose* (Edwin Honig, trans.), San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988 ♦ *Poems of Fernando Pessoa* (Edwin Honig and Susan Brown, trans.), San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998.

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ANA MARIA BINET

## Peter of Abano (Pietro de Sclavione),

\* ca. 1250 Padua, † after 1315  
place unknown

Pietro de Sclavione, son of Costanzo de Sclavione, Notary of the Seal of the Commune of Padua, was born circa 1250. Nothing of him is known after 1315. His fame as a physician and astrologer alternates between fact and legend. The legendary part is due to authors of the 15th-17th century (→ Agrippa, → Trithemius, Gianfrancesco Pico, → Symphorien Champier, and others), who created a false image of him as a magus and necromancer. Historical documents have established

that the truth was quite the contrary: he was accused of heresy by the Inquisition of his time (1304-1315) because he *denied* the existence of demons and spirits, condemned ceremonial and necromantic astrological practices based on the construction of images and → amulets, so much so that his position seemed to be a refutation of the Supernatural; and above all because he supported the horoscope of religions, holding that the repopulation of the world after the universal Flood was not due to the miracle of Noah's Ark, but to a natural phenomenon. In the medical field, he denied that melancholy was the work of the demon and explained it through excess of the humor of black bile.

Peter was in fact a rationalist astrologer, physician, and philosopher in the Aristotelian-Avicennian tradition [→ Avicenna], who did not believe that the planets were spirits, but rather saw them as superior physical bodies which move and influence earthly beings in a natural way, particularly concerning the course of maladies and human health. In → astrology, Peter kept to a mathematical, physical, rational doctrine that related the most important events, such as the rise of religious faiths, to the great conjunctions; he believed neither in miracles nor in the biblical story of Noah's Ark and the re-population of the world after the Flood. He was called before the Inquisition for this doctrine, which was considered a refutation of the supernatural and of the religious verities connected with that spiritual plane. Besides, the astrological determinism which could be connected with his doctrine of astral causality seemed to deny the liberty of the individual. It seems, however, that he was only accused, not condemned, thanks to the intervention of a Pope, perhaps John XXII, who saved him from the original charges of heresy.

After his studies in Padua and Paris between 1270 and 1285-1290, Peter went to Constantinople, and was also in Sardinia during those years. In 1295 he was in Paris, where he completed his *Compilatio physiognomiae*. Nothing is known about his Parisian sojourn but what can be drawn from the *explicit* of this work. According to Nardi, Peter was still in Paris in 1298, where he supposedly met → Ramon Llull (Nardi 1958, 20). In 1302 he returned to Padua. During his Paris period he had been accused of heresy by the Dominicans of the Monastery of Saint-Jacques. In 1304, still in Padua, where he was teaching philosophy, astrology, and medicine in 1306, he was again accused of "haereticae pravitatis". From 1303-1310, as he himself states, he revised his principal works: *Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum et medico-*

*rum*; *Lucidator dubitabilium astrologiae*; and *De motu octavae sphaerae*. In the year 1314 he was Reader in medicine or *physica* at Treviso, even though salaried by the University of Padua. In 1315 he was accused of heresy for the last time; it is not known with certainty whether he was condemned, nor what the accusations were. On May 24, 1315, he made a profession of faith and conformity with the Christian religion. Thereafter we have no more evidence of him.

In his most important astronomical-astrological writings, *Lucidator dubitabilium astrologiae* and *De motu octavae sphaerae*, Peter summarized and discussed all the principal problems of astronomy from the time of Ptolemy up to his own time, including the elaborations of the Arab astronomers (Alpetragio, Albattani, Thabit, and Arzachel), and sought to answer them. The most notable problem concerned the precession of the equinoxes, or the apparent movement of the eighth sphere, due to which the equinox no longer fell on the 21st of March, as fixed in the Christian calendar of the Council of Nicea (323), but by 1310 fell between March 12th and 13th. Preliminary to all the problems were the questions of whether astrology was, or was not, a certain, licit, and permissible science, and at what points it intersected with astronomy. The questions were as follows:

(1) Whether to attribute the diurnal motion to the primum mobile or ninth heaven, while the eighth heaven, or firmament, was left to depend solely on the precessional motion. This would refute the abstruse theory of the Andalusian astrologer Arzachel (10th century) of the “trepidation of the equinoxes”, or their oscillation forward and backward: a doctrine first developed in the school of Thabit Ben Qurra (9th-10th century).

(2) Whether one should accept the eccentric and epicyclic models: whether the variations of motion – accelerations, retrogrades, and stationaries – of the faster planets were better explained by Ptolemy’s eccentric and epicyclic models, or by the homocentric spheres, 27 in all, of Eudoxus and Callippus, and the 55 revolving spheres of Aristotle. This complicated theory is known only through Simplicius’s *Commentary* on the second book of Aristotle’s *De Caelo*. Peter followed Ptolemy, against Eudoxus, Callippus, and Aristotle.

(3) The problem of whether the planets are like nails fixed at the center of the sphere, as Aristotle says, or whether they rotate freely, as Peter maintains.

(4) The order of the planets: whether the sun is in the fourth place above the moon, rather than next to it (in which case Venus and Mercury would col-

lide with it); or whether the order is that of Aristotle, for whom the moon is immediately beneath the sun, hence the order being moon, sun, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn.

(5) Whether the spheres number eight, nine, or ten. Peter affirmed that there are only nine, and that the introduction of the tenth sphere is of a religious and theological nature, inasmuch as this heaven is the place of Paradise; thus the tenth sphere is not astronomical, hence unnecessary and pointless (another censurable thesis).

Unfortunately the work was not completed. It should have continued with a study of the apparent motion of the sun, of which nothing has come down to us but a few titles: whether the sun’s declination is  $24^\circ$  or otherwise; whether the *aux* of the sun is mobile or immobile; whether the center of the sun’s eccentric is  $2^\circ 23'$  distant from the earth, or whether its equation is different; whether the sun moves with its eccentric in  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days.

Among Peter’s medical works, the famous ones are the *Problemata*; a treatise *De venenis* which circulated widely, also in Italian translation; and the translation from the Greek of certain important pharmacological works, including Dioscorides’s *De materia medica*, some of Galen’s works (*De complexione temperata*), and the Pseudo-Hippocratic *De medicorum astrologia*.

Peter attempted to change the conceptual model of astronomical science from being merely speculative (as Aristotle insisted) and divorced from the practical, operative sphere. On the contrary, Peter underlined the close link between the theoretical and practical aspects which exists in all sciences, from astronomy to medicine. As a faithful interpreter of Ptolemy, he thought that the only certain science is mathematics, considered as geometry and astrology. The latter represents the practical aspect of the geometrical knowledge of the celestial motions; it is a theory of the significances of the physical influences of the heavens, hence should be a theory of the “sufficient”, not necessary, causes that produce phenomena. Astrological foresight also resembles medical prognosis, because the individual’s physical condition, his health and sickness, depend on the planetary constitution, on the basis of his nativity drawn up in the *iudicium* (astrological prediction or horoscope). Astrology, therefore, is a general doctrine concerned with the sufficient celestial causes, which in turn explain the causes of the *ens fore* or *futurum*. Medicine is the science of the *ens in facto perfecto*, that is, of what is “curable” or expects to be cured once the medical foresight (prognosis), on which the cure is based, has taken place and has announced recovery.

Astrology is thus a physico-mathematical science: primary, certain (because it has a mathematical certainty and in that sense is not *coniecturativa*), unique, noble, licit, and a *subiecto determinata*; in fact, its substratum, the *subiectum*, is the heavenly body “sufficiently” considered, in reference to its power of being “applied” to the terrestrial world or of applying itself, i.e., influencing the earth. Astrology is licit and not superstitious; Peter follows the speculative direction of the author of the *Speculum astronomiae*, perhaps → Albertus Magnus. Like him, Peter rejects the necromantic techniques of invoking spirits through figures and the planetary images of Hermes, Thabit, and other interpreters of the magical doctrine of *electiones* and *interrogationes*, as he affirms in the first debate or chapter of his *Lucidator*. Like the author of the *Speculum astronomiae*, Peter considers as acceptable only the investigation of those astrological images, such as Ptolemy’s, which are purely physico-astronomical, and not animistic.

The modifications introduced into Ptolemaic and Hermetic astrology by the *Speculum astronomiae* and accepted by Peter allowed him to safeguard individual liberty, because the science of astrological foresight, according to him, is founded on causes that do not absolutely necessitate but merely incline, thus freeing astrology from the magical aspects that according to Thomas Aquinas made it a superstitious and illicit doctrine. It is licit because it is founded on the rational, physico-mathematical rules of the planetary movements. These are not spirits and demons to be invoked, which would seem like pagan astrolatry. Thus Peter represented the same rationalist direction in astrology as Aquinas did, contemporaneously, in theology. Indeed, since the verdicts of Paris (1277), condemned some of Saint Thomas’s rationalist theses, it is no wonder that the Dominicans of Saint-Jacques accused Peter’s medico-cosmological rationalism of heresy. The circumstances of Peter’s accusations of heresy need to be placed in their historical context, if they are to be rightly understood.

It follows that astrology forms the scientific basis of medicine, whose object is an *ens possibile*, a “curable” being, which represents the aim of medicine and which depends on the inclinations that the stars have placed in the individual’s physical constitution. The physician’s task is to discover these, with the result that medical prognosis is always an astrological prognosis.

Natural celestial causality does not exclude, but rather presupposes the supernatural causality of God, who governs the world through his will (*nutu*

*Dei*). God is the supernatural agent (*agens supernaturalis*) because he acts without movement or change (*absque motu et transmutatione*); his action is immediate and hence miraculous. Beneath divine causality there is the secondary, natural causality, which acts in a threefold manner. The terms Peter uses are not “cause” but “action” (*actio*), “virtue” (*virtus*), “impression” (*impressio*), “influence” (*influxus*), and “sign” (*significatio*), following a tradition that stems from Albumasar’s works which he often cites. The first type of action is a universal one, distinct from the single, particular action; between them stands the median cause. The natural, universal action acts only by means of movement and light, and belongs to the eighth sphere of the fixed stars; it is uncertain and indefinite, like the number of the stars. The second type of action (median) is either that due to the constitution and aspects of the planets, or that due to the contracted virtue of the 48 celestial images. The third type of celestial action is the particular or individual one: it is a matter of a particular stellar influence (*influxus stellaris particularis*), which depends on the position of the planets in the celestial “houses” (*domus*) and their aspecting of each other. This is found in the “nativity” (horoscope), which is bound to the revolution of the planets at the day, the hour, and the exact place of the person’s birth. It is also closely bound to the elementary combination and the virtue of the place in which the influx is concentrated, with the contribution of the parents to the birth of individuals. Thus there is a perfect correspondence between the elementary qualities and the celestial qualities of the astronomical images made by the constellations of the upper and lower hemispheres (36 plus the twelve signs, hence 48 in all). These correspond to the terrestrial qualities in a physico-natural interaction or exchange.

This institutionalized teaching of astrology, consolidated by Peter, was imparted not only in Italy at Bologna, Padua, and Ferrara, but also at the Collège de Maître Gervais in Paris and at Merton College in Oxford. Here John Aschenden (or Eschenden), active between 1340 and 1370, wrote several works of universal astrology, including the *Summa astrologiae de accidentibus mundi* (published Venice 1489) and the universal *Pronosticationes* of the great conjunctions of the three higher planets and the eclipse of the moon in 1345. The *Summa astrologiae*, together with the *Pronosticationes* of the great conjunctions of 1358 and 1365, opened the way for the success of universal predictions based on the appearance of eclipses, or the advent of great conjunctions of the slow planets.



The legend of the life and work of Peter as a magus and necromancer began to circulate in the 16th century, accredited by tales of Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola and others. Gianfrancesco, in *De rerum praenotione* said that Peter was given to practicing magic in Constantinople, and the same is stated by Symphorien Champier (*Annotationa, errate et castigationes in Petri Aponensis Opera per Simphorianum Champerium*, Giunta: Venice 1520). The *Libro dei sogni* of Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1600) includes the figures of spirits who speak to him and tell tales: it has Peter in dialogue with Cecco d'Ascoli about all the necromantic practices and demonic invocations. Thus the legend was established. Magical works spuriously attributed to Peter circulated in the 16th and 17th centuries: an *Alchimia*, the *Profezie* in Latin and Italian; works on necromancy and magic such as the *Elementa magica* which appeared in many copies of the 16th and 17th centuries, when, despite Naudé's defense of him against the accusations of magic, the legend grew of a Peter who trafficked with demons. According to Naudé, Peter was not the author of a magical work entitled *Hep-tameron* that was published at the end of the first book of Agrippa's work; Trithemius accepted the idea that Peter had also authored an *Eleucidarium necromanticum Petri de Abano* and a *Liber experimentorum mirabilium de anulis secundum 28 mansionibus Lunae*, all of them spurious.

Another factor that contributed greatly to the legendary character of Peter as a magus and impostor was the story by Ludwig Tieck (Berlin, 1773-1853) entitled *Pietro d'Abano: Eine Zauber-geschichte* (Pietro d'Abano: A Story of Magic), published in 1825 in the almanac *Märchen und Zauber-geschichten*, in which the authentic image of Peter as a rationalist astrologer, physician, and philosopher dissolved into that of a practitioner of black magic.

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GRAZIELLA FEDERICI VESCOVINI

**Petric'**, Frane → Patrizi, Francesco

**Philippe**, Anthelme-Nizier, known as "Maître Philippe", \* 2.4.1849 Loieux (Savoy), † 2.8.1905 l'Arbresle (near Lyon)

"Thaumaturge", "unknown master", "spiritual master", "man of God", "friend of God": thus his disciples and admirers referred to the man they respectfully addressed as "Monsieur Philippe" or, later on, "Maître Philippe of Lyons". Since he himself wrote nothing but a few cursory letters, the available information about him derives from these disciples, apart from a few newspaper articles and police reports, mostly malevolent and not very trustworthy. Born in a town in Savoy (then part of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia), he died at l'Arbresle, near Lyons, where he usually resided; he was buried at Lyons, in the Loyasse Cemetery, where his tomb has remained the constant object of worship for a discreet cult. He was not, then, "of Lyons", despite his sobriquet; however, having arrived there at the age of fourteen, he only ever left the region for short trips in France and other countries.

Philippe showed extraordinary characteristics from his earliest years. According to a family tradition reported by Alfred Haehl (1959, 19), 'when his mother was expecting [his birth], she paid a visit to the Curé d'Ars, who revealed to her that



her son would be a very great being'. Philippe himself affirmed that he had performed 'miraculous healings . . . from the age of thirteen' (Caillet 2000, 31).

At fourteen he was sent to work at an uncle's, who was a butcher at Lyon, and at the same time pursued his studies at a religious school. During 1874-1875, he studied at the College of Medicine and Pharmacy to become an officer of health (i.e. a medical professional permitted to practice without having obtained the title of doctor); but he was expelled and disbarred for having cured some of the hospital patients who were supposed to serve as examples for the students. Thus began his controversial relationship with the official world of medicine, which censured him on several other occasions (in 1887, 1890, and 1892) for practicing medicine illegally. However, other physicians – not confined to those in his immediate entourage, such as Dr. Gérard Encausse (→ Papus) and Dr. Emmanuel Lalande (Marc Haven, his future son-in-law) – and some magistrates confirmed the reality of his inexplicable healings, testified by numerous witnesses (1954, 43-46).

As early as age 20, Philippe had acquired a reputation as a healer that would only increase with the years and attract hordes of patients, from the humblest to the noblest. The latter included princes of royal blood and even monarchs, among them King Edward VII of England, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, and the Bey of Tunis. Of all his dealings, it was Philippe's association with the Russian court, from 1899 until his death, that excited the most curiosity (often malevolent) from the press, and the most agitated distrust from the police. Introduced into the Martinist [→ Martinism: Second Period] entourage of Tsar Nicolas II by Papus (who had established Martinist lodges in Russia in 1897, and created a Martinist Order there in 1899), Philippe made at least five journeys to Russia between 1901 and 1903. On one of them, he made the acquaintance of the famous thaumaturge, the future Saint John of Cronstadt, who saluted him as "brother". For the rest of the time, the Russian aristocracy thronged to consult him. From the moment of his first interview with the imperial couple at Compiègne, in 1901, Philippe commanded the devotion of both the Tsar and the Tsarina. Up until his death, in spite of intrigues and cabals, he was treated as a friend and confidant by Nicolas and Alexandra, to whom he had predicted the birth of the much-desired male heir. These intimate relations are described in detail by Philippe Encausse (1954, 67-113).

Philippe's popularity came from his reputation for inexhaustible charity toward the humble and needy, made possible by his wealthy marriage: 'Monsieur Philippe, he is the father of the poor', proclaimed Papus (Encausse 1954, 64). His sole method of healing was prayer. Even when he let Papus persuade him to open a school of magnetism [→ Animal Magnetism] at Lyons, the form of magnetism that he taught for three years, 1895 to 1898, was singular in that he did not use any hand motions or touches, only prayer. He repeated insistently: 'One always needs prayer', adding, 'I don't do anything myself to heal you; I address the Master, who is God' (Haehl 1959, 62) – whom he also happily called "the Friend". But, he clarified, 'to be heard, you must . . . love your neighbor more than yourself; do not judge your brother'. According to → Sédir [Yvon le Loup], 'he placed brotherly love above all, above prayer and even above faith; it was charity, he said, that engenders true faith and that teaches us prayer; prayer without charity is facile, and faith without charity, that's not faith' (Sédir 1923, 117-118).

Philippe did a great deal of oral teaching, and his disciples piously reproduced his talks, particularly Alfred Haehl. In Haehl's collection *Vie et Paroles du Maître Philippe* (Life and Words of Master Philippe) these teachings are gathered under the not incongruous title *L'Évangile du Maître Philippe* (The Gospel of Master Philippe). In fact, according to Sédir's testimony ('His doctrine was purely the Gospel'; 1923, 117) Philippe himself stated: 'I do not tell you anything that goes against the Gospel' (Encausse 1954, 264). He also proclaimed that 'The Gospel contains all initiation' (*ibid.*). Sédir affirmed (1923, 117, 120) that 'he condemned the practices of esotericism' – i.e. occult practices, hypnotism, sorcery, → magic, and the acquisition of powers, 'as contrary to divine law, not teaching them in any form and not recommending their theories'. It seems that this was aimed mainly at the → Theosophical Society of → Madame Blavatsky. In contrast, Philippe was friendly towards the Martinist Order created by Papus in 1887-1891, which presented itself as a "Christian chivalry", and designed a medal and a pentacle for it (Caillet 2000, 61). Sédir, following his master's teachings to the letter, took the same steps as had been taken a century before by → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin: he resigned from all the numerous initiatic societies to which he had belonged, to devote himself to his only true Master and only true Friend, the Christ. Later, in July 1920, Sédir founded the Association of "Amitiés Spirituelles" (Spiritual Friendships), which still

exists and has as its object the reunion of ‘all persons of good will who acknowledge Christ as the sole Master of their inner life, and the Gospel as the true law of conscience and of peoples’ (Encausse 1954, 129). Under the auspices of the *Amitiés Spirituelles*, in a collection entitled *Quelques amis de Dieu* (Some Friends of God, 1928), Sédir published an anonymous piece fervently dedicated to Philippe under the title *Un Inconnu* (An Unknown). Also anonymously, Marc Haven, Philippe’s devoted son-in-law, depicted Philippe in the character of → Cagliostro in his book *Le Maître inconnu Cagliostro* (The Unknown Master Cagliostro, 1913). Later he confided to Philippe Encausse: ‘I used a character who resembled him – Cagliostro – to write about him. Only friends will understand’ (Encausse 1954, 47).

Philippe’s influence on his disciples was decisive, and caused a change of orientation in all of them that Papus described thus: ‘You have brought me to know and love Christ’ (Encausse 1954, 19). This orientation was implanted in the Martinist Order, of which Papus proclaimed: ‘Our Order is Christian, essentially and integrally Christian, and one cannot conceive of a Martinist who is not faithful to Christ’. Serge Caillet writes (2000, 140), ‘through Papus, Monsieur Philippe has influenced the Martinist Order, which he has helped to root in the tradition of Christian → illuminism’. Philippe’s influence on Papus’s son, Philippe Encausse, was no less important, even though posthumous. The latter tells (1954, 128) that ‘Monsieur Philippe had announced my birth to my parents (at a time when my dear young mother did not know she was pregnant). He had asked them to give me only one first name: Philippe. He wished, in effect, to be my spiritual godfather’. Philippe Encausse, born in January 1906, five months after Philippe’s death, was certain throughout his life that he was in communication with his godfather and under his guidance. He in turn labored to root in Christianity the Martinist Order created by his father, which he himself revived in 1952. Throughout Philippe Encausse’s term as Grand Master, as during Papus’s term, this Order devoted a veritable cult to the man who was considered its “Spiritual Master” or even, as Papus said, its ‘almost invisible apostle’ (1954, 107).

While Martinism declined after the death of Philippe Encausse in 1984, it has gone down in the history of occultist currents of the late 19th century as a movement that oriented ‘these questers of the occult, Papus, Haven, Sédir, Phaneg, and several others’ (Caillet 2000, 147) toward the simplicity of the “way of the heart” opened by Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. In this regard, it continues to this

day to exercise a discreet but powerful influence upon spiritual seekers, both in isolation and in groups.

*Lit.:* Serge Caillet, *Monsieur Philippe*, “l’Ami de Dieu”, Paris: Dervy, 2000 ♦ Philippe Encausse, *Le Maître Philippe de Lyon: Thaumaturge et “Homme de Dieu”, ses prodiges, ses guérisons, ses enseignements*, 1st ed. Paris: La Diffusion scientifique, 1954; 9th & last ed. in the author’s lifetime, Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1980 ♦ Alfred Haehl, *Vie et paroles du Maître Philippe*, Lyon: Derain, 1959; new ed. Paris: Dervy, 1980 ♦ Sédir, *Quelques amis de Dieu*, Bihorel-lès-Rouen: Bibliothèque des Amitiés spirituelles, 1923; new ed. 1954.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS VAR

### Philosophia Perennis → Tradition

Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni,  
\* 1463 Mirandola, † 17.11.1494  
Florence

Born to the noble family of the Counts of Mirandola and Concordia near Modena, Pico lived on the edge of two distinct cultural periods, the former rooted in medieval scholasticism, the latter characterized by the humanistic revival of classical thought. Pico’s strong curiosity led him to study thoroughly both medieval and classical traditions in the most renowned cultural centers of his age. His multifaceted interests in all kinds of knowledge, his peculiar life, as well as his precocious death constituted the basis for the rapid flourishing of his fame and for the spreading of his legendary biography also beyond Italian borders.

Entering the University of Bologna around 1477 in order to study canon law, Pico quickly manifested a specific talent for philosophy, which made him turn his attention towards speculative subjects. He moved to Ferrara and Padua, where he attended the local *Studia* until 1482, when he left for Florence, where he became acquainted with → Marsilio Ficino and his Neoplatonic circle. He was in Paris in 1485, where, under the influence of the Sorbonne theologians, he composed his famous letter addressed to the humanist Ermolao Barbaro; in it, he pleaded in favour of the use of philosophical technical terminology against the accusations of humanists such as Barbaro himself, who considered scholastic Latin a barbaric violation of the purity of the Ciceronian language. This first important work defines Pico’s position in the framework of the current humanistic debate between philology and philosophy. Pico’s defense of the latter is

not to be seen as a reaction against contemporary trends to revive classical Latin: on the contrary, his early production, at least until 1487, does not show any sharp distinction between profound speculative contents and an eloquent prose founded on the most widely accepted Latin models of his contemporaries. Later on, Pico would take a decisive step, mostly devoting himself to philosophy and rejecting his non-speculative production, including his poems. 1486 was a significant year for Pico: he returned from Paris to Florence, subsequently moving to Arezzo (where he caused a scandal due to his abducting a lady who had family ties with the Medicis), Perugia and Rome. In Perugia Pico began his thorough study of Oriental languages and Jewish kabbalistic doctrines [→ Jewish Influences], which were used in his commentary on a platonic love poem by his friend Girolamo Benivieni (*Commento sopra una canzona d'amore di Girolamo Benivieni*), where for the first time his views of philosophical and religious concordance were asserted. Simultaneously, Pico composed his *Conclusiones nongentae* (Nine-hundred Conclusions, or Theses), meant to be publicly discussed in Rome in 1487 and dealing with all fields of philosophic and religious knowledge which the author wanted to join in an all-comprehensive system. As an Introduction to the hoped-for scholarly conference on the *Theses*, Pico wrote an oration, later entitled *De hominis dignitate* (On the Dignity of Man): an outstanding manifesto of the Renaissance conception of the role played by man within Creation. The harsh reaction of the Roman Church against Pico's *Theses* – as a result of which the public discussion never took place – led him to write an *Apologia* in 1487, in which he tried to defend his position. After a brief detention in Paris, at the Pope's request, Pico settled in Florence. Under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici, in 1489 he composed here his Sevenfold Commentary on the Six Days of Genesis (*Heptaplus*). In 1492, while devoting himself to a commentary on the Psalms, which was to remain unfinished, the humanist dedicated to his friend Poliziano the short treatise *De ente et uno* (On Being and the One), in which he took up his project of highlighting the similarities between platonic and aristotelian thought. Pico's last years were devoted to the composition of the huge *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (Disputations against Divinatory Astrology), which were left unfinished and represent a further apology and rejection of earlier unorthodox positions. Most of Pico's production was published only after his death, firstly edited by his nephew, Gianfrancesco, in Bologna (1496), and later published in

several editions during the 16th century (the most celebrated edition being the one that appeared in Basel in 1572, reprinted in the 17th century as well).

The myth of the “phoenix of his age”, as the young Count was designated already by his contemporaries, has affected scholarly interpretations of Pico's intellectual speculation. Throughout the centuries, Pico's system of thought has been viewed as one of the earlier, more faithful, and most complete expressions of humanism. Only in recent years this interpretation has been subjected to critical revision.

Of particular importance in this regard is the role played by theology in Pico's attempt to create an all-comprehensive system of knowledge, intended to embrace and reconcile the most different rational and religious disciplines. His project of establishing a harmonious syncretism (*concordia*) between various theological and philosophical doctrines was certainly based upon intellectual foundations. For this reason, modern scholars have often considered Pico's thought to have been a strongly mundane achievement; but a closer inspection of Pico's texts allows us to perceive how closely connected Pico was to contemporary Christian religious positions. As a matter of fact, all Pico's speculation expresses his faith and willingness to adhere to Christian orthodox views, although some scholars have assumed that for a man whose work was suspect to the Roman Church this was just a strategy in order to hide his real intellectual concerns. Nevertheless, his program of universal salvation obtainable through an intellectual knowledge starts from an elitist attitude, according to which esoteric doctrines are the unique way for the initiate to better understand his relationship with nature and God.

Since the beginning of Pico's quest for intellectual knowledge, he raised the question of which boundaries are not to be overcome by the human intellect; and he did so on the basis of both classical tradition and Christian authorities. We may assume that his clearly-defined interest in such an issue – one which affected the entire age in which Pico lived – could have actually originated from Pico's stay in Padua, where he attended the local *Studium* in the academic years 1480-1481 and 1481-1482. There he met the Jewish averroist philosopher Elijah del Medigo (ca. 1458-1497), who probably initiated Pico into the averroistic interpretation of Aristotle according to the Arabic tradition. Del Medigo, who translated several averroistic works from Hebrew into Latin on Pico's request, considered Aristotle “the father of all philosophers” and Averroes his most faithful com-

mentator. Moving from Averroes, Del Medigo sharply distinguished knowledge obtained through faith from that gained through philosophical speculation. Despite Elijah's attempt to bring Pico to share his own attitude to rational speculation, the young Count seems to have been inclined to follow a different path of research, the goals of which may appear in a letter sent by Del Medigo to Pico in 1486. In this document the Jewish scholar responds to a previous letter, which has not come down to us, in which the humanist, among other questions, asked for advice about the kabbalistic books which would have allowed him to delve into the hidden doctrines of the Jews. Although actually revealing the titles of the most influential medieval kabbalistic treatises, Del Medigo, by means of rational discussion, tried in his response to deflect the humanist from adopting quasi-gnostic forms of thought; for these, according to him, would lead Pico to create a neoplatonized Christian version of Jewish Kabbalah. In Del Medigo's epistle, as well as in a later Hebrew treatise entitled *Behinat Ha-Dat* (The Examination of Faith), the Jewish scholar showed his contempt for those who assert the existence of various ontological degrees within God, and the possibility for man to affect and change God's perfection through prayer or magical devices.

In spite of Del Medigo's criticism against Kabbalah, Pico probably realized he had found in this Jewish lore one of the major links between rational and religious systems of thought. In 1486, while composing his famous *Nine Hundred Conclusions*, he resorted for the first time to a wide range of Jewish kabbalistic works, which had been translated on his request by the Jewish convert Flavius Mithridates (ca. 1450-1489). As we have seen, Pico wanted to submit and discuss all his *Conclusions* (which he had printed at the end of 1486) during a conference to be held in Rome early in 1487. A committee appointed by Pope Innocent VIII stopped Pico's plans, declaring that six of the theses were suspect and condemning seven others. Most of the condemned *Conclusions* deal with Kabbalah. Pico immediately wrote his *Apology* in order to declare his innocence, but the result of this further attempt was that the Pope eventually denounced all the theses.

In one of the *Conclusions* condemned by the Church, Pico affirmed that 'no knowledge gives us more certainty about Christ's divinity than magic and Kabbalah'. In order to defend this ambiguous claim, Pico made an effort in his *Apology* to distinguish a good from an evil form of → magic, as well as a positive from a negative Kabbalah. Accord-

ing to this distinction, the term Kabbalah was employed by the Jews to point out two distinct hidden disciplines, one dealing with a method for combining letters of the Hebrew alphabet (such a device, according to Pico, was not dissimilar from → Ramon Llull's *Ars*), the second dealing with an investigation of the celestial beings dwelling above the sphere of the Moon; this second discipline was considered by the humanist as the higher form of natural magic. Thus, if investigation of supernal entities could be carried out by means of natural magic, this sort of kabbalistic magic would certainly allow the initiate to penetrate the mysteries of the divinity of Christ. Following Ficino, Pico wanted to establish a beneficent magic based on ancient authorities (and in this perspective Kabbalah could then constitute a *prisca theologia*), which might involve the celebration of special rituals for summoning angels; in this manner the human soul could be united with higher entities, thus creating a path leading to Christ or directly to God. In his approach to kabbalistic mysteries, Pico highlighted the meaning of letters and angelic names, widely employing mystical techniques which were diffused within medieval Jewish milieus and were mostly available to the humanist through Abraham Abulafia's (1240-ca.1291) treatises translated into Latin by Flavius Mithridates. The knowledge of the names of angelic powers like Metatron, Samael or Azazel would allow the kabbalist magician, endowed with the necessary prerequisites, to draw down into this world the positive virtues from the heavens and prevent the malignant agents from harming the lower universe. Seen in this light, Pico's kabbalistic doctrine would be a gnostic-hermetic discipline intended to investigate a hidden God; such investigation was possible through the power, given to the wise man, to comprehend a complicated system of links between lower and higher degrees of reality, by means of a profound meditation on the value of alphabetic letters and angelic names. Such an elitist attitude leads to a particularistic salvation, although his doctrine was intended by Pico to eventually foster the collective redemption of mankind. According to a recent interpretation (Copenhaver 1997), Pico would have envisaged the whole set of his 72 kabbalistic *Conclusiones secundum opinionem propriam* (Conclusions according to his [Pico's] own opinion) as a magic talisman, meant to keep the evil Azazel away and bring the good Metatron closer to the mundane world. If such a reading is correct, we could assume that Pico's attempt to use Kabbalah as a magic tool to bring about redemption is not dissimilar from the views of contemporary Spanish

Jewish mystics who produced the literary *corpus* of the *Sefer ha-Meshiv* (The Book of the Responding [Angel]). Pico's knowledge of Spanish kabbalistic magic can probably be traced to the influence on him of Yohanan Alemanno (c. 1435-c. 1504), a Jewish scholar active in Florence in the last decades of the 15th century.

The problem arising from Pico's use, within a rational system, of esoteric and non-rational doctrines such as the Jewish Kabbalah has been studied by modern scholars according to the most varied perspectives: the above-mentioned interpretation is part of a more general trend of comprehending Pico's speculation as an attempt to transcend physical limits to search for a superior spirituality by means of occult kabbalistic techniques aimed at the theurgical production of a spiritual descent of efflux from above. However, it is also possible to explain the humanist's attitude in purely rational terms, if we maintain that the intellect of the wise man is attributed the privilege of raising itself up to the degree of the Active Intellect, where God's grace will meet it and lead it to the supernal realms of knowledge. A further scholarly approach is represented by those who think that Pico's interest in Kabbalah was a mere hermeneutical and rhetorical device, intended to define a new kind of exegesis of the Christian texts, based on Jewish tradition.

Here we will briefly discuss these views, which are all valid to some extent. If we assume, following Garin's approach, that Pico stressed philosophy over religion, his interest in Kabbalah should be read as merely a search for an intellectual device for overcoming the theory of the "double truth" (which Pico could have derived from Averroes' later interpreters, mainly through Elijah del Medigo's teachings). This interpretation could be supported on the basis of some passages of Pico's *Commentary on Girolamo Benivieni's Love Poem* (see Garin 1937, 464-465). However, even if we admit that Pico originally intended to explore only the hermeneutic dimension of Kabbalah, it must be recognized that already the *Commentary* shows traces of an understanding of Kabbalah as a science of hidden symbols, allowing man to reach an intellectual gnosis of the mysteries of creation and the Godhead. This attitude is more definitely expressed in the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, where Pico's resorting to hermetic passages dealing with the distinctive role of man within God's creation has often been interpreted as a quasi-gnostic reading of the Biblical Genesis. Pico's claim in the *Oration* that 'God is not less philosopher than priest' can be viewed as reflecting the humanist belief in a revela-

tion pertaining at the same time to natural philosophy and to religion (Dulles 1941, 154).

Traces of such a belief can be inferred mainly from Pico's *Heptaplus*, a commentary on the seven days of God's creation. Here the humanist interprets the book of Genesis as a scientific treatise containing elements of aristotelian natural philosophy (according to a rational type of biblical exegesis common among early Church Fathers, scholastic authors, and medieval Jewish biblical scholars); but at the same time, it is also seen as a prophetic work, the truth of which proceeds in a straight line from the divine revelation received by the *priscus philosophus* → Moses. In the *Heptaplus*, we can observe a strong appeal to prophetic Kabbalah, considered by Pico as a technique revealed to understand and control nature (Dulles 1941, 155-156). In the same commentary, Pico highlights the concept of a network of sympathies animating all nature: this concept, which was common in ancient stoic and neoplatonic thought, was one of the major focuses of Ficino's speculation. Likewise, Ficino's thought was probably responsible for the discussion of man's role within God's creation at the beginning of Pico's *Oration*. There the author asserts the idea of man's free choice of either raising himself up to God through the angels, or lowering himself to the status of an animal. Is this God as distant from man as the gnostic *deus absconditus*? Pico's *Conclusions* could be read in such a manner, since (as is well known after Wirszubski's magisterial studies on Pico's encounter with Jewish mysticism) the humanist's impressive use of kabbalistic material based on Jewish theosophical tradition (and the diffusion of such material in contemporary Tuscan milieu: see Idel 1983, Lelli 1997) made possible an understanding of God's creation according to which a lower evil world is sharply separated from a higher good world. Yet, such a sharp distinction as in kabbalistic treatises is not evident in Pico's *Oration*, while the *Conclusions* can be interpreted in various ways.

The close link between rational and non-rational, or better philosophical and theological doctrines, according to either an averroistic or a kabbalistic reading, may be easily interpreted as leading to a gnostic theology: only those wise men provided with intellectual knowledge from above (through a conjunction with the Active Intellect, or by receiving an efflux directly from God) are in a position to disclose the secrets concealed within nature, thanks to an esoteric knowledge revealed by means of symbols. According to Craven, who describes in detail the various interpretations expressed by modern scholars about the relation-



ship between rationalism and → gnosticism in Pico's thought, the humanist's attitude to gnosticism is not different from that of other contemporaries, who were not convicted of gnostic beliefs. Craven admits a peculiar interest of the young Count for secret teachings, but this trend should be comprised within Pico's intellectual elitism (Craven 1981).

In recent years, theologians have argued that Pico was a faithful and orthodox Christian, basing their assessment mostly on the opening of the *Oration*; thus, according to Raspanti (1991, 107), to attribute gnostic views to a thinker who, in his last years, decided to take the habit of the Dominican friars, is tantamount to misunderstanding the effective meaning of Pico's deeply religious attitude. For instance, the concepts of bliss and grace as dealt with in Pico's *Heptaplus* should be understood within the context of Pico's wide patristic and classical culture: like → Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, as well as Plato or Plotinus, Pico stresses the idea of reverting to the source in order to meet the Father. Nature and grace, like philosophy and religion, are but two stages of the only path leading to God (o.c., 88). In other terms, Pico's adaptation of kabbalistic ideas was mostly intended to rescue the church from what he felt were the limitations of scholastic dogmatism; platonian, as well as kabbalistic views more nearly coincide with Christian faith than syllogistic reasonings.

No consistent solution to this issue is possible without a closer inspection of the environment in which Pico developed his speculation. If on one hand we have to admit the strong influence of Ficinian neoplatonism, on the other hand we should recognize, in the same Florentine milieu where Pico spent most of his life, the late 15th-century reappraisal of averroism, as appearing also from the revival of love poems shaped according to the Dolce Stil Novo schemes of the 13th century. It will suffice to recall Pico's poetic activity (which can be explained only in the intellectual frame of this reappraisal), as well as his above-mentioned *Commentary on Girolamo Benivieni's Love Poem*, the aim of which, according to the author, was to found a new poetic theology. The ascent of the intellectual soul to its source through love is a central motif in Italian Renaissance literature; and it could have been connected by Pico to kabbalistic speculation mainly through the numerous mystical commentaries on the Song of Songs, widely diffused in Italian Jewish milieus since the Middle Ages. Pico possessed a Latin version of Gersonides' *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, where the rational and mystical ways of ascent to God are

described (see Lelli 1994, 170-172); this treatise can be seen as further proof of Pico's intention of employing hermeneutic devices for the interpretation of Scripture which could be used only by an elite of wise men, capable of reading texts in not generally accessible languages like Hebrew. According to the Provençal author Gersonides (Levi ben Gershom, 1288-1344), the Song of Songs is an allegoric history of the various stages of the ascent of the human intellect to the Active Intellect of the aristotelian medieval tradition; at the same time it is also a book hiding profound mysteries, such as that of the "death by kiss", which was borrowed by Pico and later became a favourite commonplace of Christian kabbalists. Pico's resorting to a philosophic Hebrew commentary full of mystical implications explains also his assertion that even a rationalist text such as Maimonides' *Moreh ha-Nevukhim* (Guide of the Perplexed) has to be interpreted in an occult manner (see Pico's 63th kabbalistic *Conclusion*). Such an approach towards philosophy was common among Jewish Italian thinkers, who tended to fuse rationalism and Kabbalah, and was represented at its best by the *Commentary on the Pentateuch* by the Italian 14th-century Jewish kabbalist Menahem of Recanati. This work, as well as the aforementioned commentary by Gersonides, were translated into Latin by Flavius Mithridates (Wirszubski 1989, 158-160). Menahem of Recanati often employed significant Spanish and Provençal Kabbalistic treatises which had been influenced by various forms of pagan gnosis still circulating in the Middle Ages (according to Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, who saw the Renaissance flourishing of Kabbalah as a major gnostic revival), or embodied an intellectual tradition dating to Biblical and Rabbinic times and strongly dependent on gnostic motifs diffused in the ancient Near East (according to Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*). Through such channels, mostly ignored by non-Jews until Pico had them translated into Latin, gnostic ideas penetrated the intellectual system of a thinker whose main concern in showing a favourable attitude toward intellectual gnosis was probably more that of highlighting his wide knowledge to the eyes of contemporary scholars than that of transgressing Christian orthodoxy.

After presenting in his *Conclusions* and in his *Apology* a theoretical treatment of magic as a natural art (distinguishing, as we have seen, a good from an evil magic), and after trying to convince his audience about the authority of Arabic and Jewish occult disciplines, in his last years Pico changed his mind about the meaning of → astrology. He

probably intended to respond to his opponent Pedro Garsia, one of the theologians who had been appointed by the Pope to evaluate the orthodoxy of the *Conclusions*. The Spanish bishop's refutation had concentrated on Pico's astrological, magical, and kabbalistic conclusions. This might be the reason why Pico, probably also under Savonarola's influence, decided to denounce the positive value of astrology in his *Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*, arguing on a rational basis against all supporters of astral divination and ceremonial magic (among whom was Marsilio Ficino, although Pico defended him to a certain extent on the assumption that his attitude towards astral magic was only theoretical). Relying on a careful distinction between a negative astral divination, viewed as based upon a determinist doctrine, and a positive divinely inspired prophecy, like that of Savonarola (recalling medieval arguments on the role of occult disciplines in a study program), Pico here seems to open the way to a new understanding of science. The latter might have led him subsequently to reject also the magic and kabbalistic disciplines which had been among the doctrines upon which he had founded, a few years earlier, his all-comprehensive system of thought. However, Pico's sudden death interrupted this momentous project, leaving to contemporaries and followers, as well as to modern scholars, the difficult task of ascertaining the importance of the *Disputations* in view of later scientific developments.

Iohannis Pici Mirandulae Concordiaequae Comes *Opera omnia*, Bononiae, 1496; Basileae, 1572 (reprint. Torino, 1978) ♦ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et Uno e scriptis vari* (Eugenio Garin, ed.), Firenze: Vallecchi, 1942 ♦ idem, *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (Eugenio Garin, ed.), 2 vols., Firenze: Vallecchi, 1946-1952 ♦ idem, *On the Dignity of Man, On Being and the One, Heptaplus* (1940), repr. Indianapolis/New York/Kansas City, 1965 ♦ S.A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses* (1486). *The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems*, Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998 [1999].

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FABRIZIO LELLI

### Pierre d'Ailly (Petrus de Alliaco),

\* 1350 or 1351 Compiègne,  
† 1420 Avignon

Chancellor of the University of Paris from 1389 to 1395; Bishop of Le Puy from 1395 to 1396, of Noyon in 1396 to 1397, and of Cambrai from 1397; and Cardinal from 1411 until his death. A prolific author in matters of theology, ecclesiology, and natural philosophy (including → astrology), d'Ailly was primarily known as one of the leading churchmen during the years of the Great Schism (1378-1414). A noted proponent of the conciliar solution to the crisis, he played a crucial role at the Council of Constance (1414-1417) that brought the Schism to an end. During his years at the University of Paris, d'Ailly taught many of the leading minds of his day, including Nicholas of Clamanges (1363-1437) and Jean Gerson (1363-1429).

Like his pupil Gerson, d'Ailly did compose several treatises on the spiritual life, including *Le jardin amoureux de l'âme dévote* (1401, possibly by Gerson), a *Life of Celestine V* (1408), *Speculum considerationis* (after 1408), *Compendium contemplationis* (after 1408), *Devota meditatio super psalmum: Judica me Deus* (1414), *Oratio dominica anagogice exposita* (1414), *Devota meditatio super Ave Maria* (1414), and *Devota meditatio seu expositio super psalmum: In te speravi* (1414). But if Gerson embraced → mysticism in the years after 1400, his master did not follow the pupil's lead. Although d'Ailly's treatises express an admiration of and need for the contemplative life, the general assessment is that they are fairly traditional and unoriginal compilations on the topic. He was more a man of action than a mystic.

In his final decade, as the crisis in the church reached a head, d'Ailly also immersed himself in

the study of astrology, producing several notable treatises on the topic. D'Ailly's interest in the stars was not new, but his whole-hearted embrace of astrology after 1410 was a reversal from youthful condemnations of the science, such as seen in his *Tractatus utilis super Boecii de consolatione philosophie*, written between 1377 and 1381, and *De falsis prophetis II*, composed between 1378 and 1388. D'Ailly's serious forays into astrology began in 1410, when he composed three treatises that bear the strong influence of the Franciscan → Roger Bacon (ca. 1214-ca. 1292): *Imago mundi*, *Epilogus mappe mundi*, and *De legibus et sectis contra supersticiosos astronomos*. The latter work includes a defense of astrology and its usefulness in predicting religious change (that is, the "laws and sects" of the title) through the examination of conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter, particularly those falling every 240 ("great conjunctions") and every 960 years ("greatest conjunctions").

Treatises composed on the eve of the Council of Constance reveal that d'Ailly's interest in the stars was tied up with apocalyptic fears surrounding the Great Schism. Many believed, as d'Ailly himself had in the early years of the Schism, that the division in the Church signaled the imminent advent of Antichrist. Astrology helped to reassure d'Ailly that the Council of Constance might indeed end the Schism and delay the apocalypse.

Applying astrology to the study of human history in these treatises demonstrated to d'Ailly that conjunctions and other notable astrological events had correlated with major political and religious changes in the past and could reasonably be expected to do so in the future. Accordingly, in his treatise *Concordantia astronomie cum historica narratione*, completed May 10, 1414, d'Ailly produced the culmination of his astrological researches: his prediction that Antichrist would appear in or around the year 1789. He arrived at that date by examining three important signifiers of religious change, namely, a greatest conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, the completion of ten revolutions by the planet Saturn, and an alteration in the position attained by the *accessus* and *recessus* of the eighth sphere (this latter phrase refers to one of the explanations of the precession of the equinoxes offered in the Alfonsine Tables). Although d'Ailly subsequently would revise many of his pronouncements about astrology (for example, in the *Elucidarium astronomice concordie cum theologica et cum historica narratione*, finished on September 24, 1414), he reaffirmed the prediction for 1789 in one of his final works, the *De persecutionibus ecclesie* of 1418.

D'Ailly's writings remained an important source for cosmographers and astrologers through the Renaissance. A number of his astrological treatises appear in two important incunabula (Louvain, 1483, and Augsburg, 1490) as well as in numerous manuscript copies. Christopher Columbus owned and annotated a copy of the 1483 incunable, and d'Ailly's astrological predictions were crucial to Columbus's sense of apocalyptic mission. D'Ailly's prognostications informed later astrological pronouncements, such as those by Jean de Bruges in the 1440s and Pierre Turrell in the 1530s. His work on conjunctions was cited with approval by noted astrologers like Regiomontanus. It may well be that d'Ailly's example opened the floodgates to the wave of astrological apocalyptic predictions that issued from European presses from the late 15th through the 17th centuries.

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LAURA ACKERMAN SMOLLER

## Pietism

The term Pietism refers to a widely influential reform movement in the 17th and 18th centuries, the first on the Continent since the Reformation. Historical, geographical and personal factors have

all affected the definitions of Pietism, but since the second half of the 19th century a “broad” concept has become common currency. No longer restricted to the Lutheran movement deriving from Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), together with related currents in the reformed churches of Germany and Switzerland, the concept now embraces the Netherlands, radical and separatist Pietism, as well as Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and the Herrnhuter Brethren and even Puritanism. Thus extended, it is possible to identify the distant roots of Pietism.

Johann Arndt (1555-1621) introduced the theme of Pietism in his *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (1605/10), as the retreat from an outer, formal and rigid Christianity to one that is vital and interior. The intense debate over this book of edification, distributed more widely than any other comparable Protestant work, arose not least because of its swiftly acknowledged reception of unorthodox sources such as → Valentin Weigel, Angela de Foligno, → Paracelsus et al. This ascetic book has remained, albeit with omissions, an enduring part of the Reformation heritage. Ecclesiastical Pietism was thus highly motivated to integrate Johann Arndt and not abandon this influential book to the radical spiritualists. A new pious movement emerging at the beginning of the 17th century in Germany found expression in the vacillating figure of → Johann Valentin Andreae, but Lutheran orthodoxy also made a vital contribution, by fostering piety at all levels of society, and in intellectual and religious life (cf. Johann Saubert, Johann Matthäus Meyfart, Johann Gerhard, Rosstock University).

The divisive tendencies inherent in this early pious movement developing c. 1670 at Frankfurt am Main, were integrated by Ph. J. Spener, the leader of Lutheran Pietism in Germany. Already in his Frankfurt period (1666-1686), Spener acquired great authority thanks to his profound theological training, and a patient and shrewd observation of the possibilities of networking closely with noble families. In 1686 he succeeded to the highest position in German Lutheranism as senior court preacher at Dresden, and from 1691 as provost at St Nicolai in Berlin, and as a consistorial councillor where he exercised great influence for more than a dozen years. Spener gave the Pietist movement its manifesto with his *Pia Desideria / Hertzliches Verlangen* (1675), even though it was not particularly original. First published as a Preface to a new edition of Arndt's Postille, *Pia Desideria* was highly effective by weighing complaints about conditions

in the three estates against proposed reforms, and adducing hope for the Church's improvement. Spener's cardinal themes are rebirth, renewal and a personal form of Christianity. His most famous pupil Francke, though inferior to him in theological profundity, surpassed him completely in visionary energy, practical passion and organizational ability, and was able to rely on diligent, selfless and loyal collaborators in his work at Halle (Saale). The influence of Halle Pietism on the Prussian state can scarcely be overestimated. Simultaneously with this Halle Pietism deriving from Spener and Francke, there were similarly influential Pietist movements within the reformed churches both in the Netherlands as well as elsewhere in Germany (Labadists; Theodor Undereyck at Bremen), just as Pietism as a whole is a phenomenon that extends to east and west far beyond the frontiers of Europe.

In Württemberg there developed a special kind of Pietism linked to the Church, but permeated with a strongly speculative element in its major Swabian representatives such as Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) or → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger. Here in Swabia the dangers of separatism were ameliorated by strategies for special religious gatherings outside official services.

Count Zinzendorf and the Herrnhuters are difficult to classify in the overall picture of Pietism. The origin and biography of the count is complex, but his theories and policy of transforming theology into communal practice were influential. The significance of the Herrnhut brethren in many fields such as theology, with many practical applications in pastoral and missionary work, as well as economics, literature, and much else can scarcely be overestimated.

The diverse basic assumptions of Pietism have been variously emphasised over time: the personal experience of faith; a close-knit community of true believers; a determined effort to grow in sanctity; a critical view of the Church (in both doctrine and hierarchy); a distance from the mundane world as well as the state; an inclination towards self-awareness; an intensive study of what they perceived as the will of God; criticism of a literalist faith; a critical stance towards church services “ex opere operato”. There is no uniform Pietism, a fact evident from the vehement internal controversies between J.A. Bengel and Count von Zinzendorf, between Halle and the Herrnhuters, J. Winckler and J.W. Petersen or → Gottfried Arnold and → Johann Georg Gichtel.

Across this wide thematic range, Pietism produced tendencies which admitted of limited ecclesiastical integration, if at all. One may speak of



“radical”, “separatist” and heterodox Pietism. Communities formed only sporadically and only occasionally lasted for longer periods. The spectrum extends from the “Society of Mother Eve” (Eva von Buttlar) through barely institutionalised communities at small aristocratic courts, Philadelphian communities (e.g. Heinrich Horch, 1652-1729), and followers of Gichtel, to Polycarp Müller’s foundation of independent Moravian church communities. All these represent the occasionally bizarre expressions of Pietism’s early struggle towards a “gathering” of the fellow faithful.

Radical Pietism is difficult to define on account of its overlap with ecclesiastical Pietism. Gottfried Arnold combined both in his own spiritual career, while Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769), another Radical Pietist, was also a Quietist, influenced by Pierre Poiret (1646-1719) and Madame Guyon (1648-1717). Other currents and movements approximated Radical Pietism in a modified form: remnants of Schwenckfeldians and Baptist groups, pansophic and kabbalistic circles, and mystical spiritualists. The traditions and sources at work here display affinities to Pietism in their habits and systems of thought, often on the margins of the church and seeking to develop outside official church orthodoxy. Arndt could be regarded as a mystical theologian but for his attempt to institutionalise mystical and spiritualist traditions, as is also the case with Joachim Betke (1601-1663), Christian Hoburg (1607-1675) and Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711).

Bohemean thought has had a strong and varied influence on Pietism. The followers of → Jacob Boehme in Silesia surpass him in their chiliasm or strong criticism of the church (Abraham von Franckenberg [1593-1652], Johann Theodor Tschesch [1595-1649], Daniel Czepko [1605-1666], Johann Scheffler [1624-1677]). Influences on the Netherlands and England were strong. Political and ecclesiastical frontiers offered no obstacle to spiritualists and practitioners of Hermetic arts. In the latter sphere, one finds references to precursors in the 16th century and earlier (Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenckfeld, Valentin Weigel). Catholic Quietism and early modern Catholic mysticism were also influential across confessional borders. Christian August, Count Palatine of Sulzbach (1622-1708), initiated reforms involving the Jews far beyond traditional confessional borders. → Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont was able to arouse the Count Palatine’s interest in → Christian theosophy, Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] and → alchemy. Three theologians summoned from the

Netherlands, Johann Fischer, general superintendent of Sulzbach, and → Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, active here from 1667 to 1689, all exemplified many facets of Pietism (chiliasm, philo-Semitism, spiritualism).

Enthusiasm coupled with prophetic utterance also played a considerable role in Pietism at the end of the 17th century and in the first third of the 18th century. Extreme enthusiasm is represented by Johann Daniel Müller (1716-85) with his united church of the “Revelation of Christ” and his messianic protest against the Enlightenment. This kind of thinking is particularly strong among musical theorists and practitioners such as Johann Ludwig Fricker (1729-1766), a Swabian Pietist close to F.C. Oetinger. Research opens up a large field here; the prophetic inspirations of Johann Friedrich Rock (1678-1749) have been examined in their historical development, literary expression and ramifications. Enthusiastic movements, particularly among women, have always aroused excitement in the history of Pietism. The question of special revelations beside Holy Scripture has remained an unsolved problem.

The influence of Radical Pietist writings, often appearing in large editions with scant censorship, led to indifference towards dogmatic rigidity, theological teaching and ecclesiastical confessions. They emphasised an interpretation of Scripture based on the presence of the spirit and a relaxation of the literal meaning of the Gospel and even eternal damnation. Indifference towards the outer ecclesiastical structure often extended to a separatist rejection of the church as “Babel”. No confession was regarded as the possessor of the truth required for salvation, but the members of an invisible spiritual church may be found hidden in all confessions. This inner break with orthodox doctrines leading to the development of special teachings smoothed the path towards the theological Enlightenment. The best known product of Radical Pietism is G. Arnold’s *Unpartheyischer Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (1699/1700). One should not underestimate the influence of songs, correspondence, diaries, poetry, journals and (auto-)biographical collections nor their linguistic respect. This is particularly true of such 18th-century figures as Johann Henrich Reitz, → Emanuel Swedenborg, F.C. Oetinger, → Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling and → Johann Kaspar Lavater, who represent highly individual examples, intensely concerned with natural science, medicine and other branches of science.

Due to its manifold expressions, any consideration of Pietism as a uniform movement in the 19th



and 20th centuries runs the risk of seeing continuity rather than completely new impulses. Recurrent similar phenomena such as the inspirations of Maria Gottlieb Kummer (1756-1828), which accompanied disasters between 1791 and 1809, probably derive from different sources. However new religious communities like the Seventh Day Adventists are akin to Pietists in awaiting the moment of prophetic awakening. Elsewhere a publishing house called "Inneres Leben" seeks to broadcast such works of literature as the Berleburger Bible and works of Gichtel and Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769). Around the middle of the 18th century Pietism loses its force as a vital formative movement. Late Pietism and neo-Pietism tend to characterize revivals of classical Pietism rather than an unbroken and continuing influence of Pietism.

Museum exhibitions today (Halle, Herrnhut, Stuttgart, Ludwigsburg) thematize the events and figures of Pietism. The reciprocal influence of Pietism and Hermeticism is slowly emerging now that scholarship is approaching Pietism within a wider and philosophical approach. The question of Pietism's relationship to natural science is also important. The *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica* (Bibliotheek J.R. Ritman, Amsterdam) highlights the many ramifications of the pre-history and associated currents of Pietism and explores its points of contact with the Hermetic traditions. The collections, research, publications and exhibitions of that institution in Amsterdam have an influence extending well beyond that of Pietism.

The doctrine of rebirth in Pietism parallels the process of purification in its many stages from the conquest of Evil up to union with the Godhead. → Alchemy understood as a Hermetic philosophy offered a fruitful soil for these ideas of rebirth but also risks of alienation and falsehood that were not immediately obvious. Two figures of Pietism and its influential pre-history illustrate this medical and scientific thought with special reference to the reception and development of Hermeticism: Johann Arndt and Johann Samuel Carl. Arndt's fourth book of *True Christianity* (1605-10), "Liber Naturae", shows him to be a transmitter of Paracelsian alchemy and mystical spiritualism in the pre-Pietist period. He represents a spiritual alchemy reaching back into the 16th century and fostered by theologically trained physicians and medically literate theologians. The Bible and the Book of Nature are the dominant themes, as transmitted by the Leipzig-born → Heinrich Khunrath into spiritualist and Pietist traditions. Khunrath firmly differentiates Christian alchemy from deceit-

ful gold-making and anticipates the metaphoric use of alchemical concepts as in → Johann Valentin Andreae.

One can scarcely overestimate the influence of → Jacob Boehme on Radical Pietism, which must be regarded as a fruitful humus for Hermetic ideas. Boehme (and Arndt) accord rebirth a far greater significance than the justification by faith in Luther. → Johann Georg Gichtel is the most important follower of Boehme in describing the path of rational man who has turned away from God to the status of one reborn and bathed in a divine light, where the three principles of divine essence and the whole cosmos reflect each other.

→ Gottfried Arnold plays a key role in two respects with regard to the dissemination of Hermeticism within Pietism. In the first place, he describes in his *Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* a number of Hermetic authors (→ Paracelsus, Khunrath, → J.B. van Helmont). In the second place, Arnold remained the source for all Pietists sympathetic to Hermeticism in the 18th century (Homburg circle and F.C. Oetinger). Arnold described a biblically founded and divinely illuminated "Magia naturalis", even assimilating Martin Luther's reference to the 'free and natural art of physicians and their like', which had only been perverted by jugglers and sorcerers. A medical and pharmaceutical "Chymistry" is favoured in ecclesiastical Pietism while Radical Pietism inclined more to hermetic-mystical alchemy and Boehmean philosophy. Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1734) exemplifies the path from rigid Lutheran orthodoxy to separatist radical Pietism with a strong theological, philosophical and medical stamp. His career brought him into contact with Johann Georg Rosenbach and often with J.S. Carl. All three failed in their quest for gold and higher wisdom. Against the background of Hermetic traditions, Dippel founded a comprehensive and philosophically critical anthropology based on communication with God. In 1729 he regarded himself as a friend of Halle Pietism as well as a follower of the new rational chemistry and medicine taught by Georg Ernst Stahl (1660-1734), professor at Halle. Carl was the chief representative of Radical Pietist medicine but tried to overcome what he regarded as its obscure Hermetic fascination. Following in the wake of Stahl and promoting his theories also in the circles of Pietists, Carl's exceptional knowledge of Hermetic literature still enabled him to favour milder remedies against the more aggressive methods of medical and pharmaceutical practice. Carl took his leave of Hermeticism like 'a Hermetic Saul converted into a Stahlian Paul'

(C. Habrich). Accordingly he regarded nature and its God-given order as complete and no longer needful of transformation. This provided material for an intense controversy with Dippel, continued by Dippel's supporter, Johann Christian Senckenberg (1707-1772). The hermetic-mystical position remained one based upon inspiration, while ecclesiastical and radical-separatist Pietists such as Carl and Tersteegen used alchemical concepts only as metaphors. As far as Carl was concerned, the increasingly autonomous spheres of laboratory work and medicine counted for nothing against personal piety. A gulf lay between those Pietists who merely "played" with alchemical notions and the illuminates who espoused a pious Hermeticism such as the Homburgers, who had a high regard for → Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theologicum* (1719, . . . *et Theosophicum* [1735]).

Oetinger represents the zenith and conclusion of Pietism's vital relationship with Hermeticism. He encompasses Hermeticism, alchemy, and a knowledge of antiquity with sovereign independence as well as eclecticism. Finally, Carl Arnold Kortum (1745-1824), a member of the Tersteegen Circle, represents a phenomenon in the late Hermetic period of Pietism, with his call in 1796 for the foundation of a "Hermetic Society" [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies], which conducted alchemical research until 1819.

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DIETRICH BLAUFUß

## Plethon, Georgios Gemistos,

\* ca. 1355-1360 Constantinople,

† 26.6.1452 (?) Mistra

George Gemistos, best known under his nickname "Plethon", was one of the most notable philosophers of the end of the Byzantine era. After following the traditional course of studies at Constantinople, he made a long stay at the Ottoman court in Adrianople, staying with a Jew named Elisha who was well-versed in the Arab and Persian commentators on Aristotle (Averroes, → Avicenna, and the school of Sohrawardî). From Elisha, he presumably learned some doctrines concerning → Zoroaster. On returning to Constantinople, Gemistos was victimized by a cabal of churchmen on account of the teachings he was giving out. Emperor Manuel II Paleologos sent him to Mistra as political advisor to his son Theodore II, the new despot of Morea. In 1438-1439, Gemistos took part in the Council of Ferrara and Florence on the union of the churches. He held an anti-unionist position, together with his former pupil Mark of Ephesus (Markos Eugenikos), in order to defend the Orthodox cause and, above all, to preserve whatever traces of Hellenism remained in Greek theology. Outside the Council, Plethon attended philosophical meetings in which he was persuaded to give teachings on Plato. In Florence, he wrote for his Italian friends a small Greek work (*Wherein Aristotle Disagrees with Plato*, known under the inappropriate title *De Differentiis*), in which he tried to show that Aristotle went wrong every time he distinguished himself from his master Plato. This work unleashed a fierce argument between Platonists and Aristotelians, much fueled by the Byzantine emigrants in Italy. → Marsilio Ficino later stated that Cosimo de' Medici often listened to Plethon, who was like 'a second Plato', and that this gave Cosimo the idea of restoring the Academy in Florence. On his return to Mistra,

Plethon continued writing a work on the ideal constitution, the *Book of Laws*, which was only to be made known to the so-called *phratores*, members of the *phratria* which he assembled around him (the term, adopted from antiquity, originally referred to a political and religious subdivision of the *polis*; Plethon's *phratria* was supposedly a secret philosophical and religious association with branches in Italy). In the *Book of Laws*, kept hidden because of the threats hanging over him, Plethon based the ideal political constitution on 'theology according to Plato and Zoroaster': a strictly hierarchical polytheism in which the names of the gods were taken from the Hellenic tradition, but could be transposed into other traditions.

The center of gravity of Plethon's philosophical system is the *Magic Oracles of the Magi, Disciples of Zoroaster*. At the time of the Council of Florence, Plethon refused the forced unity that the Latin Church demanded in exchange for materially assisting the Byzantines to repel the Ottomans. Rather than submitting the Orthodox Church to a Pope who was himself contested by the Council of Basel, and considering the impossibility of reconciling the different monotheisms, the philosopher recommended a far more fundamental unity that would bring into one accord the Muslims, the Jews, and the already divided Christians. It would entail abandoning the recent, monotheistic religions, and going back to the original doctrine that must have been common to all the nations of the inhabited world and taught by their wise legislators, from the Iberians in the far West to the Indians in the far East. This doctrine, itself derived from the Ideas (considered as gods), had been best preserved and transmitted by the sage and law-giver Zoroaster and his disciples, the Magi, from whom it had been passed to Pythagoras, Plato, and the (Neo)platonists [→ Neoplatonism]; this was the doctrine of the *Magic Oracles*.

Plethon had discovered these oracles in the collection made by Michael Psellos in the 11th century. He renamed them, expurgated them, and eliminated all Christian interpretation from them. Psellos's collection is known by the title *Chaldaean Oracles* (the Neoplatonists considered them as their sacred book, although the work was actually contemporary with Porphyry). But while the term "Chaldaean" suggested popular → magic, even theurgy, Plethon explained that his terminology referred, rather, to the doctrine of the Magi, who were not magicians but sages. Moreover, he purged Psellos's collection from every trace of Chaldaicism and theurgical prac-

tices, e.g. cutting out the oracles on the Sacrifice of the Mnizouris Stone, on the Spinning Top of Hecate, and the saying 'Never change barbarous names'. As for the *Iynges* or "charms" of the Oracles, he assimilated them to the intelligible Forms and the Ideas (gods) of the Neoplatonists: divinities that were both thought of and thinking. Finally, Plethon reorganized Psellos's collection and interpreted it in the context of a strictly positive and rational metaphysics, thereby separating himself sharply from the Neoplatonic current. On the one hand, he states in the *Book of Laws* that the gods truly allow themselves to be known by humans. Even though the first god of all is known by the 'flower of the intellect' (*noou anthei*: oracle 28b) or 'that in our intellection which is highest and most simple' (as Plethon explains it in his *Commentary on the Magic Oracles*), this approach remains rational: Plethon excludes any recourse to negative theology or to faith. On the other hand, and correlatively, theurgical practices are not considered a relevant method of access to the divine; the only rites prescribed seem to be prayers and hymns to the gods, and these have an effect only on those who recite them.

The link between the *Oracles*, Zoroaster, and the Magi may go back to the time when Plethon was being taught by Elisha, the expert in the Persian commentators on Aristotle. In the *Oracles*, as in Sohrawardi's school, one finds the same theme of light and a similar emphasis on the sage Zoroaster, of whom the ancient Greek as well as the Persian sages are said to be the spiritual heirs.

Zoroaster is thus made to replace → Moses, the common reference-point of the monotheist religions. Plethon also passes over in silence the sage Hermes [→ Hermes Trismegistus], whereas Sohrawardi's school and the Neoplatonists (especially Iamblichus) consider him a primordial sage. This is probably because in Greek patristics, Hermes is coupled with Moses: Cyril of Alexandria, for example, credits Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian priest and legislator, with the merit of adopting part of Moses' teachings and of anticipating certain Christian revelations, while Eusebius of Caesarea reports the Jewish historian Artapanus as proving that Hermes and Moses were one and the same. Nonetheless, Plethon was well aware of certain similarities between → Hermetism and the *Oracles*, and admits in the *Reply to Scholarios* that in Egypt the priests adopted the doctrines of Zoroaster and derived their fame therefrom.

Marsilio Ficino, from his *Commentary on the Philebus* onwards, places Zoroaster at the head of



his list of ancient theologians, whereas before 1469 he considered Hermes as the most ancient sage. Ficino owned a manuscript containing several of Plethon's works (preserved in Florence as *Riccardianus graecus* 76), notably the *Magic Oracles of the Magi, Disciples of Zoroaster* with Plethon's *Commentary* (the text, detached, now being lost). In the margin of f.27v. of the *Reply to Scholarios*, Ficino notes, summing up a sentence of Plethon's, that 'the Platonic theology has as its origin the tradition of Zoroaster'. Ficino inserted in his *Platonic Theology* many oracles taken from Plethon's collection, and also included in his own work, without mentioning the fact, whole sections of Plethon's *Commentary on the Magic Oracles* (notably those on the pneuma as vehicle of the soul, and on the idol as image of the rational soul), while attributing this text to the Magi themselves. But Ficino, who also knew and used the collection of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and Psellos's *Commentary*, associated these Magi with the Chaldaeans, and even with the magicians! → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola also owned a copy of the *Magic Oracles*, the loss of which was deplored by → Francesco Patrizi. Patrizi himself compiled an anthology (now Biblioteca Vaticana, *Barberinianus graecus* 179) comprising a copy of the first edition of the *Magic Oracles of the Magi, Disciples of Zoroaster* (printed by Tiletanus in 1538), Latin translations of the collection and of the longer version of Plethon's *Commentary*, the shorter version in both Greek and Latin, and other oracles mostly excerpted from the works of Proclus and Olympiodorus.

If Plethon could assert that Zoroaster's doctrine had been transmitted to Pythagoras and Plato, and could make Plato compatible with the *Magic Oracles*, it was because he believed that Plato's teaching was not limited to what he had consigned to writing. In the *Reply to Scholarios*, Plethon follows Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and the Neoplatonists in the idea of a teaching given by Plato by word of mouth. With Plethon, from the start, it is thus an open Platonism that is transmitted to the West, ready to receive into its crucible various esoteric doctrines rejected by Christianity.

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BRIGITTE TAMBRUN

Poiret, Pierre, \* 1646 Metz,  
† 21.5.1719 Rheynsburg

Known as a “Quietist” mystic, Poiret drew upon the theosophy of → Boehme more explicitly than either of the other major figures of this movement, Guyon and → Bourignon, whose works he was instrumental in publishing. Poiret was a Calvinist pastor who preached in Heidelberg until he was converted to the → mysticism of Tauler by Bourignon, and was persecuted by local church officials. By 1676, he was forced to live in Amsterdam, where he met → Johann Gichtel, the “hermit of Amsterdam” and founder of the *Engelsbrüder*, or angelic brethren. Poiret became an influential figure throughout Western Europe not only because he edited and published the works of Guyon and Bourignon, but also because of his own writings, which were widely distributed and read in theosophic circles. His work eventually became influential in the emergence of German → Romanticism, and he drew explicitly and extensively on Germanic mysticism – in particular Tauler, Boehme, and the *Theologia Germanica*. Poiret was in touch with the Philadelphians in England, and was instrumental in making possible the English publications of Bourignon’s works. He died in Rheynsburg in the Netherlands, where he had taken nearly life-long refuge from ecclesiastical persecution.

Poiret’s magnum opus is his seven-volume *L’Economie divine* (Amsterdam 1687), published in English translation in London in 1713. In this *Divine Economy*, Poiret offered a grand view of human history, covering the nature of creation, the fall, and most importantly, ‘L’Economie du Rétablissement de l’homme après l’Incarnation de Jésus-Christ’ (The Economy of Re-establishing Humanity After the Incarnation of Jesus Christ) and ‘L’Economie de la coopération de l’homme avec l’opération de Dieu’ (The Economy of Human Cooperation with the Operation of God). In these sections of *Divine Economy*, we find what might be called the limited millennialism of Poiret, a grand schema in which humanity moves toward reunion with God.

In this major work by Poiret one can perceive the influence of Boehme, but Poiret’s more explicit Boehmean writing is to be found in another work,

*Theologiae Christianae juxta principia Jacobi Boehmii teutonici, Idea Brevis et Methodica*, published in 1708. Here, as is obvious from the title, Poiret outlines the theology of Boehme ‘briefly and methodically’. He also published a *Bibliotheca mysticorum selecta* (Amsterdam 1708), which contains his selection of the works of mystical authors, as well as a book of commentaries on emblems entitled *L’âme amante de son Dieu, représentée dans les emblèmes d’Hermannus Hugo* (Cologne 1717), sometimes wrongly attributed to Madame Guyon.

From all of these publications, we can recognize in Poiret a figure belonging to the theosophic tradition, a man of immense productivity responsible for a number of major publications, and of often unacknowledged influence on subsequent European literature and religion. Poiret is an enigmatic figure in some respects – for instance, early on he was influenced by the work of René Descartes, who would remain influential even during his later, more Boehmean period. This is remarkable because Cartesian and Boehmean thought are usually considered irreconcilable. Poiret remains a figure whose work deserves a comprehensive reappraisal that fully takes into account his place in the theosophic tradition as a whole, as well as the relationship between Quietism, Germanic mysticism, and theosophy during this period. Major studies are Chevallier (1994), Krieg (1975, 1979), and Wieser (1932).

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ARTHUR VERSLUIS

## Politics and Esotericism

The difficulties inherent in the potentially unlimited field of politics, combined with the complexity of the definition of → esotericism, requires a definition of the method of approach used here. It includes both a reflection on institutions from the point of view of political philosophy, which opens up the question of the legal status of esoteric groups, and an anthropology of politics including its fields of representation and their variations in space and time. Another serious difficulty lies in the unconscious or deliberate confusion of the esoteric and the religious, which is in fact a prolongation, in this particular aspect, of the interference and conflicts between politics and religion.

In historical terms, the elements of these types of relationship were already in place in classical Greek antiquity and in the world of the biblical prophets. Thereafter, the changes in Western religious consciousness at the time of the Renaissance and the emergence of politics in the modern sense favored speculations of an esoteric kind on the legitimacy of power. At the time of the Enlightenment, and then the French Revolution, the eclipse of the clergy's share in political power, and even in some countries its elimination, gave rise to new needs for unity and a search for meaning, which esotericism was ambitious to satisfy. Tied to the establishment of democracy in the 19th and 20th centuries, the relation of esotericism and politics has evolved in the contemporary world alongside globalization. This evolution has gone hand in hand with that of the religious and scientific imagination.

The transition to citizenship (*politeia*) in Athens occurred in symbiosis with the original familial and tribal society; Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* presented man as “naturally” political, and Plato entrusted the philosopher with a mission of re-descending into the cave to transmit the divine models that are inaccessible to ordinary men. Thus the practices of the mystery religions and of initia-

tion went together with the appearance of democracy, just as the interpretation of the signs given by the Pythoness at Delphi for the founding of new colonies linked the political strategy of the Greek cities to a type of speculation with esoteric traits. It is not surprising that in the messianic intellectual ambience of the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic era, Philo of Alexandria classified the political arts as belonging to → magic and likened statesmen to magicians and sorcerers (*Treatise on dreams*, 2-39). With the exception of those who incarnated the new divine model on earth, and whose figures are found in the Scriptures (Solomon, and more especially Melchisedech, the mysterious King of Salem, without father, mother or offspring, the guarantee for the legitimacy of Israel to whom Abraham paid his tithe in Gen. 14:20), the attitudes of the Jewish exegetes and the Christian Fathers remained very similar on this point. Moses Maimonides, commenting in the Middle Ages on the Torah in his *Guide to the Perplexed* (2, 39), contrasted the political regimes resulting, for example, from the “laws of the Greeks” with those founded on the words of the prophets. However, a certain doubt concerning the authenticity of advice that arrived through the “voice of heaven” left room even in the Scriptures for divination [→ Divinatory Arts] and for magicians, as testified by about twenty biblical references. The renewal of the prohibition, which proves the continuation of the practice, and the consultation of the Witch of Endor by King Saul (I Sam. 28:7) are examples: ‘Seek out for me a woman who is a medium . . .’. The confirmation by “occult arts” (Maimonides's expression) of heaven's decree abandoning Saul endowed them with a certain legitimacy: it was indeed the shade of Samuel that appeared. The Middle Ages inherited from Antiquity, with the separation of powers, an uncertainty about the boundary between their respective domains: to the sovereign as image of the divine model corresponded the authority of the State as the foundation of pontifical canon law. The pontifical religious legislation set down in the Decrees of Gratian (1140) rested more on Roman law than on the Bible. Esoteric speculation as a procedure of knowledge capable of effecting a bridge between these two domains thus gradually came to hold an important stake. It was already present in the discourses of visionary prophetesses such as → Hildegard of Bingen, who drew her teachings from her access to the “primordial language” free from any → mysticism, and was heeded by princes and popes during the conflict that opposed them to the Empire, notably to Frederick Barbarossa (1122-

1190). The emergence in late medieval Europe of states founded on juridical bases favored the speculations of such prophetesses, who counseled sovereigns. With the Cistercian monk Joachim of Fiore, commentary on the text of the Apocalypse tended to integrate elements of an esoteric type, arithmological speculations, and exegesis of the signs for recognizing the Great Monarch and the Angelic Pope that would mark the coming of the fourth age. This validation of time by means of a secret history was among the things that prepared the Renaissance, and the innumerable commentators on Joachim followed in the same direction.

At the time of the Renaissance, the emancipation of religious morality was accentuated (Machiavelli's *Prince* being significant in this regard), and politics was henceforth considered an art, opening up to esoteric thought the heritage of a global vision of the world and of a link with the absolute. → Tommaso Campanella, in *The City of the Sun* (1599), associated the question of the union of churches and the realization of "natural law" under the scepter of the King of France with calculations concerning a collision between the sun and the earth. Even in the age of classicism, the argument of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) linked the fall and original sin to a change in the axis of the earth. Moreover, the wars of religion gave a new vigor to esoteric-political speculation. In *The Ash Wednesday Supper* (1584) → Giordano Bruno identified Elizabeth I of England with the Virgin of the Golden Age to whom the universal empire was promised: certainly a mystic power, but one whose exercise and approach were based on an intellectual process. In the same way, the lilies of the royal arms of France, according to → Guillaume Postel, went back to biblical symbolism and made Francis I into a figure of the universal monarchy. The art of politics, faced with the question of meaning, likewise found a new kind of expression, notably after 1516 with the *Utopia* of Thomas More. But it was the Rosicrucian manifestos [→ Rosicrucianism] that were most significant in associating the themes of secret transmission and of the orient as a source of knowledge with magical and alchemical practices, in the story of the initiatic journey of Christian Rosencreutz. The influence of the *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614), followed by a *Confessio* (1615), then by the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz* (1616), was considerable in the Germanic world of the Holy Roman Empire during the Thirty Years War. The main author, → J. Valentin Andreae, was a Lutheran, studying theology at Tübingen and seeking a hero destined to head the Evangelical Union. The Calvinist prince Chris-

tian of Anhalt (1568-1630) seemed to him capable of playing this role, but this identification changed in the Rosicrucian texts as circumstances altered. In Elizabethan England, one of Andreae's inspirers, → John Dee, author of the *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1563) dedicated to the "liberal" Catholic Emperor Maximilian II of Habsburg, placed his talent as an astrologer at the service of his sovereign; → Michael Maier served Rudolf II (1552-1612) at Prague, etc.

In the 18th century, the Rosicrucian influence soon became part of the movement of → Freemasonry, by being integrated into the various systems of high degrees; it was always very visible in Europe, particularly in the entourage of Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712-1786), with the role of Bischoffswerder (1741-1803) and of the *Gold- und Rosenkreuz* (Golden Rose-Cross). The king had presented a unitary vision of the world in his *Anti-Machiavelli* of 1739: 'If one wishes to reason justly in the world . . . one must go back to the origin of things so as to know, as far as one can, the first principles'. This declaration is significant of the role that the masonic institutions may have played in the great transformations of Europe during the Enlightenment, as the chosen field of debate between conquering reason and various forms of theosophical → Illuminism.

After the dramas of the revolutionary wars, esoteric modes of thought contributed heavily to setting up the new intellectual systems that presided over the difficult birth of democracy and a dawning "sense of history", expressed in equally new formats. The term *ésotérisme*, of learned origin, appeared first in French (1828) and soon after in the main European languages; a little later came *occultisme* [→ occult / occultism] – two terms illustrating the wish to create a legitimate intellectual framework in confrontation with science on the one side, and the struggling churches on the other. Politically speaking, esoteric thought has been used in the romantic sense of a return to the past, to the origins, against modernity, as well as being progressivist in the sense of awaiting the fulfillment of prophecies. While → Joseph de Maistre speculated on the eschatological meaning of the trials of his time in *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (St. Petersburg evenings, 1821), the first socialists were awaiting the Age of the Spirit, from Richard Owen (1771-1858) to Pierre Leroux (1797-1871, one of the first to use the term *ésotérisme*) and the Saint-Simoniens of Enfantin (1796-1864) who were preparing the coming of the Feminine Messiah. → Eliphas Lévi, the master and inspirer of occultism in the second half of the 19th century, had been

active in the revolution of 1848 and raised Napoleon to the stature of a social Messiah; like Maistre, Lévi thought that the prophecies ever since Antiquity would be realized in the 19th century, at the moment when their esoteric meaning became evident. In the Western world as a whole, there was an apparent contradiction between the progress of public debate essential to the new democratic citizenship, and the growth of numerous and influential secret societies, preparing in the shadows for the times to come. The theory of occult sciences, preserved in the secrecy of the sanctuaries, was an essential key for explaining the delay in the coming of the Spirit, of which democracy was considered the visible, social form. The people's lack of education explained the delay, but thanks to progress, the truths safeguarded "under a bushel" would appear in the light of day.

This new view of the relationship between past and future dominated the political visions of → Madame Blavatsky and → Annie Besant as successive heads of the → Theosophical Society. For Blavatsky, it concerned the relations between East and West during the colonial period; for Besant, the messianic function of woman. The same attitude also underlay the mental constructs of fringe masonry, conceived as the secret laboratories of tomorrow's world. In the Latin countries they were often revolutionary, with the Italian Carbonari fighting for national unity, or the French Charbonnerie plotting against royal power. In Great Britain and Germany they actively opposed the "establishment", as for example the para-masonic organizations of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the → Ordo Templi Orientis. In the U.S.A. the success of the Rosicrucian movements beginning with → Paschal Beverly Randolph was also marked by this double face, turned Janus-like towards the past and the future.

A number of new religious movements, particularly in the → "New Age" category, owe to 19th century esotericism the association of technical with human progress in a context of occultist speculations. But the same legacy has also included a rejection of Western individualistic civilization; and this all the more easily since the Christian religions have steadily abandoned the field, leaving it open to esotericism. The totalitarian systems, though not fulfilling a function that can be compared with the association of esotericism and socialism in the first half of the 19th century, seemed to some to have a natural affinity with esoteric thought. → Aleister Crowley combined his rejection of British society with a marked interest first in the Stalinian system, and then in the Italian

Fascism of Mussolini, before being expelled from Cefalu by the latter. → Julius Evola went further, basing his hopes for the return to a traditional society on Fascism, then on National Socialism.

While Stalin tolerated the presence of "Russian Cosmism", a heritage of Theosophy, around the physicist Sakharov, Himmler's S.S. quickly sloughed off the esoteric and mystical pretensions of some of its members, as soon as they tried to exceed a purely decorative role.

A special place must be assigned to → René Guénon, whose radical rejection of the Modern World (1927) and move to Islam had no small influence on esoteric conversions in Europe and North America, through the intermediary of the universalist Sufism of Ibn 'Arabî (1165-1240). In the Muslim world, disquieted by Westernization, this example from the West fostered a return to indigenous traditions, and sometimes a fundamentalist interpretation of the sacred texts.

Finally we should mention the importance of denunciations, found throughout history, within the triangular relationship of the political, the religious, and the esoteric: the political institution typically denounces esoteric religion as a cult, whilst the religious institution denounces the subversion of the state by the esoteric society.

*Lit.:* Jean-Pierre Laurant, "Politique", in: Jean Servier (ed.), *Dictionnaire critique de l'ésotérisme*, Paris: P.U.F., 1998 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *Arktos: the Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism and Nazi Survival*, Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1992 ♦ Massimo Introvigne, *Il Cappello del Mago*, Milan: SugarCo., 1990 ♦ Robert Vanloo, *L'Utopie des Rose-Croix*, Paris: Dervy, 2001 ♦ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1985 ♦ Marco Pasi, *Aleister Crowley e la tentazione della politica*, Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1999 ♦ *Politica Hermetica* (annual), Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987-.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Pordage, John**, \* 1607/8 London,  
† 10.12.1681 London

The son of a London merchant, Pordage was born in 1607 or 1608 and entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1623. It is possible that he obtained a diploma of doctor of medicine at Oxford in 1640, but some scholars doubt this (Hutin 1960, 82). In any case, he was not destined to practice medicine, but to be an exemplar of *homo religiosus*. Pordage entered the order of the Anglican Church and was made vicar of the church of St Lawrence's at Reading in 1644. Soon, under

the auspices of → Elias Ashmole, he was made rector of the rather wealthy parish at Bradfield, a position he held until 1654.

At Bradfield, Pordage's wife, Mary Freeman, an especially pious and spiritual woman whom he married for that reason, began to have visionary experiences. Soon Pordage himself was experiencing remarkable phenomena as well, including angelic apparitions, and these were also witnessed by other members of a small prayer group of theosophers who had gathered around Pordage and his wife. This group eventually came to include men like Thomas Bromley and Edmund Brice – both of whom were educated at Oxford and themselves wrote theosophic treatises – and women like Anne Bathurst and Joanna Oxenbridge, both women of high society who have left us records of their spiritual journeys with the Pordages.

Pordage's visionary experiences began in August of 1649, with an opening of the visionary worlds in which he was approached by a spirit, a giant, and a great dragon with 'great teeth and open jaws' that 'oft ejected fire at me'. Pordage would have been overcome by terror, he wrote, had he not been 'supported in an extraordinary way, by the Ministrations of the Holy Angels' (*Innocencie*, 72-73). This opening of the worlds was the revelation to Pordage and his family of the good and evil invisible realms: Pordage and his family believed that they saw at first hand the *Mundi Ideales*, or invisible realms, one full of love, the other of wrath. The wrathful realm was evidently quite unpleasant: Pordage and his family, he wrote, witnessed not only the presence of evil hierarchies – in monstrous theriomorphic forms, all "misshapen", with cat's ears, cloven feet and fiery eyes – but also their physical manifestations such as sulphuric foul odors and even the imprint of their images on the windows, ceiling, and chimney of the house. He and his wife, being unable to remove these various images from the chimney by using wet cloths, finally resorted to smashing them off with hammers (75).

But Pordage writes that he also passed through the flames and entered into paradise, which he calls the *Mundus Luminosus*. Here he encountered 'multitudes almost innumerable, of pure Angelical spirits, in figurative bodies, which were clear as the morning-star, and transparent as Cristal' (75). He saw the rare beauty of these beings, felt the inexpressible joys and harmonies of heaven, smelled delightful heavenly scents, and heard celestial music. The 'tongue can hardly express these Odours of Paradise', and these glorious visions and sounds, he writes.

About this time, Pordage was tried before the local Anglican commission as an heretical minister of the faith. Against him were arrayed a whole range of charges, including provocative statements and immoral conduct. Pordage was able to defend himself well against all these charges: the supposedly provocative or heretical statements imputed to him he proved to have been taken out of context and misinterpreted; the charge that he had kept a mistress in London he demonstrated to be quite false. Having exonerated himself from the accusations, he was allowed to continue as a minister from 1649 to 1654. But in 1654 Pordage was tried again on the same charges, and despite his eloquent rebuttal he was removed from his ministerial position at Bradfield. One of the chief accusations was 'that he hath very frequent and familiar converse with Angels', and that when he was attacked by a demon in his home, 'his Angel stood by him and upheld him'. Further, it was held against him 'that Mrs Pordage and Mrs Flavel had their Angels standing by them also, Mrs Pordage singing sweetly, keeping time on her breast, and that his children saw the spirits coming into the house, and said, look there, Father . . . And the whole roof of the house was full of Spirits' (*Innocencie*, 14-15).

The hostile atmosphere in which Pordage's second trial took place can be gathered from his account of the judge's rancor. Pordage did have legitimate reason to be upset, for even the very act under which he was being tried was itself not instituted until a full year *after* those things with which he was charged had reputedly taken place. In such an atmosphere, one is hardly surprised to find Pordage on trial, since he was adamantly a non-juror. He defended himself in a moving peroration, asking his fellow ministers what harm he had caused them, especially since he did not proselytize or even criticize them, but only sought to live a reclusive life. Nonetheless, he was convicted and removed from the ministry (*Innocencie*, 79).

Although he was deprived of his livelihood and found himself in extremely difficult circumstances for the remainder of his life, these outward difficulties only served to intensify his, and his group's, convictions and inward life. Their persecution did mean that for some years they felt they lived spiritually in the 'outer darkness' surrounded by wrath; but eventually they were restored to angelic communications and to the spiritual light. Yet until his death, Pordage and his small group kept themselves out of public view so as to avoid censure.

After the Restoration under Charles II in 1660, when suspended clergymen were allowed to return to their positions, Pordage did not take this step,



but remained quietly with his group of fellow theologians. As a leader of a small, private, non-Anglican religious group, Pordage had, however, to be discreet, especially after 1664 when such non-conformist meetings were again outlawed, and their leaders ran the potential risk of fines and imprisonment. Worse, the years 1665 and 1666 saw the advent of the Great Plague and the great London fire, seen by many as signs of the Apocalypse (fears intensified by the associations of the number 1666 with the number of the Beast in Revelation). Many people fled London, and Pordage and his group had to return to Bradfield, returning to London only in 1668, the year Pordage's wife died.

This time of outer difficulty also saw what is in some respects the most important affiliation of Pordage's life: the one with → Jane Lead, who first felt called to join his group in 1663. She remained a member of his group, and in fact assumed leadership, especially after April 1670 when, after her husband's death, she experienced a vision of the Holy Virgin Sophia, who called her to a virginal life (*Fountain* I.17). From this point on, she began to write a large number of extraordinary visionary treatises, and became a central theosophical figure. In 1674 she moved into Pordage's own house, at his request, so that together they could form a more powerful spiritual union. Pordage died on December 10, 1681.

From the early 1670s until his death, Pordage wrote most of his elaborate, lucid, and concisely expressed metaphysical treatises. All these treatises were based wholly and directly on his own spiritual experience, exemplary of which is the treatise *Sophia*, which consists of twenty-two daily journal entries dated from 21 June to 10 July, and which contains biographical data from the year 1675. Pordage's magnum opus, *Göttliche und Wahre Metaphysica* (Holy and True Metaphysics) was also written during this time, and was probably concluded in the year of his death. But none of these works were published during his lifetime and, even more surprisingly, only two were published in English after his death. Although all his works had a wide private circulation, and were extremely influential in both England and on the Continent, it remains a strange fact that Pordage's primary works – albeit written in English – were published only in German, and have been accessible only in that language to the present day.

We can begin with the two works published in English: *A Treatise of Eternal Nature with Her Seven Essential Forms* (1681) and *Theologia Mystica, or the Mystic Divinitie of the Aeternal Invi-*

*sibles, viz, the Archetypous Globe* (1683). The *Treatise of Eternal Nature* offers a general introduction to the concept of Eternal Nature, the 'first original and true ground of all created beings and so of all true knowledge' (Preface). Outward, physical nature, then, has its origin in an archetypal, pure realm of "Eternal Nature" similar to the Platonic realm of Ideas or Forms. Thus Divine Nature is 'hid in Nature, as a Jewel in a Cabinet'; it is manifested in the Seven Essential Forms, and has its origin in the Abyssal Nothing, which is the 'ground of all Essences, and yet no Essence to be seen in it', the 'fruitful Mother of all Things' (105, 107). In Pordage's treatise, then, we see a visionary hierarchy or ascent from the natural world to the archetypal, to the Seven Essential Forms (the qualities informing existence), to the Abyssal Nothing of God Himself.

In *Theologia Mystica*, we travel with Pordage on his visionary journey. Lead wrote effusively of Pordage's rich spiritual life, and wrote of 'those wonderful Transportations he had (or rather they had him) for the space of three weeks together . . . His outward Body lay in passive Stillness in this visible Orb' (7). Pordage offers us 'a copie taken out from the Original . . . of all Worlds', which he had seen in visionary trances that sometimes lasted weeks at a time. According to Pordage, all the different realms or "worlds", including this "visible Orb" of physical nature, are comprised within the sphere of "Eternal Nature". Eternal Nature includes the 'Four Elementarie' worlds: the 'outward visible world' below; the 'Dark-fire' or wrath-world of hell on the left; the 'Fire-Light', or 'Severe World' in the center; and the Light-Fire World, or Paradise, on the right. Above them is the 'Angelical, Heaven, or Love-World'. Thus Eternal Nature encompasses all the possible realms of creation, including heavenly, paradisaal, hellish, and earthly.

Pordage employs the images of the Globe, the Eye, the Heart, and the Breath to explain visionary spirituality, and the supreme illumination (31). This illumination is essentially a vision of the Archetypes of all things, which the visionary perceives in the divine Eye within the 'Abyssal Globe' of Eternity (34). Pordage's treatise is structured as a progressive revelation of the Globe of Eternity, of the divine Eye within it that perceives itself, and of the Eye in the divine Heart that is at the center of the Globe, in which one may behold God 'Face to Face' (37-38).

Pordage then writes of the Virgin Sophia, who is 'co-essential' and 'co-eternal' with the Holy Trinity, but not 'co-equal' with them: she is but a pas-

sive efflux of the Trinity, its Glory and Mirror (68-69). Finally, Pordage writes of the nature and qualities of the angelic spirits. The spirits possess a materiality and senses of their own: 'These *Spirits* are endued with a Spiritual kind of materiality from the Love-Essence in the Heart of God'. The spirits have their own language; they have one ear, one eye, one breath (details that underscore their unity) and their 'food and drink' is power from the Trinity (87, 92). Pordage's treatise therefore leads us from the initial vision and cosmology, through the transmuting power of Sophia, into the angelic heavenly realm itself.

In his treatise *Sophia* – which was extremely influential for German theosophers, including → Gottfried Arnold, whose own book on the Virgin Sophia was drawn in part from Pordage's – Pordage offers his experiential knowledge of Sophianic revelation in a journal form, dated 21 June to 10 July, in twenty-two chapters. Neither the dates nor the number of chapters are accidental. Pordage begins by explaining the nature of Sophia, or Divine Wisdom, as well as of the Light World, and the soul's hunger and thirst for spiritual truth. He discusses the meaning of the Biblical references to the creation of a "new heaven and a new earth"; the harmony of this world below and that above; the Paradisical Eden in the Soul; and the Quintessence or Elixir of Life. Pordage explains that the Holy Virgin reveals the New Jerusalem in the heart and soul of the newly reborn man, and he completes his work by discussing knowledge of the light and dark worlds.

In his *magnum opus*, the three-volume *Göttliche und Wahre Metaphysica* (Divine and True Metaphysics), Pordage discusses these light and dark worlds in detail. The breadth of this work is quite remarkable; around two thousand pages long, Pordage's *Metaphysica* reveals the realm of eternal nature, the wrathful world, the paradisaic realm, and the angelical world in clearly organized sections. His work is explicitly visionary: Pordage writes that it derives not from reason alone, and is not like that of the Platonists, but emerges 'out of what my eternal understanding spirit with its eyes has seen revealed of the Angelic centri' (II.ii.26).

Pordage's first volume discusses the 'Spirit of Eternity' and Eternal Nature, asserting that God permitted the Fall of his creatures in order to reveal his *barmherzigkeit* (compassion). In the second volume, Pordage outlines aspects of the angelical spirits (*Englische geister*) including their immortal nature, their possession of a "materiality" different from that of the physical world (including an Angelic body), their inward unity, their possession

of will, senses, and above all, inward freedom. They are powerful, good, immortal, and made in the likeness of God.

We should note one angelic characteristic Pordage emphasizes: the nature of their bodies. He writes that the angelic body is organic or has functional limbs, and is in many things like man, or rather, man is in his outer form made in the image of the angels (II.iv.12). He writes of angelic noses, mouth, ears, eyes, and so forth; and though Pordage refers to the traditional cherubim and seraphim of the Dionysian hierarchy, he makes it clear that his knowledge of angels comes not from having read → Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, but from having visited with angels, whom he is describing.

Pordage's third volume treats of the dark or wrathful world. He discusses the nature of demons or fallen angels, *finstern magia* (black magic), sorcery, the 'Hellish Tincture', the devil, the 'spiritual Babylon', and the spiritual Egypt. But his third volume does not dwell only on evil and wrath; later in the volume he writes of the 'heavenly Tincture', and the Community of Spirits (*Gemeinschaft der Geister*), topics closely reminiscent of his friend Thomas Bromley's work *The Way to the Sabbath of Rest*. He discusses "Eternal Nature" and the three courts of the Globe of Eternity we mentioned earlier, as well as the 'eternal heart of God' (*Von dem ewigen herzen Gottes*), the Virgin Sophia or Wisdom, the Seven Forms or Spirits of God, and the Angelical World.

Any list of Pordage's primary works must include two others, written in the last few years of his life: the *Vier Tractatlein* (Four Little Tractates), and the "Treatise on the Philosopher's Stone". The "Four Tractates", dated 3 August 1676, discuss the 'outer birth and fleshly life of Jesus Christ', the 'Mystical and Inner Birth', the Spirit and Degrees of Faith, and, finally, experimental (experiential) discoveries of the union of nature, essences, tinctures, people, and spirits (*Experimentale Entdeckungen von Vereinigung der Naturen/ Essenzen/ Tincturen/ Personen und Geister*). In this last section on "experiential discoveries" we are introduced to foundations for the "Treatise on the Philosopher's Stone", a very concise alchemical work.

The "Treatise on the Philosopher's Stone", only sixteen pages long, is a remarkable work of spiritual → alchemy. In it, we see how theosophers in general and Pordage in particular drew on alchemical terminology and process to explain theosophical transmutation and revelation. Essentially, Pordage sketches here the process by which

the human being is purified, transmutes his energies from wrath into love, and becomes an illuminated and unified being. He points out that fallen man is subject to the influences or energies of Mars and Venus, or anger and lust (emotional attraction and repulsion rooted in selfishness) (7). Eventually there comes the harmony of the planetary qualities, Saturn, Mercury, Mars, Venus, and Luna; the process culminates in the ‘milk and blood of the Virgin’, the ‘Pearl of the Virgin’, and ultimately the unity and harmony of the planetary qualities within the individual, who is suffused with spiritual light (11-16). The treatise ends with the ‘Pearl of the Virgin’, which symbolizes purity and illumination.

On the whole, Pordage is the single most important English theosopher of the 17th century. His works were very influential for such figures as Gottfried Arnold and, much later, Vladimir Solovyov, particularly in his explication of male and female tinctures and his lucid discussions of the virgin Sophia and of his visionary experiences. Although Pordage was denigrated for extravagant mysticism not only during his lifetime, but by subsequent authors like Rufus Jones (who clearly had little if any acquaintance with Pordage’s extensive works), in fact a close study of Pordage’s works reveals their breadth and depth as well as a more catalogical mind than Boehme’s. Thune (1948), Hutin (1960), Gibbons (1996), and Versluis (1999, 2003) provide the major discussions of this figure so far, but we remain in need of books devoted to Pordage alone.

*Innocencie appearing through the dark mists of pretended guilt*, London: Calvert, 1655 ♦ *Göttliche und wahre metaphysica*, Frankfurt: J.M. Hagen, 1715 ♦ *Ein gründlich philosophisch Sendschreiben*, Amsterdam, 1698 ♦ *Sophia: das ist die holdseelige ewige Jungfrau der Göttlichen Weisheit*, London, ca., 1675; Amsterdam, 1699 ♦ *Theologia Mystica, or the Mystic Divinitie of the Aeternal Invisibles, viz. the Archetypous Globe*, London, 1683 ♦ *A Treatise of Eternal Nature with Her Seven Eternal Forms*, London 1681 ♦ *Vier Tractätlein*, Amsterdam: R. & G. Wetstein, 1704 ♦ Jane Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens: or, A Spiritual Diary of the Wonderful Experiences of a Christian Soul, under the Conduct of the Heavenly Wisdom; Continued for the Year MDCLXXVIII*, London, 1700 ♦ Arthur Versluis (ed.), *The Wisdom of John Pordage [Theologia Mystica and A Treatise of Eternal Nature]* St. Paul: New Grail, 2003.

*Lit.*: Brian Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and its Development in England*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996, 8-9, 106-113, 119, 143 ♦ Bernard Gorceix, *Flambée et Agonie: Mystiques du XVII siècle allemand*, Sisteron: Présence, 1977,

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ARTHUR VERSLUIS

Postel, Guillaume, \* 1510 La Dolerie,  
† 6.9.1581 Paris

Born in Normandy, to a family of humble tillermen, he came to Paris early at his parents’ death. Moved by a passionate desire to acquire instruction and learning, he began by mainly teaching himself in the Liberal Arts and oriental languages, while attending lessons at the Colleges of Sainte Barbe and Cardinal Lemoine; working there as a servant to pay for his education, he is likely to have met some of the foremost representatives of the so-called “Pré-Réforme catholique”, who were precisely teaching at these schools, the *milieu* of → J. Lefèvre d’Etaples. Gradually, Postel came in touch with some well-connected individuals who, impressed by his knowledge, promoted him at the French Court. The first outward indication of royal favour directed towards him consists in his being sent, in a minor diplomatic capacity, to Tunis and Istanbul, on a quest for oriental manuscripts destined to enhance the king’s library (Feb. 1535-June 1537). Back in Europe, he landed in Venice, where he stayed for some two months and came in contact with several important Humanists and printers, like T. Ambrogio (1469-1540) or D. Bomberg. His first books (*Alphabetum XII linguarum, De originibus linguæ hebraicæ*) appeared in Paris the following year and caused him to be appointed “lecteur royal” at the recently founded “Collège trilingue” in 1539. As soon as 1540, the first intimations of a profound and lasting spiritual crisis manifested themselves, which – coupled with his

growing disillusion with courtly life, due to the sudden disgrace of his main protector, Chancellor Poyet – led him to the decision to renounce worldly honours, official positions and the benefices they entailed. He then became convinced of having heard divine voices, summoning him personally to dedicate his life to the pursuit of establishing a universal religious concord. After a last, unsuccessful attempt to persuade King Francis I of the necessity of reforming his kingdom and court, in the face of impending divine anger, and having written his important *De orbis terræ concordia* during the Winter 1543-1544, Postel left Paris for Rome, where he arrived in March 1544, to try and join the newly formed Company of Jesus. He remained in that city until the Spring of 1546, in the meantime ordained as priest by the Vicar General of the city, F. Archinto (1495-1558), but ultimately rejected (Dec. 1545) by the Jesuits on account of his stubborn personal messianic convictions, and his unwillingness to recant his opinion about the decisions of the Council being intrinsically superior to that of the Pope, as well as about the universal monarchy being ultimately devolved to the king of France (two ideas quite unsavory, to be sure, to Ignatius of Loyola and his first – mostly spanish – companions!). Free, henceforth, to move about as he pleased, Postel went to Venice (end of 1546), first taking up residence at the “Ospedaletto san Zanipolo” (hospital St John and Paul) as chaplain and meeting there a woman he was soon to call his “Madre Zuana” (Mother Johanna) and the “Venetian Virgin”. Ministering to the poor and the orphans in the care of this establishment, living an intense mystical life (including the reception of the stigmata), endowed with visions and prophetic revelations, she appears to have shared with Postel certain views concerning the religious concord and imminent “restitution” of mankind.

Having elected him as her confessor, she confirmed his personal claims to an eschatological role (that of “angelic pope”, already announced by Joachim of Fiore) while convincing him, at the same time, of her profound spiritual wisdom and of the veracity of her intuitions, notwithstanding her mundane illiteracy. Soon, our man identified her with the feminine messiah, due to reveal and open the penultimate era of the so-called restitution, of which he considered himself the “first-born”, by regenerating the yet unredeemed lower part (also feminine!) of the human soul. They were in contact for approximately 18 months, and Postel was to remain a lifelong enthusiast of his “Venetian Virgin”, whose private revelations (including, of course, those concerning his own mission) he

found confirmed at every page of the *Zohar* and numerous other kabbalistic texts he was actively meditating, translating or actually composing (*Or ha-Menorah*, 1548) during this venetian sojourn. From the Summer of 1549 until after Easter 1551, Postel – sponsored by his friend Bomberg – travelled to the Middle East and visited Jerusalem. When he disembarked again in Venice, “Mother Johanna” was dead; and a few months later in Paris, at the Epiphany of 1552, Postel experienced his famous “immutation”, during which, having undergone severe illness, interpreted by him as the occasion for drastic spiritual purification, he convinced himself to have incorporated her “celestial body” and, thus, to have become *substantially* her son and that of Jesus-Christ, the first-born of the second Adam and the second Eve!

After several more trips across Europe, which led him to Besançon, Basle and Vienna (where he actively collaborated in the eventual printing, in 1555, of the first Syriac New Testament), our man found himself yet again back in Venice, where he asked for an inquisitorial court to examine his works. At first he probably reckoned with the court’s leniency, since it was headed by his old acquaintance, F. Archinto. As it turned out, he barely escaped with his life by being officially declared insane, and spent the following four years in a roman prison. Eventually released by a popular upheaval following the demise of Pope Paul IV (1555-1559), he resumed his peregrinations throughout Europe (Basle again, Augsburg, Italy, Lyon) before settling anew in Paris (1562). The first of his two final great bouts of spiritual exaltation occurred in 1566, the year of the famous “miracle of Laon” (a public exorcism operated with the help of the Eucharist), to which Postel dedicated several tracts upholding the event as demonstrative of Roman Catholic views on the sacrament, as opposed to the Protestant tenets he knew well, having opposed them all his life. The second occurred in 1573, when he briefly came under the spell of yet another woman, a widow named Marie Villeneuve, who claimed to have been made pregnant by the Holy Ghost (!). A few years later, he died peacefully under the regime of mild confinement he had been sustaining for years at the monastery of St Martin des Champs, having persevered with his private teaching, writing and publishing almost until the end.

The range of Postel’s thought is much too complex, intricate and far-reaching to bear synthesizing here. Apart from the afore-mentioned themes of the universal concord and “restitution”, the acknowledged two main pillars of his doctrine

are the “kabbalistic” theories relating to the *mens Messiae* and *revolutio animarum*. But before we start examining them briefly, two essential features of our author’s intellectual personality should constantly be borne in mind. First, each and every of his favourite tenets, as well as the ideas borrowed from – at a pinch – Plato or the Jewish kabbalah, → Cusa or → Ficino, he (re)interprets and wields in strict dependance on the hazards of his own inner life, and what he firmly considers his ultimate spiritual calling. For instance, his gift for languages he sees as a “sign” of his commitment to bring about religious concord (through books and preaching . . . and the Crusade !), and his capacity of actually writing down huge tomes in a relatively short time becomes a token of his inspiration from above. We are actually dealing with a man who did not hesitate to claim himself (and the Venetian Virgin) to be portrayed in certain medieval sculptures appended to the northern portal of the church of San Marco, sculptures which he believed had been originally commissioned by Joachim of Fiore himself, in order to herald his future mission!

Another, omnipresent aspect of his thought is his obsession with the “fourth term”, as he likes to call the divine immanence within the corporeal side of nature, which he envisages as the most complete and perfect expression of the Godhead, whose ultimate *raison d’être* resides in the spiritualization of the entire material creation. “Substance”, here, is the key word and it is quite literally that Postel understands the *substantial* participation of the christian brethren (indeed, of all mankind) in the “mystic body” of Christ, or the “consubstantiality” of his own kinship with Jesus and Mother Johanna, conceived more or less along the same lines (and *mutatis mutandis*, of course) as the doctrine of the conversion of substances in the Eucharist. Precisely, the ontological gap between the Godhead and physical nature is bridged by this “fourth term”, which he calls “created wisdom” (related to divine wisdom, i.e. Christ, as ‘one side of a coin to the other’), “first spirit of all things” and “mother of the world”, and identifies for these reasons with the Venetian Virgin herself, the ‘lower part of the substance of Jesus-Christ’. Some of the names or images (*daughter*, etc.) Postel uses to describe this particular, half-divine entity, he actually derives from the *Zohar*, an esoteric *midrash*-like commentary on Scripture, replete with myths, symbols, sexual imagery, applied to the cosmological levels as well as to the inner processes of the divine realm and attributes. Although he is of course hard put to reconcile such elements with trinitarian metaphysical conceptions, Postel is not

so much concerned here with theology and rational exegesis as with the dynamic integration of such patterns into his own personal, tense mystical outlook. Underlying all this is his unflinching quest for experiential wisdom, which takes for him the exacting guise of *imitatio Christi*. Thus, instead of merely indulging in speculations about them, he is led to immerse himself in the symbolic and mythical dimensions of themes like the feminine messiah or the transmigration of souls, inseparable from his messianic claims and, accordingly, given an actual expression as concrete stages or episodes of his own spiritual life. According to Postel, therefore, the *imitatio Christi* resides in the accomplishment of the substantial embodiment of divine wisdom, an idea in perfect accordance with Pauline views on the subject, if perhaps too literally understood.

Thus it is that Postel attributes the name *mens Messiae* to what he sees as being the fundamental archetype of such an embodiment, ‘the immobile Godhead communicating itself to the mobile [and tangible] world and elements’, an entity of considerably ambiguous ontological status, as we have already said. Inspired by esoteric speculations about the Messiah contained in different passages of traditional Jewish texts (*Bereshit Rabba* and the kabbalistic *Sha’are Orab*, in particular), Postel ends up equating his *mens Messiae* with the “fourth term” mentioned above, which is supposedly instrumental in conferring existence upon every singular living being. This “superior soul of the Messiah” is for him identical with the (divine) Law (or divine/created wisdom, that is: applied to the creation), the universal – active and passive – Intellect, ‘l’esprit de Jésus par la Maternité générale du monde [Mother Johanna] faisant sa finale action dans le corps’. It is also the spiritual source of inspiration common to all *prisci theologi*, at work behind their respective doctrines, and accounts for Postel’s constant preoccupation with the quaternary, and → number symbolism in general, whether envisaged from a theological or a cosmological perspective (the *merkavah* of the vision of Ezechiel and the pythagorean *tetraktys*).

Holding fast to his now familiar Christological focus, Postel interprets the *revolutio animarum* (hebrew *gilgul*, or metempsychosis [→ Reincarnation]), an important notion in both Greek and Jewish ancient cultures, as based on the *anima Christi*. Distinct, nevertheless, from the *mens Messiae*, this “lower soul of the Messiah” revolves, ever since Adam, through all biblical prophets, like Noah or Elijah, up to John the Baptist (an esoteric and, simultaneously, quite literal interpretation of I Peter I, 11). Separated from their upper part at the



time of the Flood, the two “halves” of this soul have animated the two lineages of Japhet and Sem, i.e. that of the first- and second-born of Noah, until they were again harmoniously conjoined in Jesus-Christ and a *potiori* in his later feminine advent. Whether male or female, each human being must undergo a similar psychic process of purification, by which his/her “upper soul” (*mens* and/or *spiritus*) reverts back several times into a body after death in order to be finally reunited with its predestined lower counterpart (*animus* and/or *anima*). Only when these spiritual preliminaries are achieved may the “restitution” be manifested. The preservation of the lower human soul is for Postel both the goal and esoteric meaning of Christ’s descent to Hell (motivated by the necessity of redeeming all lower souls held captive there, including his own!), and explains the fundamental role of woman in accordance with the Jewish law of the Levirate. Thus the *circulatio animarum*, the keystone of which is the *anima Christi*, is made the foundation of the spiritual right of the “first-born”, an idea central to Postel since it symbolizes for him the whole, divinely preordained cosmic harmony, before Satan introduced confusion in the world and in human lineage(s) as well, by inducing man and woman to sin. First-born *par excellence*, Jesus appears on Earth as (humanly) descended from the second-born since “the first will be last” and he has come to set things back in their primordial place.

Self-proclaimed first-born of the “restitution”, as the *substantial* son of the second Adam and Eve, it was therefore inevitable that Postel should also have claimed possession of an enlightened upper soul; accordingly, in a book published as soon as 1547 (*Panthenosia*), he already announced his own (re)endowment with the (illuminated) “reason” of Adam before the Fall, and of the prophet Elijah, who enjoys full understanding of all things and will reunite them ultimately. The Venetian Virgin, whom he met precisely at that time, could but evince even higher privileges, while instructing him into the most arcane mysteries and entrusting him with their ulterior public revelation, when the time would be ripe for such a course of action. Each of these three figures, then, narrowly linked to the “restitution”, has been granted in some measure reunion of his/her lower soul with that of the messiah, and is thus rendered capable of assuming an eschatological role.

Absorbed in his very personal Christian approach, *in paupertate, probro et dolore*, Postel seems unlikely to have been attracted at all by → magic – even “spiritual” – or theurgy, as were so many of his colleagues and predecessors, ‘from

Ficino to Campanella’. Yet, a passage from his *De admirandis* (1549, f. 216r<sup>o</sup>; see bibliography) does provide a strange overtone in this respect: mentioning the angelic powers ascribed to different countries and areas of the globe (a very ancient topic, always dear to him ever since the *De orbis*), Postel adds [*aggregatis omnibus mundi Geniis*] *sicut nunc mihi reconciliaui per magni nominis dei virtutes*. Such an assertion could easily be construed as alluding to an operation of “angelic (or kabbalistic) magic”, the kind of which Postel might have considered necessary within the context of his mission, to ensure – for example – the cooperation of the so-called *Genii* in bringing about the universal Christian persuasion or concord. Given the isolated and somewhat enigmatic character of the sentence, one must of course remain wary of the temptation of actually reading too much into it; but the question seems worth raising.

As regards → alchemy, Postel – who intended to live in strict poverty and, anyway, led a mostly peregrine existence – obviously never dedicated himself to the actual pursuit of the philosopher’s stone. Certain general themes, widespread in the literature pertaining to the Art, like the role of the elements in cosmogony or the seminal analogy between incorruptible gold and *terra pura*, he nonetheless frequently adapted to cosmological or even mystical speculations of his own, thus anticipating – along with others – a trend which became famous later, albeit in a very different manner, with → Jacob Boehme.

Postel’s influence may be considered long-standing and, perhaps paradoxically, both discreet and significant. On the one hand, the greater part of his works remained unpublished (some were lost), or rapidly became very scarce on account of the small number of copies printed; most were more or less tacitly considered unreadable, either because of their size (*De orbis*) or because of the obscurity of their contents (or both!). Almost all smacked of heresy, first and foremost among them the small French (*Les très-merveilleuses victoires des femmes du nouveau-monde*, Paris 1553) and Italian (*Le prime nove dell’altro mondo; Il libro della divina ordinatione*, Padua 1555) tracts dealing with the Venetian Virgin, in which the author really seemed to evince unacceptable claims. On the other hand, some of the cosmographical treatises enjoyed new printings during the 17th century (*De universitate, Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium*) and the three small books – important for the author’s esoteric thought and all published by J. Oporin in 1547 – *Panthenosia*, *Clavis absconditorum*, *De nativitate Mediatoris ultima*, difficult but seemingly

more accessible, did exert a certain influence on several circles linked to the rosicrucian movement [→ Rosicrucianism], as well as on a number of theosophers and mystical reformers like Jacob Boehme's famous disciple and biographer, Abraham von Franckenberg (1593-1652). The 19th century French and English occultist movement, → Eliphas Levi *en tête*, was up to a point cognizant of Postel's ideas and often acknowledged him, albeit improperly, as one of its forefathers.

Although he was (and still is) rightly celebrated as an important Christian kabbalist, besides being a remarkable linguist and cosmographer, Postel's focus always remained on the *imitatio Christi* and on his self-appointed mission. For the most part, esotericism (including of course kabbalah) is for him but a tool meant to discover "proofs" of his (and Mother Johanna's) messianic role featured in Scripture, and in the Jewish and Platonic traditions; at the same time, and conversely, his "restitution" enables him to publicly reveal their real and ultimate signification(s), of which he alone (by divine favour) has a universal grasp – a typical mystical reformer's attitude.

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JEAN-PIERRE BRACH

Prayers → Hymns and Prayers  
(Gnostic and Hermetic)

Prisca Theologia → Tradition

Prodicus, 2nd cent.

Prodicus was a Gnostic teacher [→ Gnosticism] of whose life nothing is known. → Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, who are our primary sources (both about 200 A.D.), almost exclusively speak about the 'followers of Prodicus', and when they mention his name it is only as the representative of the movement that was called after him. This might be an indication that Prodicus was not their contemporary but that he had lived earlier in the 2nd century. According to Clement, *Stromateis*, III, 30, 1 and VII, 41, 3, the followers of Prodicus called themselves "Gnostics". This

self-designation can also be concluded from the beginning and end of Tertullian's *Scorpiace*. In 1, 5 he says that in times of persecution the "Gnostics" and the Valentinians [→ Valentinus and Valentinians] deceive the simple believers by saying that Christ has died once for all and that it is against God's will to die for Christ. In 15, 6 these two groups are hinted at again, but now by mentioning the name of their founders. He then imagines how 'a Prodicus or a Valentinus' might have tried to dissuade the apostle Paul from his martyrdom, suggesting that one ought not to confess before men, the more so because God did not thirst after human blood and Christ did not ask retribution for his death.

It is impossible to assess whether the followers of Prodicus are identical with the "Gnostics", who according to Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 29, adhered to a Gnostic system which resembled to a great extent that of the *Apocryphon of John*. Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*, 3, mentions the Valentinians and Prodicians as heretics who introduced not one God as opposed to the Creator, as → Marcion did, but more. This suggests that Prodicus, like most other Gnostics, taught a divine Pleroma, which in itself agrees with the doctrine exposed in Irenaeus, *AH*, I, 29. The followers of Prodicus boasted that they possessed secret books of → Zoroaster (Clement, *Strom.*, I, 69, 6), as did the Gnostics behind the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 19, 8-10: 'If you wish to know them, it is written in the book of Zoroaster'). For the other tenets of the Prodicians, discussed below, there are no parallels in Irenaeus I, 29-30 and the *Apocryphon*, and therefore, the correspondences between these texts and what we know of Prodicus are insufficient to establish with certainty the identity between the followers of Prodicus and Irenaeus' Gnostics.

According to Clement, *Strom.*, III, 30, 1, the followers of Prodicus claimed to be 'by nature sons of the First God', which gave them a strong sense of being above the law. 'Thanks to their noble descent and their freedom they live like they want, but they want to live in pursuit of pleasure. For they believe that nobody rules them, since in their view they are lords of the Sabbath and royal sons of higher birth than the whole race of men. For the king, however, they say, the law is unwritten'. This idea of the Gnostics as a royal race without a king above them is also found in other Gnostic texts, for instance in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, NHC V, 82, 19ff., which says that 'the generation without a king' was elected by the saviour in order to shine upon the

whole aeon. Of course, Clement interpreted this being above the law as a permit to unbridled licentiousness, but he was evidently unable to prove this allegation and, therefore, suggested that the Prodicians committed adultery in secret, afraid of being caught, condemned and punished. 'How could licentiousness and foul language be characteristic of a free person?' (*Strom.* III, 30, 2-3). It seems more probable, however, that the Prodicians, just as the Valentinian pneumatics considering themselves 'saved by nature' and as such elevated above the laws of the Creator, adhered to high moral principles and even to an ascetic way of life. Whether they also rejected marriage and the begetting of children can not be settled with any certainty. That the Prodicians considered themselves by nature the sons of the First God may have led them to the rejection of prayer. In a discussion of the importance of prayer, Clement, *Strom.*, VII, 41, 1-6, says that those around Prodicus taught that one should not pray. He does not want to interrupt his argument by a refutation of the 'unholy Gnosis of those Gnostics falsely so called', but nevertheless he sometimes seems to respond to the arguments of the Prodicians. They apparently argued, as also Clement does, that 'God knows those who are worthy of the good things or who are not; therefore he gives every one what is befitting him'. But, Clement says, from this we should not conclude that prayer has no sense: 'Petitionary prayer is not superfluous, even if the good things are given without request. For example, thanksgiving and prayer for the conversion of his fellow men are the specific tasks of the true Gnostic'.

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

**Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita** →  
Dionysius Areopagita, Pseudo-

**Ragon de Bettignies, Jean-Marie**  
(Jean-Marie de Venise, Comte Marie de Venise), \* 1781 Bray-sur-Seine (Seine et Marne), † 1866 Paris

The author of *Tuileur général de la Franc-maçonnerie* (General Tyler of Freemasonry, 1861), like F.-T.-B. Clavel (1789-1852) or Thory (1759-1827), was a living memorial of French → Freemasonry from its reconstitution after the Empire up to its secular development in the second half of the 19th century. Ragon's passage through fringe-masonic organizations with occultist tendencies, such as the Rite of Misraïm (which he left in 1816), esoteric churches like that of the Abbé Châtel (1795-1857), or the Neo-Templar [→ Neo-Templar Traditions] order of → Fabrè-Palaprat (1773-1838), made him a prominent figure in the French intellectual and spiritual landscape. Little is known of his life. He was treasurer at the general revenue office of Bruges in 1803, at the time of his masonic initiation into the lodge "La Réunion des Amis du Nord", then senior clerk at the headquarters of the national guard of Paris in 1815, when he founded the lodge that would become famous under the name of *Trinosophes*. He then published the periodical *Hermès* (1818-1819), a sort of annual of reviews of masonic sessions and festivals, before leaving with some friends for the U.S.A. He reappeared in Paris around 1835; in the 1860s he lived in the Clignancourt area (18th arrondissement). By then he was considered a great personality and authority of the order, publishing his rectifications in the *Bulletin du Grand Orient de France*. Most of his publications post-date his return from America; he brought back, in particular, a work on the degree of the *Royal Arch* . . . *contenant une étude sur . . . l'esprit de la Franc-Maçonnerie aux Etats-Unis* (containing a study on the spirit of Freemasonry in the U.S., 1860). Ragon's work combines second-hand interpretations of the origins of the order in Antiquity with expositions of the meanings of degrees and rituals. He goes back as far as Eleusis, Memphis in Egypt, and India in his quest for the sources of initiation – an initiation as imagined by the first theorists of esotericism. His *Cours philosophique et interprétatif des initiations anciennes et modernes* (Philosophical and interpretative course on ancient and modern initiations, 1841) was reprinted in 1860; he stressed the initiatic synthesis that was able to unite the biblical masons with the Templar or Egyptian masons, this capacity being a pledge of agreement between peoples. During the same period, the secularization of the high-degree

rituals in France occasioned his publications on the degrees of "Rose Cross", "Kadosh", Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master, as well as on the rituals of adoption. All of this was presented as historical adaptations of an eternal "masonic orthodoxy" (*L'Orthodoxie maçonnique*, 1853). Ragon links this occult masonry with an esoteric Christianity, which he had experienced as "Vicaire primatial" in the Johannite Church of Châtel, in *La Messe et ses Mystères comparés aux Mystères anciens* (The Mass and its mysteries compared to the ancient mysteries).

*Cours philosophique et interprétatif* . . ., Paris: Berlandier, 1841 ♦ *La messe et ses mystères*, Nancy, 1842 ♦ *Orthodoxie maçonnique*, Paris: E. Dentu, 1853 ♦ *Franc maçonnerie, manuel complet de la maçonnerie d'adoption ou maçonnerie des dames*, Paris: Collignon, 1860 ♦ *Franc maçonnerie, rituel de royale Arche, improprement appelé rite d'York*, Paris: Collignon, 1861 ♦ *Franc maçonnerie, tuileur général ou manuel de l'initié*, Paris: Collignon, 1861 ♦ *Manuel bibliographique des sciences psychiques ou occultes*, Paris: Lucien Dorbon, 1912.

*Lit.*: André Combes, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1998, vol. 1, 121 ♦ Claude Rétat, "Ragon de Bettignies", *Renaissance Traditionnelle*, forthcoming March 2005.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Randolph, Paschal Beverly,**  
\* 8.10.1825 New York City,  
† 29.7.1875 Toledo, Ohio

Black American visionary and spiritualist whose work transformed the passive and severely limited perspective of 19th-century American → spiritualism by emphasizing active pursuit of individual progress and realization through practical techniques – in Randolph's case, the use of drugs, magic mirrors and sexuality. Born impoverished and illegitimate, he grew up on the streets as an orphan, with minimal education. He took up, in turn, employment as a bootblack, cook, cabin boy and barber. Despite this background and the disadvantage of his color in the period surrounding the American Civil War (1861-1865), Randolph traveled several times to Europe and the Near East. In later life he became known as an orator and, for a time, politician, and wrote numerous tracts and more than 25 books, including very readable novels, most of which are still kept in print by Rosicrucian groups claiming descent from his original occult foundations.

By Randolph's own account, he had been a seer



from childhood and haunted by the spirit of his mother, who had died in the pesthouse at Bellevue Hospital when he was seven years old. This experience led him to embrace spiritualism as it swept the United States after 1848, and he became an ardent apostle of the new teachings. After some early experience in other forms of mediumship, he settled down as a trance medium, delivering communications from the spirits of the dead while unconscious and totally under the spirits' control and influence. During his incessant travels over the northeastern United States in the early 1850s, in support of spiritualism, he claims to have delivered more than 3000 speeches in this manner. In 1855 he traveled to England to deliver the message of the spirits to the World Convention sponsored by Robert Owen in London; but he was not allowed to speak because the socialist Owen, though a believer, feared that Randolph (and spiritualism) would bring ridicule on his political cause. During this entire early period, Randolph is distinguished from other contemporary mediums only by his energy and enthusiasm. The communications delivered by him through his spirits appear to have been standard issue: reassurances of post-mortem existence, consolation of the bereaved, and pleas for general social reform in this world (woman's rights, anti-slavery, and the like).

By the mid-1850s, Randolph had begun to realize the limitations of spiritualism, especially its unchallenged assumption that the communicating spirits were always those of dead humans, and he had become painfully conscious of the dangers of passivity with respect to the controlling spirits. As his personality shifted radically under the control of the various spirits (usually well-known American political reformers and radicals, but occasionally a spirit calling himself "Zoroaster"), he became, as he himself admitted, insane. After failing in his attempts to take his own life, he fled abroad again, to England and Europe in 1857-1858, where his spiritualistic seances garnered him a degree of recognition and a reputation for instability. On this and a subsequent trip in 1861-1862, he also traveled to the Near East, where he encountered what he called the "Ansairree" – the Nusa'iri of Syria, whose secretive ways had excited European interest since the 1780s – and the Rosicrucian Brotherhood whose teachings he propagated for the remainder of his life.

In England and France, Randolph exhibited his powers as a medium, producing wonders and apparitions that were duly noted in the press. He also traveled in the more complex world of Mesmerism [→ Animal Magnetism] and clairvoyance,

which by that time had developed strong elements of occultism [→ occult / occultism] and active magical practice; and he became familiar with the established European traditions of magic mirrors (scrying), → Rosicrucianism, theosophic speculation and → magic that he was to make use of on his return to America. It is impossible now to ascertain with certainty the members of this occult underworld whom Randolph encountered on his travels. He mentions various minor spiritualist luminaries of the time, now forgotten, but also the novelist → Edward Bulwer-Lytton, → Hargrave Jennings (the author of dense compilations on the secrets of a supposed sect of phallic-Buddhist Rosicrucians), and Baron Dupotet de Sennevoy (foremost among the French Mesmerists and users of magical mirrors). There also is reason to believe that Randolph moved in the circle of British scryers that included Frederick Hockley, K.R.H. Mackenzie and Robert H. Fryar – although Randolph's fully developed system of using mirrors taught the student to view the wonders of the magic mirror himself, rather than relying on the second-hand revelations of an entranced seer.

With respect to the Near East the situation is even more obscure. The names of the teachers Randolph says he learned from on his travels are meaningless to historical research, and their status is ambivalent as well. Like the Rosicrucians Randolph claimed to have met in Europe, they existed 'on both sides of the grave', i.e. on the material plane as well as in what Randolph called the "soul world" (the vast cosmos of beings and worlds that Randolph believed stretches beyond this earth and humanity to include a bewildering hierarchy of the born and never born: including spirits, angels, seraphs, Arsaphs, Eons, Arsasaphs, Arch-Eons, Antarphim and so on). For Randolph, after he returned from his travels, the crucial juncture between the realities of everyday life and this visionary cosmos inhabited by these creatures of vision lay in the Rosicrucians. They were not simply the Rosicrucians of history. Rather, they were supernal, evolved beings, some human and some never human, who cloaked their activities and presence on earth under the name of Rosicrucians while playing a larger role among the celestial hierarchies – a role that the neophyte Rosicrucian was invited to undertake as well. Chief among these celestial Rosicrucians was the Egyptian Ramus (or Thotmor), "Chief or Grand Master of the Superlative Order of Gebel Al Maruk" – known in Christian lands as the Order of the Brethren of the Rosie Cross, and in America and Europe, where it still thrived, as the "Imperial Order of



Rosicrucia". On his travels Randolph also learned of the power of hashish and other psychoactive drugs (datura, opium and others) which he called by the Arabic name *dowam meskh* and soon began importing in quantity into America for their visionary properties.

In 1858, on his return from his first trip to the Near East, Randolph included what he had learned in his most masterful theoretical book, *Dealings with the Dead*. While confusing and ambiguous in places, it is clearly the product of Randolph's lived experiences rather than of mere learned research or hearsay. It burst like a bomb on the limited world of contemporary spiritualism, and revealed to stunned American spiritualists the glories of man the immortal spirit who was invited to progress through myriads of worlds and incarnations in a never-ending struggle toward self-consciousness, spiritual power and divinization. Far from a simple world in which living humans communicated with their deceased brethren in the Summer Land through the offices of mediums, the world Randolph revealed was a breathtaking vista of overarching hierarchies in which man could actively struggle to progress through clairvoyance developed by use of drugs and magic mirrors and, most importantly, by techniques of sexual magic. These techniques were circulated only in privately printed tracts and in manuscript, and consisted basically in ritual preparations leading to sexual intercourse, designed to put the student in direct contact with the celestial hierarchy. It is possible that they also included a form of sexual intercourse between the neophyte Rosicrucian and celestial entities themselves, but there remains some unclarity on this point.

Randolph gave various explanations for the sources of this sexual magic, attributing it at times to the Nusairi of Syria and at other times to his own creativity. Whatever the source, however, the effect of such techniques was powerful and they were the secret that underlay the various Rosicrucian groups that Randolph began to organize after 1861, first in San Francisco, then in Boston and other American cities. All of these were short-lived, but their influence endured in other magical groups, such as the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor in the 1880s and the circles around Maria de Naglowska in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. Most importantly, they survived in the recognition that man's role in the spiritual world was an active one that required the neophyte to put forth the full effort of his "Imperial Will" in order to progress – a commonplace idea now, but novel in the spiritualist world of the 1860s and 1870s. Randolph's

motto on his return to America became "Try!", an injunction reiterated, perhaps not coincidentally, by the Masters of → H.P. Blavatsky in the early days of the → Theosophical Society.

Crucial to Randolph's vision of the world was the notion not only of hierarchies, but of competing hierarchies of the Brothers of the Light (the Rosicrucians) and the Brothers of the Shadow (evil men and celestial entities who had renounced or lost the chance to progress by seeking evil goals, and now remained only to hinder mankind). In this idea Randolph obviously found the explanation of his own troubled life and insanity, but the same notion also underlay the meta-explanations later offered by the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, C.G. Harrison, → René Guénon and others to explain the development of spiritualism in the 19th century: behind the apparent facts of spiritualism was the "hidden hand" of these mysterious, competing brotherhoods, which acted through Randolph, Blavatsky and others to achieve their occult goals.

The success of Randolph's Rosicrucian work on his return to America was hampered, as always, by his race and his instability, but also by the Civil War. In the last years of the war, Randolph, who had always been ambivalent about his race and frequently denied it (claiming Persian or Madagass origin), had momentary success as a Black politician and a teacher for the Freedmen's Bureau, educating newly-freed slaves in New Orleans. In late 1865, he set up in Boston as a physician specializing in sexual problems, and founded what he called the first School of Clairvoyance. To this period belong his numerous works on human affection and sexuality (all designed as enticements to inquire about his more profound secret teachings), *Seership!* (1870), and *Hermes Trismegistus: His Divine Pymander* (1871), a reprint of Dr. Everard's 17th-century translation. After losing everything in the great Boston fire of 1872, Randolph moved to Toledo, Ohio, where in 1874 he published what some regard as his magnum opus, *Eulis*, named after the last and highest degree of his teachings on sexual magic. The same year he tried for the last time to found an order, with a group of students in San Francisco, but this grandly named "Triplicate Order of Rosicrucia, Pythianae and Eulis" came to nothing.

In his later years, Randolph became increasingly depressed and paranoid, and turned to alcohol for relief. On July 29, 1875, shortly after his return from San Francisco, he shot himself in Toledo, in a fit of jealous rage over the supposed infidelity of his wife – a suicide that later occult history has trans-

formed into death in an occult duel with Mme. Blavatsky.

The Rosicrucian (P.B. Randolph), *Dealings With The Dead: The Human Soul, Its Migrations And Its Transmigrations*, Utica, N.Y.: Mary J. Randolph, 1861 ♦ P.B. Randolph, *The Wonderful Story of Ravalette: Also, Tom Clark and his Wife: Their Double Dreams and the Curious Things that Befell Them Therein; or, The Rosicrucian's Story*, New York: S. Tousey, 1863 ♦ idem, *Seership! The Magnetic Mirror. A Practical Guide to Those Who Aspire to Clairvoyance-Absolute. Original and Selected from Various European and Asiatic Adepts*, Boston: Randolph Publishing Co., 1870 ♦ idem, *Eulis! The History of Love: Its Wondrous Magic, Chemistry, Rules, Laws, Modes, Moods and Rationale; Being the Third Revelation of Soul and Sex. Also, Reply to "Why is Man Immortal?" The Solution to the Darwin Problem. An Entirely New Theory*, 2d [and only surviving] ed., Toledo, Ohio: Randolph Publishing Co., 1874 ♦ Maria de Naglowska (transl.), *Magia Sexualis*, Paris: Robert Télin, au Lys Rouge, 1931.

Lit.: John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian and Sex Magician*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1996 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, "The Hidden Hand", *Theosophical History* 3:2-5 (April 1990-January 1991), 35-43, 66-76, 107-117, 137-148 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel and John Patrick Deveney, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor: Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism*, New York: Weiser, 1995 ♦ J. Gordon Melton, "Paschal Beverly Randolph: America's Pioneer Occultist", in: Jean-Baptiste Martin & François Laplantine (eds.), *Le défi magique I: Esotérisme, occultisme, spiritisme*, Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994, 115-129.

JOHN PATRICK DEVENEY

**Reghini, Arturo**, \* 12.11.1878 Florence, † 1.7.1946 Budrio

Reghini was a key figure in early 20th century Italian esotericism, playing a major role in restoring the spiritual traditions of → Freemasonry, and above all in reviving Pythagoreanism. His books and articles cover a variety of subjects including Masonic symbolism, theosophy [→ Theosophical Society], → Neoplatonism, → Agrippa and → Cagliostro. As editor of the magazines *Atanòr* and *Ignis* he published articles by → René Guénon. He also stimulated the interest of esoteric author → Julius Evola (1898-1974) in the spiritual quest, despite the profound divergences between the two men; Reghini was forced to retire from public life because of his Masonic connections and anticlerical stance, while Evola joined in the anti-Masonic campaign fostered by the fascist regime.

Reghini was born in Florence and got a degree in mathematics at the prestigious University of Pisa. While still a student he struck up a life-long friendship with the musician Amedeo Armentano (1886-1966) who inspired him to investigate Italy's longstanding Pythagorean traditions. He took an early interest in the revival of esoteric studies in Italy, long dormant due to disapproval by the Catholic Church. In 1896 he went to Rome to meet Isabel Cooper-Oakley, the delegate of the → Theosophical Society, and in 1898 was among the first founders of the Italian branch of the Society.

In the pre-war years he was active on the Florentine literary scene, contributing to the avant-garde magazine *Leonardo* with its mixture of philosophy, esotericism and admiration for the Risorgimento. He also founded the Philosophical Library, registered as a public institution.

Reghini became a Freemason in Florence in 1903. A few years later a split developed in the Grand Orient for a variety of reasons, among which were objections to overly close links between Freemasonry and leftwing politics and to a decline of interest in the esoteric quest. This led to the formation of the Grand Lodge, which Reghini supported. In 1911 he was among the founders of the Italian Philosophic Rite. After Mussolini came to power, Reghini called attention to himself by supporting the nationalist stance of the new government while criticising the powerful Catholic wing of fascism. However, the new regime promoted the campaign which led to the prohibition of Freemasonry at the end of 1925. Reghini, then Grand Chancellor, was a signatory of the decree by which the Grand Lodge declared its own dissolution as a precautionary measure (the Grand Orient had done likewise; however, this did not prevent a wave of anti-Masonic persecution and confiscation of property). After collaborating with Reghini in the early 1920s in *Atanòr* and in the Group of Ur, Julius Evola later denounced him in the fascist press. Reghini left Rome to settle in a small town near Bologna, where he conducted research on Pythagorean mathematics until his death in 1946.

The magazines *Atanòr* and *Ignis* represent a landmark in Italian esoteric culture. *Atanòr*, published in 1924, contains articles by Reghini shedding new light on Pythagoreanism and the Egyptian Rites of Cagliostro. The board of editors included the well-known Neapolitan esotericist → Giuliano Kremmerz. There were contributions by Guénon as a result of the close contacts of Reghini's friend, Armentano, in the occult societies of Paris. *Ignis* (1925 and a last issue in 1929), while

continuing this line of study, reflected the pre-occupation about the increasing intolerance being shown by the fascist regime for non-Catholic spiritual traditions. Here his biting irony, typical of the Florentine pre-war literary magazines, did little to attenuate the polemics aroused by what was becoming a full-blown anti-esoteric campaign conducted by clerical-fascist publicists, anxious to smooth the way towards the Concordat between Church and State. Besides his research on Pythagorean mathematics and articles on Masonic symbolism, Reghini wrote a detailed and valuable introduction to Cornelius Agrippa.

*Atanòr* 1924 (reprint), Rome: Atanòr, n.d. ♦ *Ignis* 1925-1926 (reprint), Rome: Atanòr, 1980 ♦ Amedeo Armentano, *Massime di scienza iniziatica*, Ancona: Ignis, 1992 ♦ Arturo Reghini, *Le parole sacre e di passo dei primi tre gradi ed il massimo mistero massonico*, Rome: Atanòr, 1981 ♦ *idem*, *I numeri sacri nella tradizione pitagorica e massonica*, Rome: Ignis, 1947 ♦ *idem*, *Dei numeri pitagorici: Prologo*, Ancona: Ignis, 1991 ♦ *idem*, "L'intolleranza cattolica e lo Stato", in: *Paganesimo Pitagorismo Massoneria*, Furnari: Editrice Mantinea, 1986.

*Lit.*: Natale Mario di Luca, *Arturo Reghini: Un intellettuale neo-pitagorico tra Massoneria e Fascismo*, Rome: Atanòr, 2003 ♦ Roberto Sestito, *Il figlio del Sole: Vita ed opere di Arturo Reghini filosofo e matematico*, Ancona: Associazione Culturale Ignis, 2003 ♦ Dana Lloyd Thomas, "A Modern Pythagorean", *Gnosis* 44 (Summer 1997), 52-59 ♦ *idem*, "Il tempio assalito: Introduzione allo studio della campagna antisoterica nell'Italia fascista", *Politica Romana* 5 (1998-1999), 253-300.

DANA LLOYD THOMAS

## Reincarnation I: Antiquity

Reincarnation, or metempsychosis, metempsychosis, transmigration, is the belief in the passing of a spiritual being, the soul, after death into some other body. The four terms quoted are synonymous, although "reincarnation" is sometimes improperly reserved for the passing of the soul into a specifically human body, whereas "metempsychosis" and "transmigration" are said to include animal or vegetal bodies. In fact, this distinction does not hold for classical theories.

There is a wide-spread belief among pre-literate societies that each human being possesses one or several spiritual vital elements, "souls" or "spirits" – whatever they are called in indigenous languages. At death, these elements are believed to disperse, each one to its appropriate abode – or to disappear altogether. However, at least one of them joins the

transcendent ancestral village or a common pool of vital energies. In the course of time, this element leaves the pool or the ancestral village and enters the embryo of a future member of the clan, very often of a grandson. Being associated with the transcendent life-stock of the community, it is revered as a particularly sacred or even "divine" presence in the human being. Sometimes such beliefs are coupled with an ethical principle and it is said that after the demise of the body the "soul" or whatever it may be called has to undergo rites of purification. These may also be executed by the bereaved community on behalf of the dead person's "spirit". Ethnologists disagree whether these beliefs and practices can be viewed as parallels to classical theories of transmigration, but classical concepts can easily be interpreted as elaborations on these pre-literate traditions.

Even in the absence of written testimonies it is quite likely that in pre-literate Greece or Greater Greece some local communities held similar convictions. We know indeed that in some places a newborn baby was given the name of the grandfather, most probably because people recognized in him a new "incarnation" of the deceased member of the clan. It may be that theories of transmigration ascribed by tradition to itinerant "Orphic" shamans, magicians and soothsayers hail in truth from local beliefs and practices.

The oldest written testimony about reincarnation is due to the poet Pindar (ca. 518-438). In the second of his *Olympian Odes* he celebrates the victory Theron, the tyrant of Akragas (today's Agrigento in Sicily) had won in the Olympic games. In lines 57-80 he describes in rather dark language the fate of the dead. There are three groups: the wicked suffer frightful punishments in the under-world, and the good will be blessed with a carefree existence in the company of the gods. There is also a group of people who will keep themselves free from wrongdoing during three successive lives and who will finally reach the Islands of the Blessed where they will enjoy everlasting happiness. It has been suggested that this latter theory is based on local traditions current at Akragas; stating that a spiritual entity passes through various purificatory bodily stages, it is at any rate not very far away from our model of pre-literate beliefs and practices observed all over the world.

Reincarnationist ideas are firmly attributed to the ancient sage Pythagoras (6th century) and to his disciples. It is said that Pythagoras, observing someone beating a dog, stopped him because he recognized in the dog the soul of a dead friend. In later times people made fun of him pretending

that he knew his former and future lives over ten or twenty generations, including many passages through animal bodies.

We tread on safer ground when we come to Empedocles (ca. 490-435), an important physicist, philosopher and divine. He hailed from Akragas in Sicily, so we might assume that his ideas about reincarnation or transmigration are derived from the same local traditions as the section in Pindar's second *Olympian Ode* mentioned above. Influences from wandering Pythagorean sages may also be at work. Empedocles taught that souls are pre-existent and divine. Being in the grip of a metaphysical agent called Strife they commit murder and other sins and are condemned to purify themselves in the course of many existences. Empedocles states that he himself had been a boy, a girl, a shrub, a bird and a fish, and had attained an outstanding degree of spiritual power, but that he would still have to undergo some more births until his soul could again attain its original status among gods and immortal heroes. It is important to note that transmigration is valued negatively as a punishment, as a type of suffering in a world which itself is nothing but suffering. One of Empedocles' main poetic works bears in fact the title *Purifications*. His model of transmigration turns out to be ascensional: it is return to the lost divine status. The metaphysical agent Strife being the cause of violence and killing among living beings, Love, the second metaphysical principle, will be the ethical guide for incarnate souls. Souls being found everywhere, in humans as well as in animals, the way of purification will be a path of non-violence, a path of complete abstention from killing and from animal food.

It may be noted that Empedocles' depreciative perspective on the necessity of reincarnation is somewhat akin to Indian theories where the perspective of reincarnation engenders anguish and suffering. However, Indians never admit that reincarnation *as such* may ultimately lead to full salvation of the soul. With the Greeks, the purpose of transmigration is, fundamentally, to allow sullied souls to purify themselves and thus to regain their initial divine condition. In India, the process of reincarnation has never begun and will never end by itself. It goes on until the soul is disenslaved by an initiatory rite or by a liberating experience which acts as it were "from outside". There is thus a very marked difference between Indian and Greek ideas of reincarnation.

Returning to Greece, we see that in the 5th century B.C. beliefs about the soul and her destinies received more elaborate developments and became

more widely known. Nevertheless, they were never universally accepted. Critical thinkers like the sophists and Aristotle later on dismissed them with disdain. It may be that the critics were vaguely aware of the folkloristic origin of these beliefs.

But the most powerful and influential defender of the soul and of reincarnationist theories was yet to come: Plato (ca. 428-348). Taking up Empedocles' story of the soul's divine origin, fall and restoration, he completed and refined it. Using narrative, a *mythos* (*Phaedrus*, 248-256), to bring home his ideas, Plato teaches that originally the souls were not only enjoying divine beatitude along with the highest gods but that they lived among the eternal ideal Forms. The intellect (*nous*), the noblest part of the soul, was contemplating the everlasting models of Goodness, Beauty, Courage and Justice which form the ideal spiritual world. Souls enjoyed this bliss, not in isolation but in spiritual company and unity. But they could not sustain eternal bliss. In spite of the intellect's attraction for the wonderful Forms, a kind of boredom coupled with the agitations of desires and other emotions – the lower parts of the soul – caused dissensions and made them fall from their enviable status. So they were condemned to suffer corporeal, physical life. Imprisoned in various bodies, chased from one birth to another, souls still have dim memories of their former bliss and of the ideal Forms they had contemplated. Whereas the intellect strives for renewed admission to the original felicity, the lower powers of the soul act rather as impediments which try to keep it tied to the material world. The good life which alone can guarantee progress in future births is thus a constant fight for transformation of bad desires into positive energies, as for instance transformation of physical *eros* into *eros* for Beauty and Justice. The end of the struggle is again release from the necessity of rebirth and reintegration into the wonderful spiritual domain of eternal happiness. We may also mention the *Myth of Er* found at the end of the dialogue *The Republic* which narrates a kind of "near death experience": in the nether world the hero, called Er, is present at a general convocation of souls some of which had undergone punishment and purification during 1000 years whereas others had sojourned in heaven. All these souls have to choose a new life; forgetting their past experiences they are indeed sent to the new birth they have chosen. Plato's doctrine of reincarnation is fundamentally Empedoclean. It differs from his predecessor's mainly on two points: it identifies several powers or functions which make up the soul – joining, incidentally, archaic beliefs about various vital elements in the

human being – and it offers a more vivid description of its ascensional career.

Plato's philosophy has shaped large areas of hellenistic and greco-roman cultural and religious achievements. So we find his teachings about reincarnation reflected in many pre-Christian and Christian systems of practice and thought. They were apparently introduced as an element of secret lore in several so-called mystery cults. They were eagerly adopted by certain groups of intellectuals whose spiritual practice aimed at the realisation of *gnôsis*, transcendental Knowledge. The gnostic person identifies with *gnôsis* and becomes part and parcel of the spiritual world. Such *gnôsis* could easily be explained in terms of the priceless knowledge enjoyed by the Platonic soul when after the unavoidable incarnations it enters the heavenly realms, the dwelling places of gods and eternal Forms.

Such were the aspirations of hellenistic groups in Egypt which produced during the first three centuries C.E. the ancient → Hermetic literature. One of the Hermetic treatises is called *Korê Kosmou*, "Pupil of the Universe"; it contains revelations imparted by the Egyptian goddess Isis to her son Horus. Among other items, Isis talks about the creation of the blessed souls. Living in heavenly abodes with their heavenly Father-God, the souls were asked to fashion creatures out of a certain substance prepared by the Father. Beginning their work with some diffidence, they eventually formed birds, quadrupeds and reptiles. Having succeeded in their task, they became proud and restive. Finding that the places which the Father had given them to live in did not allow sufficient liberty of movement, they began to desert them. The Father punished them with imprisonment in physical bodies and condemned them to suffer transmigration. In case they proved guilty of ill-behaviour, they would be imprisoned in bodies of animals, and if they continued doing evil they would fall into ever more miserable depths. But if they did well and obeyed the moral laws, there was the possibility of realizing the ascensional career hoped for in traditional Greek reincarnationist doctrines. The end of it would again be renewed heavenly bliss. Here as always in the ancient world, reincarnation is but an unfortunate intermezzo. This is an outstanding example of Platonic reincarnationist ideas in a hellenistic Egyptian garb.

Other examples are found in early Christian traditions. Right from the beginning of their history, Christian communities which had not yet elaborated a unitary authoritative system of doctrines were in contact with hellenistic civilisation and

spirituality. Their over-all conviction was that Christ, risen from death, was their Saviour who delivered them from moral slavery and who guided them through the troubles of this world to eternal life. It was Christ also who gave them, through His Holy Spirit, true knowledge, *gnôsis*, about themselves and about the mysteries of the heavenly domains. It was inevitable that Christians who were particularly eager to be initiated into full *gnôsis* availed themselves of the manifold treasures of hellenistic spirituality. Their quest is documented in the Christian Gnostic literature (→ Gnosticism), particularly in the writings found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt.

It is a matter of controversy whether the Nag Hammadi Library and other Christian Gnostic texts contain references to reincarnation. Two writings from Nag Hammadi are most relevant in this regard. Towards the end of the famous *Apocryphon of John* John asks the risen Lord a series of questions regarding the fate after death of various categories of souls (NHC II, 25,16-17, 30 parr.; *Synopsis*, p. 68ff.). He learns that the souls of true gnostics will enter the great lights and go to the 'repose of the heavenly aeons', i.e. the highest spiritual realities. The souls that have received the Spirit, but have not risen to perfect knowledge, will also be saved. But the souls which have not received knowledge at all, over which a counterfeit and despicable spirit has gained power, are 'cast into forgetfulness' and, when they have 'become naked' (after the demise of the body) they will be handed over to the archons, the gruesome rulers of the material world who will 'cast them into fetters' and 'consort with them' until they 'awaken from forgetfulness' (*Synopsis*, p. 71, 16ff.). These lines may simply refer to tortures the soul has to undergo in a demoniacal world after it has left the body, but they may also mean that it has to suffer reincarnation ('be cast into fetters') at the hands of the masters of the world who will torment it in all possible ways. A reincarnationist reading may be confirmed by the next question: 'how does the soul become smaller and smaller and enter again into the nature of the mother or the man?' (72,10ff.). The answer is that it will follow illumined souls and finally be released by the Spirit, in opposition to yet another category of souls which will suffer eternal death. Despite the obscurities of this passage we may conclude that it can be understood as a description of the destinies of souls after death which follows more or less the ancient model found in Pindar's ode: besides those who are saved and those who are condemned there are those who after various reincarnations reach final beatitude.



In a similar way, reincarnation seems to be attested in the Nag Hammadi text called *The Exegesis on the Soul* (NHC II,6). It is a kind of novel which narrates the destiny of the soul. As long as she was with the heavenly Father, she was a virgin. But for reasons not mentioned she fell into a body and became the victim of 'robbers' who passed her from one to another, making use of her by force or seducing her, until she became a prostitute. At the end, deprived of everything, she repented and implored the grace of the Father. Arguably this story describes the adventures of the soul during a single human life-time when she forgets her heavenly nature and yields to all sorts of worldly occupations, forgetting and defiling her pure inner nature. But it is also possible to cling to a mythological interpretation. The 'robbers' are then the Rulers of the world, the Archons who keep the soul 'for a long time' in their power, tossing her about, through the various stages and degrees which are mentioned in the narrative. These stages could be understood as several reincarnations, similar to what is said about the third category of souls in the *Apocryphon of John*. This reading is perhaps confirmed by another Christian Gnostic text known already for more than two centuries which has been given the title *Pistis Sophia*. It is said in its fourth book that the souls are 'robbed' by the Powers and that they suffer pain through several successive lives (*Pistis Sophia* IV,139-141; see other references to reincarnation in I,7 and II, 100).

But it must be admitted that in the Nag Hammadi library, evidence for reincarnation is frail. This notion does not seem to have much attracted the authors of that collection of "gnostic" texts. They were vitally interested in the final release which they considered the true gift of the Saviour. The doctrine of reincarnation is at best the prelude to final emancipation, so it could have been dismissed without regret.

There is nevertheless direct proof that some Christians in search of liberating *gnôsis* did believe in reincarnation as the last stage before final salvation. The great theologian → Clement of Alexandria (end 2nd cent.) has preserved fragments hailing from the Gnostic teacher → Basilides who interprets texts like Deut. 5:9 (punishment for sins striking several generations) and Rom. 7:10 ('I once lived without the Law') as testimonies for reincarnation. We may also mention a hymn which Hippolytus, a scholar and writer living at Rome in the beginning of the 3rd cent. has copied in his *Refutation* (V, 10:2). This hymn says that the soul, ruled by Law and by death, now and again suffers

contradictory states, 'now it dies, now it lives again', until Jesus is sent to give it true *gnôsis*.

In → Manichaeism too the theories of ancient Greece (e.g. Pindar's) concerning the soul's destinies after death were revived. In the Manichaean *Kephalaia* (XXIX, 83,4-8) three paths are open to deceased souls: 'one to death, one to life, one to mingling'. Those who have lost themselves in the realm of Darkness, are condemned to eternal death; the Elect, the true followers of Mani, go to eternal Light and to Life, whereas the Hearers, those who have struggled on in the ambiguous realm where Light and Darkness are mingled, go to reincarnation in that very same realm. The *Fihrist*, a famous Arabic list of authors and books by Abû 'l-Faradj al-Nadîm (10th century), has an important chapter on Manichaeism, with a detailed exposition of the three paths (Flügel, pp. 69-71 arab. and 100-101 transl.; transl. Dodge, II, 796). Similarly, the *Acts of Archelaus*, a 4th century Christian work, elaborates on the reincarnation of people who are still in the world (the Hearers), whereas others are completely lost (*Acta-Archel.* X, pp. 15-17, Beeson).

It is difficult if not impossible to decide whether the Alexandrian theologian Origenes (185-254) held reincarnationist views or not. The results arrived at by very competent scholars are frankly contradictory. Two points seem nevertheless clear. First: like Plato, Origenes defended the pre-existence of souls. It was for this doctrine that he was condemned in 553 by the Oecumenical Council of Constantinople. Second: in case he accepted, perhaps temporarily, the logical implication of this first point, i.e. the Platonic reincarnation of souls (thus perhaps in his systematic work *Peri Archôn* I,8,4 and II,9,7) he certainly did not attach importance to it. It is indeed possible to quote him discarding light-heartedly fantasies about reincarnation of souls: 'it is not taught by the Apostles nor by Holy Scripture' (*Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, ad 11,13), and 'We have not found it in the Holy Scriptures' (*ib.* ad 13,1).

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CARL A. KELLER

## Reincarnation II: Renaissance – present

Traditional beliefs in reincarnation in Europe probably came to an end after the fall of Rome. At the end of the Middle Ages → Gemistos Plethon (1355-1452) revived the idea of metempsychosis, and the same idea had been developed independently by the → Cathars, possibly through their debate about Christian purgatory. Notions of reincarnation in the Kabbalah (Book of *Bahir*, c. 1200) also appear to have emerged independently, although there was some limited contact between Mediterranean Jewry and post-antiquity Gnostic groups. There is no evidence for the transmission of manichaean ideas often discussed in this context [→ Manichaeism]. However, there has been a continuous debate in kabbalistic Judaism from the 13th century up until the present regarding the “Gilgul”. The end of reincarnation beliefs in antiquity and their medieval thematisation has hardly been investigated yet.

In the Renaissance the educated classes became familiar with reincarnation beliefs as a result of their engagement with Platonic and Neoplatonic texts [→ Neoplatonism]. However, metempsychosis was usually regarded as a marginal aspect of philosophy or interpreted as an allegory (e.g. reincarnation in animals as a metaphor for bestial behaviour in → Ficino). Nevertheless, a few Renaissance philosophers embraced ideas of reincarnation, but these can be traced no earlier than the second half of the 16th century (no prosopographic survey to date). Most likely inspired by ancient philosophers, notably Pythagoras, → Giordano Bruno conceived of metempsychosis as a complement to his conception of an infinite universe, but

his notion of reincarnation remained practically unknown. Isaac Luria (1534-1572) popularised the Gilgul in the Kabbalah, thereby assimilating the Jewish experience of exile following the expulsion from Spain. Through reincarnation the scattered tribes of Israel in the diaspora were supposed to prepare the way for Tikkun, the messianic restitution of world history. → Guillaume Postel was the first identifiable theologian and philosopher in the 16th century to integrate metempsychosis into Christian theology, probably stimulated by kabbalistic authors. As in Bruno’s case, cosmology provided the frame for an anthropology of reincarnation in Postel. The significance of Christian kabbalists [→ Jewish Influences III] for the discussion of reincarnation beliefs has only just begun to attract scholarly attention.

In the 17th century ideas of reincarnation generated a widespread debate in learned circles. For example, metempsychosis was an image of the path of the soul towards its resemblance to God for John Donne (1572-1631), but Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655) saw it as an actual path to perfection. An important intermediary may have been → Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, who, as a Christian kabbalist, included especially Lurianic ideas in his work *Two Hundred Queries . . . Concerning the Doctrine of the Revolution of Humane Souls and Its Conformity to the Truths of Christianity* (1684). He discussed his ideas of “revolution” with → Henry More and Anne Conway (1631-1679) or with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), who again exchanged views on the subject with Elisabeth Charlotte of Orléans (1652-1722), the sister-in-law of King Louis XIV of France. By the end of the 17th century there had developed in several Germanic languages a special idea of metempsychosis, beyond that of the ancient terms in use: *Seelenwanderung* (transmigration of souls; German) or *Zielsverhuizing* (Dutch). This may mark the beginning of an independent discourse.

These philosophical and anthropological issues in the early modern period characterised the debate about reincarnation in Europe over the ensuing centuries. The central question was whether the monistic anthropology of Christianity, which recognised no disembodied soul, was compatible with the dualistic human image of reincarnation beliefs. Almost all theologians denied the possibility of separating body and soul, and regarded the belief in the Resurrection as contradictory to the notion of multiple incarnations. Van Helmont made a significant contribution to the debate with his term “revolution”, signifying a multiple resurrection of the same body, whereby an incomplete

life could be perfected in further stages without the separation of body and soul. From a soteriological perspective, this construct probably offered an alternative to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The irreconcilability of Christian anthropological assumptions with reincarnation beliefs severely restricted their spread up to the end of the 19th century.

Eschatology played a further part in this particular history of Western ideas. The numerous cosmologies of the 16th century jeopardised the notion of a collective divine Judgment at the end of time. Individual justice and the salvation of man after death received new formulations. This individualisation of eschatology in Christian theology also became a central consideration in ideas about reincarnation. Likewise, reincarnation was supposed to guarantee the perfection of man, whereby human autonomy was emphasised to the detriment of divine redemption. Furthermore, reincarnation was linked from the end of the 17th century with the idea of the development of humankind and from the 18th century it became an alternative religious belief qualifying the doctrine of evolution. An important example of this reception is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), whose *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780) made *Seelenwanderung* an instrument of divine instruction, leading human beings to perfection. With this adjustment in the 17th and 18th centuries, reincarnation ideas acquired their specific European coloration. No longer viewed as a penance, as in antiquity, in Giordano Bruno or in Asian beliefs, reincarnation was now seen as an opportunity, and this reinterpretation carried important implications for its human subject. Perfection was now the goal and not extinction, as with Buddha and Bruno.

The historical derivation of reincarnation beliefs ran a separate course from its philosophical substantiation. Partly they were regarded as a component of *philosophia perennis*, which → tradition, especially since the end of the 18th century (e.g. in the high grades of the → Illuminaten) was postulated in opposition to the mainstream. Its revival through reference to ancient authors seems to have been a rare occurrence, as in the case of Frans Hemsterhuis (1721-1790), but there is no further reference to Kabbalah except for Jewish kabbalists in the 18th century. → Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) offers an example of the pragmatic use of reincarnation to deal with issues of contingency. Against a Spinozan background he explained “incomprehensible” love affairs in his biography with reference to the transmigration

of souls. Analogical thinking provided important proof or at least plausible evidence. The Swiss naturalist Charles Bonnet (1720-1793) introduced the idea of *palingenesis* (first published in 1769) which Lessing transformed into the transmigration of souls. Bonnet’s “stages”, which man ascends upon a “chain” of planetary worlds, becomes for Lessing the transmigration of souls on earth. In these debates rebirth had only a limited esoteric meaning. Although all discussants were aware that it lay outside the mainstream of theological and philosophical tradition, it was openly discussed in educated circles. Only at the end of the 18th century did reincarnation become a secret tradition, especially in masonic circles.

Far into the 19th century, the idea of reincarnation was the exclusive preserve of an educated elite in a predominantly Protestant milieu. There is no evidence whatsoever of it entering popular beliefs. Its eventual widespread popularisation is closely linked with the history of → spiritualism, which movement split into factions which either accepted or rejected reincarnation following the publication of → Allan Kardec’s *Livre des Esprits* (1857). In the second edition (1859), Kardec presented a catechism of more than 1000 questions and answers, with reincarnation serving as the basis of a universal philosophy. Kardec regarded himself as a Christian theologian: his coining of the word “reincarnation” as an analogue of “incarnation”, may even identify him as its originator. By the end of the 20th century, the generic term “reincarnation” had displaced all other synonyms (metempsychosis, rebirth, *Seelenwanderung*, transmigration, *Wiederverkörperung*) in current usage.

The → Theosophical Society popularised its usage significantly. The founding generation, among whom → Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and → Henry Steel Olcott played the major role, came from the spiritualist camp and replaced its empiricism with an esoteric history of religion. Reincarnation also became a component of the occult history of mankind in this context. When Blavatsky and Olcott moved to India in 1879, Blavatsky accepted reincarnation, most likely through her contact with Buddhist ideas; in her earlier work *Isis Unveiled* (1877), she had actually rejected metempsychosis. Blavatsky asserted that her idea of reincarnation derived from an ancient secret wisdom of Tibetan origin. However, its focus on the human subject and involvement with an evolutionary history indicates its provenance in European thought. The significance of Theosophy for the spread of reincarnation ideas cannot be

overestimated, as important promoters of esoteric thought such as → Rudolf Steiner also took their idea of reincarnation from this source. Theosophy also introduced the notion of *karma* to signify a moral system for the consequences of one's actions leading to a good or bad rebirth. At the end of the 19th century, karma began to supersede the Christian ideas of judgment and retribution, thereby creating a certain distance from Christian terminology in theology and religious studies. Contemporary experiments to find empirical proof of reincarnation, which began in the 19th century in response to scientific methodology, are the long-term results of spiritualist and Theosophical attempts to objectivize reincarnation. No empirical studies of reincarnation have as yet been discovered before the end of the 18th century.

After the turn of the last century reincarnation became a widespread idea among the European middle and upper classes. The astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), the writer August Strindberg (1849-1912) or the founder of the Ford motor empire Henry Ford (1863-1947) are representative examples. Reincarnation was generally linked to ideas of progress and focused on the individual. Only in exceptional cases was reincarnation marked by a more Buddhistic relativisation of self-realisation, as for example in Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) or his follower Richard Wagner (1813-1883) or, at the beginning of the 20th century, among European Buddhists who read Oriental texts in the original languages or in reliable translations.

In the 20th century, the number of societies propagating reincarnation rocketed, among them the Anthroposophical Society [→ Anthroposophy], the Lectorium Rosicrucianum and → Scientology. After the mid-20th century there was also a massive diffusion of reincarnation ideas outside institutional associations, for example in the → New Age Movement and in the growing market for esoteric literature. Statistical surveys suggest that some 10-30% of the population of Europe and North America now believe in reincarnation. The validity of such surveys is often uncertain, depending on whether it is a question of actual belief in reincarnation or whether it is only considered probable or comforting. The numbers expressing agreement with reincarnation do appear to have remained constant at this percentage. Today reincarnation is not an isolated notion but linked to all other kinds of world-view. The 20th century has introduced only one innovation. Since the end of the 1950s, reincarnation therapy (e.g. past life regression) has developed as a branch of esoteric

psychology and as a significant economic factor in reincarnation beliefs.

Reincarnation has not become a powerful social force in European culture. One reason may be the lack of social relevance. Collective and political expressions of reincarnation beliefs, as in the Hindu caste system or the Tulku genealogies of Tibetan Buddhism, have not developed in Europe. Attempts to relate reincarnation to society and politics, like that of Charles Fourier (1768-1830) at the beginning of the 19th century, remained still-born. There has also emerged a massive critique of reincarnation in response to its growth since the early modern period. For example, there were in the 18th century many alternative theories of palingenesis or ideas of a "planetary round", as in Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) or in → Pierre Simon Ballanche (1776-1847), which sought to link the idea of progress with mainstream European traditions, without invoking reincarnation or positing the separation of body and soul. Meanwhile, there are secular critiques of reincarnation. For instance, it has been banned in Germany if linked to a justification of Nazism and the statement that the extermination of the Jews was their deserved karmic destiny. One and a half thousand years of Christianity in Europe have ultimately marginalised the idea of reincarnation. Even its establishment as a minority world-view since the early modern period occurred within the context of Christianity or its secular residues such as the autonomy of the subject, the linear conception of history or the idea of evolution. This syncretism has produced a particular modern European form of reincarnation belief, which differs notably from its manifestations in antiquity and the Orient.

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HELMUT ZANDER

**Rétif (or Restif) de la Bretonne,**  
Nicolas-Edme, \* 23.10.1734 Sacy,  
† 3.12.1806 Paris

Born in a small village in Burgundy, Rétif, known as “de la Bretonne” (the name of his family farm), was the son of a well-to-do peasant, whose idealized portrait he painted in *La Vie de mon père* (My Father’s Life, 1778). Raised by two Jansenist brothers, he received a very strict religious education; however, he learned to read and write very late, and remained self-taught all his life. At age 16, he was apprenticed to a printer at Auxerre, then became a journeyman typographer at Dijon, Auxerre, and Paris. Beginning in 1767, he frequented the Bohemian literary underworld of Paris and published several novels, such as *La Famille vertueuse* (The Virtuous Family, 1767) and *Le Pied de Fanchette* (Fanchette’s Foot, 1769); also various projects for reform, called *Idées singulières* (peculiar ideas), for example *Le Pornographe* (The Pornographer, 1769), *La Mimographe* (The Mimographer, 1770) and *Les Gynographes* (The Gynographers, 1777), in which he purported to reform prostitution, theater, and the education of women respectively. In *L’Andrographe* (The Andrographer, 1782) and *Le Thesmographe* (The Thesmographer, 1789), he appeared to be a precursor of socialism and communism, while in the utopian novel *La Découverte australe par un homme volant* (The Discovery of Austral Lands by a Flying Man, 1781) he showed himself a partisan of evolution.

Rétif became famous in 1775 with the publication of *Paysan perversi* (Perverted Peasant), an epistolary novel that became an immense success, as did the series of *Contemporaines* (Contemporaries), a collection of illustrated short stories in 42 volumes. Near the end of the old régime, between 1780 and 1789, Rétif de la Bretonne was a celebrated writer, a friend of Beaumarchais and Sébastien Mercier, sought out by the aristocrats and welcomed in the salons of Grimod de la Reynière and Fanny de Beauharnais. A fascinated witness of the French Revolution, which he described in *Les Nuits de Paris* (The Nights of

Paris), he was ruined by the collapse of the *assignat* currency and fell into poverty; but continued writing and publishing stories, plays, and above all his monumental autobiography, *Monsieur Nicolas ou le Coeur humain dévoilé* (Mr. Nicolas, or the Human Heart Revealed, 1797). Between 1798 and 1802, thanks to the patronage of Mme. de Beauharnais, he obtained a position at the ministry of police and finished several manuscripts, for the most part unpublished: *L’Anti-Justine* (The Anti-Justine, 1798), *Les Posthumes* (The Posthumous Letters, 1802), *L’Enclos et les Oiseaux* (The Enclosure and the Birds), *Les Mille et une métamorphoses* (The Thousand and One Metamorphoses), and *Les Revies*. In these last works, Rétif fully regained his inspiration: he gave free rein to his imagination and his fantasies, alternating between the erotic and the fantastic.

After his death, he left behind an immense and varied body of work: more than forty titles and two hundred volumes. In these works, Rétif appears as an admirer of Voltaire and a disciple of Rousseau, committed to the Enlightenment and a partisan of the Revolution. But one also notices in certain works, like the *Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas* (Philosophy of Mr. Nicolas, 1796) or *Les Posthumes*, a zone of darkness and mystery, a secret philosophy, which might be explained by his affiliation with → Freemasonry or by his adhesion to the doctrine of the Illuminés [→ Illuminism]. Up to now, no lodge’s record attesting to Rétif’s membership in a masonic order has ever been found in the archives; however, his life and works show indisputable links to masonry.

Rétif kept up close and steady connections with numerous masons, mostly belonging to the *Neuf Soeurs* (Nine Sisters) Lodge, including Cailhava, Cordier, Cubières, Fontanes, François de Neufchâteau, Lalande, Lepelletier de Morfontaine, Lezay-Marnésia, Mercier, and Nougaret. The designs of Rétif’s reform projects, such as *Le Pornographe* (1769) or *L’Andrographe* (1782), are based on the same model as the statutes of masonic associations. The same fundamental principles are there: an insistence on secrecy, justification of work, praise of equality and fraternity, and morals of reciprocity and solidarity. There is no denying the authentic masonic values in Rétif’s works.

In his writings, there is also a predilection for coded language, in particular a frequent use of masonic vocabulary with terms such as: respectable, venerable, illustrious, immortal, enlightened, fraternity, humanity, zeal, and regeneration. He often reverses letters or syllables when transcribing proper names, resulting in a profusion



of pseudonyms and anagrams. He also assigns a symbolic value to numbers: he readily uses the calendary divisions and displays an absolute mania for dates, anniversaries, and Latin inscriptions.

Like the adepts of Freemasonry, Rétif showed a definite interest in ancient and Oriental religions. In *Les Nuits de Paris* (The Nights of Paris, 1788) there are long discussions on the religion and morality of the ancient Egyptians, as brought back into fashion by → Cagliostro's Egyptian Masonry. Following the mystic traditions of Eleusis and Osiris, Rétif wanted to reestablish initiations for men and for women. He alludes frequently to the Greek myths of Epimenides and the Phoenix, both symbols of immortality. He often praises Pythagoras, admiring his theory of sacred number [→ Number Symbolism] and his belief in metempsychosis [→ Reincarnation]. Nor was Rétif indifferent to the craze for Oriental religions. He often refers to Persian, Hindu, Chinese, and Tibetan religions, believing that his own ideas are to be found there, and he sometimes even quotes the Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences].

On the other hand, in reaction against the austere Jansenism of his youth, Rétif manifested virulent anti-Christian and anti-clerical sentiments. He did not believe in the personal God of the Christians, nor in Providence, but in an eternal God, the principle of Being, the Great Architect of the Universe, who is one with the All or Nature. For Rétif, God cannot be good and generous, but only just. God is synonymous with Nature and with the Order of the world; there is no Devil, no Hell, no Paradise, and the immortality of the soul is a mere fantasy.

Rétif objected equally to the existence of beings intermediary between God and man, such as angels, sylphs, or genies – invisible beings with whom man could nonetheless communicate. Such beings do occasionally appear in his utopian or fantastic novels, but he criticizes them unambiguously in his didactic works, thus making clear that he wished not to be identified with Illuminés like → Swedenborg or Dupont de Nemours.

Rétif denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, whom he most often calls Jesuah, and sometimes goes so far as to deny his existence altogether. He denied the virginity of Mary, the miracles, and the Resurrection, and considered Christ to have been merely a philanthropist and a benefactor of mankind. In opposition to the church of his time, he praised the merits of the primitive church, in which poverty, equality, and fraternity reigned. But this was a polemical device, and one should not confuse Rétif with mystical Illuminés such as Swedenborg,

→ Willermoz, or → Saint-Martin, who sincerely wanted to regenerate Christianity.

Even more than Christianity, seen as a false religion and source of error and illusion, Rétif attacked the Catholic Church and its priests, whom he presented as self-serving, deceitful, and hypocritical. As for monks, they were even worse than priests: withdrawn from the world, they appeared as cynical and unscrupulous libertines.

With his radical criticism of the Christian religion, Rétif placed himself incontestably among the partisans of the Enlightenment. He admired Voltaire, Rousseau, and Buffon, and did not hesitate to proclaim himself their disciple, even if he sometimes criticized them. He praised “enlightened” statesmen such as Frederick the Great, Joseph II, and Benjamin Franklin. Like Rousseau and Helvetius, he believed in progress through education. His various projects of reform likewise showed his belief in the possibility of improving morals and society: thus we see him applauding the French Revolution, which would nevertheless ruin him. Finally, he never showed hostility towards the science of his time, and was aware of the most recent discoveries of Lavoisier, Lamettrie, and Laplace.

In response to Mallet of Geneva in 1786, Rétif denied being a disciple of Swedenborg, Cagliostro, → Martinism, or → Cazotte. Nevertheless, he corresponded with many celebrated Illuminés, some of whom were also his friends: Nicolas de Bonneville, founder of the Cercle Social, admirer of Swedenborg and Saint-Martin, who would later edit the *Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas*; Jacques Cazotte, the famous author of *Le Diable amoureux* (The Amorous Devil) and an adept of the → Elus Coëns and of Saint-Martin, to whom Rétif ascribed the inspiration for *Les Posthumes*; the famous Cagliostro, whom Rétif sometimes called a “great man” and sometimes a “charlatan”, and who was the model for Multipliandre, the hero of *Les Posthumes*; and lastly, the Baron de Corberon, minister to the Prince des Deux-Ponts, disciple of Swedenborg, devotee of occult sciences and esotericism, who declared himself an admirer of Rétif and met him in 1784.

Rétif figures in → Gérard de Nerval's *Les Illuminés*, together with Cazotte, Cagliostro, and Quintus Auclerc. Nerval's notoriety and the success of the book, published in 1852 and often reprinted, contributed largely to Rétif's reputation as one of the representatives of 18th-century Illuminism. Rétif's thought has, indeed, many affinities with the doctrine of the Illuminés. Even if he claimed to be a partisan of the Enlightenment, the

author of the *Philosophie de Monsieur Nicolas* often distanced himself from science: he claimed to reconcile reason and analogy, observation and imagination. He reproached the savants for being mere calculators and “*chiffromanes*” (number-maniacs), incapable of making unexpected connections or wide-ranging hypotheses.

Rétif never hesitated to extrapolate boldly, starting with simple analogies. He based himself on a unique principle: *everything in nature is image and symbol*, so that analogy and comparison are the best means for grasping the hidden meaning of the universe. In this sense, Rétif can be considered an authentic representative of esoteric thought. For him, as for most of the *Illuminés*, there is a profound correspondence between man and nature, between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and their secret relationships can only be revealed through symbols and allegories.

Rétif’s thought is fundamentally analogical and symbolic, but even in his most extravagant inferences it does not cease to be logical and rational. His logic is eminently dialectic: it is built upon a favorite principle of the Hermetists, that of the opposition and unity of contraries. Good and Evil oppose and complement each other, like Life and Death, Light and Darkness, Sun and Earth, and the Male and Female principles. Here we find the Manichaeism of Ormuzd and Ahri-man in Persian religion, of Yin and Yang in Chinese philosophy, and also of the two columns Jachin and Boaz in masonic symbolism.

Rétif’s philosophy can be defined as a pantheistic materialism, or rather as a materialistic pantheism. From *Le Généographe* (The Geneographer, 1770) to the last “*juvénale*” (Satire, after Juvenal) entitled “*Immoralité folle des athées*” (Insane Immorality of the Atheists, 1797), Rétif never ceased to criticize the atheism of the Baron d’Holbach, Diderot, and Lalande. However, he very soon accepted the principles of the most radical materialism: the idea that all the universe is nothing but matter in motion, and that matter is capable of thought. His philosophy was inspired directly by Spinoza, for whom thought and extension are only methods of a common substance, i.e. God or Nature. In this sense, Rétif was favorable to monism, to the unity of thought and matter, and was opposed to Cartesian dualism.

This materialism and pantheism is at the same time a type of vitalism, because God or the Principle of Being is synonymous with life. God consists of a vital or intellectual fluid, a sort of electromagnetic fluid that animates inert matter and gives it its form. It corresponds to the sum total of

living beings, stars, humans, and animals, united in an immense chain of beings, in which one can distinguish an overall gradation from animal to man, from man to the universe. Like Diderot in *Le Rêve de d’Alembert*, in *La Découverte australe* (1781) Rétif adopted the evolutionist hypothesis and the theory of the transformation of species.

One also finds there a sort of pansexuality: all of Rétif’s universe is sexualized. As the primitive androgyne, God is simultaneously male and female, fertilizing and regenerating him/herself. Created by God, the universe consists of a multitude of male suns and female planets, reproducing themselves in an immense copulation. This universe is the only thing deserving of a religion: man’s adoration should be addressed to Father Sun and Mother Earth, the male and female principles that govern our world. This worship of heavenly bodies recalls primitive animism and ancient Sabaeism: hence Rétif has been labeled a neopagan [→ Neopaganism] and restorer of the pagan cults.

Rétif went further: he invented a whole original cosmology, which describes the entirety of the universe in mutation, beginning with the explosion of suns that transform into comets, then into planets, under the effect of gravitation and later of crystallization. But for Rétif the universe does not die; it only regenerates and renews itself through a whole series of revolutions and mutations. This concept of the Eternal Return sometimes leads him to envisage metempsychosis, even though he did not believe in the soul’s immortality or the permanent identity of the individual ego. For him, only the Whole is immortal; the parts simply aggregate and separate themselves into new individuals, who retain no memory of their past existence in the form of dispersed elements.

Rétif wanted to create a new religion. He invented an original philosophical system and a coherent system of physics, in the form of a vast cosmogony. But this concept was not free from contradictions. Rétif seems divided between rationalism and Illuminism, between rational thought and symbolic thought, just like many of his contemporaries, during the time when science was just beginning to disengage itself from the occult sciences and follow rigorous, methodical rules. According to Bachelard’s theories, Rétif’s thought is the epitome of pre-scientific thought, which refuses to make the necessary split between image and concept, and above all fails to verify hypotheses through experimentation. Be that as it may, Rétif’s literary merit lies in his discernment, well before the Romantics [→ Romanticism] and the Surrealists, of all the poetic riches of Illuminism

that liberate the forces of the unconscious and the imagination.

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PIERRE BOURGUET

## Reuchlin, Johannes, \* 22.2.1455 Pforzheim, † 1522 Liebenzell

Reuchlin was the leading German humanist of the Renaissance, the most prominent Hebraist of his age and the author of the central text of Christian kabbalah, *De arte cabalistica* (1517). The influence of his numerous books and the intense controversy which surrounded them make him a key figure in the history of European spirituality in the 16th century and the main influence on the integration of Jewish and kabbalistic elements into European thought [→ Jewish Influences] and especially European esotericism between the late-15th century and the 18th.

Reuchlin's early studies and scholarship were focused on the Greek and classical languages and traditions. He studied in Freiburg, Paris and Basle. He also obtained a degree in law in Poitiers (1481), taught classics, and wrote a Latin lexicon. In 1482 he travelled to Italy for the first time, and became acquainted with the great humanistic center and library under the patronage of the Medicis in Florence. Here he added Hebrew to his intellectual and linguistic interests, and was exposed to the

influence of the school of → Marcilio Ficino, dominated by the Platonic tradition in a particular spiritualistic interpretation, and to the → Hermetic literature which had been translated into Latin by Ficino. These interests culminated in the publication of Reuchlin's first work on the kabbalah, *De verbo mirifico* (1494): the result of his association with → Pico della Mirandola, the originator of Christian kabbalah. Reuchlin had become aware of the wider horizons of late-15th century knowledge and science, and he adopted the graecized name Capnion. When returning to Germany he became a counselor to Count Eberhard of Württemberg, and continued his studies of Hebrew.

Reuchlin's assimilation of Platonism and Hebrew occurred at a time when the atmosphere in Europe was turning into directions diametrically opposite to his own inclinations. Enmity towards the Jews, expressed by their persecution in Spain (culminating in the expulsion of the Jews from that country in 1492) and the anti-Judaizing campaign of the Spanish Inquisition, was paralleled on the religious-intellectual level by hatred of the Talmud and deep suspicion of all Jewish traditions. The increasingly dualistic world-view of the period (promoted intensively by the Dominicans), which saw the earth as the battleground between Satan and his servants and the Church, placed the Jews and their traditions on the Satanic side. The impact of these views was stronger in Germany than in most other European countries, and the Florentine school of humanism developed a perspective in clear opposition to the prevailing cultural currents.

The distance between Reuchlin and the humanists who followed him, on the one hand, and some of the Church authorities in Germany, on the other, became apparent in the controversy concerning the confiscation and burning of Jewish books which erupted about 1508 and was to accompany Reuchlin throughout his life. His most fierce opponent was Johannes Pfefferkorn, who had been born as a Jew in Nuremberg in 1469, converted to Christianity together with his family in Cologne in 1505, and became Germany's most energetic and prolific writer against the Jews and their books. He claimed that Jews derived their spiritual power from their books, especially the Talmud, and subscribed to the popular notion that the Talmud preaches against Christianity (although he denied the Blood Libel). In order to stimulate their conversion, the books must be taken from the Jews, and several other social and religious restrictions should be enacted against them. With the help of the Dominicans in Cologne, and especially the Dominican inquisitor Jacob Hochstraten, he succeeded to get attention

in the court of the Emperor Maximilian I. His chief opponent was Reuchlin, and a controversy ensued which is documented by treatises from both sides. Pfefferkorn attacked Reuchlin in his *Handspiegel* (Mainz, 1511) and other books, and Reuchlin responded with his famous *Augenspiegel* (1512). The notorious anti-Dominican satirical work *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* (*Dunkelmännerbriefe*; 1515) was published anonymously, but probably written by several humanists inspired by Reuchlin. In 1513, Hochstaden initiated an official procedure against Reuchlin, which was rejected in 1516 but re-enacted in 1520. The controversy became a concern of intellectuals and leaders in Germany, and even the Emperor and the Pope became deeply involved in it. When studying Reuchlin's works and theological positions, one should always be conscious of the atmosphere of accusations, persecutions and religious strife which accompanied his scholarly work; and there is little doubt that, among the contemporary public, Reuchlin's views were shared by only a small minority. The intensification of the hatred towards the Jews following Luther's attacks and the Catholic reaction made Reuchlin's position into an isolated one.

There is no inherent connection between Reuchlin's endeavors as a Hebraist and his theological writings in the field of the kabbalah. His grammar and lexicon of the Hebrew language, *De Rudimentis Hebraicis* published in 1506, has a similar place in the history of Hebraism as *De arte cabalistica* (1517) has in the history of the Christian kabbalah. Reuchlin's philosophical work concerning the Hebrew language followed his previous writings in Greek and his translations of classical Greek texts. All his work reflects the Renaissance humanist drive of widening the horizons of languages and classical lore, and seeking a new understanding by excelling in the mastery of the ancient languages. The study of the Hebrew language did not carry theological implications, as did the adherence to the ideas of the kabbalah, and it was not a significant part of the controversy which erupted around Reuchlin in the last decades of his life.

A comparison between the structures of *De verbo mirifico* and *De arte cabalistica* is most instructive concerning the evolution of Reuchlin's attitude towards the kabbalah, Judaism and the Jews. Both works are presented as dialogues between three participants. In the earlier work, the speaker, Capnion, is in dialogue with the Epicurean philosopher Sidonius and the Jew Baruchias. Capnion (i.e., Reuchlin), is the ultimate authority who, to some extent, proves to the Jew Baruchias that

the real meaning of the tetragrammaton is not to be found in the Jewish four-letter version but in the secret, five-letter one, which is the Christian secret name of Jesus, YHSWH. Jewish tradition is thus placed on a level which supplies important materials, yet the ultimate truth, which is of an esoteric-Christian nature, eludes it. In *De arte cabalistica*, the speakers in the three dialogues are the Muslim Marranus, the philosopher Philolaus, and the Jew Simon. Simon participates only in the first and third dialogues; he is absent from the second, because it is conducted on Saturday, and the participants – like the author – respect his religious obligations on the Sabbath. Simon to a very large extent has “the final word”, and most of the third and concluding dialogue is devoted to kabbalistic information revealed by him. He is described as a descendent of the revered Rabbi Simon bar Yohai, the legendary author of the Zohar; and thus he is the physical embodiment of the kabbalah in general. It is very difficult to find any parallel to such a sympathetic and generous presentation of a contemporary Jew in Christian literature; and in 1517, to publish one was highly unusual and courageous. There is no attempt to convert Simon or make him see the meaningfulness of Christian tradition, and he emerges from the dialogues and the book as a devoted Jew. It is easy to understand why such a portrayal of a Jew infuriated some of his contemporaries, among them Jewish converts to Christianity, even though the attacks on Reuchlin in fact started long before *De arte cabalistica* was published. As demonstrated by the comparison between his earlier and later work, these attacks did not inhibit Reuchlin from further developing his attitude towards Jews and their secret lore.

*De verbo mirifico* was the first book in Latin dedicated to the kabbalah in Jewish esoteric traditions. *De arte cabalistica* is the work which demonstrates Reuchlin's mastery of the Hebrew language and Jewish world-views, unparalleled both before and for a long time after its publication. Reuchlin seems to enjoy quoting biblical verses in the original, and many talmudic and kabbalistic paragraphs are quoted in Hebrew as well as in Latin translation. The presentation of a Christian theological work in which Hebrew characters embellish almost every page was an unusual event. It gave the work an aura of erudition and reliance on primary, ancient and revered sources, which enhanced its impact and influence.

As a disciple of Pico, it is not Reuchlin's purpose to present a coherent, systematic theology. He quotes Pico's statement that what is incoherent is closer to the truth than what is coherent, as

Reuchlin presents it in *De arte cabalistica* book III (Goodman ed., 269-271). In *De verbo mirifico*, the main message is the basic identity of all religious systems, which, in their roots, are united in one secret, sublime truth; that truth, according to Reuchlin, is the supreme, esoteric truth of Christianity. That truth is revealed best by esoteric lore, and Reuchlin refers in particular to the traditions of Orpheus and, first and foremost, the teachings of Pythagoras. In the second part of *De arte cabalistica* – the dialogue from which Simon is absent – the two debaters present Simon's teachings on the first day as identical to those of Pythagoras. The core of the wisdom which Reuchlin purports to glean from the kabbalah, from Pythagoras and all other sources, is neoplatonic in nature. It is not Reuchlin's way to make fine distinctions and present differences; his method is an inclusive one, demonstrating the essential identity of the teachings which are presented in various languages and terminologies. There should, however, be no mistake: when all the particular characteristics of every ancient lore are removed, the remaining essence is that of Christian truth.

One of the few connections which Reuchlin established between kabbalistic speculation and contemporary Christian historical thought was his formulation of the concept of stages in the history of the spirit as a development of the Hebrew names of God. According to talmudic tradition, employed by Reuchlin, God revealed himself to the patriarchs by the name of Shadday: SDY in Hebrew, a three-letter name. To Moses and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, when the Torah was given, he was revealed by the tetragrammaton: YHVH, four letters. The redemption is signified by the appearance of the messiah, whose name consists of five letters, and becomes apparent by inserting a *shin* into the tetragrammaton: YHVSH, which Reuchlin believed to be the five-letter original Hebrew name of Jesus. There is actually no kabbalistic element in this construction; it follows the ancient Jewish and Christian division of history into ages, expressing it by the nature and structure of the dominant name of God in that epoch. In Reuchlin's rendering, there is also no distinct eschatological meaning to the gradual, three-epoch historical unfolding of revelation. His concepts have been compared with those of the great 13th-century historian of the revelation of the Trinity, Joachim of Fiore; yet in the system presented by Joachim, the third and last phase of development, the appearance of the *testamentum aeternum* of the Holy Spirit (following those of the Old Testament of the Father and the New Testament of the Son) will announce the beginning of

the messianic age. In Reuchlin's formulation, the five-letter redeeming name is associated with the appearance of Christianity, and thus does not signify a change in contemporary history. As a whole, Reuchlin's work, like those of many humanists of the time, did not include expectations of revolutionary transformations in history and in political and religious institutions.

For a reader of his theological works it is not surprising that Reuchlin, declining all entreaties of his closest friends and colleagues, refused to join the Protestant rebellion. He was never a person to insist on differences and argue against the mistakes and errors of others (except those who attacked him, and even this he did with satirical elegance and camouflage), and the developing schism and civil war in the Church distressed him. Some 19th-century scholars have described Reuchlin as 'the father of the German Reformation', but it is very doubtful whether such a title is correct and meaningful. Like most humanists, he cherished ideas concerning reform and improvement in the Church, but it is doubtful whether his worldview allowed or substantiated a revolutionary upheaval. His contacts with Popes, especially Leo X, the younger brother of his patron Lorenzo de Medici ("the magnificent") of Florence, demonstrate that he sought protection under the Vatican's wings; and he did not hesitate to dedicate his magnum opus on the kabbalah to the Pope, prefaced by a long letter of praise to the Medici family and its humanistic enterprise. Leo X, however, did denounce Reuchlin in 1520 (together with Martin Luther, incidentally). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Reuchlin did not share the anti-Catholic sentiments of the leaders of the German Reformation.

No less than his impact on the Christian kabbalah, Reuchlin's influence on the development of Hebraism in Christian Europe is second to none. Gershom Scholem has rightly described him as the first great Christian scholar of Hebrew. He started studying and publishing works concerning Hebrew grammar and lexicography in his youth, and continued this activity until his death.

Reuchlin's relationship with → gnosticism must be described mainly in negative terms, but many of the sources he used – including the kabbalah – do contain elements associated with gnosticism. The reverence he demonstrated for the Zohar could have resulted in the development of gnostic motifs, but they did not. Reuchlin rejected both Jewish and Christian tendencies towards theological dualism, and the concept of creation by an evil demiurge could not be integrated in any way in his world-



view. Like Ficino's and Pico's, his attitude towards the world was essentially an optimistic one. Like his fellow-humanists, he was overwhelmed by the discovery of the great secrets of the universe encoded in the old texts, and his main concern was the demonstration of the underlying unity which bound them together. The revelation that Pythagoras and the Zohar, → Hermes Trismegistus and the Egyptian hieroglyphs, were presenting the same message, identical to that of ancient, pure Christianity, was the dominating element in his work.

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JOSEPH DAN

**Ricenus Thrasibulus** → Khunrath, Heinrich

**Richter, Samuel** → Sincerus Renuatus

**Rijckenborgh, Jan van**  
(ps. of Jan Leene), \* 16.10.1896  
Haarlem (The Netherlands),  
† 17.7.1968 Santpoort  
(The Netherlands)

Jan Leene who, under the pen name of Jan van Rijckenborgh, became the founder of the Rosicrucian movement Lectorium Rosicrucianum, or the International School of the Golden Rosy Cross, was born in Haarlem (The Netherlands) on October 16, 1896. His father was a textile merchant, and Jan became his successor when he finished his High School studies. Although the Leenes were a strict Dutch Reformed family, Jan became interested in religions other than Christianity from his early years. He also read Christian esoteric authors, particularly → Jacob Boehme (1575-1624); and he would later translate Boehme's masterpiece *Aurora*.

He was also interested in 17th century → Rosicrucianism, and originally thought its legitimate modern heir was the Rosicrucian Fellowship established in the United States by → Max Heindel (pseud. of Carl Luis von Grasshoff, 1865-1919). Van Rijckenborgh eventually became the leader of the Rosicrucian Fellowship in the Netherlands, and was joined by his brother Zwierv Wilhelm Leene (1892-1938). From August 1924, an "inner pilgrimage" persuaded van Rijckenborgh that Gnosis as truth lay at the heart of all religions and indeed all human beings, and he oriented the Dutch Chapter of the Rosicrucian Fellowship towards a Gnostic vision of Rosicrucianism. In 1935, together with his brother and Ms. Henny Stok-Huyser (1902-1990), later to be known under her pen name of Catharose de Petri, van Rijckenborgh left the Fellowship in order to establish a Rosicrucian Society of their own. Van Rijckenborgh accused the Fellowship of delving into occult practices, and based the teachings of the new Rosicrucian Society on → Gnosticism and Christian esotericism. He had a particular interest in re-interpreting the Gospel history of early Christianity as the development of an initiation process. The initiate, van Rijckenborgh taught, should evolve from John (the seeker) to Jesus (the twice born) to the Christ (the transfigured human being).

For the journal *New Religious Orientation*, van Rijckenborgh translated several 17th-century Rosicrucian documents. Besides this quite scholarly activity, he also gathered followers around him, who were attracted not only by his teachings

but also by his abilities as a seer. He warned against the dangers of contacts with the spirit world, and condemned spiritualist and occult practices of all kind. During World War II, van Rijckenborgh's Society was banned by the occupying Nazis, and had to continue its activities underground. Van Rijckenborgh proceeded with his work as a translator, however, working on the *Corpus Hermeticum* and several Manichaean texts [→ Manichaeism].

In 1945, the Rosicrucian Society was reorganized under its present name, Lectorium Rosicrucianum, or the International School of the Golden Rosy Cross. In 1946, van Rijckenborgh published his main work, *Dei Gloria Intacta*. In that same year, he travelled to Southern France, where he studied the historical and archaeological records of ancient → Catharism. It was there, in 1948, that he met Antonin Gadal (1871-1962), a key figure of modern → neo-Catharism. Gadal recognized van Rijckenborgh as “Grand Master” of a mysterious Gnostic Brotherhood, and remained a loyal member of the Lectorium right up to his death. Catharism was to remain an important intellectual reference for van Rijckenborgh during his whole lifetime.

In fact, van Rijckenborgh's doctrine affirms the existence of a universal Gnosticism, but takes into account as its principal forms Christian Gnosticism and Catharism; the human being is interpreted as a microcosm, with a divine original spark (the “rose”) capable of leading to renewal. The ego, however, creates a number of obstacles to the renewal process, and the initiate should endeavour to free himself from them by connecting the divine spark of the heart to the “sanctuary” located in the head. Van Rijckenborgh referred to this “alchemical” and spiritual process as “transfiguration” and it is, in fact, both an awakening and a return “home” to the Kingdom of Heaven. On the other hand, his teachings strongly reject all occult techniques, contacts with “ascended masters”, and spiritualist practices [→ Spiritualism]. Van Rijckenborgh's “auto-Freemasonry” is a personal spiritual process, leading the initiate, at the same time, into an active and fruitful life.

When he died in 1968, van Rijckenborgh had written more than forty books, and several other writings remain unpublished. In total, van Rijckenborgh left to the Lectorium Rosicrucianum more than 30.000 pages of teachings, which still form the basis of the esoteric and religious instruction of some 15.000 members world-wide.

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*roze kruis*, Haarlem: Roze kruis Pers, 1984<sup>4</sup> ♦ *Dei Gloria Intacta*, Haarlem: Roze kruis Pers, 1995<sup>5</sup> ♦ *Het Mysterie der Zaligsprekingen*, Haarlem: Roze kruis Pers, 1999<sup>3</sup>.

*Lit.*: Konrad Dietzfelbinger, *Die Geistes-schule des Goldenen Rosenkreuzes: Eine spirituelle Gemeinschaft der Gegenwart*, Andechs: Dingfelder Verlag, 1999 ♦ Harald Lamprecht, *Neue Rosenkreuzer: Ein Handbuch*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004, 250-296.

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Risenus Thrasibulus → Khunrath, Heinrich

Ritter, Johann Wilhelm, \*16.12.1776  
Samitz (Silesia, now in Poland),  
† 23.1.1810 Munich

After studying pharmacology and chemistry in Liegnitz from 1791 to 1796, Ritter enrolled at the University of Iena where he presented in 1797 a ‘Demonstration that in the animal kingdom a constant galvanism accompanies the process of life’. This paper's publication the following year stirred a flurry of debate. After its publication, Ritter occupied two more or less overlapping positions within Germany's intellectual world at the turn of the century, namely, that of a *Naturphilosoph* [→ Naturphilosophie] with strong theosophical leanings and that of a great scientist. As a *Naturphilosoph*, in 1799 he became one of → Novalis's best friends, then won the friendship and admiration of Johann Gottfried Herder. Friedrich Schlegel held him in great esteem, as did → Goethe, with whom he conducted some experiments in physics. In 1805 Ritter settled in Munich to teach and do research. There, he collaborated with other *Naturphilosophen*, among whom → Friedrich W.J. Schelling (appointed at the University of that city the year after), → Franz von Baader, who also held a Chair, and → Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert. Thus emerged the “Schelling-Baader-Ritter triumvirate” – as a contemporary ironically named it –, which played a central role in the history of the so-called “German romantic constellation” in Munich. In 1806, at the Academy of Sciences in Munich (to which he had been elected a member in 1804 with the support of Baader), Ritter gave a lecture titled ‘On Physics considered as an Art’, which ranges among the most characteristic, theosophically tinged texts produced by German *Naturphilosophie*. At the end of his life he pub-

lished what was to remain his best known work, *Fragmente aus dem Nachlasse eines jungen Physikers: Ein Taschenbuch für Freunde der Natur* (Fragments from the Legacy of a Young Physicist: A Handbook for the Friends of Nature). This compilation of his personal thoughts and reflections, jotted down over the preceding years, is presented as a sum of numbered aphorisms, apothegms, and short developments dealing with chemistry, physics, astronomy, biology, psychology, and → music, pervaded throughout by perspectives of an esoteric character. They are preceded by a “romanticized” autobiography.

Many of the experiments Ritter made as a scientist were concerned with electricity and/or electrochemistry. One of his earliest studies focused upon the manner in which muscle tissue reacts to electrical charges, a research which helped him to develop his theories in the context of *Naturphilosophie*. As a result of these studies, he was the first to establish an explicit connection between galvanism and chemical reactivity (1798-1801). Beginning in 1799 and throughout the rest of his life he contributed articles to several academic journals, including *Allgemeines Journal der Chemie*, *Annalen der Physik*, *Voigts Magazin*. In 1799/1800, shortly after the English chemist William Nicholson had succeeded in decomposing water into hydrogen and oxygen by electrolysis, Ritter improved the process greatly. These contributions paved the way for his invention in 1800 of electroplating, which is still currently used to plate gold, silver and other metals. Besides, in line with one of the prevalent views of *Naturphilosophie*, namely, that an electrical polarity pervades Nature, he put forward the hypothesis that invisible radiation beyond the visible red should be paired to invisible radiation beyond the violet. This led in 1801 (one year after William Herschel had announced the existence of the infrared region) to his greatest scientific accomplishment, the discovery by chemical means of a previously unknown region of the solar spectrum, namely ultraviolet radiation. The same year he observed thermoelectric currents, investigated the artificial electrical excitation of muscles, and anticipated the discovery of thermoelectricity by Thomas Johann Seebeck. Additional inventions of his soon followed, most notably the first dry-cell battery in 1802 and the first electrical storage battery (or accumulator) in 1803. One of his latest interests was dowsing (rhabdomancy), whose connection to galvanism he tried to demonstrate, thereby elaborating the theory of what he called “Siderismus”.

Despite his strong personal connections in the

intellectual world and these important scientific achievements, Ritter sadly remained poor all his life. He could hardly support his family (his wife Dorothea Munchgesang and their four children). Some people (among whom his friend and publisher Carl Friedrich Ernst Frommann) helped him financially, but this was hardly enough. Two reasons seem to account for this situation. First, he spent most of his money in procuring expensive scientific instruments, and in Munich he ruined his health by experiments of electrophysiology (electrical excitation of muscles and sensory organs) with high voltages, not only on plants and animals, but upon himself as well. Second, his difficult, rough and chaotic style (more in the order of poetry) irritated many scientists and deterred them from properly understanding the oral and published accounts he gave of his investigations and discoveries. Moreover, the esoteric part of his interests aroused their suspicion. Significantly, Ritter had more readers among poetically and philosophically oriented *Naturphilosophen* than among professional scientists (with some exceptions, such as the celebrated chemist Hans Christian Oersted, who held Ritter in great esteem). Therefore, many of his findings went unnoticed, only to be independently rediscovered by other scientists later on. It took over a century before his scientific work was given due credit. Ritter died an embittered man a few weeks after his thirty-third birthday.

Ritter's imaginary revolves around a number of symbols which he intends less as metaphors than as metaphysical truths. Objective observations are raised up to the level of a theosophical dramaturgy, so much so that the facts revealed by scientific experimentation are supposed to give an account of mythical recitals. For example, in Ritter the physical element fire refers to an ontological reality, to the point that “Fire” must become the ‘myth of science’, and physics the science of Fire, because in the latter all the energies of the world are enclosed (‘On Physics considered as an Art’). In oxidation he sees more than a chemical process only. Oxidation is burning, and therefore cult, prayer, and respiration are also forms of oxidation (Fragment 599): ‘Woman is the oxygenable, Man is the oxygenizing. This is why Woman gains weight in love, like all the bodies that oxygenate’ (Fragment 636). The notion of polarity, widely shared in that period among *Naturphilosophen* and German philosophers in general, is prevalent in Ritter. In this connection, he holds that the Earth, since it is the object of oxygenation processes, in-breathes solar energies and out-breathes lunar ones. Therefore, the Moon is hydrogen par excellence (Fragment

527). The opposite pole of Light is Gravity (as in Schelling), which means that matter is nothing but a condensed Light (Fragment 266).

Many of Ritter's writings resonate with paracelsian notions [→ Paracelsianism]. He considers physics as a physiology, not the reverse. During the Golden Age there were no inorganic forms, and this means that science has to be genetic, not ahistorical as it usually claims to be. The whole solar system is within Man, and each of us is a universe in miniature (Fragment 451). Celestial bodies are the sanguine corpuscles of the cosmos; the Milky Way is its muscles; and Ether runs through its nerves. In addition to that, Ritter is looking for the "original forms". Resonant with Goethe's quest for an "Urpflanze", Ritter wrote in 1808 that he would like to be able to arrest or fix a spark (to petrify it), because this would enable us to see the 'Normal-Figur' (normative figure) to which all organic and inorganic forms of Nature could be brought back.

Ritter, well read in the writings of such theosophers as → Jacob Boehme, → Baader and → Saint-Martin, posited that matter was created in order to undo the wrath brought about by the Fall of Lucifer. 'Through Light, the Earth remembers times of old' (Fragment 517). The inner radiation of precious stones is laden with promise and is a reminder of the brightness of our Lost Paradise ('Electrical System of Bodies'). The Earth appears to us as a great conflagration, which is now extinguished and of which only a few sparks remain. In a parallel to Paul's Rom. 8:19-22, Ritter says that the fault of that conflagration lies with Man, and that it is incumbent upon us to awaken that Fire from its sleep ('On Physics considered as an Art'). He also deals theosophically with issues bearing on the origin of mankind. For example, he compares Eve, who was created without the aid of a woman, to Christ, for whom the reverse was the case. He announces the advent of an androgyne Christ, in a time when both sexes will fuse into one, and he links his reflections on that subject to → alchemy, in particular to the elixir of Life (Fragments 518, 602). In one of the most beautiful passages of German → Romanticism, Ritter celebrates Sun and Moon, Man and Woman: 'The Moon is a secret love letter that the Sun sends to the Earth, it is the reflection of the surge of love of man toward his beloved' (Fragment 518). Such writings are a blend of science and art, of content and form. Novalis's remark is pertinent: 'Ritter's quest is throughout the true World Soul of the universe. His purpose is to read the visible letters which one can weigh, and to account for the typographic composition of the highly spiritual energies'.

*Beweiss, dass ein ständiger Galvanismus den Lebensprocess in dem Tierreich begleite . . .*, Weimar, 1798 ♦ *Beiträge zur näheren Kenntnis des Galvanismus und der Resultate seiner Untersuchung*, 2 vol. (in 8 Books), Iena, 1800-1805 ♦ *Das elektrische System der Körper*, Iena, 1805 ♦ *Die Physik als Kunst: Ein Versuch, die Tendenz der Physik aus ihrer Geschichte zu deuten*, Munich: Joseph Lindauer, 1806 ♦ *Physikalisch-chemische Abhandlungen in chronologischer Folge*, 3 vol., Leipzig, 1806 ♦ *Neue Beiträge zur näheren Kenntnis des Galvanismus . . . oder der Siderismus*, vol. 1 (no subsequent one), Tübingen, 1808 ♦ *Fragmente aus dem Nachlasse eines jungen Physikers, Ein Taschenbuch für Freunde der Natur*, 2 vols., Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1810; Reprint: Leipzig/Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1984; Reprint: Lambert Schneider, 1969, 2 vol. in one (Reihe – Goethezeit, hrg. von Arthur Henkel), Postface by Heinrich Schipperges; French trans. by Claude Maillard, *Fragments posthumes tirés des papiers d'un jeune physicien: Vademecum à l'usage des amis de la nature*, Premières Pierres: Charenton, 2001, Introduction by Yves Wattenberg ♦ *Der Physiker des Romantikerkreises Johann Wilhelm Ritter in seinen Briefen and den Verleger Carl Friedrich Ernst Frommann* (Klaus Richter, ed.), Weimar: Heinz Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1988, 85-148.

*Lit.*: Antoine Faivre, "Physique et métaphysique du feu chez Johann Wilhelm Ritter", in: A. Faivre, *Philosophie de la Nature (Physique sacrée et Théosophie XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1996, 267-304 (1st version in *Etudes Philosophiques* 1, 1983) ♦ Daniel Giroux, *Lettres d'un physicien théosophe: J.W. Ritter à J.W. Goethe, K. von Savigny, G.H. von Schubert, F. von Hardenberg, H.C. Oersted, F. von Baader. Présentation, traduction et notes de Daniel Giroux*, diss. University of Dijon, 1973 (unpublished) ♦ Wolfgang Hartwig, *Physik als Kunst: Über die naturphilosophischen Gedanken Johann Wilhelm Ritters*, diss. Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg-in-Breisgau, 1955 (unpublished) ♦ Klaus Richter, *Der Physiker des Romantikerkreises Johann Wilhelm Ritter in seinen Briefen and den Verleger Carl Friedrich Ernst Frommann* (Klaus Richter, ed.), Weimar: Heinz Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1988, 7-84 ♦ idem, *Das Leben des Physikers Johann Wilhelm Ritter: Ein Schicksal in der Zeit der Romantik*, Weimar: H. Böhlhaus Nacht, 2003 ♦ Jürgen Teichmann, "Johann Wilhelm Ritter – Ein romantischer Physiker", in: W.C. Zimmerli etc. (ed.), *Fesselung durch die Systeme*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstadt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1997, 331-334 ♦ Walter D. Wetzels, *Johann Wilhelm Ritter, Physik im Wirkungsfeld der deutschen Romantik*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973 ♦ idem, "Johann Wilhelm Ritter: Romantic Physics in Germany", in: A. Cunningham (ed.), *Romanticism and the Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 199-212.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

Rivail, Denizard Hyppolyte Léon →  
Kardec, Allen



## Robert of Chester, fl. between 1140 and 1150

Robert, sometimes also known as Robert of Ketton or Robertus Rettinensis, was active between 1140 and 1150. We know of him first because, together with Hermann of Carinthia, he was engaged by Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, to translate the *Qurʾān* completed in 1143. He was archdeacon of Pamplona from sometime around 1143. He is also known to have spent time in Barcelona and Tuleda and was evidently in London between 1147 and 1150.

His translation of al-Khwārizmī's *Algebra* completed at Segovia in 1145 introduced not only the word but the techniques of algebra to the Latin West. He was responsible for the revision of several astronomical tables for the meridian of London based upon tables of al-Khwārizmī, al-Zarqāllu and al-Battānī. Hermann of Carinthia identifies him as the translator of the *Opus astronomicum* of al-Battānī, a work which does not survive. Two treatises, one on the construction of the universal astrolabe and the other on the use of the planispheric astrolabe, also circulated under his name. He was probably also responsible for a redaction of Adelard of Bath's translation of Euclid's *Elements*.

Robert is perhaps best known for his connection with the early stages of the transmission of Arabic → alchemy to the Latin west. The Arabic term *al-kīmīyāʾ* may have been first introduced as *alkimia* to Latin readers before 1141 by Hugo of Santalla whose translation of the *Tabula smaragdina* was among the earliest significant texts. But the translation of the first substantive text on *alchymia*, the *Liber Morieni*, is commonly attributed to Robert. Objections have been raised to this attribution, however, due to its relatively late date (13th century) and the association of the name with what appears to be a later redaction of the original translation.

*Lit.*: Charles Burnett, "The Astrologer's Assay of the Alchemist: Early References to Alchemy in Arabic and Latin Texts", *Ambix* 39: 3 (1992), 103-109 ♦ L. Stavenhagen, *A Testament of Alchemy*, Hanover, New Hampshire: Brandise University Press, 1974 ♦ Hubert L.L. Busard and Menso Folkerts, *Robert of Chester's (?) Redaction of Euclid's Elements: The so-called Adelard II Version*, Basel, Boston, Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1992 ♦ R. Lemay, "L'Authenticité de la préface de Robert de Chester à sa traduction du *Morienus* (1144)", *Chrysopoieia* 4 (1990), 3-32.

FRANK KLAASSEN

## Roberts, Dorothy Jane, \* 8.5.1929 Saratoga Springs, New York, † 5.9.1984 Elmira, New York

Jane Roberts – her first given name is never used – preferred to see herself as a poet and writer, but achieved fame by her books based upon "channeled" messages received from a "spiritual entity" called Seth. Her childhood was difficult: her parents divorced while she was still a small child, and Jane spent some years in a Roman Catholic orphanage. Having returned home, she was forced to take care of the household while looking after her invalid, psychotic and abusive mother. Already at the orphanage she had begun writing poetry, which seems to have been considered "heretical" by the nuns. In her senior year in high school, honorable mention in a poetry contest sponsored by *Scholastic Magazine* earned her a scholarship to Skidmore College (Saratoga), but she was expelled after a year for having attended an all-night party at a professor's house. Having placed her mother in a nursing home, she took off on a motorcycle with a boyfriend, to visit her father in California. Back in Saratoga, she married the boyfriend, Walter Zeh, and began working in various small jobs. In 1953 she instantly fell in love with thirty-four year old artist Robert F. Butts. Having divorced her first husband, she married Butts on December 27, 1954. The marriage seems to have been a happy one, with both partners agreeing from the outset about a life single-mindedly devoted to their artistic and literary work. They lived first in Tenafly, New Jersey, supporting themselves with irregular jobs, then moved to Butts' hometown Sayre in Pennsylvania. In 1960 they settled in Elmira, New York, where they would remain for the rest of Jane's life.

In 1956 Jane Roberts' career as a science-fiction writer began with a story titled "The Red Wagon", published in *Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine*. Interestingly, given the later Seth messages, the story was about past-life memories, and in fact the subject of → reincarnation appears in her poetry at least as early as 1954. "The Red Wagon" was followed by several dozen other stories published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* journals and "men's magazines", and three novels: *The Chestnut Beads* (1957), *The Bundu* (1958) and *The Rebels* (1963). Apart from a strain of apocalypticism reflecting concern about impending nuclear holocaust, a strong interest in the untapped potentials of the human mind is evident already from this early production, but after the disappointing



production of *The Rebellers* (bound in a cheap paperback together with another novel), her interest in the Science Fiction genre began to decline.

The turning point in Jane Roberts' life occurred in the afternoon of September 9, 1963. According to her own report, while quietly sitting at the dinner table she was suddenly and unexpectedly hit by an overwhelming "psychedelic" experience: 'Between one normal minute and the next, a fantastic avalanche of radical, new ideas burst into my head with tremendous force, as if my skull were some sort of receiving station, turned up to unbearable volume' (Roberts 1970, ch. 1). Roberts felt herself travelling at top speed through multiple dimensions of reality, while her hands were scribbling down the ideas that rushed through her head. When she came back to normal consciousness, she had written down a manuscript titled *The Physical Universe as Idea Construction*, which eventually turned out to contain many of the core ideas that would be developed in the Seth sessions. Trying to understand what had happened, Jane and her husband developed an interest in extrasensory perception (ESP); in fact, she lost no time in drafting a proposal for a book about how to develop ESP, even though (always according to her own report) she was almost completely ignorant about the subject. Having received a positive response from her publisher, the couple began to experiment with the Ouija board, which at the third attempt began to spell messages from a "Frank Withers" who claimed to have lived in Elmira and died in the 1940s, and to have known Jane and Robert in Denmark during a previous life. On December 8, 1963, the spirit announced that his real name was Seth, and began addressing Robert and Jane as Joseph and Ruburt. Over the next sessions Jane noticed she began anticipating the Ouija board's answers in her head, until she felt impelled to speak them out aloud. Thus the seances developed into "channeling" sessions, during which Jane would go into a full trance while Seth "possessed" her body and spoke through her with a male voice and in a characteristic style entirely different from her own. Robert Butts would converse with Seth and note down the questions and answers in shorthand, and these transcripts became the foundation for the series of Seth books published by Jane from 1970 on. In 1966 she had already published her book on *How to Develop your ESP Power* and a year later she had begun to teach ESP classes in her home, during which she would frequently go into trance, with Seth speaking through her with the participants; these classes continued regularly from 1967 to 1975. In addition she gave occasional lectures

and interviews (see Watkins 2001, 209-210). Although her books made her famous as a psychic, she disliked that label and its associations, and seems to have always experienced a strong aversion against the "New Age" circuit [→ New Age movement]: 'As a writer I feel free to be as psychic as a bird, do what I please, and use my abilities psychically quite freely. When I think of me as a psychic I get hung up because I seem to be in the company of so many nuts' (journal 26.3.1972, in Watkins 2001, 122).

In 1965 Roberts began to experience the first symptoms of rheumatic arthritis, from which her mother had been suffering as well. Over the years her physical problems grew steadily worse, and from the late 1970s on she also developed thyroid. Refusing regular medical treatment until a very late stage, she finally had to be hospitalized; she died in 1984 after a long and difficult sickbed.

Throughout her life, Jane Roberts was single-mindedly devoted to her writing, and of her total output (now at Yale University, Sterling Memorial Library, ms.group nr. 1090) only a small part has been published. Interestingly, and consistent with the complex theory of the relation between mind and reality developed in the Seth material, she considered literary creativity and psychic manifestations as intimately related, and always preferred to see herself primarily as a writer and poet: 'The psychic stuff literally came out of the poetry . . .' (journal 5.5.1972, in Watkins 2001, 114). The series of Seth books that were published from 1970 on, and several of her "own" books not attributed to Seth as the source, contain a comprehensive "spiritual" worldview based upon a complex theory of mind and reality.

The Sethian worldview is explained with considerable intellectual subtlety. It is based upon a concept of the soul (also referred to as "multi-dimensional personality" or "entity") defined as conscious, unlimited energy that is continuously seeking to express itself. It does so by creating "realities" and identifying itself with them. Each human being is in fact a "fragment personality" unconsciously participating in a much larger group entity or oversoul; we all "create our own reality" on the basis of our beliefs, and derive our sense of identity from focusing more or less exclusively on the products of our own creative → imagination while blocking from conscious awareness the multiple alternative realities that are available to us. The reality shared by us as human beings is characterized by the categories of linear time and three-dimensional space; but in fact, reality consists of an unlimited number of dimensions, most of which

are beyond our capacity of understanding, and time does not exist.

These principles are developed with relentless logic into a radical multidimensional worldview reminiscent of the so-called “many-worlds theory” in quantum physics. Since even the tiniest movement of consciousness is inherently creative, it inevitably gets realized. Thus, whenever in our daily life we choose between A and B, this causes our personality to split up into two fragments focused on two parallel universes: one in which we have chosen A, another in which we have chosen B. Any soul’s consciousness may therefore be imagined as an explosion of “fragments” that continuously multiply in an infinite number of parallel realities, each one of which is experienced as “the” only reality by the fragment that is focused on it. Seth devotes detailed discussions to the concomitant philosophical problems, such as the implications for our concepts of personal “identity”, or the nature of “consensus reality” (Seth does not defend solipsism, but claims that consensus reality is permanently being created as an unconscious and automatic telepathic compromise agreed upon by our souls).

Just like each personality is a fragment of a much larger soul or “entity”, entities in turn are parts of a god-like super-entity, referred to as All That Is (and Seth speculates that perhaps All That Is himself might be a fragment of an even larger entity, and so on *ad infinitum*). All That Is strives for self-realization by means of unfolding his infinite creative potential in a dazzling expansion of multiple realities: a process that is never-ending, and yet takes place not in space-time but in what is called the “spacious present”. Conscious participation in this process is what gives meaning to human life: ‘You are here to use, enjoy, and express yourself through the body. You are here to aid in the great expansion of consciousness. You are [here] . . . to create the spirit as faithfully and beautifully as you can in the flesh’ (*The Nature of Personal Reality*, 28). While our “higher self” remains permanently linked to our “multi-dimensional personality”, it guides our ego and personal subconscious through an endless series of lives, during which we experience our self-created realities. Eventually we will learn to make conscious and responsible use of our creative abilities (whereas at present most of us do so unconsciously and irresponsibly), after which we will be ready to “graduate” to even higher cycles of development presently beyond our capacity of imagination. Conventional concepts of reincarnation are ultimately misleading, because they suggest a linear development whereas actually time

does not exist: ‘The reincarnational structure is a psychological one. It cannot be understood in any other terms. . . . The reality, the validity, the immediacy of those lives do exist simultaneously with your present life. The distance between one life and another exists psychologically, and not in terms of years or centuries. . . . Reincarnation, as it is usually explained . . . is a myth’ (*Seth Speaks*, 447/449).

Some sources of the Sethian worldview are obvious: there are clear references to e.g. Emersonian Transcendentalism, William James (the subject of an entire book written by Roberts), and popular accounts of modern relativity physics and psychology. The insistence that we can create our reality by our conscious beliefs reflects not only basic → New Thought convictions, but also a concern about the suggestion of popular psychoanalytic literature that we are at the mercy of our unconscious drives. More research is needed to explore e.g. the sources of Roberts’ early interest in reincarnation, or the extent of her familiarity with → spiritualism.

Regardless of such backgrounds, the Sethian synthesis is remarkable for its originality and internal consistency. Its optimistic and world-affirming spirituality and its message that all of us have the power to create our own reality by changing our beliefs has strongly appealed to many readers since the 1970s. Detailed analysis of the literature of the → New Age movement shows that its basic ideas are modeled after Seth’s worldview to such a degree (Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 126 and *passim*) that, without exaggeration, Jane Roberts should be recognized as one of the major religious innovators in Western society after World War II. Given her pivotal role in creating the foundations of a comprehensive belief system now widely diffused through Western popular culture, she has been surprisingly neglected by scholars of Western esotericism and of new religious movements. A major critical monograph is long overdue.

*The Rebels*, Ace paperback, 1963 ♦ *How to Develop your ESP Power*, Frederick Fell, 1966 (and several reprints under different titles) ♦ *The Seth Material*, Prentice-Hall, 1970 ♦ *Seth Speaks: The Eternal Validity of the Soul*, Prentice-Hall, 1972 ♦ *The Education of Oversoul Seven*, Prentice-Hall, 1973 ♦ *The Nature of Personal Reality: A Seth Book*, Prentice-Hall, 1974 ♦ *Adventures in Consciousness: An Introduction to Aspect Psychology*, Prentice-Hall, 1975 ♦ *Dialogues of the Soul and Mortal Self in Time*, Prentice-Hall, 1975 ♦ *Psychic Politics: An Aspect Psychology Book*, Prentice-Hall, 1976 ♦ *The World View of Paul Cézanne: A Psychic Interpretation*, Prentice-Hall, 1977 ♦ *The “Unknown” Reality: A Seth Book*, 2 vols., Prentice-Hall, 1977/1979 ♦ *The Afterdeath Journal of*

*an American Philosopher: The World View of William James*, Prentice-Hall, 1978 ♦ *The Nature of the Psyche: Its Human Expression. A Seth Book*, Prentice-Hall, 1979 ♦ *Emir's Education in the Proper Use of Magical Powers*, Prentice-Hall, 1979 ♦ *The Further Education of Oversoul Seven*, Prentice-Hall, 1979 ♦ *The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events: A Seth Book*, Prentice-Hall, 1981 ♦ *The God of Jane: A Psychic Manifesto*, Prentice-Hall, 1981 ♦ *Oversoul Seven and the Museum of Time*, Prentice-Hall, 1984 ♦ *Dreams, "Evolution", and Value Fulfillment: A Seth Book*, 2 vols., Prentice-Hall, 1986.

*Lit.*: Gene Carroccia, "Seth and the New Paradigm: Understandings of the Soul, Mind, Body, Symptoms, and Personal Reality", Ph.D. dissertation, Illinois School of Professional Psychology, 1998 ♦ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Channeling-literatuur: Een vergelijking tussen de boodschappen van Seth, Armerus, Ramala, en 'A Course in Miracles'", *Religieuze Bewegingen in Nederland* 22 (1991), 9-44 ♦ idem, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996/Albany: SUNY Press, 1998 (*passim*, see index) ♦ Arthur Hastings, *With the Tongues of Men and Angels: A Study of Channeling*, Fort Worth etc.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1991, 72-78 ♦ Jon Klimo, *Channeling: Investigations on Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources*, Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher 1987; 2nd exp. ed. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1998 ♦ Susan M. Watkins, *Speaking of Jane Roberts: Remembering the Author of the Seth Material*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Moment Point Press, 2001 ♦ Exhaustive bibliography by Barry C. Noonan on [http://newworldview.com/library/Noonan\\_B\\_Works\\_Jane\\_Roberts.html](http://newworldview.com/library/Noonan_B_Works_Jane_Roberts.html)

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

## Robertus Rettinensis → Robert of Chester

### Romanticism

1. ONTOLOGY 2. EPISTEMOLOGY
3. LINGUISTICS AND POETICS
4. INITIATION 5. MYTH AND RELIGION
6. PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY
7. NATURPHILOSOPHIE 8. ROMANTICISM AND ESOTERICISM

Rather than attempt an exhaustive catalogue of the connections between esotericism and Romanticism, this entry is structured as a set of brief essays on interrelated topics, illustrated with representative thinkers, and followed by some remarks on the relationship between esotericism and Romanticism. Romanticism is a diverse historical phenomenon: at the very least, one must distinguish the

national Romanticisms of Germany, Britain, and France; and within those national Romanticisms, distinctions must be made by generation or place. Thus there are the German Romanticisms of 1798-1800, 1806, and 1808-1810, or those of Jena, Heidelberg, and Munich; there are the British Romanticisms of Wordsworth and Coleridge and of Byron, Shelley, and Keats; and there is the Catholic and royalist French Romanticism that begins in 1801 and the anti-clerical and liberal Romanticism that begins in the late 1820s. The principal representatives of the western esoteric tradition for Romantic thinkers are → Jacob Boehme, → Emanuel Swedenborg, → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, → Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, → Karl von Eckhartshausen, and → Franz von Baader. → Illuminism is a subset of the esoteric tradition corresponding to the last decades of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century. There is a strong Boehmenist component to Illuminism (hence the Romantics' tendency to equate Illuminism and theosophy), though other esoteric currents are also present.

#### 1. ONTOLOGY

The God of Romanticism is no longer, as for the Enlightenment, an architect, a clockmaker, a judge, or a paternalistic pedagogue. Freed from the rational fetters which made the God of the Enlightenment a captive of human categories of understanding, the Absolute of → F.W.J. von Schelling or the Infinite of Victor Hugo and Jules Michelet is incommensurable with human knowledge; our reason, Friedrich Schlegel observed, can attain only a negative idea of the Infinite. Behind the Romantic notion of Divinity is the *Ungrund*, the essential Non-being of Boehme which wills Being into existence. Subsequent Boehmenist theosophy conceives of God as the *ens manifestativum sui*, the Life-principle that strives from a dark original cause toward its own realization and corporealization. Divine self-realization, or theogony, means that God actualizes himself progressively in the development of life. This divine unfolding has a dark aspect; evil and suffering are not external to God, but arise as an eternal moment of theogony. And since creation is part of the self-manifestation and self-realization of the divine nature, it too is characterized by conflict and suffering. This gives rise to what the Romantics called the *Nachtseite der Natur* (the nocturnal side of nature). From about 1806, Schelling's metaphysical thinking reflects his reading of Boehmenist theosophy and his discussion of it with Franz von Baader. Under its influence, he attempted to incorporate genetic and

volitional principles into the very core of ontology. The theosophical influence is clearly discernible in *Die Weltalter* (1811-1813, published posthumously), in which Schelling undertakes a logical analysis of the ontological relations that constitute the eternal process that is God. Schelling interprets history and nature, the unfolding of the pre-existent divine nature, as both a theogony (divine self-revelation and self-actualization) and a soteriology (restoration of Creation to unity with God).

The esoteric tradition depicts creation as the emanated self-manifestation of God. The world is a vital infinite reality in which all phenomena, as emblems of the divine, provide symbolic or analogical knowledge of the links between divinity, the self, and the world. Despite the Fall, light from the spiritual world is invisibly active in the sunlight of our world, just as the spiritual nature of creation remains present, though hidden, at the heart of the physical world. The cosmos is thereby a universe of mirrors and → correspondences. The Romantic cosmos is the emanated, living, analogically-linked cosmos of the esoteric tradition, and the Romantic quest, like that of the esotericists, is to create or restore a lost harmony through poetic vision, the restoration of language, initiation, the study of myths and religions, the restructuring of society, and contemplation of nature.

## 2. EPISTEMOLOGY

Romanticism's epistemological signature is its refusal to accept the Kantian disjunction between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) made the noumenal realm of ultimate truth inaccessible to rational knowledge. Romantics claim to grasp, directly or mediately, the ontological Absolute through an extra-rational faculty: intuition, → imagination, or a reconceptualized reason. Schelling attempted to elude Kantian epistemological pessimism by reconceptualizing reason as a transcendental insight or intuition that communicates with the Pure Actuality of the Godhead. Friedrich Schleiermacher similarly asserts, in *Reden über die Religion* (1799), that intuition is the centre of religious life because it alone brings us into contact with the Infinite. In Britain, Samuel Taylor Coleridge responded to Kant's challenge to metaphysical knowledge by distinguishing between the faculties of understanding and of reason. His distinction, a variation of Schelling's reconceptualization of reason, concedes that Enlightenment rationalism, or the understanding, cannot attain ontological truth but insists that reason, the "organ of the supersensuous", directly apprehends ontological truth and produces sub-

jective knowledge of the interpenetration of the finite and the Infinite. Coleridge alternatively refers to the faculty of reason as the imagination. This epistemology, by which, in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), he theorized the great poetry of his early collaboration with William Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), also underlies his approach to religious knowledge in later theological works such as *Aids to Reflection* (1825).

The refusal to accept Kantian epistemological pessimism also applies to the Illuminists themselves. In *Vers dorés de Pythagore* (1813), Fabre d'Olivet overcomes Kant's epistemological pessimism, in a manner parallel to Schelling, by redefining reason as an intuitive faculty capable of grasping the ontological Absolute. More commonly, however, the supra-rational epistemological faculty celebrated by the esoteric tradition is the imagination. Predicated on the optimistic presupposition that the Fall has obscured but not entirely blocked our perception of the divine light pervading the universe, esotericism maintains that the imagination, whether Boehme's "eye of fire" or Saint-Martin's and Baader's "organ of the soul", sees through the world of appearances to the spiritual world hidden within and enables access to different levels of reality through the use of mediations such as symbolic images.

Esotericism nourished Romanticism in its aspirations toward knowledge of the Absolute. F. Schlegel proclaimed that the highest philosophy – the science of the nature and relations of divinity – is theosophy, and called for religion and philosophy to unite. Schelling's early philosophy, drawing on J.G. Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), transformed Boehmenist imagination, by adding the elements of subjectivism and voluntarism, into an imagination that, rather than realizing a synthesis of the Infinite and determinate forms, actively gives birth to the entire perceptible world. This transformist sense of imagination characterizes Jena Romanticism. For → Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), the imagination places one in synchrony with the rhythm of the universe, thereby enabling one to change it. The transformist imagination persists in later German romantic literature, as in the poetry of Achim von Arnim and the stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann. Baudelaire's imagination similarly illuminates, animates, and transfigures material reality. For → William Blake, the imagination, which he calls Poetic Genius or Spirit of Prophecy in *The Marriage of Heaven & Hell* (1790), transcends the limits of rationality and sense perception in order to discern the spiritual essence that is eternal and infinite in

every living thing and in ourselves. Blake was influenced by Swedenborg, but turned to Boehme and other esoteric writers when he decided that Swedenborg's grasp on divine truth had been weakened by concessions to scientific rationality and that Swedenborgians sought spiritual escape from the world rather than to transform it.

Since the universe is a vital infinite reality, in perpetual becoming, Romanticism rejects the ideal of an objective, systematic account of a fixed order (of ontology or human affairs or nature or anything else). True knowledge is subjective and non-systematic. Michelet's historical method is to grasp its subject from the inside, by an act of sympathy (preface to *Histoire de France* [1869]). Novalis and F. Schlegel insist that true knowledge is interior, affirming Ludwig Tieck's description in *Phantasus* (1844) of the vocation of man as 'circumnavigator of our interior world'. Tieck, Clemens Brentano, his sister Bettina, and Achim von Arnim (Bettina's husband) polemicized against systematic thought. Romanticism, like the esoteric tradition, replaces systematic thought with correspondences, similitudes, harmonies, and analogies. By these tropes, Novalis said, humanity becomes aware of itself through the experience of the dynamic, developing universe in which it lives. Such knowledge transforms its possessor; Romantic knowledge is salvific knowledge.

### 3. LINGUISTICS AND POETICS

Esoteric linguistics, prominent in the Romantic period thanks to Saint-Martin and Fabre d'Olivet, among others, holds that behind the present cacophony of languages lies a single, primitive, language. This Adamic tongue enabled the first human beings to participate in the divine speech that had created the universe. In the primitive language of humanity spoken before the Fall, words corresponded to the essence of the things they named. Present-day languages, in which words no longer have an evident relation to the things that they designate, are as they are because of the Fall. The rehabilitation of humanity is linked to the recovery of the original, universal, divinely natural language of humanity. This recovery is possible because traces of the primitive language remain in one (Hebrew was the usual candidate), or a few, historical languages. These traces might one day be assembled and the primitive language reconstructed, thereby restoring humanity to unity and direct communication with God. Fabre d'Olivet illustrates this metalinguistic procedure in *La langue hébraïque restituée* (1815-1816). More typically, Saint-Martin asserts that recovery of the original language of

humanity is possible because something of the original language remains in our degenerate languages. This something is the ability of language to express spiritual reality, not directly or literally, to be sure, but indirectly through correspondences, symbols, figures, and analogies. This indirect speech, which we call poetry, participates in the divine powers, thereby linking humanity to God and apprehending the unity of creation.

Romanticism embraced the esoteric conception of poetry as symbolic knowledge and the key to an analogical world, of the poet as the recipient and transmitter of revelation, and of a recoverable universal language. F. Schlegel and Novalis, writing in the *Athenaeum* (1798-1800), celebrate the poet as a priest who will lead humanity to its eschatological fulfilment by relinking the world here below and divine transcendence. The symbolic imagination of Pierre-Simon Ballanche's poet-seer – exemplified in his *Vision d'Hébal* (1831) and discussed in Book Seven of *Orphée* (1829) – intuits spiritual truths and translates them into material form; poetry is the intuitive faculty of penetrating the essence of beings and things. Romantic poetry, from Novalis to Joseph von Eichendorff, Alphonse de Lamartine to Hugo, Wordsworth to John Keats, decodes and celebrates the presence of Divinity in the beings and things of the natural world. Since analogy reveals and materializes the unity of divine creation, the symbolic image ceases to be merely decorative and instead conveys meaning. The best-known poetic statements of this theory of harmonies are → Gérard de Nerval's sonnet "Vers dorés" (1845) and Charles Baudelaire's "Correspondances".

Esoteric poetics charges the poet with communicating spiritual truth (or at least the portion of it vouchsafed to him) to his contemporaries. Yet, the communicative obligation collides with the limits of linguistic communication. That which can be said literally is fallen; spiritual truth can only be hinted at by means of correspondences, symbols, figures, and analogies. The limitation of language to express spiritual truth reappears in Romanticism, as does the poet's awareness that he has glimpsed only a portion of the truth (this is why the fragment is a characteristic Romantic genre). Ballanche resigned himself to the fact that his "true book" would never be written; the spiritually acute reader must discern his true teaching from the symbols of his texts. Here, as in the case of other notoriously obscure Romantic works, including such landmarks as Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht* (1802) and Nerval's *Les Chimères* (1844-1854), the author did not willfully encrypt



that which could have been expressed clearly; obscurity is a consequence of the epistemological necessity of symbolic circumlocution of spiritual truths.

True poetry, for Illuminism, displays a historical aspect because the relationship of humanity to God – the subject of poetry – is the drama of the Fall and the regeneration to come. Saint-Martin's ideal of poetry as metaphysical, narrative, and prophetic reappears as one of the characteristic genres of French Romanticism: the philosophical epic. Ballanche offers both a theory of the Romantic epic in chapter ten of *Essai sur les Institutions sociales* (1818) and an exemplar, *Orphée*. Other notable efforts include Alfred de Vigny, *Eloa* (1824), Edgar Quinet, *Abasvérus* (1833), Alphonse de Lamartine, *Jocelyn* (1836) and *La Chute d'un ange* (1838), Alexandre Soumet, *La Divine Epopée* (1840), and Hugo, *La Légende des siècles* (1859-1883).

#### 4. INITIATION

Initiation – an ontological metamorphosis or purification of being effected along with and by means of knowledge of and participation in the hidden mysteries of the cosmos and God – is yet another esoteric theme taken up by Romanticism. In Romantic epistemology, the acquisition of spiritual truths both imperils the aspirant and, once successfully attained, transforms his being. In the literary realm, works from Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) onwards are structured around an initiatic quest; archetypically, a quest for the Castle, the Sanctuary, the Treasure, the Secret, an ordeal of the Labyrinth or dark Forest, an Ascent of the Mountain or Descent into the Underworld. George Sand's *Consuelo* and its continuation, *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt* (1842-1844), describe an initiation into a para-masonic sect. Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862) transfers initiation from the realm of secret societies to social reality; descent into the underworld becomes the struggle of a former convict against poverty and social annihilation. In Charles Nodier's *La Fée aux miettes* (1832), as in Nerval's *Aurélia* (1855), madness constitutes the descent into the underworld that leads to illumination. Even travel narratives, such as the *Voyage en Orient* of both Lamartine (1835) and Nerval (1843), must also be recognized as accounts of the path to self-knowledge. Initiation may also encompass the discovery of a truth which has social and political implications: the eternal gospel of Sand's *Spiridion* (1839) is the vehicle of the social prophetism of *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*; the revelations of Hugo's

"Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre" (1854) lead to Enjolras' profession of faith on the barricades in *Les Misérables*. Many Romantic philosophical epics are also tales of initiation, including social transformation through initiation. The great example here is Ballanche's *Essais de Palingénésie sociale* (1827-1831) in which social palingenesis, or social evolution, operates by means of the progressive initiation of humanity into knowledge of the primitive revelation and full participation in religion and society. Each successive initiation represents a social evolutionary advance, the sum of which constitute the rehabilitation of humanity from the Fall. Another influential example is the religious humanitarianism of Pierre Leroux's *De l'Humanité* (1840).

#### 5. MYTH AND RELIGION

Schelling identifies myths as intuitions of Spirit that cannot be made manifest by any other means. F. Schlegel's claim that all relation of humanity to the Infinite is religion is closely echoed by Hugo's assertion that the essence of religions is sentiment of the Infinite. Romanticism revalorizes myths as intuitions of Spirit and religions as stages in the unfolding, and humanity's progressive apprehension, of Spirit. Romantic histories of religions chart the unfolding of Spirit. Beginning with *Über die Gottheiten von Samothrake* (1815) and culminating in *Philosophie der Mythologie* (1842) and *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1841, both published posthumously in 1854), Schelling arranges the mythologies and religions of the world into a history of religions according to the degree to which each manifests the progressive self-actualization in human consciousness (including the subconscious) of the divine nature. Other prominent examples of what Quinet called the genealogy of the Eternal within the limits of time include Joseph von Görres, *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt* (1810), Friedrich Creutzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (1810-1812), Benjamin Constant, *De la Religion* (1824-1831), Ferdinand d'Eckstein's articles in his journal, *Le Catholique* (1826-1829), Quinet, *Du génie des religions* (1842), and Michelet, *Le Bible de l'Humanité* (1864).

Since Romanticism holds that the essential content of myths and religions is the same everywhere and at all times (that is, the unfolding of Spirit), it follows that differences among them are only superficial and that there is no absolute distinction between Christianity and the other religions. There is, therefore, no hard and fast opposition between Romantics, such as Schelling and Ballanche, who

maintain that while all religions participate in truth, Christianity is the highest expression of that truth, and those, such as Sand or Hugo, who deny Christianity any special status. In each case, while myths and religions are the vehicle of the universal revelation and embody truth, a hermeneutics is necessary in order to recover the truth hidden beneath the disfigurements of myths and the externalities of the various religions. Romanticism practices an analogical hermeneutics of myth and religion that discovers an inner unity beneath the surface differences that seem so striking.

The Romantics apply the valorization of interior truth over external expression to their own religious lives. One must remain entirely free, Novalis says in *Blütenstaub* (1802), to choose the mediator by whom one is brought into contact with divinity; the least constraint nullifies religion. This idea is also at the heart of Schleiermacher's *Reden über die Religion*. A core theme of Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven & Hell* is the superiority of the poetic genius of the artist over institutionalized religions and their priests; art is internal, original, and liberating, whereas religion is external, derivative, and oppressive. In France, Balzac's religion of the future will be an interior illumination, just as for Hugo, in *Contemplation suprême* (1863-1864), religions are obstacles to the essence of religion. By displacing the idea of revelation from the outside to the inside, Romantic religion escapes from institutional control and is identified with the spiritual life of the individual, whatever the form its activity takes: art, philosophy, or religion in the narrow sense.

Closely linked to the interiorization of religion is the recognition that religion must change and develop as human beings achieve a progressively better apprehension of Spirit. Romanticism presumes the need for an ongoing *aggiornamento* of spirituality. F. Schlegel, in *Rede über die Mythologie* (1800), considering the culture of his day to be disenchanted as a result of the Enlightenment, calls for the creation of a new mythology. He and Novalis encouraged each other in the wish to found a new religion. Their desire was echoed in France by, among others, Hugo, Leroux and Sand. To this end, the Romantics both adapted old myths and religions and created their own in order to meet the spiritual exigencies of their own day. Representative Romantic myths include Orpheus, Oedipus, Cain, the Wandering Jew, Christ, Satan, the Revolution, the Nation, Napoleon, Don Juan, the Androgyne. The Romantics extended the category of sacred texts to include their own inspired works.

The principal elements of Romantic thought on myth and religion – interior truth over external expression, individual illumination over institutional structures, perennialism, syncretism, analogical hermeneutics – are also present, as the Romantics were aware, in esoteric writers. Even the history of religions is represented in Fabre d'Olivet's *Histoire philosophique du genre humain* (1824).

#### 6. PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Romantic philosophies of history arise from the conjunction of an epistemology that grasps eternal spiritual reality and an organic developmentalism according to which essences unfold over time. As such, they express an antinomy basic to Romantic thought: they affirm the existence of eternal ideas while at the same time asserting the meaningfulness of history.

The Romantics found a concept of spiritual evolution in the esoteric tradition. For → F.C. Oetinger, the essence of created things contains not only the form but also all the potentialities and possibilities of realization of a thing. The unfolding of essences is initiated by the operation of a secret interior impulse, which Oetinger calls 'the electrical fire concealed in all things'. The unfolding of essences toward the full realization of spiritual corporeality is the theosophical sense of evolution. Schelling's interpretation, in *Die Weltalter*, of history and nature as the development, or self-actualization, of the pre-existent divine nature is built on an essence-and-development model of evolution derived from Boehmenist theosophy. And yet, Romantic philosophies of history, particularly French ones, depart from the esoteric tradition in the importance they grant to temporalism and actual historical events. For the esoteric tradition, "process" is a dynamism that unfolds outside of time. In Fabre d'Olivet's *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, the history of humanity is merely the playing out in time of the consequences of the metaphysical principles contained in its essence. For Saint-Martin, as for Fabre d'Olivet, while history is the arena in which reintegration is accomplished, historical events at most mark or symbolize phases of this process; they in no way effect it. The locus of reintegration is the extra-historical interior life of individuals. History belongs to the fallen world of time and matter; reintegration does not redeem history, it is a redemption from history. Romanticism radically revalorizes history. Ballanche's philosophy of history elaborated in *Essais de Palingénésie sociale* fuses the esoteric understanding of evolution as the process of spiritual rehabilitation with

historical-mindedness by reading historical events not merely as signs of the process of the reintegration of the primordial Adam but as the necessary and efficacious means of the reintegration. Human beings themselves, under the guidance of Providence, work out their own rehabilitation in the history of social institutions. The process is taken a step further by Lamartine and Quinet in their philosophical epics, in which a rationalist perfectibilitarianism substitutes for the esotericist telos of the rehabilitation of humanity from the Fall. Here, historical progress, while providentially guided, is no longer merely the sign – as for the esotericists – or even the means – as for Ballanche – of spiritual reintegration; it becomes the end in itself. Salvation is now conceived of as a spiritualization of terrestrial humanity within the historical process. Whereas the early Romantics historicized the esoteric process of reintegration, later Romantics historicized reintegration itself.

#### 7. NATURPHILOSOPHIE

→ *Naturphilosophie* is the application of Romantic ideas on ontology and epistemology to the physical universe, just as its poetics and philosophy of history are the applications of them to other epistemic realms. *Naturphilosophie*, however, was predominantly a German phenomenon; in France, despite the chapter on *Naturphilosophie* in Germaine de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1814), the savants of the Institut national remained faithful to the demands of positivity. Coleridge's *Theory of Life* (1816) is a rare British example of *Naturphilosophie*, and depends heavily on German sources.

Nature, for the *Naturphilosophen*, is a perpetually living revelation. Franz von Baader, a geologist, mineralogist and professor at the University of Munich as well as a theosopher, understands Nature as the organ and sensible symbol of Divinity; Novalis, in his professional life an inspector in the directorate of salt mines of Saxony, sees each being and each object in Nature as illuminated by the transcendent light of the divine truth, and thereby transformed into a sanctuary for a believing soul. The sciences, he confided to August Wilhelm Schlegel, must be poeticized. Because the signification of Nature lies outside itself, empirical observation is only a necessary point of departure. Nature must be deciphered by means of correspondences; that is, authentic knowledge of Nature as the invisible processes of Spirit is possible only by means of analogy. Romantic *Naturphilosophen* criticized the objective sciences as being restricted to the surface of things and for conceiving of

Nature as lifeless and mechanical. The idea of a dead universe could only be convincing to those in whom a total enslavement to rationality had degraded the faculty of the imagination. *Naturphilosophie* looks inward as well as outward; knowledge of Nature and knowledge of oneself are linked because the hidden core of both is Spirit. Recognizing that the connaturality of the soul and the world is manifested by the correlation of microcosm and macrocosm, Baader applies to *Naturphilosophie* the epistemological formula of Saint-Martin: 'it is necessary to explain things by man and not man by things'. For Henrik Steffens, study of the developmental history of the earth and its creatures ennobles us because it allows us to grasp the unity of spiritual process in nature and ourselves. For Lorenz Oken, the philosophical study of natural history can unify the German people with themselves and the world. Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797) proposes that the philosopher can attain by investigation of Nature what the poetic vision reveals spontaneously: a glimpse of that eternal and original unity that in Nature and history is rent asunder.

*Naturphilosophie* is linked with and overlaps other early 19th-century investigations that seek to unveil the hidden forces of Nature and to read essences, hidden natures and ideal types from outward appearances. The many roads to reunion with Nature set out in Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (1802) indicate the range of the disciplines contributing to Romantic *Naturphilosophie*: cosmology and cosmogony, developmental history of the earth and its creatures, investigations of conscious and unconscious mental states, of electricity, magnetism, galvanism, physiognomy, phrenology, meteorology, mineralogy, and philosophical anatomy. None of these sub-disciplines are independent; a scientific fact is a sign, and because signs correspond, concepts borrowed from chemistry, for example, may be transposed into astronomy or psychology.

*Naturphilosophie* is directly linked to the holistic and organicistic living Nature of esotericism. The Romantics recognized in Hermetic types of *Naturphilosophie*, which opposed acasual correspondences to the mechanistic causality of the emerging scientific revolution, a viable counter-metaphysic to contemporary mechanism, dualism, and materialism. Representatives of *Naturphilosophie* most attached to esotericism include A.K.A. Eschenmayer, → Novalis, → J.W. Ritter, → G.H. von Schubert, and C.G. Carus.

## 8. ROMANTICISM AND ESOTERICISM

Scholars who have traced the connections between the western esoteric tradition and Romanticism offer numerous metaphors for the relationship between them: a complicity formed between the Baroque imaginary and the Romantic frame of mind; the Romantics found nourishment in Boehmenist theosophy; the relationship between esotericism and Romanticism is a confluence, rather than an influence; the relationship is one of analogy, not of cause and effect; Romanticism drew on esotericism as an ally in its battle against the Enlightenment; Romanticism is the revival of the esoteric tradition, though a revival with a difference; Romanticism reformulated the esoteric tradition. Each of these metaphors – of complicity, nourishment, confluence, analogy, alliance, revival, reformulation – makes a claim about the relationship of Romanticism to the esoteric tradition. A historical explanation, rather than extrapolating from some essentialist definition of Romanticism, is required in order to adjudicate these claims, and thereby to decide whether or not the extensive connections between the Western esoteric tradition and specific Romantic thinkers warrant the claim that esotericism is an essential, constitutive factor in Romanticism.

We must begin with the fact that Boehme, for example, lived and thought as a man of the 17th century, and not of the 19th century. His theosophy responded to a set of religious, philosophical, social, etc. problems posed to him by his time, his place, and his environment. The thought of other pre-Enlightenment representatives of the esoteric tradition connected to Romanticism is similarly historically specific. For their part, the Romantics themselves belonged to a unique historical moment: post-Enlightenment, post-French Revolutionary, marked by the upheavals of the industrial revolution (fully in Britain, increasingly in France, only slightly in Germany); an age of social and intellectual disintegration, crisis, and renewal; of the crumbling of old religious certainties and a massive expansion of human knowledge. The brutal end of the *ancien régime* in the French Revolution opened up a mental space that came to be occupied by Romanticism. Ideas in the air before 1789, but incompatible with rationalism and empiricism, crystallized into a set of alternatives to Enlightenment attitudes toward art, thought, belief, and life: the primacy of the imagination, the potencies of intuition, the importance of the emotions and emotional integrity, a living Nature, the value of interior spirituality, independent of confessional frameworks, and the uniqueness and

value of every human being in a constantly changing cosmos. What unites Romantics – and provides whatever coherence the term “Romanticism” possesses – is that individual Romantics were all responding to the same historical situation, albeit with national variations, and were subject to the same historical constraints.

The Romantics found in the Western esoteric tradition ideas that answered to the intellectual and spiritual problems of their own historical moment. Their relationship to that tradition is not that of the heir or disciple who piously preserves what is handed down or recites unchanged the master’s teaching. The Romantics used esoteric ideas in order to, and to the extent that they helped, resolve the problems posed for them by their own historical situation. Esoteric ideas are only part, though an important part, of Romanticism. Moreover, while, for example, much Romantic poetry, as the decoding of the presence of Divinity in the beings and things of the natural world, is linked to esotericism, the fact that this link is weak or non-existent for the English poets (for most of whom Oxbridge platonism served in its place) suggests that Romantic poetics does not require an esoteric inspiration, however much it may actually have had one in Germany and France.

The esoteric tradition experienced a second Golden Age from the late 18th century until the mid-19th century – the period of → Illuminism. Sects promising spiritual regeneration, which had flourished as an underground movement during the Enlightenment, were now in harmony with events and spirits. Swedenborgian New Christianity, Boehmenist theosophy, Martinesism and → Martinism, Pythagoreanism, and → Magnetism all spread during the early years of the 19th century. Illuminism, as well as Romanticism, occupied the mental space opened up by the French Revolution. Saint-Martin to an extent, and Fabre d’Olivet and Baader completely, are Illuminists responding to the same historical situation as the Romantics. The difference between Illuminism and Romanticism, aside from the fact that Romanticism draws on many other sources besides esoteric traditions, is that Illuminists give unique authority to the esoteric tradition, whereas Romantics test esoteric texts, like all other authorities, against their own subjective experience. Illuminism complicates the historical relationship between Romanticism and the esoteric tradition; it is both an inspiration of Romanticism and a parallel movement to it. Illuminists like Fabre d’Olivet and Baader reinterpreted esoteric themes and ideas in light of the historical situation of the early 19th century,

thereby making them more accessible to, and more useful for, the Romantics. Complicating matters even further, Romanticism itself influenced the esoteric tradition. The prime example is temporalism. The historical consciousness of the Romantics is alien to esotericism as it had developed hitherto; “process”, for theosophical, alchemical, mystical, and Neoplatonic traditions, unfolds outside of time. Once Romanticism had inculcated into Western culture a historical consciousness, “process” and “transmutation” began to be interpreted, within esoteric traditions themselves, in terms of evolution.

The relationship between Romanticism and the western esoteric tradition is therefore a complex one rooted in the historical situation of the late-18th and early-19th century. Esoteric ideas were important, even central, to certain aspects of Romanticism, but much less so to others – more so for epistemology and poetics than for philosophy of history; more so in Germany and France than in Britain. The Western esoteric tradition contributed importantly to the thought of many individual Romantics, but was not an essential, constitutive factor in Romanticism.

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ARTHUR MCCALLA

**Roquetaillade, Jean de (Johannes de Rupescissa), \* ca. 1310 Marcolès (south of Aurillac), † after 1365 place unknown**

Roquetaillade took the habit of the Brothers Minor in 1332 after studies pursued for five years in Toulouse, and continued his studies as a Franciscan until 1337-1338. He would later judge these youthful years to have been wasted in ‘vain disputations and a great din of useless words’. Jean very soon espoused the cause of the “Spiritual” Franciscans whose principal doctrines related to the teaching of Pierre Dejean Olieu († 1298). In 1332, a vision in a dream informed him of the birth of an oriental antichrist in a place called Zaycon, about which he knew nothing at all. Paying no attention to the vision at first, he literally fell into “ecstasy” (*fui subito quasi in extasem conversus*) three years later when, reading letters sent by a brother residing in China, he discovered that the Minor always finished his letters with the name “bishop of Zaycon”. Jean de Roquetaillade was henceforth persuaded that God was signifying to him that he had to proclaim to the world the apparitions and revelations that were granted to him. Heaven favoured him with illuminations so generously that his main works, which are prophetic and alchemical, often have a vision as a starting point. Like Olieu and → Arnau de Vilanova, Jean de Roquetaillade lived in expectation of the Antichrist, of whom he identified several avatars. He adopted the *modus vivendi* of the “Spirituals” and preached the



evangelical poverty that the Franciscans of strict observance associated with the spirit of prophecy. Expressed without caution by a violent and intransigent character, in an era when concessions to Franciscan demands were no longer considered opportune, his imprecations, warnings and denunciations of a Church wallowing in luxury cost him imprisonment from 1344 on. This was the beginning of a long period of hardship, with internments in various places (Figeac, Cahors, Rieux, Avignon, etc.). These confinements obviously did not prevent him from writing down his predictions and visions, or from engaging in alchemical experiments. Inspired by the apocryphal works of Joachim of Fiore, the writings of Robert d'Uzès, pseudo-Cyril (cf. his *Commentaire sur l'Oracle du Bienheureux Cyrille*), → Hildegard of Bingen, the books of Daniel and Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse of John, Jean de Roquetaillade belongs to the Joachimite vein, integrating the contributions of Olieu and of Arnau de Vilanova with the concepts of Joachim of Fiore. One of the great originalities of Roquetaillade is (in his *Liber Secretorum Eventum*) to proclaim a literal millenarianism that postulates 1000 solar years between the death of the great Antichrist and the Last Judgment; then, he writes, 'the fullness of the Holy Spirit will descend over the whole earth' and men will joyfully embrace the lifestyle of the poor Franciscans. He is considered to have been the first to break away so clearly from the Augustinian dogma prohibiting any millenarianism. He predicts the coming to this world below of prophets who will completely understand 'the secrets and hidden mysteries of Scripture'. In the image of an Arnau de Vilanova and of many Joachimites, he thought in fact that the full extent of the Biblical message had not yet been revealed, and that only certain chosen and well-informed individuals were qualified to bring the enigmas of the Book into the open. Jean's ambition was to conjecture future events. On several occasions he flatters himself with having seen correctly; for example, in announcing the capture of King Jean le Bon (in *Vade mecum in tribulatione*). However, his self-appointed mission of bringing current political events in accord with his discourse on the "last things" forced him to make certain adjustments from one work to the other. Situating himself in the purest tradition of oracles and prophecies, Jean multiplied the number of symbolic figures and metaphors (bat, fox, donkeys, eagle, bear, etc.) to the interpretation of which he delivered the keys. One may be surprised at the 'esoteric language' (Bignami-Odier) of these prophecies, composed of enigmatic sentences

marked by a difficult syntax, but in fact, such was the law of the genre. This style in an expression of the sense of mental crisis typical of those who experienced the end of the Middle Ages. Besides the works already listed, mention must also be made of the *Veh mundo in centum annis* (or the *De oneribus orbis*) in which, among others, the author attacks the "sons of Aristotle", the ninth scourge, and the *Liber ostensor*.

Jean de Roquetaillade was renowned not only for his visions and predictions, but owes part of his fame to his books treating of → alchemy. Here again, he is considered a disciple of master Arnau de Vilanova. In *De consideratione quintae essentiae rerum omnium* or *De quinta essentia*, a text of medical chemistry, Jean de Roquetaillade identifies the fifth element, Aristotle's ether, as alcohol and the elixir of the alchemists. In the prologue to this work, he clearly states that the goal of philosophy is not to lose one's time in sterile disputes but, rather, that it consists in providing evangelical men with an admirable medicine that revives their health and vigor. Jean says of his quintessence that it has the power to cure the plagues that occur through the evil influence of the stars, but not those sent by God. Another alchemical book by Jean de Roquetaillade is *Liber lucis*. There Jean connects his revelation of the mystery of the philosopher's stone to his predictions about the Antichrist. If he does not respect the obligation, so dear to the adepts, of keeping the secret, this is because men of the gospel are in need of the stone in order to help the unfortunate who are being persecuted by the sect of the Antichrist. This treatise repeatedly quotes the *Tractatus parabolicus* by Arnau de Vilanova, which compares the alchemical regimen with Christ's passion.

The paradox of an uncommon character like Jean de Roquetaillade is that, despite beliefs and convictions that may well seem fantastical (he announced, for example, the physical destruction of terrestrial animals by enormous earthworms!), he displays so much sound scientific knowledge in his alchemical works that he must be considered one of the distant precursors of iatrochemistry. In addition, it is certainly his total independence with regard to the philosophical dogmas issued from Aristotle, that made it possible for him to develop his theory of distilled alcohol as the earthly equivalent of the fifth element, the matter of the celestial bodies. It is no less surprising that Jean de Roquetaillade, a man brimming with visions and an obscure interpreter of the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures and oracles, was obsessed by numbers and calculations to such an extent as predicting

‘future events with a greater certainty than through miracles and wonders’.

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ANTOINE CALVET

## Rosicrucianism I: First half of the 17th Century

The phenomenon known as “Rosicrucianism” has its origin in 1614, with a volume that appeared in Kassel, Germany, containing three texts: *Allgemeine und General Reformation der gantzen weiten Welt* (Universal and General Reformation of the Whole Wide World), *Fama Fraternalitatis, Deß Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes, an alle Gelehrte und Häupter Europae geschrieben* (The Fame of the Fraternity of the Praiseworthy Order of the Rose-Cross, Written to all the Learned and Rulers of Europe), and *Auch einer kurtzen Respon-sion* (Also a Short Reponse) signed by → Adam Haslmayr. In a new edition, published in 1615, the first item, a satirical extract translated from Traiano Boccalini’s *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (News from Parnassus), disappeared in favor of the *Confessio Fraternalitatis* (Confession of the Fraternity). The *Fama* was an undoubted success, for it was reprinted nine times through 1616, in which year a story entitled *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz Anno 1459* (The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz in the Year 1459) appeared in Strasbourg. From the moment of their appearance, the two early manifestoes and the novel the *Chemical Wedding* enjoyed a warm reception over the whole of Europe. In Germany, France, and England, these modest writings unleashed an avalanche of reactions *pro* and *contra*: more than 200 polemics or panegyrics appeared between 1614 and 1620, and some 900 up to the beginning of the 18th century. Some accused the authors of the Rosicrucian manifestoes of heresy, political agitation, or diabolic pacts. Others, more objective, sought the genesis of these

mysterious writings in the alchemical tradition [→ Alchemy], in Paracelsian pansophy [→ Paracelsianism], or in the Hermetic currents of the Renaissance [→ Hermetic Literature III], while others believed that they could identify the source in Brahmanism or even in → Moses.

The considerable success of the first Rosicrucian writings is certainly due in part to their literary quality and to the mystery which surrounded them. But in addition to that, what they contained also put forward solutions to the problems of the time and of the generations to come, within the context of what the present author has called (borrowing Paul Hazard’s expression) “the crisis of European consciousness in the 17th century”. That crisis took on three forms: in politics, religion and epistemology. The Holy Empire was subject to strong tensions which the Peace of Augsburg and the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* had not been able to alleviate. The so-called “Formula of concord” had not succeeded in reinstating the unity between the various Lutheran States. Calvinism was gaining ground, and the Roman Catholic Church had become reinforced since the Council of Trent. As a consequence, Lutheran authorities drew tougher doctrinal lines. On the other hand, the new scientific orientation had been rapidly expanding, as exemplified by the mathematician Ieronymus Cardanus, the geographer Mercator, and primarily the astronomer Johannes Kepler (the influence of the latter on the Rosicrucian writings is indisputable).

The manifestoes originated in the “Learned and Christian Society” established by → Johann Valentin Andreae in Tübingen in 1610. This small group of bosom friends of Andreae’s, notably Christoph Besold and Tobias Hess (his *amici secretissimi*), together conceived of and constructed the Rosicrucian myth. In all likelihood the *Fama Fraternalitatis* and the *Confessio* resulted from the cooperation of several authors, whereas the *Chemical Wedding* was written by Andreae alone. Against the background of the crisis referred to above, the members of the Tübingen circle felt that it was necessary to return to the practice of Christian piety, aloof from the dogmatic squabbles of orthodoxy, and reconcile it with the advancement of science and learning.

The *Fama*, the *Confessio*, and the *Chemical Wedding* reflected a worldview based upon an analogical apprehension of God and of the world on the part of man, based upon earlier esoteric sources and traditions in Western esotericism. The rose in this context reveals symbolic attributes similar to those of the lotus in the Far East. It

unfolds on the surface of the Earth-Mother, while the mystic rose is an attribute of the *Mater Dei* (Mother of God) and of spiritualized matter. According to the *Zohar*, the rose is the symbol of God's presence in the world, which will bloom again in messianic times. Medieval iconography made its blossom the image of the Grail [→ Grail Traditions in Western Esotericism], the vessel in which Christ's blood was collected, and thus saw this flower as a symbol of regeneration. In the *Paradiso* of his *Divine Comedy*, → Dante sees 'the eternal rose opening stepwise' in which the Blessed live. Traditionally, the rose is also the receptacle of the fertilizing dew, symbol of the redemptive divine grace. The prophet Hosea has Jahweh say: 'I will be as the dew to Israel; he shall blossom as the lily' (Hos. 14:5/6), while Isaiah speaks of a 'dew of light' that will restore life to the dead (Is. 26:19). The similarity of the Latin words *rosa* (rose) and *ros* (dew) has led some to see in the Rose-Cross the alliance of the dew and the cross.

If the rose is the point of juncture and flowering between matter and the divinity, it is normal for it to be situated symbolically at the center of the cross that unites heaven and earth. → John Dee, in his *Monas hieroglyphica* (Hieroglyphic Monad), had argued that the cross is ternary (consisting of two straight lines plus their meeting-point), representing the Holy Trinity and the trinity of body, soul, and spirit; that it is quaternary, thus terrestrial; and that it is also quinary, the number five evoking the sacred marriage of spirit and matter. Thus it is no surprise that the two symbols should be allied in heraldry, notably in the coats of arms of Luther and of the family of Johann Valentin Andreae, in the Order of the Garter, founded circa 1348, or in the collar of the Annunziata, a chivalric order founded in 1363 by Amadeo VI, Duke of Savoy. These two motifs already appear united in the frescoes and mosaics of primitive Christianity, and in the work of the German mystic Heinrich Suso (1295-1366). → Paracelsus, in his *Liber de resurrectione et corporum glorificatione* (Book of the Resurrection and Glorification of Bodies, circa 1533), explains that man, regenerated by the Cross, thereafter receives a spiritual body whose glorification is symbolized by the rose; it is Christ, the Man-God, who transfigures us, just as the philosophers' stone transmutes metallic matter. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Fama Fraternitatis* mentions the name of Paracelsus with respect and admiration, nor that it depicts works relating to this author as being present in the vault where the body of Christian Rosenkreuz rests. The founder of the Rosicrucians, as explained in the *Fama*, is supposed to have

died in 1484, and his mausoleum not discovered until 1604, whereas Paracelsus was born in 1493 and died in 1541. The implausible chronology only goes to underline paradoxically the relationship of ideas between the Rosicrucians and Paracelsus. The latter's ideas about the *Astrum*, the world-soul which manifests through the macrocosm; on the *Liber Mundi* (Book of the World) whose hieroglyphs are there to be deciphered; on the invisible half of the cosmos whose secrets man is able to discover because he is the microcosm and the temple of God; on the notion of cosmic time in which the alchemist may intervene as midwife to nature and co-operator with God; on the capacity of the human soul to command the stars, to control events, and even to produce new beings that the *Anima Mundi* "imagines"; and finally his belief in "elementary" beings, i.e., those that live in the elements, the 'nymphs, sylphs, pygmies, salamanders, and other spirits': all these ideas of Paracelsus recur in the *Fama Fraternitatis*. His rich and powerful writings, which were not really accessible until Huser's edition appeared in Basel in 1591, have every appearance of proclaiming him a prophet of the new era.

Another influence is that of *De arte cabalistica* (On the Kabbalistic Art), published by → Johannes Reuchlin in 1517. This contains an account of the symbolic meeting between a Pythagorean, a Muslim, and a Jewish Kabbalist. While the *Fama* is as little sympathetic towards Mohammed as it is to the Pope, it praises kabbalah and emphasizes the musical and philosophical harmony existing between man, heaven, and earth, symbolized by the geometrical perfection of the sphere. As for Christian Rosenkreuz, through his *Axiomata* he is said to have penetrated the secrets of divine mathematics; thanks to his knowledge of the *Rotae Mundi* (wheels of the world), he is the universal man, the axis of the cycles of renovation; and the book entitled *Proteus*, said to be in the library of the first Rosicrucians, evokes the theme of metamorphosis. Thus one can understand the *Fama's* affirmation that there is no contradiction between philosophy and theology.

The *Fama* is not exclusively dogmatic. It also recounts the history of Christian Rosenkreuz: his initiatic journey to the Orient, to Egypt and Morocco, the constitution of the Order of the Rose-Cross, the writing of their 'secret and revealed philosophy' which is a gnosis, and the miracles that they work thanks to their cosmosophy, which is a pansophy, a natural → magic, a spiritualization of matter, by means of which all things are ordered towards divinity. The Rosicru-

cians' wisdom is said to be "revealed" because it is not the result of rational thought, and because it is simultaneously knowledge and procreation. It is presented as an interior vision, a divine gift mediated through the *mundus imaginalis* (imaginal world; the term derives from → Henry Corbin), which is the reason that the *Fama* mentions 'the office of angels and spirits' and evokes the elementary beings as intermediaries. Finally, theirs is a secret philosophy, i.e., one that is connected with the mysteries of the → correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm, which only reveal themselves through masks, in a symbolic ambivalence accessible solely through initiation. This philosophy belongs within a tradition whose initiates are named in the *Fama*: Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras. One can see that this "philosophy" which encompasses Hermetism and → alchemy is really the *philosophia perennis* [→ Tradition]: it is perennial because it has been perpetuated since the origins of mankind, and it is eclectic because it conciliates the divine revelation and its cosmic manifestations in a higher unity. Without any syncretism, it recognizes the equal value of the Divinity's two forms of expression, Nature and Scripture ('the great Book of marvels is in concord with the Bible').

Christian Rosenkreuz is said to have died in 1484, at the age of 106. In terms of traditional → number symbolism the number 100 evokes individuation, while the addition of 1 and 6 gives the well-known symbolic number of 7. Likewise the date of 1484 reduces to a total of 17, which could be interpreted as the ogdoad (1+7) or, according to a Pythagorean and Shi'ite tradition, the number of those who will be resurrected. Thus number symbolism confirms the particular election of Christian Rosenkreuz. The *Confessio Fraternitatis*, as its appearance was announced in the *Fama*, was to contain 37 reasons for making the Brotherhood public. Although the reasons are not in fact enumerated in the *Confessio*, the symbolism of this number is also obvious: 3+7 gives the number of the Pythagorean tetraktys in which the source and root of eternal Nature is to be found, while their multiplication gives 21, which in the Bible is the number of attributes of Wisdom.

The authors of the *Confessio Fraternitatis* agree with the astrologers that their epoch is entering into the sign of Mercury, who was assimilated by → Michael Maier with Hermes [→ Hermes Trismegistus]. In his *Choephoroi*, Aeschylus has Electra define Hermes as the mediator *par excellence* between gods and men, a function also ascribed to him by the alchemists and by → Heinrich Khun-

rath. Hermes is the messenger and the spokesman of Zeus, the "angel" (Gk. *aggelos* = messenger) of Olympus, the herald of good news. Thus it is normal for astrologers to regard Mercury as 'the lord of the word', and for the *Confessio Fraternitatis* to proclaim the coming of 'the age of the Tongue'. → Jacob Boehme, in his *Morgen-Röthe im Aufgangk* (Rising Dawn, 1612), wrote that in the man who is fulfilled, the planet Mercury gives rise to an inspired language. Possessed by the divine virtues, he becomes the singer of the Word, in communion with the angels (*Aurora*, 5, 11-13). In the same way, the *Confessio* states that the time has come to speak, to reveal the mysteries of the Adamic language, i.e. the primordial idiom, transparent as light, which the animals in Paradise understood and which allowed Enoch to converse with angels. Because the Rosicrucians already possess the knowledge of this language, they claim to be able to go beyond the exoteric meaning of the Bible and give it a spiritual reading, so as to discover that the Holy Scriptures are the quintessence of the entire world, and so as to decipher the characters of the *liber Naturae*. But they make it plain that the book of nature cannot be read and understood except by a minority. They proclaim 'the age of the tongue', but they impose the law of silence on whoever rallies to them. If → secrecy is a fundamental element in the *Confessio Fraternitatis*, which mentions it at least ten times, it is not for the sake of kindling the readers' curiosity, but because certain realities touching on religion, creation, and the book of nature are held to be inaccessible without a long initiation and an alignment of the psyche with the divine and cosmic mysteries. Secrecy is a condition of the sacred. → Hermes Trismegistus says to Asclepius: 'It is an impious thing to divulge to the masses a teaching filled with the divine majesty', and the epigraph of the *Chemical Wedding* recalls that pearls should not be cast before swine. The Rosicrucians' secret is the possession of the gnosis that the *Corpus Hermeticum* defines as a gift from God. And the 'true philosophy' that the *Confessio* extols is Hermetist; the reference to the theological and medical sources of this "philosophy" reflect its Paracelsian origin. In the *Liber Paragranum*, Paracelsus had mentioned as the four foundations of his medicine 'philosophy, astronomy, alchemy, and virtue', and he had stated that 'The philosopher should find nothing in heaven or earth that he cannot equally find in man. The physician should only find in man that which heaven and earth contain'.

Paracelsus' optimism sometimes gives his writings a prophetic tone. According to the treatise

*De Mineralibus*, there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed; the author announces the coming of a man who will possess wisdom and be able to unveil all. This same prophetic atmosphere pervades the *Confessio Fraternitatis*, but it also stems from Joachim of Fiore, whose principal writings had been printed at the time of the Reformation. Joachim's reflections on the profound meaning of Scripture had led him to discern in the creation three successive ages: the age of nettles, the age of roses, and the age of lilies. The *tertius status* (third stage) will be that of the eternal Gospel, in which, thanks to a new "spiritual" religion, we will see the heavens open. This third age was to begin at the end of the sixth millennium, when the "sixth seal" would be broken and the "sixth candlestick" be lit. The *Confessio Fraternitatis* similarly situates itself at the end of the 'age of the rose' and evokes the privilege granted to the Rosicrucian Brotherhood to light the 'sixth candlestick', thus inaugurating an era of happiness, health, and prosperity. Paracelsus saw this time of the Holy Spirit already at work in the microcosm and macrocosm; according to him, there is a light in nature whose brightness surpasses that of the sun, and in this light invisible things become visible, ubiquity becomes possible, and the future is unveiled. The *Confessio* alludes to the pseudo-Paracelsian prophecy of the *Lion of the North*, taken up by Haslmayr in his *Responson* to the Brothers of the Rose-Cross that was bound with the first edition of the *Fama*. The action of the Rosicrucians prepares for the advent of the Lion, whose universal monarchy will inaugurate an era of felicity. But the prophecy goes on to say that this golden age presupposes a transmutation that is symbolically described in the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*.

This narrative is placed in obscure fashion under the patronage of the *Aurora consurgens* (Dawn Rising), a mysterious text of the 15th century that describes the chemical and spiritual marriage on a new earth; and also under that of Paracelsus, whose name is mentioned in a cryptogram. In his *Liber de resurrectione et corporum glorificatione*, Paracelsus writes that 'the proofs of authenticity of natural gold give us an image of the trials that our regenerated body must undergo . . . Thus, after the resurrection, a new body is born which, being more luminous than the sun, is called the transfigured body'. The resurrection of Christ is an image of our own: 'by him and in him we will arise like the rose and its proud blossoms from the same seed and the same stem'. → Gérard Dorn, whose writings had surely been read by Andreae, speaks in a Latin work of the end of the 16th century called *Aurora*

*Philosophorum* (Dawn of the Philosophers) of 'rose-colored blood' in which is hidden the soul of the philosophers' stone, and cites this prediction of the alchemists: 'The last times will see the coming to the earth and the world of a man who is absolutely pure, which will permit the redemption of the world. Thanks to the drops of rose-colored blood that he will shed, he will wash away the sin of the world, he will purify it and purge it of all its uncleanness'. Further on, Dorn concludes: 'In the end . . . the matter of our philosophic stone is nothing other than the true hermaphroditic Adam, the microcosm . . . It is the case that our mercury . . . acquires the energy and power of the higher and lower things, whose nuptial union, so to speak, it realizes'.

The Rosicrucian romance of the *Chemical Wedding*, to whose authorship Johann Valentin Andreae eventually admitted, describes the coming of a 'perfectly pure' man, *putissimus homo*, who appears on the earth *in postremis temporibus* (in the last times). Evidently this providential being is not to be confused with Christ, whose redemptive sacrifice saved humanity once and for all and freed it from the tragic burden of original sin. Nor is the *putissimus homo* the *salvator microcosmi*, the savior of the microcosm that is man, but rather the *servator cosmi*, i.e., the liberator of the world, the total man, he who will complete the redemptive work of Christ by practicing "deliverance" in the sense of the Greek word "maieutic"; that is to say, the birthing of nature which Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans 'has been groaning in travail up to now' and 'waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God' (Rom. 8.22, 19). This glorification of Nature which is to achieve the work of redemption is interpreted as an alchemical *opus*: it is the Great Work, the effect of the double mystery of regeneration and of the *hieros gamos*, hence the sacred marriage. Regeneration and hierogamy are understood as two salvific actions due to the intervention of Hermes, or more precisely of the *spiritus Mercurius*, the Spirit Mercury. As for the mission of the *servator mundi*, the liberator of the world, at the end of the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* it is granted to the "Knights of the Golden Stone".

The strange symbol drawn on the invitation to the royal wedding that an angel brings to Christian Rosenkreuz is in fact an ideogram that was commented upon in the *Hieroglyphic Monad* of John Dee (1564), and symbolizes the sacred marriage between the material and the spiritual. It evokes the image of a mysterious personage, the protagonist of this hierogamy, who manifests at



certain moments in the sight of mortals. Christian Rosenkreuz in fact says that he comes back periodically to guide mankind.

In this brief presentation of early Rosicrucianism it is impossible to expound in detail the multiple symbolic elements of the *Chemical Wedding*. It must suffice to indicate and decipher the principal stages of initiation of the novel's eponymous hero. When he arrives at the castle of the Wedding, he is met by a fierce lion, which is later found perched on a fountain and holding in its paws a naked sword, which it breaks before throwing the pieces into the fountain and giving a roar. A dove then brings the lion an olive branch, which it swallows. A white unicorn that had come to kneel before it thereupon shows extreme joy. The lion symbolizes among other things the *spiritus Mercurius*, as does the unicorn. It is appeased by the reverence of the unicorn, which represents the active purity, the fecundating sword, the penetrating force of the Spirit Mercury. The white dove, messenger of peace, may also be a symbol of the philosophical mercury, this time in its volatile form, corresponding to the Holy Spirit in the Bible. The water of divine grace is here gathered in the mercurial fountain. It is what the alchemists call *aqua permanens* (permanent water), whose virtue is to transform the body into spirit and confer indestructibility upon it. This mercurial water is the primordial water, of which a 17th century Hermetist author said that it is born from the divine light and that the quintessence is its issue. Just as a spiritual spring once sprung forth symbolically in Judea, for the alchemists there is a mysterious Judea in a place kept secret, with a spring whose water comes from the *lumen naturae* (light of nature). On the following day, Christian Rosenkreuz is again brought to the fountain; the lion holds between its claws a plaque announcing the metamorphosis of Hermes, 'turned to a healing medicine', and invited to drink and purify himself. The enigma of this transformation makes sense in the context of Hermetism. The alchemists say of the Mercury of the philosophers that it is versatile and rejoices equally in the company of the good and the bad. But it is precisely this changing humor that renders it capable of metamorphoses, of an evolutionary process that begins with evil and ends with good. It has issued from Saturn, the *diabolus*, who is its father, but it becomes the mystagogue, the mediator *par excellence* between heaven and earth, between matter and spirit; in short, it is the philosophic stone, the universal tincture. Thus the transformation of the *spiritus Mercurius* into a healing medicine is explained within a hermetic perspective. As the alchemical texts of Andreae's

time show, it is the *medicina catholica* (catholic medicine), i.e., the panacea; the *salvator omnium imperfectorum corporum* (that which cures all imperfect bodies); and the *aqua vitae* (water of life). The *aqua permanens* is simultaneously water, fire, air, and golden tincture. It is the baptismal element from which emerges the second Adam, the *philosophic man*. On Friday, *dies veneris* (the day of Venus), Christian Rosenkreuz discovers in the subterranean caverns the *Arbor philosophica* (philosophic tree) whose branches are like the veins of the earth whose coagulated blood becomes the metals, especially gold. Venus, whom he beholds naked, is the matrix from which its roots draw their sap, and her fecundity will permit the realization of the Great Work. The elect, marked by the sign of the Golden Fleece and led by Hermes the psychopomp, proceed on their journey which brings them to the Tower of Olympus. For the Mercury of the philosophers is the actor of all the metamorphoses that take place, and which are directed by the Virgin Alchemy, herself one of the aspects of the *spiritus mercurialis*. In a treatise dating from the 15th century and attributed to → Marsilio Ficino, it is stated that Mercury, like the Virgin Mary to which he is assimilated, has given birth to the philosophic stone. He carries it in his belly, and when the time is ripe he gives birth to the *Filius macrocosmi* (son of the macrocosm), by whose blood inferior bodies are "tinctured" and gathered, cured, into the Golden Heaven. This transmutation, in which Rosenkreuz is invited to participate in the *Tower of Olympus*, was evoked by Poimandres in the first tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum* [trans. Copenhagen]: 'First, in releasing the material body you give the body itself over to alteration, and the form that you used to have vanishes. To the demon you give over your temperament, now inactive. The body's senses rise up and flow back to their particular sources . . . and mingling again with the [astral] energies . . . Thence the human being rushes up through the cosmic framework', which is sevenfold, and comes denuded of his vices to the 'ogdoadic nature'. This corresponds to the eighth story of the Tower of Olympus, which is the place of regeneration of the royal couple whose "chemical wedding" will be the supreme act of unification that completes the Great Work.

From the moment they appeared, the first Rosicrucian writings aroused the interest of many readers throughout Europe: among the French, Descartes and Gabriel Naudé; in England, where their impact was considerable, → Elias Ashmole (1617-1692), Samuel Hartlib (1595-1662), John Dury (1595-1680), the pansophist physician →

Robert Fludd (1574-1637) and his German colleague → Michael Maier (1568-1622); in Moravia, → Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670), who gave the Rosicrucian ideas a planetary dimension and anticipated the humanitarianism of → Freemasonry. From the Royal Society of London to the Alchemical Society of Nuremberg and the folio volumes of → Gottfried Arnold, the Rosicrucian influence persisted throughout the 17th century. This influence remained literary, however: there is no proof that the Brotherhood of the Rose Cross described in the *Fama Fraternitatis* ever existed, and it is only in the 18th century that actual organizations calling themselves “rosicrucian” first come into existence.

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*Lit.*: Susanna Akerman, *Rose Cross over the Baltic: The Spread of Rosicrucianism in Northern Europe* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History), Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1998 ♦ Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (ed.), *Das Erbe des Christian Rosenkreuz*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1988 ♦ idem, *Rosenkreuz als europäisches Phänomen im 17. Jahrhundert*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2002 ♦ Roland Edighoffer, *Rose-Croix et société idéale selon Johann Valentin Andreae*, 2 vols., Neuilly-sur-Seine/Paris: Arma Artis, 1982/1987 ♦ idem, *Les Rose-Croix*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 3<sup>e</sup> éd., 1991 ♦ idem, *Die Rosenkreuzer*, München: C.H. Beck, 1995 ♦ idem, *Les Rose-Croix et la Crise de Conscience européenne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Bibliothèque de l'Hermétisme), Paris: Dervy, 1998 ♦ Regine Frey-Jaun, *Die Berufung des Türhüters: Zur "Chymischen Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz" (1586-1654)*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1989 ♦ F. Leigh Gardener, *Bibliotheca Rosicruciana*, Thame, Oxon: Mandrake Press, 1992 ♦ Carlos Gilly, “Das Rätsel um die RC-Manifeste”, in: van der Kooij, *Fama Fraternitatis*, Haarlem: Rozekruis Pers, 1998, 11-16 ♦ idem, *Adam Haslmayer, der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer* (Pimander, Texts and Studies), Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1994 ♦ Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians*, 3rd ed., York Beach: Samuel Weiser,

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## Rosicrucianism II: 18th Century

About one century after the original Rosicrucian manifestoes [→ Rosicrucianism I], in 1710, Samuel Richter published in Breslau, under the pseudonym Sincerus Renatus, a book titled *Die wahrhafte und vollkommene Beschreibung des philosophischen Steins der Bruderschaft aus dem Orden des Gülden- und Rosenkreutzes denen Filiis Doctrinae zum Besten publiciret*. It is significant that the author had added the word *Gülden* (golden) to the generic term Rose Cross, for this detail changes the meaning of the original myth by accentuating the alchemical *Theo-Philosophia Theoretico-Practica* (according to the title of a work published by Sincerus Renatus in 1711). Moreover, to the book of 1710 he attached fifty-two articles about the practical organization and continuation of what he called the “Society of the Golden and Rosy Cross”. At its head stood, according to him, an imperator appointed for life. The members, unlike those of the original Rose Cross described in the manifestoes, could be Catholic; but brothers were forbidden to enquire about the religious persuasion of their fellow brethren. They could not marry, but were allowed to have sexual relations if their desire was too intense. Some of the fifty-two articles referred to the brothers’ alchemical powers, their capacity to materialize the philosopher’s stone, precious gems or pearls, as well as their ability to rejuvenate and renew themselves. Sincerus Renatus emphasized in his preface the divine character of true alchemy, whose goal is the purification of Man and Nature. Moreover, he stated that the Rosicrucians had moved to India to live there in peace. Although he invited his readers to join the Society, it is practically proven now that in his era, a Society of the Golden and Rosy Cross did not in fact exist.

The edition of the complete works of Sincerus Renatus appeared in 1741, on the threshold of the second half of the 18th century. The preamble to

this edition puts emphasis on regeneration, considers alchemy a *vocatio secundaria*, and warns that its “theosophical doctrines” must not be read with the eyes of reason but with those of the spirit. The title of the complete edition, *Theo-Philosophia Theoretico-Practica*, is explained by a sentence in the preface (p. 134): ‘We say that philosophy without true theology has nothing enduring in it’. Referring to the Paracelsian doctrine of “signatures”, Sincerus Rhenatus states that God manifests himself through nature like the soul manifests itself through the body (p. 286).

In opposition to the spirit of the *Aufklärung*, Sincerus Rhenatus’ work was to enjoy considerable success among the European intelligentsia of the second half of the 18th century, parallel to that of the Pietists [→ Pietism], who were likewise open to hermeticism and alchemy. Starting from about 1750, a “Rosicrucian tradition” henceforth came to be opposed to the rationalism that, notably in the case of Helvetius, led to a materialistic atheism. In Germany, a doctor Johann Ludolph ab Indagine printed a new edition in 1751 of Conrad Orvius’s *Occulta Philosophia* (first published in 1737), which purported to be from a Rosicrucian society in Holland. In 1761, a member of the “Assembly of Prague” had an *Aureum Vellus seu Iunioratus Fratrum Rosae Crucis* published, which contained the statutes, rituals and membership list of a “Society of the Golden and Rosy Cross”; but partly this document repeats *verbatim* the work published by → Hermann Fictuld in 1749 (see analysis in Faivre 1990, 73-82). In 1762, it was in France that baron Schoudy, originally from Metz, organized Adonhiramite → Freemasonry, the seventh grade of which was called Knight of the Rose Cross or of the “unknown philosopher”, thus introducing a Rosicrucian tendency into the lodges.

Lorraine is not far from the Palatinate and from Sulzbach, residence of a doctor named Bernhard Joseph Schleis von Löwenfeld (1731-1800), who became provincial leader of the Order named “Gold- und Rosenkreuzer” (see *infra*), under the pseudonym Phoebro. From a later controversy between him and baron von Ecker und Eckhofen, the author of a pamphlet published in 1782 under the title *Der Rosenkreuzer in seine Blösse* (The Rosicrucian in his Nakedness), it appears that the first creation of a Rosicrucian order in Germany can be dated from 1763. In the same year 1782, Phoebro wrote his book *Der im Lichte der Wahrheit strahlende Rosenkreuzer* (The Rosicrucian Radiant in the Light of Truth), stating that all the knowledge of the patriarchs had been transmitted to the accomplished Rosicrucians (p. 254).

A professor of medicine at the University of Marburg, Friedrich Joseph Wilhelm Schröder (1733-1778), developed between 1766 and 1774 a significant activity within the circles of Rosicrucians that now existed. Ralph Christian Zimmermann has assembled documentation which strongly suggests that the Swabian Pietist → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782), the theoretician of a “*philosophia sacra*”, had some contacts with the founders of the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer. *Patriarchalphysik*, a work published in 1772 and attributed to him, seems to demonstrate that he was their *maitre à penser*. Finally, → Goethe took an interest in the Rosicrucian myth as well. He had read the novel *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz* and in 1786 he dedicated to Charlotte von Stein some verses inspired by the song of the nymphs contained in it. Around the same period Goethe began writing his *Die Geheimnisse* (The Mysteries), an epic influenced by Rosicrucian symbolism, which shows how the pilgrim Brother Markus reaches an idealized Montserrat. A monastic order which seems a mixture between the Templars [→ Neo-Templar Traditions], the community of the Holy → Grail and the Rosicrucian Society has a certain Humanus as prior. He is a symbol of the Total Man, destined to accomplish the new Easter (Passover) of a humanity finally reconciled, and promote the synthesis of all forms of religiosity, Christian, Masonic or Spinozist. In 1782, Goethe was accepted into the Inner Order of the high grades of the Strict Observance, and the following year he entered, with Duke Charles-August de Weimar, the Bavarian Order of the → Illuminaten, whose purpose was to combat the ‘enemies of reason and of humanity’. The Bavarian Illuminaten did not look favourable on the Rosicrucians, whose alchemical theories were opposed to scientific materialism and who had now gained a considerable influence in Freemasonry.

In 1777 appeared a work fictitiously dated 5555 and entitled *Starke Erweise aus den eigenen Schriften des Hochheiligen Ordens Gold- und Rosenkreutzer . . .* (Strong Proofs Drawn from the Writings of the Very Holy Order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer . . .), containing instructions meant for the use of Brethren who were already ‘Masters of the Reflection of the Light’. Both this date and this work signal the “official” foundation of the Order of the “Gold- und Rosenkreuzer Älteren Systems” (Gold- and Rosicrucians of the Ancient System), which was to flourish until 1782 (see *infra*).

In 1778 was published a *Hermetisches A.B.C. deren ächten Weisen älter und neuer Zeiten vom Stein der Weisen* (Hermetic A.B.C. of the Philosopher’s

Stone According to the True Sages of Ancient and Recent Times). In 1779, the Rosicrucian doctor from Leipzig, Adam Michael Birkholz, published his *Der Compass der Weisen* (the Compass of the Sages). In 1781, Wöllner and Jugel republished the *Aurea Catena Homeri* under the title *Annulus Platonis*, while in the same year, Friedrich Nicolai procured a reprinting of the first Rosicrucian manifestoes and the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*. In 1785, J.D.A. Eckhardt had printed in Altona the *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreutzer aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert* (Secret Figures of the Rosicrucians Dating from the 16th and 17th Centuries), a marvelous album still in print today. In the same year appeared a 280-page treatise entitled *Die theoretischen Brüder oder zweite Stufe der Rosenkreutzer und ihrer Instruktion* (The Theorici Brothers or the Second Degree of the Rosicrucians and their Instruction). In 1788 was printed in Leipzig *Das Geheimnis aller Geheimnisse ex Macrocosmo et Microcosmo, oder der güldene Begriff der geheimsten Geheimnisse der Rosen- und Gülden-Kreutzer mit ihren drey Steinen der Wunder* (The Secret of all Secrets ex Macrocosmo and Microcosmo, or the Golden Concept of the Most Secret Secrets of the Golden Rosicrucians with their Three Miraculous Stones).

The proliferation of these editions or reprints is testimony to the interest of many readers in → Christian theosophy at the very time of the *Aufklärung*, and to the prominent role that the Gold- and Rosenkreutzer had come to play in Freemasonry. According to some of these publications, Master Masons possessed no more than a “reflection of the Light” and had therefore access only to the outer Temple. As adepts of the *philosophia perennis*, the Rosicrucians considered themselves heirs to a gnosis transmitted by the angels to one of Noah’s descendents, who had not participated in building the Tower of Babel; and Abraham had benefited from a supernatural knowledge subsequently cultivated by Nazarean Magi. → Moses had been initiated in Egypt, and the tradition had been nurtured by the great biblical prophets, the adepts of the Eleusinian mysteries, the Pythagoreans, the Druids and the Bards. In Egypt, where St Mark preached the Gospel, an Alexandrine priest named Ormus had been baptized in the year 46 together with six other adepts. His name was a deformation of Ormazd, the god of light and goodness, who had revealed the mysteries of Mazdaism to the great prophet → Zoroaster. Still according to the same legend, Ormus, once converted to Christianity, had founded the Society of the Sages of Light, whose

symbol was a gold and red cross. Its members, established in Palestine, had left the country in 1118 after the defeat of the Crusaders and had spread all over the world. Three of them had created in Scotland “The Scottish Order of the ‘Builders of the East’”, as a foundation for their confraternity. → Ramon Lull had been one of its directors, and King Edward I (1239-1307) one of its members. Descendants of the families of Lancaster and York, their coats of arms comprised of a white rose and a red rose (cf. the War of the Roses), were members as well. It was from these blazons, blended with Ormusian Christianity, that the name Rosicrucian had been derived. Over the centuries, the Order had declined, until Cromwell reactivated it and changed the denomination of “Constructors” into “Freemasons”. The legend thus strongly emphasized the precedence of the Rosicrucians with respect to the Freemasons, who were considered no more than spiritual descendents of the former, and who possessed merely a reflection of the true Light of the ancient Rosicrucian tradition.

The development of the Gold- und Rosenkreutzer of the Ancient System was impressive. Societies had been created in Silesia, Upper Lusatia, Marburg, Ratisbonne, and Leipzig. Vienna was an important center of Rosicrucian influence for all of Austria, Hungary, Bavaria, Wurtemberg and Poland. The Grand Master of the Masons of Austria, prince von Dietrichstein (1728-1808), was himself received into that Order. In Vienna, J.R. von Bischoffswerder, an officer in the service of prince Charles de Saxe, keenly interested in the occult sciences, was accepted into a Rosicrucian circle in 1777. He then went to Leipzig, and next to Wiesbaden, and entered into relations with J.C. Wöllner (1732-1800); this former pastor who had become a Freemason was thirsty for supernatural knowledge, and had been accepted into the Rosicrucian circle of Berlin in 1779. These two characters have been mainly responsible for a rapid development of the administration of the Golden Rosicrucians of the Ancient System: by the end of 1779, it already included twenty-six Rosicrucian circles, distributed over various German cities. In Berlin, Bischoffswerder managed to gain the trust and collaboration of Prince Frederick William (1744-1797), heir presumptive of Frederick II of Prussia. He succeeded in curing the prince of an illness by means of a secret remedy, and did not hesitate (with the support of Wöllner and the prince’s mistress) to dupe him by using the services of a false Viennese magician, a certain Steinert. By a variety of stage tricks, the Austrian ventriloquist conjured before



Frederick William the ghosts of Leibniz, Julius Caesar, Marcus Aurelius and the Prince Elector, founder of the Prussian dynasty. Full of enthusiasm, the prince asked to be affiliated with the Rose Cross, and was admitted in 1781, under the hieronym Ormesus, by Duke Frederick August of Brunswick. In the wake of this political success, the Golden Rose Cross of the Ancient System succeeded in attracting into its orbit the Mother Lodge of the Prussian States, the Three Globes.

Despite such success, the end of Golden Rosicrucians of the Ancient System was near. In 1782 an international Convention of Freemasonry met at Wilhelmsbad, putting an end to the templar filiations, and validating the Reform of Lyon established by → Willermoz. The Rosicrucians, trying to be admitted to the Convention of Wilhelmsbad, sent duke Ferdinand of Brunswick a memorandum composed by Wöllner and members of the Ancient Scottish Lodge Frederick of the Golden Lion. Rather awkwardly written, it expressed the Rosicrucians' intentions of bringing the Masons, who were confined to the threshold of the Temple, out of the shadows and into the light; and it reserved authority concerning the higher grades for themselves. Since the Landgraf Carl von Hessen was attracted by Rosicrucian esotericism, Ferdinand's reply was diplomatic enough not to offend those responsible for the Golden Rosicrucians of the Ancient System, while nevertheless dissuading them from participating in the Convention of Wilhelmsbad. In any case, the author of the pamphlet *Der Rosenkreuzer in seine Blöße* (see above), as well as some of the Bavarian Illuminaten, believed that the Golden Rosicrucians were directed behind the scenes by members of the Company of Jesus, suppressed in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV.

By 1783, the Golden Rosicrucians of the Ancient System were widespread in Hungary, in Poland and in Russia, where they attempted to attract the hereditary Grand Duke. In Austria, however, a governmental decree caused the Rosicrucian circles to close; and in Germany, where Frederick William had become the reigning sovereign, Bischoffswerder and Wöllner, who were hoping for high functions in Prussia, prudently chose to decree in 1787 a "general silanum" that put an end to the activities of the Golden Rosicrucians of the Ancient System. The order of the Bavarian Illuminaten did not survive them by long, disappearing completely in 1790.

These two movements, although opposed to one another in their basic ideas and aspirations, were in fact closely connected, as attested by the research on Rosicrucian history by the Aufklärer Friedrich

Nicolai. His *Bemerkungen über den Ursprung und die Geschichte der Rosenkreuzer und Freymaurer* (Comments on the Origin and History of the Rose Cross and the Freemasons), which appeared in Berlin in 1806, also challenged the assumed link between the Golden Rose Cross and the Rosicrucian myth of Johann Valentin Andreae in the 17th century. The claim of such a continuity had already been cast into doubt in 1781 by Adolf von Knigge in his book *Über Jesuiten, Freymaurer und deutsche Rosenkreutzer* (On the Jesuits, the Freemasons and the German Rose Cross).

In Prussia, the Rosicrucian prince Frederick William's accession to the throne enabled Wöllner to become minister of religion; in this function he concentrated on combating the irreligiosity spread by Enlightenment ideas and the pretended Illuminaten. An edict of 9 July 1788 condemned deist pastors and teachers and prohibited any theological discussion of rationalist tendencies, while books by "free-thinking" authors were censored. The ideology of the Golden Rosicrucians of the Ancient System certainly influenced neither the political economy nor the exterior politics of Prussia; but the Rosicrucian tradition continued throughout the following century, and has influenced the opposition to Enlightenment rationalism characteristic of the German movement of *Sturm und Drang* and European → Romanticism.

*Codex Rosae Crucis, D.O.M.A., A Rare and Curious Manuscript of Rosicrucian Interest. Now published for the first time in its original form*, Los Angeles, 1983 ♦ *Schriften der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer* (Christopher McIntosh, ed.), Sinzheim: Archiv für altes und geheimes Wissen, 1999 ♦ Bernhard Beyer, *Das Lehrsystem des Ordens der Gold- und Rosenkreuzer*, Leipzig: Pansophie-Verlag, 1925.

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### Rosicrucianism III: 19th-20th Century

No Rosicrucian Orders in the 19th and 20th century could rightly claim a direct connection to 17th century counterparts. We will deal here with Rosicrucian Orders as autonomous organizations, and not particularly with Rosicrucian degrees within → Freemasonry. The oldest modern masonic Rosicrucian Order is the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, which was established in London in 1865-1866 by Robert Wentworth Little (1840-1878), an officer within mainstream English Freemasonry. This society, in its turn, generated two American offsprings, the Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis and the Societas Rosicruciana in America (both still in existence, but with a very limited constituency). It also influenced the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and, later, its splinter group founded by Paul Foster Case (1884-1954) and known as Builders of the Adytum (BOTA).

In France, small Rosicrucian bodies were active in Toulouse from the first decades of the 19th century, gathering around Viscount Louis-Charles-Edouard de Lapasse (1792-1867). A larger and particularly significant organization was the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose Cross, founded in Paris in 1887 by → Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897), → Papus (Gérard Encausse, 1865-1916), and → Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918). The latter, an eccentric poet and very independent Roman Catholic, broke with the Kabbalistic Order in 1890 to create the rival Catholic Order of the Rosy Cross of Temple and Grail. The two Orders fought bitterly, and an amused press dubbed the controversy the “war of the two roses”. Péladan’s organization never had many members, but it did exert considerable influence on French literature, art, and → music at the time. More significant for the first modern Rosicrucian generation was the Kabbalistic Order, although it is difficult to distinguish it from several other occult organizations also headed by Papus. Heirs of Papus’ Rosicrucianism did, however, attend the 1934 foundation meeting of FUDOSI (Universal Federation of Orders and Society of Initiation), which would continue to exist until 1951. Dissatisfied with FUDOSI, other Rosicrucian organizations joined several different Orders into the rival federation known as FUD-OFSI. This European controversy was a consequence of the rivalry in the United States between two American Rosicrucian Orders, the *Fraternitas Rosae Crucis* established by Reuben Swinburne Clymer (1878-1966) on the basis (inter alia) of the occult doctrines of → Pascal Beverly Randolph

(1825-1875), and AMORC. Although there are several other Rosicrucian organizations, we will deal with three in particular, which have reached international dimensions: the Rosicrucian Fellowship, the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, and AMORC.

Carl Louis von Grasshoff (1865-1919) was born in Denmark into a German aristocratic family. He spent his early manhood wandering the seas as a merchant ship captain, and settled first in New York (where he worked as an engineer), then in Los Angeles (1903). In the meantime, he had joined the → Theosophical Society, and in 1907 decided to travel to Germany, where he met → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the later founder of → Anthroposophy and at that time a leader of the German Theosophical Society. Grasshoff later claimed to have met a mysterious “Elder Brother of the Rose Cross”, who took him to a secret temple on the border between Germany and Bohemia. After his return to California, Grasshoff published in 1909 his magnum opus, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, under the pseudonym of → Max Heindel; and in 1910 he married a well-known astrologer, Augusta Foss (1865-1949). Between 1910-1918, Heindel went on to publish several works on → astrology, → Freemasonry, and esotericism in general. He launched a Rosicrucian Fellowship in 1909, which was officially incorporated in 1911. He also supervised the construction of the Fellowship’s international headquarters in Oceanside (California), including a temple and beautiful gardens.

After Heindel’s death in 1919, his wife Augusta continued the Fellowship’s expansion into several foreign countries, with a membership of thousands. Unlike other Rosicrucian organizations, the Fellowship had, since its very beginning, a clearly religious orientation, as evident from the fact that its practices included rituals for weddings and funerals, as well as spiritual healing services. While astrology remains an important part of the Fellowship’s teachings even today, the influence of Theosophy and Anthroposophy is also apparent. It teaches *karma* (the “Law of Consequence”), → reincarnation (the “Law of Rebirth”), and believes in a succession of (theosophical) “root races” on Earth. Heindel also offered an occult interpretation of the United States’ role in history. The Fellowship promotes vegetarianism, and warns against the evil effects of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Alcohol, it teaches, had an occult purpose within the framework of the descent of the human spirit into matter: it was used to enable humans to forget their higher selves in the fifth, or “Aryan”, epoch. In preparing for the coming Aquarian Age, humans

should regain knowledge of their higher selves, however, and consumption of all forms of alcohol is therefore rejected.

The Lectorium Rosicrucianum, or the International School of the Golden Rosy Cross, was founded by Jan Leene (1896-1968) and his brother Zwiervilhelm Leene (1892-1938), both leaders of the Rosicrucian Fellowship in the Netherlands. Although the events leading to the Lectorium's foundation date back to August 24, 1924, it was not until 1935 that the Leenes and Ms. Henny Stok-Huyser (1902-1990), who had joined them in 1930, formally declared their independence from the Fellowship and established a Rosicrucian Society of their own (Rozekruisers Genootschap, whose name was changed to Order of the Manichaeans in 1936). After Z.W. Leene's death in 1938, Jan Leene and Ms. Stok-Huyser, under the respective pen names of → Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, started writing several books about their teachings, which took the shape of a kind of Christian → gnosticism influenced by → hermetism, 17th century → Rosicrucianism, and → Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). Following the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands, the movement was proscribed, its property confiscated, and several members executed. It continued its activities underground throughout the war years, however, and in 1945 the movement was reorganized and resurfaced under the name of Lectorium Rosicrucianum. In 1948, the two founders met Antonin Gadal (1871-1962), one of the founding fathers of modern → neo-Catharism, who in 1957 would become the first President of the French branch of the Lectorium. It was after the founders' deaths that the Lectorium, led by an International Spiritual Directorate, became a truly international movement, with currently some 15,000 "members" and "pupils". "Members" of the school are those not yet prepared to "live" the teachings, and are distinguished from "pupils" who meet regularly for services in the temples that the Lectorium has established in a number of countries. Pupils are expected to practice a healthy life style, abstain from alcohol and drugs, reject all occult practices and any form of communication with the dead, and remain wary of the dangers of being unduly influenced by the media (particularly television). Important references in understanding the Lectorium's ideas are Gnosticism and → Catharism, as well as its efforts to reconcile its teachings with those of 17th century Rosicrucianism (which, unlike the former, was not dualistic). A key teaching distinguishes between the original divine Order,

and the "dialectic" Order, including both the dead and the living, and subject to the cycle of living, dying and being born again. However, it is not the ego which reincarnates, but the human microcosm, the latter being called to overcome the wheel of life and death in order to reach the divine realm of immortality and Light. Within the human microcosm, a divine spark remains latent in the heart and calls for a return "home" to the Kingdom of Heaven. Guiding its members in this process of awakening and "transfiguration" is the Lectorium's main purpose.

AMORC, the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, insists that it is not a religion, and that it includes members ("students") from several different religious backgrounds. AMORC was founded in 1915 by → Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883-1939), a New York advertising agent who had been among the founders of the New York Society of Psychical Research. Lewis regarded the Wisahickon (Pennsylvania) community founded in 1694 by Johannes Kelpius (1673-1708) as the first American Rosicrucian experiment, claiming that some of his ancestors had been involved in it. In 1909 Lewis visited France, and reported that he had been initiated into the Rosy Cross in an "old tower" in Toulouse. The first national AMORC conference was held in Pittsburgh in 1917; the Order later moved to San Francisco, Tampa (Florida), and (in 1927) to San Jose, California, where its world headquarters (including a temple, museum, library, and planetarium) have become one of the city's main tourist attractions. After AMORC's success in the United States, several more or less independent AMORCs were established in Europe. Some of them later went their separate ways (such as AAORRAC, the Antiquus Arcanus Ordo Rosae Rubae Aureae Crucis, led by Eduard Munninger, 1901-1965), but Lewis, working jointly with Jeanne Guesdon (1884-1955), was able to keep the large French-speaking branch within the main fold. He was succeeded as leader ("Imperator") of AMORC by his son, Ralph Maxwell Lewis (1904-1987).

When Ralph died, Gary L. Stewart, despite being only 34 years old, was elected Imperator with the support of Raymond Bernard, the powerful leader of the French-speaking branch. Stewart was soon in conflict with the Board of Directors, however, and in 1990 was replaced by Raymond Bernard's son, Christian. After the 1990 crisis, two of Stewart's supporters, Paul Walden and Ashley McFadden, established the Ancient Rosae Crucis (ARC), while Stewart himself founded a Confraternity of

the Rose Cross. The elder Bernard, in turn, distanced himself from AMORC and established a variety of separate organizations including CIRCES (International Committee for Charitable and Social Works), now presented as the humanitarian branch of the Sovereign Order of the Temple of Initiation, a neo-Templar organization Bernard had created while still a leader of AMORC. It is fair to say, however, that AMORC remains, by far, the largest international Rosicrucian organization, with hundreds of thousands of members (the figure of “six millions”, often quoted, refers to the Order’s mailing list).

Most AMORC members enrol in correspondence courses and follow the instructions included in the Order’s “monographs”. For the first nine degrees, initiations may be self-conferred at home (although they may also be received in a temple). For the tenth, eleventh and twelfth degrees, there are no initiations because the member at this stage is advanced enough to establish a direct contact with the occult hierarchy. Before entering the nine degrees, each student goes through five introductory lessons and three “Atria” as a neophyte, learning inter alia the structure of matter, the power of thought, Rosicrucian healing treatments, karma and reincarnation. Additional information about these and other esoteric themes is offered during the course of the nine degrees process, usually completed in five or six years. Beyond the ninth degree, secret teachings include mystical techniques of concentration, meditation, visualization, and spiritual → alchemy. AMORC teaches that, ideally, humans should reincarnate every 144 years (or live to the age of 144 years, then die and reincarnate immediately). The students’ aim, rather than escape in the cycle of reincarnations, is to be received into the Great Wide Brotherhood through a “cosmic initiation”. AMORC insists that it is the heir of a tradition dating right back to ancient Egypt and Pharaoh Tutmosis III († 1450 B.C.). Documents confirming this, it is claimed, exist in the San Jose archives. Other teachings concern Jesus Christ, who is regarded as a member of the Essene Brotherhood [→ Essenes] who did not die on the cross but was saved from it and retired to a monastery on Mount Carmel. Astrology, occult anatomy, and the study of the esoteric meaning of numbers [→ Number Symbolism], sounds and geometrical shapes complete AMORC’s teachings. Controversies notwithstanding, AMORC maintains a very visible presence, thanks to its temples, publishing houses, and magazines in several countries.

Beyond the three largest organizations, several

dozens of smaller Rosicrucian bodies are also active throughout the world. One of the most significant is the *Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua* (FRA), established in the 1920s in Latin America by Arnaldo Krumm-Heller (1879-1949). A one-time associate of → Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), Krumm-Heller was able to build the largest Spanish-speaking Rosicrucian organization, with teachings drawn from → Freemasonry, Theosophy, and several different systems of sex magic. FRA split into a number of competing branches after Krumm-Heller’s death in 1949, none of them as large as the parent organization had been before World War II. FRA and Krumm-Heller are important, however, for their role in the formation of the Gnostic Movement and the Gnostic Church founded in the 1950s in Mexico by Samael Aun Weor (Victor Manuel Gómez Rodríguez, 1917-1977), a Colombian FRA member and a pupil of Krumm-Heller. Although divided, in turn, into several dozens of rival groups after Weor’s death, the Gnostic Movement founded by the Colombian esotericist still maintains teachings and features of Krumm-Heller’s FRA. Combined membership of its branches runs in the tens of thousands, and (although not “purely” Rosicrucian) Weor’s movement should probably be included, along with the Rosicrucian Fellowship, AMORC and the *Lectorium Rosicrucianum*, as being among the largest international bodies still claiming some sort of Rosicrucian heritage in the 21st century.

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**Rudolf II of Habsburg, \*** 18.7.1552  
Vienna, † 20.1.1612 Prague

Holy Roman Emperor, King of Bohemia and Hungary. Son of Emperor Maximilian II (1527-1576) and his first cousin Maria, daughter of Emperor Charles V. From 1564-1571 Rudolf was sent to Spain to be educated under the supervision of Philip II. He was crowned King of Bohemia in 1575, and elected Holy Roman Emperor the following year. In 1583 he moved the imperial capital from Vienna to Prague. Rudolf never married, though he spent much energy on failed matrimonial plans. Consequently he was succeeded by his hated brother Matthias (1557-1619), who usurped Rudolf's titles and forced him into retirement in 1611.

Rudolf II was unequalled as a patron of the arts and sciences. Those who worked at his court for a longer or shorter time included Carolus Clusius the botanist (1526-1609), Joannes Sambucus the historian (1531-1584), the antiquaries Jacopo Strada (1515-1588) and his son Ottavio (1550-1606), the astronomers Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) and Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), the composers Philip de Monte (1521-1603) and the nobleman-musician Christoph Harant (1564-1621). Rudolf's consuming interest was in his collections, perhaps the richest and most varied of his time. Inspired by his father's collecting and by that of his uncle Ferdinand II of the Tirol (1529-1595), Rudolf assembled a *Kunstammer* which filled four large rooms of the Hradčany Castle in Prague, as well as a large library (mostly kept in the Hofburg, Vienna) and an art collection that included about 3000 paintings. Among artists of the past, Rudolf collected especially Dürer and Jan Brueghel. The living artists whom he patronized included Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-1593), Georg Hoefnagel (1542-1600), Adriaen de Vries (1545-1626), Bartolomeus Spranger (1546-1611), Hans von Aachen (1552-1615), Josef Heintz Sr. (1564-1609), Roelant Savery (1576?-1639), the hard-stone carver Ottavio Miseroni (1560?-1624), and the engraver Aegidius Sadeler (1570?-1629). The loosely-knit "Prague School" cultivated two main areas: mythological subjects with an erotic atmosphere, and naturalistic representations of plants, animals, birds, and landscapes. The *Kunstammer* contained natural wonders from the animal, vegetable, and mineral realms; artefacts from non-European countries; historically significant objects and antiquities; works of art in precious materials (silver, gold, gems, hard stone); automata, machines, and

scientific instruments. Rudolf liked to watch his employees at work, and sometimes worked himself, notably at goldsmithing. Unlike his contemporaries, he did not display his collections to demonstrate his wealth, power, taste, and universality, but kept them jealously for his own study and enjoyment. Very few visitors were admitted to the *Kunstammer*, which then took on a mythical reputation.

In Spain, Rudolf had been indoctrinated with Spanish court ceremonial and a strict Catholic faith. He adhered to the former all his life, in his black costume and the rigid etiquette of his court. The latter had the contrary effect: the sight of an *auto da fé* (execution) of heretics in Toledo had inclined him to a lifelong policy of non-compulsion in religious matters. For a long period he avoided all rites of the Church. From 1601-1608 his friend Johannes Pistorius (1546-1608) persuaded him to confess and communicate at Easter, but Rudolf died, as his father had done, without receiving the sacraments. Given his eirenic disposition, Rudolf was frightened by fanaticism, whether it was that of the Czech Brethren and the Utraquists, that of the Calvinist princes plotting against the Habsburg monarchy, or that of the ultra-Catholic Philip II of Spain and the papal nuncios whom Rudolf's mother had installed in Prague. The Bohemian Estates (nobility) were largely Protestant, and they put pressure on the Catholic emperors by withholding taxes to support the war against the Turks. Political unrest drove Rudolf increasingly into the Catholic camp, until the Estates forced him to sign a "Letter of Majesty" (1609) proclaiming religious freedom. Rudolf II lost all support in 1611, after a Catholic mercenary army had ravaged the countryside and invaded Prague.

Rudolf's lack of enthusiasm for any particular Christian sect was certainly due also to his hermetic and esoteric inclinations. His private convictions are unknown, but all his voluntary activities point to a pansophic attitude, embracing the wisdom and beauty to be found in the widest range of spiritual and material creations. Central to this was the philosophy and, to a lesser degree, the practice of → alchemy. Among the alchemists who flourished at Rudolf's court, sometimes in the function of physicians, were Martin Ruland Sr. (1532-1602) and Jr. (1569-1611), → Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605), → Michael Maier (1568-1622), Michael Sendivogius (1556-*post* 1630), Nicholas Barnaud (1538/39-after 1600), and Oswald Croll (ca. 1560-1609). → Giordano Bruno made a short visit in 1588. The Jewish community in Prague was a



center for Lurianic Kabbalistic studies [→ Jewish Influences], especially under Rabbi Judah Löw (1520?-1609) who met with the Emperor in 1592. Rudolf's confessor Pistorius edited the important collection *Artis Cabalisticæ, hoc est reconditæ theologiae et philosophiæ scriptorum Tomus I* (1587).

→ John Dee and Edward Kelley spent the period 1583-1589 in Bohemia and Central Europe, first at the invitation of the Polish magnate Olbracht Łaski (1536-1605). In 1584 Dee secured an audience with Rudolf, but the mention of angel-magic alarmed the superstitious Emperor, and, still more, his Jesuit supervisors. Dee and Kelley were expelled from Prague and found protection with Vilém Rožmberk until 1589, when Dee returned to England. Kelley then enjoyed two years of Rudolf's favor, but ended his life in prison.

Rudolf's "melancholic" (or manic-depressive) temperament made life difficult for himself and for others. He had a romantic view of Empire and of the glory of his Habsburg ancestors, especially Maximilian I, but could not handle the political realities of his own time. His failure to marry and produce an heir was one result of this. However, he had a long relationship with Anna Maria Strada, the daughter of his court antiquary Ottavio Strada, who bore him five or six children. The fanaticisms of others drove him either to uncharacteristic and poorly-judged decisions, or else to abnegation of his responsibilities. Then he would retreat into his collecting, commissioning, arranging, and experimenting, where he was the undisputed master of his world. After centuries of misunderstanding, this private world and the constellation of talents that it attracted has been given its due as a kind of Hermetic utopia.

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JOSELYN GODWIN

**Russell, George William** → AE

**Rupescissa, Johannes de** →  
**Roquetaillade, Jean de**

**Saint-Germain, Le Comte de**, \* year and place unknown, † 26.2.1784  
Eckernförde

Referred to by Frederick the Great as 'a man whose mystery has never been solved', the first evidence we have of Saint-Germain's existence is a letter by him, dated 22 November 1735 and sent from The Hague (British Library; Sloane MSS 4026, ff. 289r-290v); it is addressed to Sir Hans Sloane, to whom the author offers an incunable. Next we hear of him as being in London, at a time when the invasion by the young Pretender caused foreigners to be arrested. He acknowledges passing under a fictitious name and title, and says he will disclose his real identity to the king only. We do not know whether George II ever received him, but around the spring of the following year we find Saint-Germain as a prominent personality in London musical circles. He composed a considerable amount of music, largely Italian-style and operatic (preserved in the British Library), and played the violin. Leaving England, he disappears from view for some years, to resurface in 1756 at the court of Louis XV. Concerned that France was heading for bankruptcy, he disadvised from seeking loans from foreign powers and so incurring further debts; and he said that for purposes of export he would donate a collection of dyes of extraordinary brilliance, a yellow metal called "Similor" and the secret of a process for removing flaws from diamonds. Although he said that the latter worked by chemical means, the procedure was widely believed to be occult in nature. The fact that Saint-Germain used to decline invitations to dine, even at the King's table, gave birth to the legend that he lived without eating – actually he was a vegetarian – and his interest in finding a way to increase the human lifespan bred the rumour that he himself had lived since antiquity. The less credulous supposed that he was the illegitimate son of some royal lady, and that this was the information he had told the king. Saint-Germain was urging that France must cease its ruinous war with England, where he had good contacts. He believed that the English king would welcome peace, and actually went to The Hague to try and negotiate for peace with the English Ambassador there. However, Louis XV's prime minister Choiseul tried to get him arrested and he had to flee. In Belgium, Saint-Germain sold a Raphael to raise money for starting a dyeing business, but tariffs turned out to be too high.

His real identity remains a mystery. To Karl Alexander, Margraf of Anspach, he said that his father was Prince Rakoczy II of Transylvania; but Rakoczy had only three, legitimate sons, and their



histories are known. In Prussia, Princess Amelia, Frederick the Great's sister, tried to tease the secret out of him, and he replied that he came from a land that had never known foreign occupations, with a royal lineage as long as the Bourbons. Only the Wittelsbach dynasty of Bavaria could make such a boast. The person who knew Saint-Germain best was his last host, Prince Carl von Hessen-Cassel, Governor of Schleswig, and a Freemason. He considered Saint-Germain one of the greatest philosophers who had ever lived; and in his *Mémoires de mon temps* (1861) he says that his friend was indeed the son of Rakoczy II of Transylvania, born from his 'first wife' but brought up in Florence by Gian de' Medici. In fact Rakoczy married only once; however, at the age of seventeen he spent four months in Florence, where he was in contact with a Princess Violante, of Wittelsbach descent, brought from Bavaria to marry Gian's homosexual brother. If the two had a child, the two stories about Saint-Germain's ancestry could be combined; and one imagines that Gian could have spared an incunable and a Raphael as gifts to the boy who had been given into his charge.

From the perspective of the history of Western esotericism, the historical Saint-Germain becomes submerged in the career of the mythical persona. A book of alchemical contents, *La Très Sainte Trinosophie* (The Most Holy Trinosophy; with illustrations in colours), from the end of the 18th century, several times newly edited until the present time, has been persistently attributed to him (although it is not from his pen) and has in no small measure contributed to his fame. Legends circulating about Saint-Germain were fostered to a large extent by Baron Carl Heinrich von Gleichen's *Denkwürdigkeiten* (Memories; 1847). Gleichen gives a vivid narrative of how he met him. The chapter he devotes to Saint-Germain, followed by others dealing with → Cagliostro, → Lavater, → Saint-Martin and the Marchioness de La Croix, was to be repeatedly copied or adapted. It is not surprising that the figure of Saint-Germain had already been used in works of fiction, for instance in Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* (1834), where he is in the possession of a card-game winning formula, and more importantly in Sir → Edward Bulwer-Lytton's celebrated "rosicrucian" novel *Zanoni* (1842), where he appears as a foil to Zanoni, the hero of the story. Later again, in Rainer Maria Rilke's fictional autobiography *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, 1910), he appears under the name of Marquis von Belmare.

Saint-Germain could hardly have been ignored by modern Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society] and

offshoots such as the → Church Universal and Triumphant. → H.P. Blavatsky first referred to Saint-Germain in her *Isis Unveiled* (1877), and followed this up in an article 'Count de Saint-Germain', in *The Theosophist* of May 1881. This was the year in which A.P. Sinnett received, in Simla, a letter supposedly written by the Master Koot Hoomi, which referred to Saint-Germain as continuator of the teachings of Christian Rosenkreutz (see *Mahatma Letters*, 280). Isobel Cooper-Oakley's first articles about Saint-Germain appeared in the November and December issues of *The Theosophical Review* (1897). Cooper-Oakley was interested in Saint-Germain's possible masonic connections, and asked → Annie Besant to get into occult contact with him. Besant at first did not think this would be possible, but in 1898, while she was alone in her room in Avenue Road and preparing to go to bed, Saint-Germain appeared to her, told her to take a pencil, and said 'Rakoczi'. Besant was given to understand that in earlier existences he had been Christian Rosenkreutz, Hunyadi Janos (a 15th-century Magyar hero from the Rumanian part of Transylvania) and Lord [Francis] → Bacon (Besant, 'The Theosophical Society and its Work', *The Adyar Bulletin*, nov. 1823, 445-446). In the journal *The Link* of the Theosophical Society's Esoteric School, Besant wrote in February 1909 that Saint-Germain was one of the seven Masters; and at the occasion of his first initiation, on 11 January 1910, Jiddu Krishnamurti saw 'Master the Count' together with the six others. He again saw 'the Count' on 12 June, 1911, when Besant was giving a lecture at the Sorbonne. In her book *The Masters* (1918), Besant described Saint-Germain as having previously incarnated as 'Rakocsi' (she keeps to this spelling according to Rakoczy's autobiography, the Latin of which has no "y"), Bacon, Robertus the Monk (who has resisted attempts at identification), Hunyadi Janos and Christian Rosenkreutz. She claimed that he was now living in Hungary, and traveled much.

→ Alice Bailey's Arcane School was a breakaway from the Theosophical Society, but Bailey had been a member of the Esoteric School; in her *Initiation: Human and Solar* (1922), she refers to the 'head of the seventh ray' as 'The Master R . . . . . ' – presumably this is Saint-Germain. → C.W. Leadbeater, in *The Masters and the Path* (1925), extended the list of the Master's incarnations: St. Alban, Proclus, → Roger Bacon, Christian Rosenkreutz, Hunyadi Janos, and Francis Bacon. And in *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry* (1928), he left out St. Alban but added a 19th-century figure, Baron Hompesch. Leadbeater claimed to have met Saint-Germain in 1901, walking down the Corso in Rome in modern dress. Presumably he meant Saint-Germain in his

latest incarnation, for the body in which he walked around the court of Louis XV lies buried beneath the floor of the Nicolaikirche in Eckernförde. The civic authorities were so conscious of burying ‘the man who never dies’ that they listed the possessions he left behind, down to number of razor blades, within the case and without.

→ Manley P. Hall’s influential and repeatedly reprinted book *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Kabbalistic and Rosicrucian Philosophy* (1928) opens with a large “portrait” (by J. Augustus Knapp) of Saint-Germain in colour, and contains elements which were instrumental in further spreading legends around this figure. Hall also gave a new English edition, with his own commentaries, of *The Most Holy Trinosophy of the Comte De St.-Germain* (see above).

Saint-Germain continues to inspire novelists, the most celebrated contemporary one being Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. Her series of best-sellers which constitute *The Count de Saint-Germain’s Series* in nine volumes (1979 to 1993) have for their main hero our personage, the Count of Saint-Germain of the 18th century, still very much alive. In Yarbro’s highly syncretistic fiction, several themes are combined, like those of vampirism, the mysterious saviour (in the wake of Bulwer-Lytton’s Zanon), and not least, → alchemy.

MSS: London: British Library, Sloane MSS, Egerton MSS, Additional MSS Public Record Office. State Papers, Foreign Ambassadors, Intercepted. Paris: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Angleterre, Hollande, France Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, Archives Nationales.

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## Saint-Martin, Louis-Claude de,

\* 18.1.1743 Amboise, † 13.10.1803  
Aulnay (near Paris)

1. LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT
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### I. LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Saint-Martin, who published under the pseudonym of “the Unknown Philosopher”, was born into a pious family of the minor nobility. He studied law, and practised briefly, but gave it up (although the theme of justice permeates his theosophy) at age twenty-two, for a military career. The principal attraction of the life of a military officer – he received, thanks to the duc de Choiseul, a commission as a lieutenant in the regiment of Foix – was the leisure it allowed him for philosophical and literary studies. Saint-Martin systematically read his way through Enlightenment philosophy, but without finding therein satisfactory answers to the problem of human destiny. He found an alternative solution through some of his fellow officers who were initiates of the Order of → Elus-Coëns, a masonic Rite (or System) comprised of High degrees only, and devoted essentially to theurgical practices founded by → Martinès de Pasqually

(1727-1774). Martinès' wife, in fact, was the niece of the major of the regiment of Foix. Sometime between August and October 1768 Saint-Martin received initiation into the Order. He quickly rose through the grades. From 1768 to 1771 Saint-Martin worked, at Bordeaux, as secretary to Martinès himself. It is during this time that he acquired detailed knowledge of the Order's practice. Martinès' → Illuminism centred on the existence and theurgic cultivation of superior, primarily angelic, powers. Saint-Martin's duties included organizing Martinès' papers and copying the ritual manuals in which were set out the ceremonial → magic by which the adept attains illumination and – the ultimate goal of Masonic theosophy – recovers the primitive faculties possessed by Adam before the Fall. His secretarial duties brought him into contact with → J.-B. Willermoz, leader of the Lodge of Coëns at Lyons. In 1771, at age twenty-eight, Saint-Martin resigned from his regiment in order to devote himself to the study and propagation of Illuminism. Living, principally at Paris and Lyons, in the company of esoteric Masons such as the comte d'Hauterive, l'abbé Fournié, and Willermoz, he spent his time gathering notes for a book, and improving his meditation and practice.

At Lyons, living under Willermoz' roof, Saint-Martin wrote his first book, *Des erreurs et de la vérité, ou Les hommes rappelés au Principe universel de la science* (1775). This work develops a theosophical system in which the ideas of Martinès de Pasqually are transformed into an original system. *Des erreurs et de la vérité*, in presenting a philosophy of nature, of society, and of knowledge, offers a wide-ranging critique of secular Enlightenment reason. Its immediate occasion was Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger's assertion, in *L'Antiquité dévoilée par ses usages* (1766), that religions were born of the terrified imaginations of survivors of the great Flood and allied calamities whose capacity for rational thought had been destroyed by the horrors of the natural catastrophes they had witnessed. Saint-Martin counters that religion is a supernatural gift by which the divine mercy continues to transmit its wisdom to those who can perceive it. He argues that the true cause of, not only religion, but also social institutions, natural laws, and human nature itself is an active, intelligent being. Saint-Martin's second book, *Tableau naturel des rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'homme, et l'univers* (1782), structured as a theosophical version of the design argument for the existence of God, continues Saint-Martin's attack on Enlightenment philosophy. Whereas the Enlightenment explained humanity by material factors, Saint-Martin

explains the physical world by its relation to humanity and, ultimately, God. In the Fall that which exists in principle immaterial was sensibilized under material forms; nevertheless, everything tends to reenter into the unity from which it emerged. The Fall divided and obscured the virtues or moral and intellectual faculties proper to humanity; we must work, by revivifying our will by desire, to recover those from which we have been alienated. Through this regeneration, which can operate only by virtue of the sacrificial act of the Réparateur, physical nature is also regenerated, and the universe as a whole reattains the Edenic condition.

With the success of his first book, Saint-Martin became the apostle of Illuminism to the *beau monde*. His task was to lead humanity to the supernatural things that belong to it by right, but of which Saint-Martin's generation has lost totally the idea. He saw himself as a 'cleanser of the temple of truth', in opposition to both Enlightenment rationalism and orthodox Christianity in which the letter of Scripture appeared to be valued over the spirit. In his ministry he allied himself with a wide range of fellow-minded personalities: an interest in → animal magnetism brought him into contact with the Marquis de Puységur and the *Société de l'Harmonie* of esoteric Mesmerism; he met → William Law on a trip to London in 1787; and at Strasbourg he made the acquaintance of the Swedish baron Silberhielm, the nephew of → Emanuel Swedenborg, who interested him in his uncle's ideas. In fact, Saint-Martin wrote *Le nouvel homme* (1792) under the immediate influence of Swedenborg, although from the very beginning he was highly critical of the Swedish visionary. The fundamental idea of this work is that we carry in ourselves a sort of text, of which our entire life ought to be the development, because the soul is primitively a Thought of God. We must renew ourselves by reentering into our true nature.

In a letter to Willermoz, dated 4 July 1790, Saint-Martin asks to be struck off the masonic registers. This request signals a profound reorientation of Saint-Martin's theosophy. It is easily explained: he had, during his residency in Strasbourg between 1788 and 1791, discovered the works of → Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). Credit for introducing Saint-Martin to Boehme's writings goes to → Friedrich-Rudolf Saltzmann, a Freemason theosopher, and Madame de Boecklin. In Boehme, who was little known in France, Saint-Martin found a theosophy of human regeneration: if we are not renewed in our essence, we will not attain true understanding. According to Boehme, this second birth is magical, although this magic has nothing to do with theurgy.

It is Wisdom, namely the divine Sophia herself, the symbol of absolute purity, who enables us to be born to true life, whereas spirits such as those which the Order of Elus Coëns claimed to subdue in order to gain knowledge evolve in a sphere where the impure mingles with the divine. Under the influence of Boehme, Saint-Martin moved steadily away from Martinès' theurgical practice. He now rejected, as set out in *Ecce Homo* (1792), commerce with the intermediary beings of the astral realm through the theurgic ritual of the Elus Coëns, as well as other marvels of a lower order, such as magnetic somnabulism or Swedenborgian visions, insisting instead that reintegration is to be achieved through imitation of Christ in the manner of Boehme's *The Way to Christ* (1624). Nevertheless, Saint-Martin did not renounce Martinès entirely; the latter's principal idea of the man-God, or the human being understood as minister and cooperator with the divine will and charged with the soteriological mission of restoring the perfection of his original destiny, always remained fundamental to Saint-Martin's thought.

Saint-Martin initially encountered Boehme through English translations republished in the 18th century and edited by William Law. He learned German in order to tackle the original texts, and set himself to translating Boehme into French. He was assisted in mastering Boehme by a Swiss theosopher, → Niklaus Anton Kirchberger, baron of Liebisdorf, who became his pen friend and his dearest disciple for the rest of his life, although they never met in person. Not only did Kirchberger help him on specific matters of translation, their epistolary discussions deepened his understanding of the essence of Boehme's teaching. With Kirchberger Saint-Martin discovered a range of esoteric writers of whom he had hitherto been unaware: Madame Guyon, → baron von Eckhartshausen, → Heinrich Jung-Stilling, English philadelphes like → Jane Lead, → John Pordage, and Thomas Bromley, disciples of Boehme such as → Johann Georg Gichtel, and Protestant spiritualists from the time of the Reformation, such as Caspar Schwenckfeld and → Valentin Weigel. Of this group, it was Gichtel who had the most notable influence on Saint-Martin. Saint-Martin considered the German thought of his day – particularly that with its roots in Boehme – to be deeper, and much less tainted by Enlightenment materialism than French philosophy. In the years that followed, Saint-Martin understood his vocation to be that of interpreting Boehme for the French-speaking world and for his generation. Yet, Saint-Martin was not merely a

conveyer of Boehme's thought. While he achieved a profound understanding of Boehme's theosophy, Saint-Martin was an original thinker in his own right, and was responding to a historical situation that differed considerably from that of Boehme. The result was a set of works deeply marked by Boehme yet original, principally *L'Homme de désir*, 1790 (later revised editions), *Le Ministère de l'homme-esprit*, 1802, and *De l'esprit des choses, ou Coup d'oeil philosophique sur la nature des êtres et sur l'objet de leur existence*, 2 vols., 1802. To this list of works of exposition should be added his "theosophical" novel, *Le Crocodile*. It is on these works that rests Saint-Martin's reputation as the most inspired and the most powerful theosopher in the French language.

Saint-Martin's sense of himself as fulfilling a vocation in direct opposition to the spirit of the times made him sometimes feel isolated in the midst of a hostile world. He described himself as the Robinson Crusoe of spirituality awaiting the ship that will take him far from his exile. At times this sentiment of isolation brought him to the edge of despair, but for the most part Saint-Martin was able to remain optimistic, buoyed by his conviction that while his mission faces numerous obstacles and appears to proceed very slowly, it will be crowned with glorious success after his death.

Saint-Martin was not, like Willermoz, a creator of masonic Rites, nor did he cultivate disciples in the narrow sense of the term. One should not, however, conclude from this that his influence was short-lived or limited in scope. Saint-Martin's works were read, translated, and commented upon all over Europe, in Russia and Germany as in France. Saint-Martin's influence encouraged French interest in not just Boehme but the entire tradition of German thought from Weigel and Schwenckfeld to Gichtel. He deeply marked French esoteric thought as both the popularizer of Boehme and as an original theosopher in his own right. In Germany itself, surprisingly, Saint-Martin played a role in reintroducing Boehme through the dual medium of German translations of his work and Franz von Baader's promotion of his principal ideas. In Russia, an Illuminism heavily indebted to Saint-Martin flourished under Emperess Catherine II. Beyond esoteric circles, Saint-Martin is the major intermediary through whom Illuminism reached the early 19th century. Balzac (*Louis Lambert* [1833], *Le Livre mystique* [1834-1835]) and → Joseph de Maistre (*Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, Entretien XI) attest to his influence. His greatest impact, however, was on → Romanticism; Martin-

ist ideas and themes recur throughout Romantic writings on poetics, the → imagination, epistemology, and philosophy of history.

## 2. THE “GREAT WORK” OF REINTEGRATION

Saint-Martin’s theosophy is an epic of fall and rehabilitation. The history of humanity begins from the *prévarication* (a term Saint-Martin borrowed from Martinès de Pasqually to designate the metaphysical Fall of humanity) in which humanity lost the perfection of its primordial state in which it participated in the divine pleroma. Saint-Martin teaches that humanity subsists in a state of forgetfulness of its true nature owing to the Fall, but that its true intellectual (i.e., spiritual) nature renders it susceptible to receive the light emanating from the divine intelligence that permeates the universe. Fallen humanity, which retains the germ of the image of Divinity within itself, must draw out its divine life from under the bondage of its fallen status by reorienting its will, still free despite the Fall, with the divine will. Through contemplation (the soul as mirror – mirrors being living, organic reflections of the divine image, from whose reciprocal play we know ourselves and reassemble a shattered, dispersed world into unity), humanity can awaken to consciousness of its true nature and to the circulation of spiritual forces through the universe. Sensible objects are signs of a hidden spiritual reality. Saint-Martin calls souls who, moved by desire for God, acquire knowledge of the interior truths *hommes de désir*. These “men of aspiration” imitate Christ both in incarnating consciousness of the Word (divine truths) and in expiating the fallen world through sacrificial suffering. Their self-immolation having separated them from the material kingdom, they exercise a spiritual ministry by regenerating others through their sacrifice. Once a critical mass of “men of desire” has been achieved, the *homme-esprit*, or corporate regenerated humanity, is created. *Le Ministère de l’homme-esprit* is to complete the regeneration of humanity through the radical development of its intimate essence. The identity Saint-Martin posits between the regenerated human will and the divine will makes it possible for humanity to regain its true end and become once again the image of God. The attainment of this glorious future is the “Great Work” of reintegration. Like his Enlightenment opponents, Saint-Martin refuses to see humanity as an abject creature humbled before the divine mysteries of the universe, yet at the same time he rejects the Enlightenment repudiation of reli-

gion by bathing humanity in these very divine mysteries.

The reintegration of humanity carries with it the regeneration of nature. *De l’esprit des choses* considers humanity, as a living mirror, to be a reflection of divinity. By giving oneself over to meditation, and renouncing, by the will, all external things, one operates and obtains intimate knowledge of the Prototype, or of the Word, of which the human being is originally the image and the type. This knowledge not only reveals God to the human being, it also reveals our proper relation to Nature. By placing ourselves in harmony with our Principle, we also place ourselves in harmony with original Nature (Boehme’s Eternal Nature). Present-day Nature, fallen and divided in itself and in humanity, nevertheless preserves in its laws, as humanity in many of his faculties, a disposition to reenter into the original unity. By this double relation, Nature is put in harmony with humanity to the extent that humanity coordinates with its own Principle. In this way the “Great Work” of reintegration restores Nature, as well as humanity, to its prelapsarian state. *De l’esprit des choses*, a rare example of French → *Naturphilosophie*, greatly interested the German *Naturphilosophen*.

## 3. MAGISM/IMAGINATION

Magism operates, in Saint-Martin’s theosophy, on three levels: divine, natural, and human. On the divine level, God manifests or reveals himself externally through the Sophia, but additionally through other mirrors, requiring in their turn new mirrors in which they are reflected. Saint-Martin calls the circulation of spiritual forces through the universe by means of the multiplication of mirrors “divine magism”. This divine magism both reveals to humanity the reflections of the eternal magnificence and, through its action on our hearts, inspires love for it, though in such a way that we cannot appropriate the principle to ourselves (Divinity remains ineffable to creation).

On the level of Nature, there is a triple magism. The first, more or less identical with divine magism, is divine generation itself, or the filtering through the veil of things as much of the spiritual forces as created beings can sustain. This is the capacity that pre-fallen Nature has to manifest God. But Nature is no longer in its original state; like humanity, it is fallen. Hence, another magism, the universal-present, must be exercised in order to protect against the Evil Principle and remove the horror and infection with which the fall has tainted our suffering. In fact, however, the natural magism of the present



universe is in its principle identical to the natural magism of the original universe; it differs only in the realm in which it operates. In addition, each individual entity in the natural world also has its particular magism; each flower, each animal, as a medium between its tangible properties and the invisible and intangible properties that are in its principle of life, is an image of the eternal and original medium of divine generation. The third natural magism is distinct and, as a consequence of the fall, works against the divine forces. It is called *astral* magism. Under the influence of its disorderly and irregular images, our spiritual and physical being alike can be seduced from our true destination.

Saint-Martin calls the human form of magism the  $\rightarrow$  imagination. Its original role was to make ever more beautiful, ever more perfect the sphere wherein humanity lived. This imagination remains with us despite the Fall. Discerning the spiritual glory hidden under the appearances of sensible nature, the imagination is the spiritual part of humanity that possesses the vision of all things. Everything is a symbol in our world; physical objects are the visible signs of invisible forces on which they depend. Through imagination we grasp the spiritual unity of the universe. In Saint-Martin's anthropology, the imagination is not one faculty among others, but a primary vocation as the duty and power of reflecting, or making real, of propagating and re-creating. The term "mirror", then, linked as it is to magism and imagination, does not connote passive reflection, but an active concentrating and focusing that causes germination and growth, the passing from dispersal to the unity of the human being. Just as, however, astral magism opposes the good natural magisms, so there is a negative human imagination, or a faculty of representing to ourselves chimerical beings or composite monstrosities that stand against the plan of harmony and universal restoration. One must cast the negative magism aside in order to become the mirror of God and of Nature.

#### 4. LANGUAGE AND POETICS

Saint-Martin, like many of his contemporaries, argues for a natural origin of language, as opposed to a conventional origin. But by natural origin he does not mean that which Enlightenment philosophes meant by it; that is, that language was born out of the necessities imposed by our terrestrial condition. Languages of such an origin do exist – Saint-Martin points to the idioms spoken by savages – but they are animal languages. The true primitive language of humanity, that spoken before

the Fall, was natural in the proper sense because its words responded to the essence of the things they named. Present-day languages, in which words no longer have an evident relation to the things that they designate, are as they are because of the Fall. Language, like humanity itself, has suffered an exile from its original state. The rehabilitation of humanity is linked to the recovery of the original, universal, divinely natural language of humanity. This recovery is possible because something of the original language remains in our degenerate languages. This something is the ability of language to express the universal faculties of the Supreme Principle, not directly or literally, to be sure, but indirectly through  $\rightarrow$  correspondences, symbols, figures, and allegories. This indirect speech, or poetry, participates in the divine powers, thereby linking humanity to God and grasping the unity of creation. Through poetry, an enduring echo of the universal language, humanity becomes the lyre of God. True poetry, finally, must display a historical aspect because the relationship of humanity to God – the subject of poetry – is the historical drama of the Fall and the regeneration to come (hence, its historical aspect includes a prophetic element). Saint-Martin's poetic ideal is lyric, metaphysical, narrative, and edifying; in short, the epic of Fall and rehabilitation.

Two consequences emerge from Saint-Martin's theories of language and poetics. First, he asserts the idea of a poetic priesthood. Primitive poetry, he says, was religious in character; the history of poetry has been a long decadence, a descent toward terrestrial subjects and futility. Poetry, which has fallen by making itself into a simple translation of the passions or imitator of things, must take up again its primitive function as a celebration of the Principle of our grandeur. Poetry has a privileged function in the relation of humanity to God because it is, of all human productions, that which most reconciles us with our Principle, and which, by the feelings it evokes, best proves to us the dignity of our origin. The second consequence relates to the limits of communication. The Illuminist or sacred poet, by virtue of a transcendent intuition, has become the depositary of the truth. He is charged with communicating this truth to his contemporaries, but the communicative effort collides with the limits of communication. That which can be said literally is fallen; the truth can only be hinted at because of the degeneration of our language. Poetic language attempts to say the unsayable by means of correspondences, symbols, figures, and analogies. The deeper a spiritual truth one tries to express, the more one must resort to

these circumlocutions. The secret possessed by the Illuminist or poet is secret or esoteric, not by his choice, but because the truth that grips him cannot, by its very nature, be put into circulation under a form accessible to all.

### 5. CHRISTOLOGY

Saint-Martin taught that reintegration is possible because humanity retains a spark of its divine origin, and, moved by desire for God, can acquire knowledge of the interior truths. The various religious traditions of the world, as well as the Bible, confirm for the “man of desire” the truths that he finds within himself. Nevertheless, Christ retains a unique and necessary role in the process of reintegration because fallen humanity retains the possibility of reintegration only thanks to Christ, the divine Réparateur. Christ’s sacrifice renders our suffering efficacious and gives us a new life. Echoing St. Paul, Saint-Martin insists that the Réparateur must be both divine and human since humanity could not be regenerated if Christ had been solely a human Réparateur, while if the Réparateur had not become human the path of suffering would never have been opened and all suffering would have been in vain. Though Saint-Martin accepts that the restoration of fallen humanity began to take form at the moment of the Fall, whence the constant presence of the divine in history, he insists that salvation must await Christ. Christ’s sacrifice culminates the history of bloody sacrificial réparateurs of pre-Christian religions and societies and transforms humanity by offering the possibility of rebirth into a new life. Nevertheless, transformed humanity extends and will eventually complete Christ’s work and bring about reintegration. Through imitation of Christ, “men of desire” are not only redeemed but, coming after Christ and possessing the gift of the Spirit, surpass him in the work of the sanctification of the universe through suffering.

### 6. HISTORY

Do historical events play any role in effecting reintegration, or is history for Saint-Martin, as for Boehme and Martinès de Pasqually, simply the stage on which a spiritual drama is played out? Saint-Martin’s interpretation of the overwhelming historical event of his generation, the French Revolution, may serve as a test case for this question. Though Saint-Martin observed the Revolution and its social and political consequences with interest and even, in the beginning, enthusiasm, it troubled him, as it troubled an entire European generation. In the mid-1790s he worked out his response to it in *Lettre à un ami, ou Considérations politiques,*

*philosophiques et religieuses sur la Révolution française* (1795). He returned to the social lessons of the Revolution two years later in *Eclair sur l’association humaine. Le Crocodile* (1799), his novel treating the period leading up to the upheaval, is also relevant to Saint-Martin’s understanding of the Revolution.

History, for Saint-Martin, begins with the Fall. Since, as for Milton, the way back is barred, history is not a question of returning to a past, but of conquering a future. Historical events are signs of the “Great Work” of reintegration. Saint-Martin teaches that post-lapsarian humanity is possessed by nostalgia for its origin, and constantly seeks, without being aware of the true cause of its search, an ideal harmonious socio-political order in which to develop itself in its truth and its plenitude. The quest for such an order governs history. Saint-Martin interprets the socio-political life of humanity as a sequence of violent and convulsive efforts, which he calls crises, toward harmony. Crises, analogous to the delirium of the sick person whose convulsions are at once signs of the illness and of struggle against the illness, are simultaneously signs of the desire for reintegration and of progress toward reintegration. Crises assist the work of reintegration both because they add to the suffering that is part of the reintegrative process and because they provide ideal conditions for the reactivation of the primitive faculties of rapidity and energy characteristic of humanity in its primordial state but possessed only in potential since the Fall. The Revolutionary crisis, in particular, reactivates these primitive faculties and thus marks a new origin for humanity. Not only is this positive spiritual evolution irreversible, it will be extended to other nations through the spread of the Revolution. Historically, the Revolution raises the French people into a “people of the new law”, the law of action that succeeds ages of sacrifice and prayer. Saint-Martin described the Revolution as an ‘abridged image of the last judgement’ in recognition of its epochal status of inaugurating the reign of the *homme-esprit* who rediscovers its function of administering the universe by the creative power of the Word. The Revolution, like all actions in the physical world, is a sign of spiritual action, of divine magism. By manifesting rediscovered human energy and thereby announcing reintegration, the Revolution is a great sign marking the liberation of humanity. Liberation, here, includes an anti-clerical dimension: the Revolution destroyed a Catholic clergy which had interposed itself between God and the people. Saint-Martin’s interpretation of the Revolution, which decodes it as a hieroglyph of

spiritual meaning, was guided by his conviction that nothing happens without permission from Above. Saint-Martin both comprehends the Revolution within the providential order and declares it to be irreversible because it marks spiritual progress. But this positivity has its reverse. God regenerates France, but punishes it; the violence of the Revolution expiates its forgetfulness of God in the century past.

Saint-Martin's reflections on the Revolution contributed to the elaboration within his theosophy of a philosophy of history in which humanity, engaged in a process of historical becoming, raises itself to a dynamic consciousness of eternal truths. The "Great Work" of reintegration, as an epic of the human will, culminates when regenerated humanity, the *homme-esprit*, becomes once again a flawless mirror of Divinity, when the reconquest of humanity's quasi-divine status in the realization of its primordial state restores unity and universal harmony. The providential design for history is thus fulfilled, not by the establishment of new social and political institutions, but by spiritual reintegration. Historical events do not in themselves effect reintegration; rather, they are signs of the activity of the reawakened will and primitive faculties, which are the true agents of reintegration. Saint-Martin values history, not for itself, but for the divine signs it encodes. While his reflections on history and politics inspired certain socialist visionaries of the 1830s in their attempts to establish terrestrial utopias, for Saint-Martin himself historical events are symbolic of, not instrumental to, the reintegration of humanity. Though history points to it, Saint-Martin's new order is outside history altogether. While Saint-Martin's theosophy, reflecting the conviction of French Enlightenment thinkers that political events and social institutions are constituent elements of human development even while repudiating 18th-century rationalism and materialism, marks the beginning of the convergence of voluntarism and historical-mindedness, ultimately Saint-Martin regards reintegration as an interior reorientation of the will and looks to the end, not the culmination, of history.

#### 7. ARITHMOLOGY

Arithmology (or arithmosophy [→ Number Symbolism]) treats numbers not as conventionally agreed upon values, but as signs of the divinely established relationships uniting God, humanity and the universe. In this view, numbers are the expressions of the diverse properties of being; they express truth, but do not give us truths. The science of arithmology is thus a metaphysics of numbers in

which the value of particular integers and the relationships among them teach the investigator about the structure of the cosmos and the linkages among its levels. Arithmological speculation feeds on biblical passages in which specific dimensions are given, above all, those concerning Solomon's Temple and the Ark of the Covenant.

Arithmology was a recurrent interest of Saint-Martin, in which he was guided by Martinès de Pasqually and Boehme. It is prominent in *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité*, *Le Tableau naturel*, and *L'Esprit des choses*, in his correspondence with Kirchberger, and received in-depth treatment in the manuscript *Les Nombres* (published in two modern editions). *Les Nombres* opens with the proclamation: 'Numbers are only the abridged translation, or the concise language of the truths and laws of which the text and ideas are in God, in man, and in nature'. The balance of the work draws out the implications of this view within the structure of Saint-Martin's theosophy.

*Des erreurs et de la vérité, ou Les hommes rappelés au Principe universel de la science*, Edinburgh (Lyons), 1775 ♦ *Tableau naturel des rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'homme, et l'univers*, Edinburgh (Lyons), 1782 (in: *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 2) ♦ *L'Homme de désir*, Lyons, 1790 (in: *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 3) ♦ *Ecce Homo*, 1792 (in *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 4) ♦ *Le nouvel homme*, Paris, 1792 (in *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 4) ♦ *Lettre à un ami, ou Considérations politiques, philosophiques et religieuses sur la Révolution française*, Paris, 1795 (in *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 7) ♦ *Eclair sur l'association humaine*, Paris, 1797 (in *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 7) ♦ *Le Crocodile, ou la guerre du bien et du mal arrivée sous le règne de Louis XV: Poème épico-magique en 102 chants*, Paris, 1799; reprint Paris: librairie du Cercle social, 1976 ♦ *De l'esprit des choses, ou Coup d'oeil philosophique sur la nature des êtres et sur l'objet de leur existence*, Paris, 1800 (in *Oeuvres Majeures*, vol. 5) ♦ *Le Ministère de l'homme-esprit*, Paris, 1802; reprint Le Tremblay: Diffusion rosicrucienne, 1992 ♦ *Les Nombres* (Robert Amadou, ed.), Paris: Cariscript, 1983 ♦ *Les Nombres* (Nicole Jacques-Chaquin, ed.), Nice: Belisane, 1983 ♦ *Mon portrait historique et philosophique*, Robert Amadou (ed.), Paris: Julliard, 1961 ♦ *Oeuvres Majeures*, 5 vols., in 7 tomes (Robert Amadou, ed.), Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975-1990 ♦ *Correspondence inédite de L.-C. de Saint-Martin et Kirchberger* (L. Schauer & A. Chuquet, eds.), Paris: Dentu 1862 ♦ *Mon Livre vert* (Robert Amadou, ed.), Paris: Cariscript, 1991 ♦ Saint-Martin's translations of Jacob Boehme: *L'aurore naissante*, Paris, 1800 ♦ *Les Trois Principes de l'Essence Divine*, Paris, 1802 ♦ *De la Triple vie de l'Homme*, Paris, 1809 ♦ *Quarante questions sur l'âme*, Paris, 1807 ♦ English translations: *Theosophic correspondence between Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (The "Unknown Philosopher") and Kirchberger, baron de Liebisdorf*, Pasadena, CA:

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*Lit.*: *Les Cahiers de Saint-Martin*, Nice: Belisane, 1978-1984 ♦ *Présence de Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin: Textes inédits suivies des actes du Colloque sur Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin tenus à l'Université de Tours*, Tours: Société ligérienne de philosophie; Université de Tours, 1986 ♦ Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l'écrivain, 1750-1830*, Paris: J. Corti, 2nd edition 1985, chapter 3 ♦ Ernst Benz, *Les sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande*, Paris: Vrin 1968, chapter 5 ♦ Frank Paul Bowman, "Illuminism, Utopia, and Mythology", in: D.G. Charlton, *The French Romantics*, 2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 1, 76-112 ♦ Nicole Chaquin, "Le Citoyen Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Théosophe révolutionnaire", *Dix-Huitième Siècle* (Numéro spécial: *Lumières et Révolution*) 6 (1974), 209-224 ♦ Nicole Jacques-Chaquin, "Le Crocodile (1799) ou Le Paris fantastique d'une Révolution figurée", *Les Cahiers de Saint-Martin* 9 (1994), 236-257 ♦ Pierre Deghaye, "Jacob Boehme and His Followers", in: Antoine Faivre & Jacob Needleman (eds.), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, New York: Crossroad 1995, 245-246 ♦ Antoine Faivre, "Vis Imaginativa", in: *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 99-136 ♦ Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre, *Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, le philosophe inconnu (1743-1803): Un illuministe au siècle des Lumières*, Paris: Dervy, 2003 ♦ Jacques Matter, *Saint-Martin, le philosophe inconnu*, Paris: Didier, 1862 ♦ Arthur McCalla, "Illuminism and French Romantic Philosophies of History", in: Antoine Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, Louvain: Peeters 1998, 253-268 ♦ Papus [Gérard Encausse], *Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin*, Paris: Charcornac, 1902, repr. Paris: Demeter, 1988 ♦ Mieczysława Sekrecka, *Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin le Philosophe Inconnu*, Wrocław, 1968 ♦ Arthur Edward Waite, *The Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin* (1901), reprinted as *The Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, the Unknown Philosopher, and the substance of his transcendental doctrine*, Blauvelt, NY: R. Steiner Publications, 1970.

ARTHUR MCCALLA

**Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Joseph Alexandre**, \* 26.3.1842 Paris,  
† 6.2.1909 Pau (Basses-Pyrénées)

The name of "synarchy" given to the synthesis of all human knowledge, as dreamed of by Saint-Yves, played an extraordinary role within the myth of conspiracy that flourished around World War II, bearing no relationship to its author's intentions. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's reputation was solidly established in the Parisian world after an adventur-

ous life, followed by a written oeuvre that was widely recognized. The early years were difficult for this son of a doctor (most likely an alienist) who treated him very harshly and finally sent him to Mettray, a boarding school specializing in young delinquents but headed by an admirable man, Frédéric Demetz (1796-1873), whom the young rebel considered as a father-figure and an inspirer. Here Saint-Yves read widely and became possessed by the idea of a mission to be accomplished: to become the "Pythagoras of Christianity". After passing his baccalaureate in Paris and serving in the National Marines simultaneously with medical studies, he joined the French exiles around Victor Hugo (1802-1885) on the island of Jersey. Disciples of Pierre Leroux (1797-1871) introduced him to the master, and more importantly to Virginie Faure, a charming old lady who had known → Fabre d'Olivet, and who perhaps owned the latter's manuscripts that Saint-Yves was later accused of plagiarizing. After Jersey, Saint-Yves went to England and made friends with Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton (1831-1891), the son of the author of the initiatic novel *Zanoni* [→ Edward George Bulwer-Lytton. There was a rumor that Saint-Yves had also met the elder Lytton, as well as → Eliphaz Lévi. The turning-point in his life came with his marriage in 1877 to Marie-Victoire, Countess Keller (1827-1895), daughter of a family of chamberlains to the Tsar and close to Madame Hanska (1801-1882), who married Balzac (1799-1850). The couple settled in a magnificent town house in Paris, then in Versailles, where Saint-Yves, endowed with a papal title of Marquis d'Alveydre but spurned by high society, concentrated on realizing his spiritual destiny, supported by the active admiration of his wife.

Saint-Yves conceived a vast historical system around the cycle of Ram, legislator of our humanity (Abraham – Ab-Ram – owed his name to him), whose secret spiritual direction has always been exercised through the intermediary of the "King of the world" out of his subterranean city of "Agartha". The modern world might regain the harmony lost in successive schisms by submitting to the "universal trinitarian synarchy". Saint-Yves presented his project from 1882 onwards, publishing a series of "Missions": *Mission actuelle des Souverains* (Current mission of the sovereigns, 1882), *Mission actuelle des ouvriers* (Current mission of the workers, 1882), *Mission des Juifs* (Mission of the Jews, 1884), *Mission de l'Inde* (Mission of India, 1886, published posthumously), and *Les Etats généraux du suffrage universel* (The states-general of universal suffrage, 1888). His oeuvre was addressed to the political world, the syndicates, the cultivated public,



but definitely not to the occultists, whose organizations he carefully avoided; it proposed the institution of a hierarchy of economic, political, and religious powers in a great spiritual body, conceived on the model of the Christian Trinity. Thanks to communications with his deceased wife, which he received from 1897 in his private chapel at Versailles, he completed his revelation by conceiving of a machine of universal correspondences (sounds, colors, forms): *L'Archéomètre* (1911), which also gave the key to the primordial language of Watan. The "Friends of Saint-Yves" undertook the posthumous publication of the work, but soon fell apart; nonetheless, his influence was felt in fields as various as architecture, → music, the plastic arts, and in the Western Indianism between the World Wars.

*Clefs de l'Orient*, Paris: Didier, 1877 ♦ *Mission actuelle des souverains*, Paris: Dentu, 1882 ♦ *Mission actuelle des ouvriers*, Paris: Dentu, 1882 ♦ *La Théogonie des patriarches . . .*, Paris: La Librairie hermétique, 1909 ♦ *Mission de l'Inde en Europe*, Paris: Dorbon, 1910 ♦ *L'Archéomètre – Clef de toutes les religions et de toutes les sciences de l'Antiquité – Réforme synthétique de tous les arts contemporains*, Paris: Dorbon, 1911.

Lit.: Philippe Encausse, *Sciences occultes ou 25 années d'occultisme occidental: Papus, sa vie, son œuvre*, Paris: Ocia, 1949, 317-371 ♦ Jean Saunier, *Saint-Yves d'Alveydre ou une synarchie sans énigme*, Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1981 ♦ Joscelyn Godwin, *Music and the Occult*, Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1995, 181-196 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'Esotérisme chrétien en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1992, vols. 4, 5 ♦ Olivier Dard, *La synarchie ou le mythe du complot permanent*, Paris: Le grand livre du mois, 1998 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, "Saint-Yves d'Alveydre fondateur du pacte synarchique", *Le Figaro* (5.3) 1998.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Saltzmann, Frédéric-Rodolphe**, \* year unknown Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, † 7.10.1821 Strasbourg

Saltzmann's father, Jean-Rodolphe, son of a wealthy Strasbourg merchant, was pastor at Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines from 1746 to 1759. His mother, Marie-Elisabeth Sauer, was daughter of a manufacturer in the Val d'Argent. In 1759, Saltzmann Sr. was appointed pastor at the Temple Neuf in Strasbourg, and Frédéric-Rodolphe became a pupil at the famous Protestant gymnasium, Jean Sturm. In 1765 he entered the Theology faculty of the University of Strasbourg, but very soon changed to the Law faculty, while still following courses at the Faculty of Letters.

Before devoting himself to → mysticism and → Christian theosophy, Saltzmann led a worldly life. On leaving the university, he became tutor to Baron von Stein, the future reformer of Prussian institutions. Saltzmann's correspondence with Madame von Stein displays his first literary activities at Göttingen, particularly the publication of an *Almanach des Muses* (Muses' almanac) modeled on that of Delalain in Paris. His cultural and literary activities after his return to Strasbourg obtained for him first the secretariat, then the directorship of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft* (German society) founded by the poet Lenz, and of its organ, *Der Bürgerfreund* (The burgher's friend). Saltzmann was also responsible for the publication of another Strasbourg periodical, the *Gelehrte Kunstnachrichten* (Learned art news), organ of the Société des gens de Lettres (Society of literary people) founded by Blessig and Jean de Turckheim.

With these varied literary activities and a vast knowledge of books, which had put him in touch with the famous Berlin publisher of the Enlightenment, Friedrich Nicolai, Saltzmann was well prepared for the work of bookseller and journalist. In 1782 he acquired the *Librairie Académique*. When the French Revolution broke out, he owned the most important newspapers in Strasbourg. This situation destined him to play a role in political events. A member of the moderate party, he was soon, along with them, the target, then the victim, of the Jacobins. Banishment was his reward.

These trials seemed to Saltzmann to be Providence's invitation to turn away from worldly affairs. His "conversion" had been prepared by frequenting pietist circles [→ Pietism], and also by his activities within the Templar Freemasonry [→ Neo-Templar Traditions; → Freemasonry] of Strasbourg. During a stay in Lyon, from December 1777 to January 1778, he prepared with Jean de Turckheim and → J.B. Willermoz the reformation of French Freemasonry, beginning with the recasting of the symbolic degrees and that of the Scottish Master. Henceforth, the French Templars took the name of → Chevaliers Bienfaisants de la Cité Sainte. This reform was ratified at the Convent of Wilhelmsbad in 1782. Saltzmann (ab hedera) was a member of the Collège des Grands Profès (College of great professed [masons]) created the previous year by Willermoz at the Convent des Gaules. Saltzmann, with Plessen, succeeded in rallying Ferdinand of Brunswick and Charles of Hesse for this new system. But the cause was far from won. In 1785, Saltzmann had to tour the towns of Germany to investigate the situation in the lodges and



hold negotiations in view of their adherence to the Chevaliers – a journey that was disappointing, whatever he said of it.

The Terror marked a break in Saltzmann's life, after which he devoted himself almost exclusively to theosophic and mystical speculations, inseparably linked. The Bible, and especially the writings of the Apostles, held first place here with the Fathers of the Church. But above all, Saltzmann formed a bond with the → mysticism of the Middle Ages. He recognized Johannes Tauler as a spiritual father, → Jacob Boehme as another. Following Tauler, Saltzmann preached the necessity of a mystical union with God in the depths of the uncreated soul of the divinity, in order to cast off the old man and bring about the birth of the new man, who would then regain his primordial power from before the Fall. The end would return to the beginning. Like → Saint-Martin, Saltzmann followed Boehme in his cosmogonic and anthroposophic theories. Averse to the idea of eternal punishment, he also decreed the final reintegration of all beings. Saltzmann and Oberlin gave a graphic description of the other world, relying on the theories of → Swedenborg, among others. Saltzmann debated these in copious correspondence with his theosophic brethren: → Jung-Stilling, → Johann Friedrich von Meyer, → Johann Caspar Lavater and his Zurich circle, Heribert de Berne, and others.

Among Saltzmann and his friends, the prospect of the future was resolutely optimistic, because our era, even though destined to see the general destruction at the end of time (which they thought to be imminent), would give way to a new golden age marked by the return of Christ and destined to last a thousand years. The German Romantics [→ Romanticism] would in turn take up this vision of the golden age, but with a different orientation, for they turned to a far-off, mythic past.

Saltzmann never hoped for his theosophic teaching to act on the broad mass of Christians, and would have wished the esotericism of his thought to have prevented it. He only wanted to address the “men of aspiration”, that little band of interior Christians, that long chain of the children of God, present and future, who are affiliated to the first Christians, whose spiritual heritage they have received and whose superior enlightenment, known to them alone, they transmit to other initiates.

The works of Saltzmann appeared anonymously. Their author was identified thanks to his correspondence with Jung-Stilling and J.F. von Meyer. Several of the writings mentioned therein have disappeared, while others have remained in manuscript, including his autobiography.

*Es wird alles neu werden*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1802-1810 ♦ *Bemerkungen über die letzten Zeiten und die zweyte sichtbare Zukunft Jesu Christi zur Errichtung seines herrlichen Reiches auf Erden, von einem Forscher der Wahrheit*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1806 ♦ *Ein Wort der Vereinigung, oder Beantwortung der Frage: Ist die Tradition eine zuverlässige Erkenntnisquelle der christlichen Religion in unseren Zeiten*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1808 ♦ *Was ist Tod, Todtenbehältniss, Errettung vom Tode und Auferstehung*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1810 ♦ *Blicke in das Geheimnis des Rathschlusses Gottes über die Menschheit von der Schöpfung bis ans Ende der Welt*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1810 ♦ *Religion der Bibel in Abhandlungen über einige Stellen der heiligen Schrift, zur Erbauung für gebildete Leser, nach den Bedürfnissen unserer Zeit*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1811 ♦ *Es ist die letzte Stunde*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1815 ♦ *Geist und Wahrheit oder Religion der Geweihten*, Strasbourg: Silbermann, 1816.

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JULES KELLER

**Sangro di San Severo, Raimondo di**  
\* 30.1.1710 Torremaggiore (Foggia,  
Italy), † 22.3.1771 Naples

One of the significant figures in the early history of Italian → Freemasonry, Prince Raimondo di Sangro di San Severo was born into one of the most illustrious families of the Naples aristocracy, with family connections extending to European royalty dating back to the Middle Ages. A pupil of Jesuit schools in Rome and Naples, di Sangro emerged in the 1730s as an inventor in several different fields, from fireworks to weaponry, and from hydraulic machines to new fabrics and tapestries. Some of his inventions were greeted with skepticism; others, particularly in the military field (in which di Sangro also excelled, as a commander in the Neapolitan army), apparently worked well, and their creator was celebrated as a precocious, if somewhat bizarre, genius.

Freemasonry, which had its earliest and largest Italian lodges in Naples, became one of di Sangro's most dominant interests in the late 1740s. Even before his formal initiation (possibly no earlier than 1750), and his installation as Grand Master of Neapolitan Freemasonry shortly after, di Sangro wrote several works and letters to political figures in which, capitalizing on his military successes, he argued that the most successful European armies (in empires such as Prussia and Britain) were those which counted mostly active Freemasons among their generals.

This is an argument also advanced in di Sangro's most controversial work, the *Lettera Apologetica*, published in 1750. The *Lettera* is an apology, against Catholic critics, in defense of Freemasonry and its usefulness to monarchs, armies, and the population in general. It is also an unashamed apology for the di Sangro family and its role in Neapolitan history. It is much more than that, however, insofar as it includes (particularly in its very lengthy footnotes) a theory of language, of the magical power of words, and of mysterious sacred languages. Central among these in the *Lettera* is the "quipù", i.e. the language expressed, according to di Sangro, in the knotted cords used by the Incas in Peru (and burned as potentially demonic by Jesuit missionaries). The "quipù", di Sangro argued, reveals secrets of potentially universal value, a truth beyond all sectarian truths in the shape of the "Pachacamac", a benevolent original God who was, it was claimed, surprisingly similar to the → Hermes Trismegistus of the Hermetic tradition.

With the *Lettera* and other works, di Sangro made two different sets of powerful enemies. One included the Roman Catholic Church, the Inquisition (exposed in the *Lettera* in the style of an Enlightened philosopher), and the Jesuits, who accused di Sangro of trading Christianity for a pantheism à la John Toland (1669-1722). The other was the rationalist wing of Freemasonry, which did not like di Sangro's reliance on sacred languages and exotic occult secrets.

For a number of political reasons, di Sangro decided to make peace with the Church. In 1751, when Rome proceeded to excommunicate Freemasons, he accepted to deliver to the authorities a list of all Naples' Freemasons, resigned as Grand Master on July 24, and wrote to the Pope on August 1, seeking forgiveness and the lifting of his excommunication. Although he was informed verbally that the Pope regarded his excommunication as no longer in force, the Catholic Church nonetheless included the *Lettera* in its *Index* of forbidden books in 1752.

To Catholics who claimed that, although perhaps no longer a Freemason, he was still a pantheist, di Sangro answered by re-interpreting his theory of "quipù" in a booklet published in 1753 and dedicated to the Pope; and by drafting and circulating (but not publishing) an *Antitoland* in 1754, in which he tried, with great care, to distinguish his ideas from Toland's pantheism. To Freemasons, who accused him of having betrayed the order, di Sangro replied that his criticism was only directed against the rationalist wing of Freemasonry; in fact, he continued to write about → alchemy and → hermeticism, at least throughout the late 1750s.

Critics created the legend of di Sangro as a dabbler in black → magic and occult sciences [→ occult/occultism], still reproduced in countless works of popular literature. In fact, there is no evidence that he ever practiced ritual magic, and his approach to Freemasonry was, as he claimed, "philosophical", although his philosophy was more in the tradition of → Giordano Bruno than of the Enlightenment *philosophes*. A frequent accusation against di Sangro is that he was insincere and ready to compromise his ideas when political advantages for himself and his family were at stake. di Sangro's ideas were so peculiar, however, that he could with some sincerity deny complete self-identification with any organization of his time, from Freemasonry to the Roman Catholic Church.

On the other hand, a grand idea of the di Sangro family undoubtedly dominated the Prince's life, and should be taken into account when interpreting di Sangro's most visible legacy, i.e. the extraordinary Temple of Piety that he built in his family's Sansevero Chapel in Naples. A late Baroque masterpiece, the Temple does in fact include elements of Freemasonry and non-Christian religions. There is a risk, however, of reading too much into its convoluted architecture and sculptures, and those who look for hidden alchemical secrets are influenced as much by legend as by the real-life figure of the Prince di San Severo. They forget that the Temple was also built in celebration of the di Sangro family, and of the grandiose sense of self-importance of an aristocrat who was not ashamed to dedicate his most important literary works to none other than himself.

*Pratica più agevole e più utile di Esercizij Militari per l'infanteria*, Naples: G. Di Simone, 1747 ♦ *Lettera Apologetica dell'Esercizio Accademico della Crusca contenente la Difesa del Libro Intitolato Lettere d'una Peruana per rispetto alla supposizione de' Quipi scritta alla Duchessa di S. . . e dalla medesima fatta pubblicare*, Naples: n.p., 1750 ♦ *Supplica di Raimondo di*

*Sangro, Principe di Sangro di San Severo, Umiliata alla Santità di Benedetto XIV, Pontefice Ottimo Massimo, in difesa per rischiaramento della sua Lettera Apologetica sul proposito de' Quipù de' Peruani*, Naples: Salzano e Castaldo, 1753.

*Lit.*: L. Sansone Vagni, *Raimondo di Sangro Principe di San Severo*, 2nd ed., Foggia: Bastogi, 1992 ♦ Vincenzo Ferrone, *I profeti dell'Illuminismo: Le metamorfosi della ragione nel tardo Settecento italiano*, Roma & Bari: Laterza, 1989.

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Satanism

Theologically, Satanism has been defined as a religious or philosophical system which professes or manifests a hatred of Christianity. Historians and religious studies scholars usually adopt a different definition, and limit Satanism to the adoration, in an organized and ritual form, of the figure known in the Bible as the Devil or Satan. According to this definition, therefore, early modern → witchcraft cannot be defined as Satanism: whatever it was, it was not an *organized* form of Devil worship.

Organized Satanism is a modern phenomenon. Its first incarnation was in the circle operating, at the Versailles court of Louis XIV (1638-1715), around Catherine La Voisin (?-1680) and the defrocked Catholic priest Father Guibourg (whose first name is never mentioned in contemporary accounts: 1603-1683). La Voisin invented the “black Mass”, i.e. an “inverted” Roman Catholic Mass in which, by appropriately changing the formulae, Satan is worshiped and Jesus Christ is cursed. Black Masses at which Guibourg and other renegade Catholic priests officiated were sold by La Voisin as means of obtaining specific favors (such as money or love) from Satan to a number of nobles, including the King’s lover, Madame Françoise de Montespan (1641-1707). In 1695 the royal guards discovered the ring; but because the subsequent investigation involved too many well-known figures it was not carried to its full conclusion, although La Voisin was burned at the stake in 1680 and Guibourg died in jail in 1683. The Versailles incident became famous all over Europe thanks to the then recently acquired prominence of the press, and small rings imitating what they had read of La Voisin and Guibourg were subsequently discovered in France, Italy, and Russia. In the 18th century, the Hell Fire Clubs and the Society of St. Francis, created by British politician and dilettante Sir Francis Dashwood (1708-1781), were in turn

accused of being Satanist organizations, although they were rather anticlerical and libertine clubs, not particularly interested in Devil worship. Catholic authors later connected these episodes to the French Revolution, which they believed had been masterminded by anti-Catholic Satanists. Between 1800 and 1865, more than thirty influential works, exposing a widespread Satanist conspiracy, were published in France and in other countries. This religious literature became discredited by its own excesses, however, and slowly disappeared.

In the 1880s, Jules Bois (1868-1943) and novelist → Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907) explored the French occult underworld, and in 1891 Huysmans published his best-selling novel on Satanism, *Là-bas*, which included one of the most famous literary descriptions of a Black Mass. The Satanists of the 1880s were not invented by Huysmans; they already existed, although they had admittedly only a few members in two or three small cults operating in France and Belgium. Again, public opinion overreacted and, in the wake of the success of *Là-bas* sensational revelations on a worldwide Satanic conspiracy were offered to the French public by journalist Léo Taxil, whose real name was Marie-Joseph-Antoine-Gabriel Jogand-Pagès (1854-1907). He had also announced, with much fanfare, his conversion from → Freemasonry and anti-clericalism to Roman Catholicism in 1885. Taxil revealed that a huge Satanist organization called “Palladism” was behind political anti-Catholicism, Freemasonry, → Spiritualism, and occultism [→ occult/occultism], all placed under the authority of a “Satanic Pope”, revealed to be the prominent American freemason Albert Pike (1809-1891). Eventually, Taxil’s sensational stories came under increasing scrutiny by both Freemasons (including the British Masonic encyclopaedist → Arthur Edward Waite, 1857-1942) and Catholics (particularly the Jesuit press in France and Germany). In 1897, Taxil confessed at a conference in Paris that there was neither a Palladism, nor a worldwide Satanic conspiracy at all; his own conversion to Catholicism had also been a hoax which he had conceived in order to convince the world just how gullible the anti-Masonic Catholics of his time actually were.

Although a body of literature inspired by the Taxil fraud continued to be published well into the 20th century (including *L’Élué du Dragon*, a 1929 book claiming that U.S. President James Abram Garfield, 1831-1881, had replaced Albert Pike as chief of the worldwide Satanic conspiracy before his assassination in 1881), anti-Satanism was

largely discredited after the infamous Taxil hoax. When in the 1930s Russian-born occultist Maria de Naglowska (1883-1936) established an openly Satanist cult in Paris, the press was more amused than scandalized, and some newspapers characterized her kind of Satanism as an interesting “religious experiment”. The international press was less kind when British magus → Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) shocked his contemporaries by styling himself ‘the Beast 666’ and ‘the wickedest man in the world’. Crowley made use of Satanic imagery and is still regarded by many as the founding father of contemporary Satanism. The British occultist, however, was a “magical atheist” who did not believe in the actual existence of Satan; and although he has been influential on later Satanic movements, he should not be regarded as a Satanist in the narrower, technical sense of the term. On the other hand, it is true that Crowley enthusiasts, including movie director Kenneth Anger, were instrumental in founding the Church of Satan in San Francisco in 1966, its notorious spokesman being the former carnival performer Anton Szandor LaVey (pseudonym of Howard Stanton Levey, 1930-1997). LaVey’s Church of Satan and its main splinter group, Michael Aquino’s Temple of Set, remain the largest Satanic organizations in the world. They are not large, however: in fact, their combined active membership (not to be confused with their mailing lists) does not exceed one thousand people and is probably even smaller. The main reason for Aquino’s schism from LaVey was that the former believed in the literal existence of Satan (or Seth), while LaVey, although believing in the power of → magic and ritual, regarded Satan as a metaphor for each person’s higher self, which emerges when liberation is achieved from the strictures of Judaeo-Christian morality.

LaVey’s notoriety certainly played a role in the early stages of the anti-Satanist campaign of the 1970s and 1980s. In his early studies of hysteria, Sigmund Freud used hypnosis, and for a while became convinced that what he called the “theory of seduction” could explain the genesis of hysteria in female patients. All the patients he hypnotized, in fact, remembered being sexually abused in childhood, a memory they were not conscious of while not under hypnosis. While Freud was initially persuaded that these memories corresponded to real, historical instances of abuse, he became perplexed when, continuing the hypnotic therapy, almost all the patients “remembered” abuse by Satanists (mostly their parents) in bizarre ceremonies and apparitions of the Devil himself. Freud dismissed these stories as fantasies, abandoned the theory of

seduction and went on to formulate the alternative explanation for hysteria which eventually made him famous. Eighty years after Freud’s early career, the theory of seduction surfaced again. A Canadian Catholic therapist, Lawrence Pazder, was told by his patient Michelle Smith that she had been abused as a child by a Satanic cult of international proportions twenty years before, had witnessed horrible scenes of human sacrifice and cannibalism, had seen the Devil in person, but had forgotten all these experiences until beginning therapy with Pazder. Unlike Freud, Pazder concluded that Smith’s memories corresponded to true and actual historical events, publishing in 1980 a book that eventually became a bestseller, *Michelle Remembers*. Although the book was written from a religious point of view, it was welcomed more by certain secular mental health professionals than by the churches. Michelle’s story was interpreted within the context of an ongoing discussion on Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), a disorder whereby the same patient “dissociates” into different “alters” who speak with different voices, may have very different personalities and may not remember what the other “alters” think or do. Therapist Cornelia Wilbur was instrumental in promoting the theory that MPD was almost invariably the result of severe childhood trauma, often in the form of sexual abuse. As a result of increasing media coverage of MPD, thousands of patients in the United States began claiming that they were “survivors” who had been abused by Satanic cults in their childhood. Therapists and anti-Satanist activists alike ultimately repudiated Freud, claiming that the survivors’ stories were literally true. They also called for quick action by public authorities to uncover the perpetrators, who were, they claimed, members of a vast, “multigenerational” and deadly dangerous Satanic conspiracy. Anti-Satanists also speculated that MPD does not always arise as a spontaneous protection mechanism against traumatic memories, but may instead be “planted” by Satanists, who presumably have access to sophisticated psycho-technologies enabling them to brainwash children to dissociation, making their memories so garbled that future identification of the perpetrators becomes virtually impossible. Influenced by the survivor stories, some therapists reasoned that the Satanic cults were probably still operating, and that many of the child sexual abuse incidents (unfortunately common in the United States and elsewhere) may include an undetected Satanic element. The first and the most famous court case arising from these claims involved the McMartin Preschool in the

affluent Los Angeles suburb of Manhattan Beach. The McMartin case began in 1983, when the principals and a number of teachers of the respected preschool were accused of operating an underground Satanic cult, which ritually abused and tortured children. Mental health professionals involved in the case were later accused of having “planted” the stories in the children’s minds (some of them only two or three years old) based on their own theories about Satanic conspiracies. The McMartin trial was the most expensive in United States legal history, and ended in 1990 with no convictions. It had an enormous media impact, however, and undoubtedly had something to do with the hundreds of subsequent similar accusations of Satanic ritual abuses in both day-care centers and in family settings. Although complete statistical data is lacking, it is possible that as many as two thousand cases of Satanic ritual abuse of children were investigated in the decade 1983-1992. Although, in a handful of cases, pedophiles did use Satanic symbols and paraphernalia in order to scare their victims, there was no evidence confirming the existence of an international Satanic network of abusers. Gradually, sociologists and other academics emerged as the most vocal critics of the theory of a Satanic conspiracy and did much to ridicule the stories of survivors.

By 1991, even some psychiatric MPD specialists were harboring doubts on the factual truth of the survivors’ Satanic stories. In 1994 two official reports, one by the U.S. National Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, and one by sociologist Jean S. La Fontaine on behalf of the U.K. government, concluded that stories of Satanic ritual abuse were largely figments of the survivors’ imaginations, that no secret Satanic underground existed, and that the imaginary evil of international Satanic pedophile cults should not be confused with the very real evil of pedophilia. After these reports, the number of court cases involving allegations of Satanic ritual abuse decreased from several hundreds to less than ten per year on a worldwide scale, and most convictions based on survivors’ accounts were reversed on appeal.

It is also important not to confuse the debate on the Satanic ritual abuse of children with discussions of adolescent Satanism. There is little doubt that there are gangs of teenagers performing some sort of home-made Satanic ritual mix (copied from comics, books or movies) and drug parties. These teenagers are often guilty of minor crimes such as vandalism or animal sacrifice. In less than a dozen cases over the last two decades, more serious crimes appear to have been committed, including a

handful of murders. In these cases, it is difficult to determine whether drug, gang-related violence or Satan worship are mostly responsible for the crimes. What is clear is that teenage Satanism is not connected with any international conspiracy, and is a different phenomenon from both “ritual” child abuse by adult pedophiles and the religious Satanism represented by leaders such as the late Anton LaVey or Michael Aquino. As far as the latter is concerned, the excesses of the anti-Satanist campaigns based on survivor accounts have again made the media more reluctant to attack religious Satanism. Indeed Satanic rituals are still being practiced, comparatively undisturbed by the authorities, by the Temple of Set, what remains of the Church of Satan after LaVey’s death in 1997, and a handful of smaller organizations (the largest of which may have been the Italian Children of Satan in the 1990s).

Summing up, from the Court of Louis XIV right through contemporary California, the pendulum has periodically swung between Satanism and anti-Satanism. Small Satanic cults have existed from time to time and have produced (since Satanism is, by definition, intolerable) gross overreactions in the form of Satanism scares. The success of the anti-Satanist campaigns has been limited by their own exaggerations. The fact that each wave of anti-Satanism has been discredited, has allowed new Satanic cults to operate for a while, creating in turn a new overreaction, and so on.

Maria de Naglowska, *La lumière du sexe: Rituel d’initiation satanique selon la doctrine du troisième terme de la trinité*, Paris: Éditions de la Flèche, 1932 ♦ Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, New York: Avon Books, 1969 ♦ Michael Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, Los Angeles: The Author, 1989 ♦ Michelle Smith & Lawrence Pazder, *Michelle Remembers*, New York: Congdon & Lattès, 1980.

*Lit.*: Massimo Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme: Satanistes et anti-satanistes du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours*, Paris: Dervy, 1997 ♦ James T. Richardson, Joel Best & David G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991 ♦ Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, Chicago/La Salle (Illinois): Open Court, 1993 ♦ Karl R.H. Frick, *Satan und die Satanisten*, 3 vols., Graz: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1982-1986 [with great caution].

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

## Satornilus, ca. 120

Satornilus (Gr. Satorneilos, in Lat. sources Saturninus) was a Christian Gnostic [→ Gnosticism]



active in Antioch. Our knowledge of Saturnilus derives almost exclusively from the information provided by Irenaeus of Lyons in his *Adversus Haereses* I, 24, 1-2 (ca. 180). According to Irenaeus and other anti-Gnostic writers Saturnilus was a pupil of → Menander, but this view is based more on the assumption of a Gnostic “genealogy” than on a correspondence between their essential doctrines. He taught that there existed one Unknown Father who had created ‘angels, archangels, powers and dominions’. Seven specific angels had made the world and everything in it, and man also was a creation of the angels. When an image of light from the highest power appeared in the world and the angels were unable to catch it, since it immediately withdrew to heaven, they said to each other: ‘Let us make man after the image and the likeness’ (Gen. 1:26). So they did, but because of their weakness they could not raise their mould, which crawled like a worm. Then the Power on high had pity with this creature because it was its image, and sent a spark of life which raised the first man and made him alive. At death the spark of life returns to its origin and the body is decomposed into its constituents. This biblically inspired creation myth is typically Gnostic; it is found in several Gnostic documents, *inter alia* in the *Apocryphon of John*.

Saturnilus’ doctrine of salvation, as reported by Irenaeus, does not completely fit, or at least qualifies, the creation story mentioned above. A distinction is now made between the Unknown Father, the angels who created the world, and the demons. The Jewish God is one of the angels and probably their head; the devil, who apparently is the chief of the demons, was originally an angel but hostile to the other angels and the Jewish God. The prophecies were partly given by the angels, partly by the devil, which implies that Saturnilus valued certain Old Testament prophecies more than others. This shows that Saturnilus took part in the 2nd-century discussions about the meaning of the Jewish scriptures within the Christian context. But notwithstanding this differentiation between the heavenly powers, Saturnilus taught at the same time that they all tried to remove the Father from his supreme position and that for that reason Christ had been sent. It was his mission to break the power of the Jewish God and save those who would believe in him, i.e. those who possess the spark of Life. It now turns out that the angels had made two kinds of human beings, good and evil ones. Only the good ones had received the spark of life, the evil ones are assisted by the demons. The primeval man who was raised up by the spark of

life apparently symbolizes the class of good people, the one who crawled on the ground and was unable to stand up refers to the class of evil people. The Saviour has come to destroy both the demons and all evil men and to save the good ones.

Saturnilus and his followers abstained from marriage and the begetting of children as instigations of Satan, and also from carnal food. In doing so, Irenaeus says, ‘they deceived many by this seeming abstinence’. If Irenaeus’ report is trustworthy – and there are no reasons to doubt it – Saturnilus adhered to or, less probable, developed himself an early version of the classic Gnostic myth as represented, in a more developed form, by the *Apocryphon of John* and related texts. Saturnilus may have been influenced by Jewish speculations on the creation of the world and man, but his rejection of the Jewish God and the clear distinction he made between two classes of human beings make him one of the first Christian Gnostics of whom we know more than a name.

A. Rousseau & L. Doutreleau (eds.), *Irénee de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre I* (SC 264), Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1979 (with French translation); English trans., after the German trans. by W. Foerster, in: idem (ed.), *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, English trans. edited by R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, 40-41.

ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

**Scabelloni, Antonio** → Scaligero, Massimo

**Scaligero, Massimo** (Antonio Scabelloni), \* 17.9.1906 Veroli (Province of Frosinone, Italy), † 26.1.1980 Rome

One of the most distinguished members of the Italian Anthroposophical Society [→ Anthroposophy], Scaligero was born as Antonio Scabelloni in Veroli (not far from Rome) on September 17, 1906. As a teenager, he became interested in yoga and in different forms of Western esotericism, and in 1921, while on vacation in Sardinia, had a mystical experience of the universe as light and energy. He subsequently became a disciple of Giovanni Colazza (1877-1953) at that time the member of the Italian Anthroposophical Society closest to Anthroposophy’s founder → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Scaligero later reported that Colazza was one of the twelve chosen disciples with whom

Steiner attempted in 1913-1914 to perform a ritual which, had it succeeded, would allegedly have prevented World War I.

In those years, Colazza also worked closely with → Arturo Reghini (1878-1946), → Julius Evola (1898-1974), the poet Arturo Onofri (1885-1928) and others within the framework of Rome's "Gruppo di Ur". Although several members of this group were neo-pagans, Colazza maintained a firm Anthroposophical orientation (and, in 1924, persuaded Onofri to preface the first Italian edition of Steiner's *Occult Science*). Contrary to persistent rumours, Scaligero was not a member of the group at this time; he was introduced to Evola only in 1930. A favourable review of one of Evola's works on race later caused Colazza's young disciple (who had now adopted the pen name of Massimo Scaligero) to be occasionally counted, after World War II, among those intellectuals who supported Fascist anti-semitism. Actually Scaligero was not particularly interested in Fascist politics at that time, although he later wrote, in the 1960s, several books criticizing Marxism and counted among his students several young right-wing intellectuals.

Scaligero went on to befriend Evola, but (just as his master Colazza) nonetheless remained a devoted Anthroposophist throughout his entire life. His books, published from the 1950s to the 1970s, confirm his basic Anthroposophical orientation. They are, however, interesting for their many references to several movements and figures of Italian esotericism. In this milieu, Scaligero knew almost everybody, and was widely respected. He wrote about practically every topic discussed within the esoteric "underground", and frequently added new insights of his own. His sister, Adelina Scabelloni (1908-2000), married Christian esotericist Paolo M. Virio (pseudonym of Paolo Marchetti, 1910-1969), and in turn wrote several esoteric books under the pen name of Luciana Virio.

*Avvento dell'uomo interiore: Lineamenti di una tecnica dell'esperienza soprasensibile*, Florence: Sansoni, 1959 ♦ *Trattato del pensiero vivente: Una Via oltre le filosofie occidentali, oltre lo yoga, oltre lo Zen*, Milan: Feriani, 1961 ♦ *La luce: Introduzione all'Immaginazione creatrice*, Rome: Tilopa, 1963 ♦ *Graal: Saggio sul Mistero del Sacro Amore*, Rome: Perseo, 1969 ♦ *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, Rome: Perseo, 1972 ♦ *Reincarnazione e karma*, Rome: Mediterranee, 1976.

Lit.: F. Belfiori & G. Burrini (eds.), *Massimo Scaligero: Il coraggio dell'impossibile*, Teramo: Tilopa, 1982.

MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

**Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von,**  
\* 27.1.1775 Leonberg, † 20.8.1854  
Ragaz

The son of a pastor, and himself a student (with Hölderlin and Hegel) in the seminary of Tübingen, Schelling very soon began to publish works in the tradition of Fichte. As early as 1797 he became professor at the University of Jena, and subsequently, in 1803, at that of Würzburg. In 1801 he parted ways with Fichte, in presenting his own system of philosophy. From 1806 to 1827, he left teaching to occupy the lucrative and undemanding position of director of the Academy of Fine Arts of Bavaria. In 1827 he once more became a professor, at the University of Munich, and in 1841 he was called to the University of Berlin. His inaugural lecture has been described by Karl Jaspers as the last great public event of the German university. However, the student audiences remained faithful to the memory of Hegel and soon deserted Schelling, who took his definitive retirement in 1846.

A professor showered with honors and a philosopher universally recognized as one of the most typical representatives of German idealism (together with his teacher Fichte and his comrade Hegel), at first glance Schelling may not seem to belong to the history of esotericism. In fact, he did not have much opportunity to actually encounter representatives of esotericism in his life – except for a friendship, soon broken off, with → Franz von Baader. However, a reading of his work and his correspondence nevertheless reveals a precocious contact with Germanic → Christian theosophy, first through the works of → Oetinger (which were in his family's library), then, probably starting in 1802, by a direct reading of → Boehme. This influence is evident in the most original part of the young professor's work, his *Naturphilosophie*, developed notably in *Die Weltseele* (The World Soul, 1797), *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (Presentation of my System of Philosophy, 1801), and *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* (Aphorisms about *Naturphilosophie*, 1806). We find in it the typical Boehmenist pattern of a revelation of the Absolute, beginning paradoxically with its *velatio* in matter subject to gravity, and then freed from matter through the redemptive action of light. However, the perspective in Schelling's case is not so much that of Christianity as that of an astral paganism in the lineage of → Giordano Bruno (*Bruno*, 1802).

Schelling's viewpoint changes in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der*

*menschlichen Freiheit* (Philosophical investigations about the essence of human freedom) contemporaneous with the meeting with Baader (1809), and in Schelling's major unfinished work *Die Weltalter* (The ages of the world) of which there are several versions (1811, 1813, and 1815). Here, the initially neutral Absolute takes on the personal characteristics of the Trinitarian God: the Father, who is pure freedom, while passing into existence, becomes subject to an internal contradiction, a "wheel of anxiety" from which he cannot escape except by engendering his Son, his redeeming sun (*Sohn/Sonne/Sühne*), who clarifies the paternal chaos and replaces it with the consonance of the Spirit.

In 1827, returning to teaching after an interval of almost twenty years, Schelling maintained this theogonic scenario, but placed it within the context of a "philosophy of mythology". The latter appears as the struggle of the ancient God Kronos (who stands for the universal power that usurped the place of the divine act of existing [*Sein*], whereas he should have remained its simple foundation [*Grund*]) with the young god Dionysos, God's very act of existing. Once having gained the victory, he abdicates his acquired dominion and, submitting to the Father in the Incarnation, makes possible the advent of the Spirit within the Church. The latter, following the Joachimite pattern, has developed historically as the Church of Peter (= Catholicism, based upon observance), followed by the Church of Paul (= Protestantism, based upon subjective faith), finally to culminate in the Church of John, founded on the positive philosophy of which Schelling considers himself the initiator.

To the influence of Boehme seems to have been added, by 1810, that of → Swedenborg. It was probably from the latter that Schelling borrowed his identification of the Son with the divine act of existing (perhaps by way of Fichte's *Anweisung zum seligen Leben* [1806]). We again find Swedenborg's influence in the background of the beautiful dialogue *Clara* (1810?) in which Schelling, still in shock about the death of his first wife, tries to unravel the mystery of the *Geisterwelt*. This work, like the *Weltalter* and the lectures on Mythology and Revelation, only appeared after Schelling's death (although the lectures were published during his lifetime in several "pirated" editions).

Among his contemporaries, Schelling never managed to free himself from the image of a pantheist and *Naturphilosoph*, suggested by his first writings. Only in the 20th century, authors interested in → Christian theosophy such as Vladimir Soloviev or Franz Rosenzweig began to do justice to the religious dimension of his work. *Naturphilosophie*,

from this perspective, appears not so much as the expression of an immature science but, rather, as the ultimate version of an alchemical myth in which the Christ-Light acts, prior to his historical mission, as the redeemer of nature (or of the unconscious, in the philosophy of mythology). This mythical background, combined with a rejection of all initiatory esotericism, gives Schelling's work (not unlike that of → Carl Gustav Jung one century later) its remarkable character of "a mystery in broad daylight".

*Sämtliche Werke*, 12 vols., Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-1861 ♦ *Die Weltalter (Urfassungen)*, München: C.H. Beck, 1946.

*Lit.*: Ernst Benz, *Les sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande*, Paris: Vrin, 1965 ♦ idem, *Schellings theologische Geistesahnen*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1955 ♦ Friedemann Horn, *Schelling und Swedenborg: Ein Beitrag zur Problemgeschichte des deutschen Idealismus und zur Geschichte Swedenborgs in Deutschland*, Zurich: Swedenborg Verlag, 1954 ♦ Robert Schneider, *Schellings und Hegels Geistesahnen*, Diss. Bonn, 1938 ♦ J.F. Marquet, *Liberté et existence: Etude sur la formation de la philosophie de Schelling*, Paris: Gallimard, 1973 ♦ idem, "Schelling et la philosophie de la nature", in: Antoine Faivre & Rolf Christian Zimmermann (eds.), *Epochen der Naturmystik: Hermetische Tradition im wissenschaftlichen Fortschritt*, Berlin: Erich Schmitt, 1979.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MARQUET

**Schlag, Oscar (or Oskar) Rudolf,**  
\* 22.3.1907 Osterhofen (Bavaria),  
† Zurich 29.11.1990

Already as a teenager, Schlag was held to possess mediumnistic faculties. In 1927, Albert Schrenck-Notzing, a dominant figure in continental parapsychology at the time, recruited him as a test subject in the laboratory he had set up in Landshut (the association lasted no more than a few months). Two years later, Schlag settled in Luzern, where he worked as a philatelist. In 1930 he moved on to Zurich where he was to remain for the rest of his life, except for several stays in other countries, notably in North and South America. In Zurich, no later than 1929, he began to hold séances in which he was the medium. Then, in 1932, he began to study under the guidance of the celebrated graphologist Max Pulver, to the point of eventually becoming himself a highly respected graphologist. In the same period he also studied psychology at the *Institut für Angewandte Psychologie* (Institute for Applied Psychology), where in 1938 he began

to give lectures on psychic phenomena and on the theoretical foundations of Yoga. He continued this activity for many years. From 1949 to 1962 he busied himself intensively with psychoanalysis. He trained for a career as a psychoanalyst under Oskar Pfister, and afterwards enjoyed great success with his own practice as a psychological consultant in Zurich. He authored poems, a few articles, and essays, some of which have remained unpublished (they are preserved in the archives of his library).

Unlike many mediums, Schlag was a very cultivated man, particularly in history of Western and Eastern religions, and more specifically of esoteric currents. From the early 1930s on, he began to create a superb library of his own, which expanded over the years to ca. 26,000 books, and must be considered one of the three richest European libraries in the domain of Western esotericism. After his death, it was made over to the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich and is now open to the public. It is still located in his house, where its holdings are preserved as well. In collaboration with the Zentralbibliothek, the Oscar R. Schlag Foundation (created in 1990), also in Zurich, is responsible for the maintenance of both these holdings and the house. Schlag's importance in 20th century Western esotericism is not only due to his activity as a collector of books, for he was himself a practicing esotericist as well. His connections to numerous initiatory societies, in particular to the → Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO, of which he was, however, not a member), are well documented. His posthumous renown as an esotericist results largely, however, from the publication (as of 1995) of the *Lehren*, or *Unterweisungen* (Instructions), transmitted from 1929 on during weekly séances in Zurich by an entity that presented itself under the name of Atma, and was "channeled" by Schlag. The first ones were written down by a participant during these séances; but as soon as it became technically possible they were recorded on disks and typed out afterwards. Among the early participants, most of whom were reputable scholars and scientists, were Fritz Allemann (a member of the Eranos group), the psychologist and Art historian Rudolf Bernoulli (who lectured at Eranos in 1934) and his wife Katharina, the psychiatrist and parapsychologist Eugen Bleuler (→ Carl Gustav Jung's superior at the clinic Burghölzli), and Max Pulver. Carl Gustav Jung himself participated in one of these séances, resulting in a long recorded conversation between him and Atma (see *Die Lehren des Atma.*, I, 14. November 1930). This original group of participants dwindled after a few months, and was eventually reduced to the Bernoullis and Alle-

mann. But the séances continued to be held almost every week throughout the 1930s, and more sporadically afterwards (some took place even as late as the 1960s). The typescript of all these sessions consists of many thousands of pages, starting on September 20, 1930.

Atma's provenience and ontological status remain obscure. In his statements about himself, he occasionally suggests he might be an "egregor" (i.e., a product of the participants' collective psyche), but more often he presents himself as an entity of divine nature. His Instructions constitute a kind of never-ending story or dream, with beginning nor end. As his inspiration goes, he dwells and comments on a great variety of symbols, themes and myths for a while, then suddenly leave them for others, only to take them up again later. He extensively deals with → alchemy, kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], the → Tarot, Egyptian and Greek mythology, Buddhism, Hinduism, and last but not least a great variety of Yoga theories and practices. He does so in a way that very much reflects the literature of the period. Written in a German not deprived of some moments of poetic beauty, these texts are always characterized by a "noble", oracular style.

Interestingly, during the first séances (1929/1930), another entity made its appearance as well. It went by the name of Cyprian, referring to a person who had allegedly died many years before. This spiritualist aspect was no longer present after Cyprian had left the stage. Taken as a whole, the "Instructions" are anthropocentric in character (i.e., almost devoid of cosmogonical or cosmological elements), dealing mostly with the development of human potentialities for the benefit of the individual person, by means of initiatory techniques. In this respect, the séances with Atma belong to the forbears of the so-called channeling literature that was to flourish within the → New Age movement as of the 1960s. In 1946, Atma stated that the Instructions he had been giving for so many years now represented a body of material from which benefit could be drawn also by people outside the group. In response to this, the Instructions are now in the process of being published.

"In Memoriam Dr. Freiherr von Schrenk-Notzing", *Okkultistische Rundschau* 4 (1929) ♦ "Anmerkungen eines Graphologen zur Handschrift von Ernst Jünger", *Graphologia* II, Bern: Huber, 1949, 12-24 ♦ *Frühe Gedichte*, Zurich: Origo, 1955 ♦ "Die Symbolik des Tarot", *Alpina* 123:4 (1997), 102-107 ♦ *Von alten und neuen Mysterien: Die Lehren des Atma*, vol. I, (Antoine Faivre & Erhart Kahle, eds., with the collaboration of Annelis Bergmaier), Stäfa: Rothenhäusler,



1995 ♦ Next volumes (II-IX) under the title *Die Lehren des Atma*, same eds., Würzburg: Ergon, published from 1996 to 2003 (the series is to be continued; each volume has between 350 and 550 pages).

*Lit.*: Hans Thomas Hakl, review of *Von Alten und neuen Mysterien: Die Lehren des Atma*, vol. I, *ARIES* 20 (1996), 94-97 ♦ idem, *Der verborgene Geist von Eranos: Unbekannte Begegnungen von Wissenschaft und Esoterik*, Bretten: Scientia Nova, 2001, 147, 159, 199, 216 ♦ Erhart Kahle (and Antoine Faivre), "Einführung", in: *Die Lehren des Atma*, vol. I, V-XXI ♦ Peter König, *Das OTO-Phänomen: 100 Jahre Magische Geheimbünde und ihre Protagonisten von 1895-1994*, Munich: ARW, 1994, 206-218 ♦ idem, *Materialien zum OTO*, ARW: Munich 1994, 273-306 (many testimonia) ♦ Peter Mulacz, "Oscar R. Schlag", *Journal for the Society of Psychical Research* 60, nr. 89 (1995), 263-266 ♦ Website of the O.R. Schlag Foundation: www.Stiftung-schlag.ch

ANTOINE FAIVRE

**Schneider, Joseph Anton** → Bô-Yin-Râ

**Schneiderfranken, Joseph Anton** → Bô-Yin-Râ

**Schubert, Gotthilf Heinrich von**,  
\* 26.4.1780 Hohenstein-Ernstthal,  
† 30.6.1860 Munich

The son of a Saxon pastor, Schubert attended lyceum at Weimar, where he followed the courses of J.G. Herder (1744-1803). The work of this great thinker would play a decisive role in the development of Schubert's philosophical thought. He studied theology in Leipzig before turning to medicine and the natural sciences. A deep faith inherited from his Pietist education [→ Pietism] combined with a veritable passion for science would mark the rest of his life.

An authentic theosopher [→ Christian theosophy], Schubert never ceased to refer to the fundamental importance of the "two books": the Bible and Nature. Throughout his life, he sought to make these two "readings" coincide in his publications. Through his openness to the ideas of his age, and also through his vocation as a teacher and writer, he helped promote the philosophical theses of → Schelling, with whom he studied in Jena from 1801 to 1803, and the original intuitions of the physicist → J.W. Ritter.

After following A.G. Werner's (1749-1817) courses in mineralogy and "geognosis" at the Academy of Mines in Freiberg, Saxony, he contin-

ued his scientific activity in Dresden, where he played a central role in a circle of Romantics [→ Romanticism] that included Adam Müller (1779-1829), Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811), and the painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). It was in this context, during the winter of 1807-1808, that Schubert gave his famous lectures entitled *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (Views of the night-side of natural science). In his speculations on somnambulism, → animal magnetism, seership, and dreams, Schubert tried to restore the link that he believed had once existed between man and the universe. He gave attention to the → correspondences uniting the One with the All, and discovered in *Sehnsucht* (nostalgia) a thread of continuity that could be traced through the whole of creation.

Published in 1808, these lectures reached a vast audience and had considerable success. After his nomination in 1809 as director of the Nuremberg lyceum, Schubert discovered the world of the mystics and theosophers by reading the works of Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), → Jacob Boehme, and → F.C. Oetinger. These years were decisive for the evolution of his philosophical and religious thought. His meeting with → Franz von Baader definitively turned him toward the theosophy of → Saint-Martin. In 1811, Schubert translated the "Unknown Philosopher"'s *De l'esprit des choses* (On the spirit/mind of things). Saint-Martin's → illuminism marks most of Schubert's subsequent writings, especially *Die Symbolik des Traumes* (Symbolism of the dream, 1814). In this highly successful work, which was reprinted eight times, Schubert expounds a veritable metaphysics of the dream and unconscious states. Thanks to the principle of analogy he believed to have discovered that dream, poetry, revelation, and myth have in common a universal, inner language that has its source in the night-side of the soul. The myth of the Fall explains the disappearance of the original harmony, while animal magnetism makes it possible to re-establish the unity between conscious life and unconscious activity.

In 1819 Schubert was appointed as professor at the University of Erlangen, where he taught mineralogy, zoology, and botany. His career culminated in 1827 in his appointment at the University of Munich, where he found Schelling, Baader, and Görres (1776-1848) at his side. King Ludwig I of Bavaria entrusted the education of his sons to him, and bestowed the "von" on his name. Schubert gave courses in anthropology and psychology, while expounding his philosophical system in a work of over 1000 pages, *Geschichte der Seele*



(History of the soul, 1830). In this book, which he considered his major work, Schubert set himself the task of discussing human nature and its connection with the material universe as well as the spiritual world. His esoteric understanding of life allowed him to connect the human soul with the world soul, 'this spiritual link that maintains the cohesion of the sensible world'. He assigned to psychology the task of describing the progress of the soul, in nature and man, on its way toward God.

Schubert's works were extremely successful among the Romantics, and inspired many writers. Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), → Justinus Kerner, and later F. Hebbel were profoundly influenced by them. Quite original in his thought, nourished by esotericism, and marked by speculative → mysticism, Schubert never tired of investigating the vibrations of nature and the messages of the unconscious. His work fits well within the grand tradition of Western theosophy that goes from → Paracelsus to → C.G. Jung. A major representative of *Naturphilosophie*, Schubert appears – with → Mesmer, C.G. Carus (1789-1869) and others – as a precursor of psychoanalysis.

*Abndungen einer allgemeinen Geschichte des Lebens*, Leipzig, 1806 (vol. 1), 1807 (vol. 2), 1821 (vol. 3) ♦ *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, Dresden, 1808 ♦ *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, Bamberg, 1814 ♦ *Altes und Neues aus dem Gebiete der inneren Seelenkunde*, Leipzig, 1817-1844 ♦ *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte*, Nuremberg, 1827-1831 ♦ *Geschichte der Seele*, Tübingen-Stuttgart, 1830 ♦ *Geschichte der Natur*, Erlangen, 1835-1837 ♦ *Die Krankheiten und Störungen der menschlichen Seele*, Stuttgart, 1845 ♦ *Der Erwerb aus einem vergangenen und die Erwartungen von einem zukünftigen Leben: Eine Selbstbiographie*, Erlangen, 1854-1856 ♦ *Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert in seinen Briefen: Ein Lebensbild* (Nathanael Bonwetsch, ed.), Stuttgart, 1918.

*Lit.*: Albert Béguin, *L'Âme romantique et le rêve*, Paris, 1939 ♦ Ernst Busch, "Die Stellung Gotthilf Heinrich Schuberts in der deutschen Naturmystik und in der Romantik", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 20 (1942), 305-339 ♦ Hans Dahmen, "E.T.A. Hoffmann und G.H. Schubert", *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der Görres Gesellschaft* 1 (1926), 62-111 ♦ Antoine Faivre, "La philosophie de la nature dans le romantisme allemand", in: *Histoire de la philosophie*, vol. 3, Paris, 1974, 14-45 ♦ Peter Krebs, *Die Anthropologie des Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert*, Cologne, 1940 ♦ Wilhelm Lechner, *Gotthilf Heinrich von Schuberts Einfluss auf Kleist, Justinus Kerner und E.T.A. Hoffmann*, Münster-Leipzig, 1911 ♦ Wolfgang Liepe, "Der Schlüssel zum Weltbild Hebbels: G.H. Schubert", in: idem, *Beiträge zur Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte* (1963), 139-157 ♦ Franz Rudolf Merkel, *Der Naturphilosoph Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert und die deutsche Romantik*, Munich, 1913 ♦ Gustav Osthus, *Gotthilf Heinrich*

*Schuberts philosophische Anfänge, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Schellings Einfluss*, Erlangen, 1930 ♦ Patrick Valette, "G.H. Schubert et la 'Naturphilosophie'", in: Schubert, *La symbolique du rêve*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1982, 9-54 ♦ idem, "Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert", in: *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle* (Les oeuvres philosophiques, vol. 1), Paris, 1992, 2109-2110.

PATRICK VALETTE

**Schuon, Frithjof** (also known as Shaykh 'Isâ Nur al-Dîn Ahmad al-Shâdhilî al-Darqâwî al- 'Alawî al-Maryamî),

\* 18.6.1907 Basle (Switzerland),

† 5.5.1998 Bloomington, Indiana (USA)

Swiss esotericist and Sufi master [→ Neo-Sufism] whose personal life was complex and whose substantial corpus of metaphysical writings ranks among the most clear, profound, and gifted ones produced by any similar author in the 20th century. Schuon was born of German Roman Catholic parents. His father was a violinist and poet, described by Schuon as highly gifted but a dreamer. His mother was apparently the opposite. Schuon's affinities were clearly with his father, who influenced him greatly. He describes him as strongly inclined toward the esoteric and the mystical; he maintained a small, darkened room in the family house, probably for meditation, that contained nothing but a table with copies of the Hindu *Vedas* and the *Qu'ran*. It was in this Germanic childhood environment of esotericism, mythology, and poetry that Schuon lived his formative years, attending school with his life-long friend Titus Burckhardt, until his father's death in 1920. Thereafter he, with his brother and his mother, moved to Mulhouse, France, just across the border from Basle. Schuon was thrust abruptly from German into French culture; he was enrolled at a French school and became a French citizen, while simultaneously attempting to adjust to his father's death. After a three-year period of depression and melancholy, Schuon left school and found employment as a textile designer. It was also during this time that he briefly joined the Roman Catholic Church; but while his brother went on to become a monk, Schuon soon left the Church again, considering its perspective too narrow. In 1924 he discovered the works of → René Guénon, which had a significant impact upon his life, confirming his youthful perceptions and inquiries into the inner life and esotericism.

In 1928 Schuon joined the French Army. He spent 18 months at Besançon, which he later

remembered as a period of boredom as well as stress. He thereafter relocated to Paris, where he again worked as a textile designer. He remained in Paris for two years, immersing himself in the arts and other forms of cultural expression, and began to study Arabic. In 1932 he left Paris for Algeria: his first visit to a “traditional” society. Here met Sheikh Ahmad al-‘Alawī to whom he would come to refer as his spiritual master. Following this, Schuon assumed the Arabic name ‘Isā Nur al-Dīn.

After his return to Europe he divided his time between Paris, Basle, and Lausanne. From 1932 to 1939, Schuon made other trips to Algeria and Morocco, and two separate trips to Cairo in 1938 and 1939 to see René Guénon. After the last trip he sailed with two of his disciples to Bombay; but the eruption of World War II forced him to return to France. Schuon again joined the French Army, but within months was captured by the Germans, who sought to make him join the German Army. He escaped and fled to Switzerland, where he would remain until 1980, when he relocated to Bloomington, Indiana, in the United States.

During the forty-year period from 1940 to 1980, Schuon wrote many of his seminal works on metaphysics. He gradually shaped his Sufi *tariqa*, which he named *Maryamiyah*, of which he was the *sheikh* or spiritual master, and into which he initiated several hundred men and women. Around 1946 he parted ways with Guénon over a dispute regarding the efficacy of the Christian sacraments, and a number of disciples left the Schuon *tariqa* to join Guénon’s group. In 1949 Schuon married one of his disciples, a German Swiss woman named Catherine Feer. Following the deaths of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in 1947 and René Guénon in 1951, Schuon gradually assumed the role of the premier expositor of the *philosophia perennis* [→ Tradition] and leader of the Traditionalist school which the two had started. Also during this forty-year period Schuon and his wife traveled extensively, including several trips to the United States, where they visited and were ceremonially initiated into the spiritual practices of the Crow and Sioux Indians.

In 1980 Schuon and his wife left Lausanne and moved to Bloomington, where a community of disciples took shape at Inverness Woods. Schuon assumed the role of resident spiritual master; and a publishing house, World Wisdom Books, was established to publish and promulgate his writings. In 1991 Schuon was indicted by a Monroe County grand jury on several counts of child molestation and sexual molestation. This stemmed from a practice peculiar to his *tariqa*, which Schuon called “primordial gatherings”, in which group nudity

and sexual symbolism played key roles; they are described in his autobiography under the heading “Sacred Nudity”. All charges were eventually dropped, but the *Bloomington Herald-Times* had run nearly a dozen stories on the affair, and a French Guénonian group antagonistic toward Schuon established Internet websites using these stories to further accusations against him as being a cult leader. The affair was reportedly demoralizing for Schuon, and was a sad episode at the end of his otherwise brilliant career as the foremost expositor of the *sophia perennis* in the late 20th century. Schuon died in 1998 without producing another major book.

Schuon was a prolific author whose published corpus contains scores of books and articles, the complete list of which appears in *Religion of the Heart* (p. 299) cited hereafter. What follows is a list of Schuon’s principal works in their first English translation, with the year of original French publication in brackets where applicable. *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, London: Faber & Faber, 1953 [Paris: Gallimard, 1948] ♦ *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, London: Faber & Faber, 1953 [Paris: Les Cahiers du Sud, 1953] ♦ *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, London: John Murray, 1959 [Paris: La Colombe, 1957] ♦ *Castes and Races*, London: Perennial Books, 1982 [Lyons: Paul Derain, 1957] ♦ *Stations of Wisdom*, London: John Murray, 1961 [Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1958] ♦ *Understanding Islam*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1963 [Paris: Gallimard, 1961] ♦ *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, London: Perennial Books, 1965 [Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1965] ♦ *Logic and Transcendence*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975 [Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 1970] ♦ *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, London: World of Islam Publishing Co., 1976 ♦ *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, London: Perennial Books, 1978 [Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1978] ♦ *Sufism, Veil and Quintessence*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1981 [Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1980] ♦ *From the Divine to the Human*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1981 [Paris: Le Courrier du Livre, 1981] ♦ *In the Face of the Absolute*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1989 [Paris: Le Courrier du Livre, 1982] ♦ *Survey of Metaphysics and Esoterism*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1986 ♦ *Having a Center*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1990 [Paris: Maisonneuve Larose, 1988] ♦ *Roots of the Human Condition*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1991 [Paris: La Table Ronde, 1990].

*Lit.*: Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon*, Rockport, MA: Element, 1986 ♦ S.H. Nasr & William Stoddard (eds.), *Religion of the Heart*, Washington D.C.: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1991 ♦ T. Béguelin (ed.), *Les perles du pèlerin*, Paris: Seuil, 1990 ♦ Memorial volume *Sophia: Journal of Traditional Studies* 4:2 (1998) ♦ Harry Oldmeadow, “Frithjof Schuon, the Perennial Philosophy, and the Meaning of Tradition”, Unpubl. Ph.D. diss. University of Sydney, 1982.

**Schuré, Edouard**, \* 21.1.1841  
Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin), † 7.4.1928 Paris

Schuré came from the Lutheran Protestant bourgeoisie of Strasbourg, his mother being the daughter of a university professor and the granddaughter of a pastor. His education, in French and German, was thorough but austere and conventional. Having passed through the faculty of Law, he traveled from one university to another, as customary in his days; thus he spent some time in Heidelberg, Bonn, Berlin, and Munich. He was a great admirer of → Goethe and Nietzsche, with whom he exchanged letters (a chapter of *Précurseurs et révoltés* [Precursors and rebels], 1904, is devoted to him); and as one of the first persons in France – along with → Péladan – to recognize the genius of Wagner, he became a habitué of Bayreuth. His *Le Drame musical: Richard Wagner, son oeuvre, son idée* (The music drama: Richard Wagner, his work, his idea, 1875) was reprinted several times. A taste for the intellectual and social life of Paris also marked his personality. He frequented the fashionable spiritualist salons [→ Spiritualism], especially the one of the very wealthy Lady Caithness (1832-1895), a “Christian” theosophist and dissident member of the → Theosophical Society of → Madame Blavatsky. The whole occultist [→ occult / occultism] world passed through this salon, together with liberal Protestants and spiritualist feminists like Emilie de Morsier (1843-1896), whose principles Schuré supported. He chose to write in French, despite pressures from the German side, then opted for French citizenship after the annexation of 1871. But it was in Italy that he found his road to Damascus, in another literary and aristocratic salon: that of Margarita Albana-Mignaty in Florence. Margarita, of Greek origin, inspired a hopeless passion in him and would remain his inspiration until his death, regarding both the feminist question and his vision of the origins of mankind and the fundamental unity of religions. He paid a biographical homage to her in *Femmes inspiratrices et poètes annonciateurs* (Inspiring women and prophetic poets, 1908), where one finds her in the company of Cosima Liszt, Mathilde Wesendonck, and Malvide de Meysenberg. Among the “poets” referred to in this title was the esotericist → Saint-Yves d’Alveydre, whose mediocre poetry Schuré esteemed and who also inspired Schuré’s vision of a global history, conceived of as starting with the “cycle of Ram”, the mythical founding hero from India. Saint-Yves had used → Fabre d’Olivet, another one of Schuré’s principal sources; but these two influences ended

up producing in Schuré’s mind a very simplistic vision of global spiritual progress, leading from Ram to Krishna, Orpheus, Pythagoras, → Moses, and Jesus Christ. This genealogy was offered to the general public in *Les Grands initiés* (The great initiates, 1889). The immense success of this work has persisted through innumerable editions, continuing up to the present day. Another work that strongly contributed to the development of Schuré’s ideas was *The Perfect Way* (1887) by → Anna Kingsford, whose French edition (1891) he prefaced. Schuré’s “progressivism” was based on his belief in a hidden motor of history: the permanence of the esoteric tradition, ageless and common to all peoples. Buddha and Mohammed were missing from the fresco of the *Grands initiés*, which was further modified in *L’Évolution divine: Du Sphinx au Christ* (Divine evolution: From Sphinx to Christ, 1912). These modifications were inspired by Schuré’s meeting with → Rudolf Steiner in 1905: Schuré henceforth insisted that the chain of “great initiates” culmination in a cosmic Christ, conceived (after the fashion of *The Perfect Way*, and also in line with a tradition common in 19th-century theological thought) as inheritor of the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries. Mystical union through gnosis marked the higher spiritual state of man, according to Schuré, who reproached the Church for having confiscated Christ. Yet before his death he returned to the Lutheran faith.

*Le Drame musical*, Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1875  
♦ *Les Grands initiés, esquisse de l’histoire secrète des religions: Rama, Krishna, Hermès, Moïse, Pythagore, Platon, Jésus*, Paris: Perrin, 1889 ♦ *La Vie mystique*, Paris: Perrin, 1894 ♦ *Rudolf Steiner, le mystère chrétien et les mystères antiques*, Paris: Perrin, 1908 ♦ *Femmes inspiratrices et poètes annonciateurs*, Paris, 1909 ♦ *L’Évolution divine, du Sphinx au Christ*, Paris: Perrin, 1912 ♦ *La Druidesse, précédé d’une étude sur le réveil de l’âme celtique*, Paris: Perrin, 1914 ♦ *L’Âme celtique et le génie de la France à travers les âges*, Paris: Perrin, 1921.

*Lit.*: Georges Jeanclaude, *Edouard Schuré*, Paris: Fischbacher, 1968 ♦ Alain Mercier, *Edouard Schuré et le renouveau idéaliste en Europe*, Paris: Champion, 1980.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

**Schwaller, René Adolphe** (called de Lubicz; pseudonym Aor), \* 31.12.1887  
Asnières (France), † 5.12.1961 Grasse (France)

This occultist writer, Egyptologist, and founder of spiritual brotherhoods was of Alsatian origin,

his pharmacist-chemist father having set up practice in Strasbourg. René aspired to be a painter and was a student in Henri Matisse's atelier in Paris. Under the pseudonym of "Aor" he was an active member of the → Theosophical Society, and it was at a lecture in the Adyar Hall of the Paris Theosophical Society, in 1915, that the decisive encounter took place between him and → Oscar de Lubicz Milosz. In 1917 the Baltic poet was fascinated by Schwaller's publication of a booklet on → Number Symbolism, which expounded a vitalist conception of their extension, beginning with the "irreducible one", which supposedly provided the key to the birth of the universe. Milosz was so struck by it that his destiny remained linked with Schwaller's until 1926, and even went so far as to adopt him: Schwaller was thereby authorized to join to his surname the noble name of "de Lubicz" and use the Lubicz coat of arms.

There followed the foundation of a chivalric order called the "Veilleurs" (Watchers), which had a hierarchical structure and a secret inner circle. As founding members, the journalist Fernand Divoire (1883-1951) and the writers René Bruyez (1886-1969), Carlos Larronde (1888-1940), and Gaston Revel (1880-1939, a leading figure in French Theosophy) joined with some of the great names of Parisian literary and artistic circles, from Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931) to Henri de Régnier (1864-1936). The group was inspired by the ideas of Charles Fourier and the Saint-Simonians as revived in → Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's dreams of "synarchic" unity; it published a successful periodical, *L'Affranchi* (The Emancipated). However, its existence was marked by journalistic attacks, of such virulence that Schwaller eventually left Paris, in 1922, for the Engadine region of Switzerland. Here a closed community called "Suhalia" functioned as an "initiatic monastery" until 1927.

Schwaller broke with Milosz in 1926 due to the incompatibility of their respective illuminations, especially concerning Milosz's Christian interpretation of → alchemy (see his *Ars Magna*, 1920). Thereupon Schwaller cruised the Mediterranean by yacht, thanks to the generosity of a disciple, Jeanne (Isha) Lamy. In 1927 she became his wife, and in turn received a revelation, concerning the secret meaning of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The Schwaller de Lubicz couple now founded a "Groupe de Louqsor" (Luxor Group) with the support of the Egyptologist Alexandre Varille (1909-1951). Their study of the proportions of the temples of Luxor and Karnak and of the Pyramids, combined with a new decipherment of the best-known stela, gave rise to a series of publications

on the sacred symbolic language; the latter was supposed to furnish the key to the relationship between the "temple of stone" and the "temple of man", with the Pharaoh as the model of the initiate and perfect man. The Schwallers' enterprise belongs to an old tradition of attempts to find the origins of knowledge. After William Warburton (*The Divine Legation of Moses*, 1738) and the Abbé Terrasson (*Sethos*, 1767), the occultists [→ occult / occultism] of the 19th century had taken up the idea – already present in Plato's *Phaedrus* – of looking to ancient Egypt for the key to all the sciences, and the Schwallers were trying in their own way to adapt it to the scientific language of their time. Their teachings have remained widely known in Parisian esoteric circles up to the end of the 20th century, and are often associated with those of → Fulcanelli.

*Etude sur les nombres*, Paris: Librairie de l'Art indépendant, 1917 ♦ *La doctrine: trois conférences faites à Suhalia*, Noël 1926, St. Moritz: Officina Montalia, 1927 ♦ *Le Temple de l'homme: Apet du Sud à Louqsor*, Paris: Editions Caractères, 1957; Eng. trans. by D. & R. Lawlor, *The Temple of Man*, Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions International, 1998 ♦ *Le Roi de la théocratie pharaonique*, Paris: Flammarion, 1961; Eng. trans. by A. & G. Van den Broeck, *Sacred Science*, New York: Inner Traditions, 1982 ♦ *Du symbole et de la symbolique*, Paris: Dervy, 1978; Eng. trans. by R. & D. Lawlor, *Symbol and the Symbolic*, Brookline, Mass.: Autumn Press, 1978 ♦ *Verbe Nature*, Paris: Axis Mundi, 1988, with bibl. of René & Isha Schwaller de Lubicz; Eng. trans. by D. Lawlor, *Nature Word*, W. Stockbridge, Mass.: Lindisfarne Press, 1982.

*Lit.*: Isha Schwaller de Lubicz, *Aor: sa vie-son œuvre*, Paris: La Colombe, 1963 ♦ idem, *L'Ouverture du chemin*, Paris: Aryana ♦ Pierre Mariel, *Dictionnaire des sciences occultes en Occident*, Paris: Culture, art, loisir, 1971, 392-396 ♦ André Van den Broeck, *Al-Kemi: Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz*, Gt. Barrington, Mass.: Inner Traditions/Lindisfarne Press, 1987 ♦ Alexandra Charbonnier, *Milosz, l'étoile au front*, Paris: Dervy, 1993, 301-345 and appendix 5 ♦ Erik Sablé, *La vie et l'oeuvre de René Schwaller de Lubicz*, Paris: Dervy, 2003.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Scientology

Scientology is a religious philosophy and a set of ritual practices partly based on Dianetics, a "do-it-yourself-therapy" developed by the American adventurer, philosopher and science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard in a number of articles and, exhaustively, in the book *Dianetics: The Modern*



*Science of Mental Health* published in 1950. The first Church of Scientology was founded in Washington, DC in 1955.

Lafayette Ron Hubbard was born in Tilden, Nebraska on the 13th of March, 1911, as the son of a naval officer and a teacher, Harry Ross and Ledora May Hubbard. According to the extensive hagiographical tradition of Scientology, from his very early years he was brave and outstanding for his age, and eagerly interested in different cultures, people and customs, including various Indian traditions; as a twelve-year-old he was introduced to the teachings of Sigmund Freud which, it is emphasized, left him with many unanswered questions. Due to his father's naval career, he was given the opportunity to travel through the East, where he became familiar, so we are told, with the cultural and religious traditions of China, Japan, Guam, the Philippines and other areas of the Orient. Although keenly interested in everyone and everything he met on his way, he concluded that no Eastern tradition of wisdom had found the answer to Man's basic problems of suffering, misery and despair. This was a great disappointment. According to Scientology sources, in 1929 he returned to formal education in Manassas, Virginia and Washington DC and was enrolled at George Washington University in mathematics and engineering.

From this time on, Hubbard devoted himself to a series of quasi-scientific studies and experiments in order to "solve Man's problem", while providing for himself and his family as a science fiction novelist. The science fiction milieu, including the circles around the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* and its editor John W. Campbell, Jr., who became a key figure in promoting Hubbard's ideas, consisted of all kinds of intellectuals and scientifically-trained individuals such as astronomers, chemists, doctors and engineers. The articles written and read by these people in *Astounding* not only reflected an interest in science fiction or related subjects such as extraterrestrial life, weapon development, space research and developments in technology. The magazine also published many articles on alternative medical practices, psychology and occultism [→ occult/occultism]; in many ways the milieu surrounding the magazine were similar to the environment, ideas and practices that would later be referred to as the → Human Potential Movement and → New Age. Dianetics and, later, Scientology were therefore both developed as part of a living Western occult tradition where ideas were exchanged within a freethinking and creative subculture. In the mid-forties, Hubbard was also very briefly in contact with Jack Parsons,

the head of → Aleister Crowley's → Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) in Pasadena. However, trivialities apart, no specific influence from Crowley can be traced in Hubbard's later teachings in terms of Scientology.

By the end of the 1940s, editor Campbell got interested in Hubbard's new therapeutic system, Dianetics; and prior to the big release of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* on the 9th of May, 1950, Campbell wrote an enthusiastic foreword to an article, 'The Evolution of a Science', published in the May volume of *Astounding*. The decision to release Dianetics to a broader public of lay readers seems to have been connected to the fact that Hubbard and his co-worker at that time – medical doctor Joseph A. Winther, who had moved to Bay Head, New Jersey to take part in Hubbard's work (having become familiar with it through Campbell) – had not succeeded in breaking through to the American Medical Association or the American Psychiatric Association. These early rejections seem to have played a crucial role in Scientology's later polemics, which have continued until the present, against the medical and psychiatric establishment worldwide, and have contributed to Scientology's self-understanding as a religion that promotes the truth that mainstream science and society at large refuse to recognize.

According to *Dianetics*, Man is suffering from powerful mental and psychosomatic traumas because of the function and structure of the mind. The human mind, according to Hubbard, is subdivided into three minds, the analytical mind, the reactive mind and the somatic mind. While the latter serves as the body's tool in acting out the decisions and impulses from the two other minds on a physical level, the analytical mind is described as a perfect computation system that will always make the best decisions by means of analyzing the available data in the memory bank. However, in every incident in a person's life that involves just a minimum of physical or mental pain, the analytical mind shuts down and the reactive mind takes over. And this is where the trouble begins. In the reactive memory banks of this mind, "engrams" are stored. Engrams are Hubbard's conceptualization of memory units that involve pain. These engrams are, in part, reactivated every time a person meets a situation that is just remotely similar to the incident that originally caused the engram to be stored in the bank. This function, Hubbard claims, is the cause of all kind of irrational ("aberrated") action and psychosomatic illness. In *Dianetics* Hubbard fully developed these ideas, and presented a practice designed to eliminate the harmful influence of



the engrams and the reactive mind: the Dianetics therapy called “auditing”.

Soon after, Hubbard took his ideas and his therapeutic practice beyond the materialistic limitations of early Dianetics, and from 1951 he began to transform his therapy into a fully developed soteriological religious system, by including in his system metaphysical ideas and “axioms” about the individual and his or her spiritual character and potential as well as about the cosmos at large. In 1954 Hubbard announced that what was initially a therapy, Dianetics, had now become transformed into a religious system in its own right. The new religion was named Scientology (from Latin *scio*, to know and from Greek, *logos*, word or thought; i.e. knowing about knowing or the science of knowledge).

From the very beginning, Hubbard was inspired and influenced by science, religion and various occult traditions and other conceptual systems. Like many of the religious activities later found in the New Age Movement, Hubbard, in developing Scientology, was blending secular and religious inspirations: on the one hand his perspective reflects a critique of established science, while on the other he considered his inventions scientific and he had scientific ambitions for his creations – without ever really exhibiting a scientifically valid understanding of the premises of science. At the same time, although already at an early stage he criticized older religious traditions, e.g. Buddhism, for not being capable of solving the problems of Mankind, his system nevertheless reflects Buddhist, Hinduist as well as Gnostic ideas [→ Gnosticism]. Hubbard presented Scientology as true science as well as true religion, the latter in the sense of “wisdom”, as also done by present-day scientologists.

The basic idea of Scientology is that man is a composite being of body, mind and spirit. The most important unit is the spirit, i.e. the true individual, called a “thetan”. The basic problem is that in a very early stage of their development, thetans were led to believe that they were dependent on the physical universe, and thus on bodies, in order to function on this planet. Scientology aspires to teach its practitioners how to gain the gnosis that the thetan is not dependent upon anyone or anything in the physical universe, and is capable of taking control over himself and the events in his or her existence. Each thetan or individual has existed through an endless amount of incarnations on this planet and others, during hundreds of millions of years, and every single incident occurring to each and every body throughout this mytho-evolutionary history determines who a person is now, how he or she is feeling, and how he or she is functioning both phys-

ically, mentally and spiritually. Each incarnation has left the thetan with certain types of karmic experience, which are still present on his or her “timetrack”. Through the ritual practices (“auditing”) and courses of Scientology, a person can reach insight about these matters and ritually confront his or her mythological past, thereby improving his or her happiness, relationships, physical condition and individual spiritual truth.

Scientology is a practical and non-dogmatic religion in that the ideas developed by Hubbard from 1950 to his death in 1986 are not seen as truths that must be unconditionally accepted by each individual scientologist. The truth is “what is true for you”. On a theoretical level, this rhetoric implies the idea that the scientological practice is thought to work for everyone no matter how the person’s conceptualizations of the world might be. On a practical level, however, obviously individuals engaged in the soteriological ritual practice of Scientology find the resources for their own individual stories in the reservoir made up of the extended Hubbard material. Therefore, in practice, being a scientologist does not imply seeking high and low for theological elements fit for one’s own construction of meaning but, rather, consists in integrating the Hubbardian truths in one’s own life. It is a very individual matter how far this integration is taken, but three things seem always to be present in scientologists’ conceptualizations, e.g., the idea that a person is a spiritual being, the idea of the timetrack, and the appreciation of Hubbard’s outstanding qualities as a human being. Still, it is very individual how reflective scientologists are. Many do, in fact, seem to apply the principles of Hubbard in their practice without speculating on their truth value. Practice is the central issue; gnosis is individual – although certain incidents on the timetrack, according to Scientology, have turned out to be common to all people.

Scientology offer its practitioners a salvational path to individual enlightenment, the “Bridge to Total Freedom”, and each practitioner moves up through the extensive soteriological hierarchy through a long series of initiations in a codified prescribed sequence. The goal is to move the individual to higher and higher states of consciousness and orders of existence towards the ultimate enlightenment. Furthermore, the intention is to make the person capable of existing without the deplorable dependence upon the body and the physical universe. The gnosis presented by Hubbard is legally protected by an organization known as Religious Technology Center. This unit, within the complex system of Scientology branches, owns all trade-

marks and servicemarks of the world and licensing of his teachings, so as to ensure that no other church, mission or person is using ritual techniques that are not a hundred percent in line with Hubbard's original teachings and instructions.

Because of the nature of its worldview, Scientology can be seen as belonging within the domain of Western esotericism. However, Scientology can also be called "esoteric" in the sense of "secret religious tradition", for at least three interrelated reasons. First, its soteriological system is considered to gradually initiate the individual into higher and higher states of awareness and gnosis. Without these initiations there can be no progress and no salvation. Second, the soteriological hierarchy is constituted by several steps of which the upper levels, called the OT levels (OT meaning Operating Thetan), are considered harmful to persons with no suitable initiation. The steps must be taken in the correct sequence and persons already initiated cannot speak to others about their ritual experience. Although it is known in Scientology circles that the truths revealed in several of the OT levels are obtainable in Hubbard's publications available to all scientologists, for instance *Scientology: A History of Man* (1952), discipline and selfdiscipline are supposed to prevent scientologists from trying to obtain the gnosis outside the context of the ritual initiations. Third, it is not only the presence of specific secret teachings and rituals that makes the religion esoteric. The system of guidance and maintenance of the religious secrets not only demarcates initiates from not-yet-initiates within the religion itself, but also implies that the religion holds certain religious truths that can never be obtained by outsiders. Esotericism in the sense of → secrecy is therefore an important tool of power not only inside the religious organization but also in Scientology's relations to the surrounding world. This lack of transparency and its distinctive secretiveness is one cause for the accusations Scientology has faced in the public sphere over the years. Still, it is clear that it is an important element in Scientology's self-perception that Scientology is protecting the truths, gnosis and the road to freedom discovered and systematized by Hubbard while, at the same time, protecting individuals from seeking this knowledge without being properly prepared.

During the Church's fifty years of history, the atmosphere between the church and its surroundings has been tense. A number of individuals, e.g. former scientologists and their families, have taken the church to court because of financial controversies or due to accusations of abuse, for instance in regard to contracts. The Church, in turn, has taken

individuals to court on accusations such as e.g. infringement of copyright on secret documents. Furthermore, several countries, e.g. Germany, have run campaigns not only against the church but also against individual scientologists because of a fear of what is perceived as the totalitarian character of the organization. These court cases and governmental attacks on the church have been supported by massive media campaigns throughout the Western world not only in regard to the specific actions taken by the governments and other institutions but also, on a more general level, because of a general distrust of what is considered a totalitarian multinational that is accused of harassing individuals in and outside the Church, of tiring out its critics, and of publicly throwing suspicion on any individual who does not sympathize with church practice. The secrecy surrounding the soteriology of the Church seems to contribute to this tense atmosphere.

Today Scientology is present on all continents, in more than 145 countries. The Church estimates that 8 million people worldwide are using Hubbard's religious and therapeutic techniques one way or the other. Not all of these people are devoted members, however. Most of them are clients that buy books and take courses, and go through rituals on a regular basis without considering themselves scientologists. The estimation of the Church includes all individuals that are on the scientological mailinglists, and it might be fair to estimate that no more than one million people are in fact active scientologists worldwide.

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## Secrecy I: Antiquity

1. INTRODUCTION 2. SECRET KNOWLEDGE  
3. SECRET ACTS 4. SECRET IDENTITIES

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The only fruitful way to study secrecy in ancient cultures and religions is to study it as a social phenomenon. The private secrets of individuals, that is knowledge of facts kept hidden from everyone (for example a woman who hides from her husband the fact that the child she is bearing is not his), are not only lost to us forever, but also do not really constitute a subject that could be analysed profitably. That is why, following a lead from the German sociologist Georg Simmel, secrecy in antiquity as an object of study is most often said to have a “triadic” nature: the three activities of “concealing”, “keeping hidden” and “revealing” knowledge involve, in turn, at least three parties: two people who share the secret and a third party, the ones who do not know it.

Secrecy in social life is a double-faced phenomenon. It is in many cases socially and psychologically productive and produces feelings of identity and belonging among those who share the secret, but it can also be disruptive to the point of annihilating social structures, such as family relations or political alliances. As a concept, both insiders and outsiders exploit it: those who guard a secret may use it to increase their personal prestige or to make their group seem more attractive, whereas outsiders can launch the suspicion of subversive secrecy to mobilise feelings of rage among those excluded, and use it as a weapon against opponents or to divert attention from their own activities.

All ancient religions were characterised by a certain amount of secrecy. Certain restrictions could apply to parts of the temple; there were rituals without any human audience, featuring only the god and his priest, and knowledge and texts could be kept out of reach from all but a few trusted ones. A few further distinctions must be made here, before we can analyse the concept and the working of secrecy in the ancient world.

In the first place, secrecy is connected with publicity and with accessibility, in other words, with

tradition. If it is about excluding and including, about handing down knowledge, texts, or rituals to a privileged person or group, the secret needs to be capable of being transmitted. There is a wide gap between secrecy on the one hand and → mysticism on the other, in the sense that secrets can be articulated, accessed and transmitted, with severe restrictions, whereas mystical experiences, including the emotional impact of secret acts, defy formulation. The ineffable may be a private secret; it is not a social one and must be treated elsewhere.

In the second place, there are numerous cases of supposed secrecy, which on closer inspection turn out to be something else. If outsiders are excluded from witnessing certain rituals, because the place where these rituals are performed, the dwelling place of a god, must be protected from pollution (as is the case in Zoroastrian fire-temples or in the two holy cities of Islam), this does not automatically characterise these rituals or places as secret. On the contrary, the rituals may be witnessed in priestly schools, where they are being taught to students, elaborate descriptions of these rituals and places can be found in priestly and scholarly literature and all “insiders” are welcome to observe and tell about them in every detail. Characterising such rituals as secret betrays a typical “third party” point of view, but is incompatible with the intentions of the other two parties.

We know both more and less than people in antiquity. We know more, because we can dig up ancient sites and structures that would have been closed to the majority of the population in antiquity. We know something, for example, of the layout of the cult-places of the god Mithras (*mithraea*), which were hidden from sight in the ancient world, and we can study Mithraic art that was hidden in these sanctuaries. We can study papyri and texts that would have circulated only among a few privileged members of a guild or a religious association. That we know less is obvious: secrets that were transmitted orally, including the interpretation of Mithraic art, for instance, are lost to us, together with the vast majority of texts, locations, and artefacts. Our knowledge is restricted not by codes of secrecy, for there would be no one to enforce them, but by the vicissitudes of history. What we know or can reconstruct, can be treated here under three headings: secret knowledge (texts, names, myths and their explanations, etc.); secret acts (chiefly rituals); and secret identities.

### 2. SECRET KNOWLEDGE

To be able to speak of “secret” knowledge, we must first tackle its opposite, the “public” nature of knowledge in antiquity. Estimates of literacy rates

for any ancient culture rarely rise above ten percent. This means that “published” works in writing were inaccessible to the vast majority of the population. In the political processes, including deliberations on government and justice, only a few (for instance, local, free-born men of a particular social background) could participate. Practical knowledge in crafts and trade was passed on in the family or in guild structures. Education, again, was most often neither public nor free and for many people either impossible to reach or undesirable. In religious matters, the situation was not much different. The primary *locus* of religious socialisation was the family. Those who chose religion as their vocation or were destined for a job in a religious organisation were taught their rituals and other practical knowledge by their older colleagues in a style not unlike the tradition of craft knowledge. There is a striking difference between the ancient civilisations of the Near East and Egypt on the one hand and the institutions of the ancient Greeks and Romans on the other. In Mesopotamia, in particular, priesthood was often a lifelong vocation, involving enormous amounts of study, both in order to be able to perform the required rituals and to acquire a solid grounding in theology and literature. In Greece and Rome, by contrast, priesthood was rarely associated with learning in this sense. Priesthoods were often honorary positions that did not preclude other vocations, required little formal training and were rarely associated with the transmission of more knowledge than was required for the performance of one’s duties. It is not surprising, therefore, that the concept of “secret knowledge” received a much greater emphasis in the context of the religions of the Near East than it did in the context of the public religions of the Greeks and Romans, even though in both clusters of civilisations, religion was very much a state affair.

Among the Greeks, the concept of secret knowledge gained more currency in small-scale groups of a teacher with his pupil(s). In these groups, exemplified by Pythagoras and Empedocles, for instance (or what the tradition made of them), knowledge was passed on that was felt to contain truths about reality that not every mortal was able or entitled to find out. Among a range of options in restricting access to that knowledge, the most common features are preparatory purifications, certain prescriptions for the style of living (e.g. dietary rules) and formal or informal teaching, following which the hidden truths were destined to be perceived or experienced by the pupil. The question whether this knowledge was considered too sacred to reveal to those who were not properly prepared or was thought to be beyond the reach of those without

the initial stages of purification and instruction, seems to be a modern preoccupation. The common ground between the two is the factor of experience: the knowledge revealed transforms the person who receives it. To hand it out to those without preparation was not seen as offensive as much as it was pointless: it would not work. This, at least, seems to apply to the often-encountered injunction to keep things secret in the history of Platonism, whose texts frequently stress the fact that people may laugh at the knowledge that is being handed down.

What was handed down? One common denominator in the content of the secret traditions seems to be living truths underlying ordinary things: the (nature of the) gods, stories about the gods, texts that were read by everyone and the world surrounding us. Under the right guidance, a new interpretation of all these sources of information could lead to other, better understandings of reality. This is, of course, a claim common to all systems of instruction and does not necessarily require codes of secrecy or extensive preparations, but it is certainly characteristic of these secret traditions. A second element is the defragmentation of reality: whereas our common experience naturally leads us to a fragmented view of reality (a myth is relevant to a particular subject, a hymn is sung to please a god of choice, literature serves an aesthetic experience and mathematics are useful for measuring or trading, etc.), the hidden teachings would most often stress the interrelatedness of all these things. Almost every aspect of human culture and experience could be presented in the light of overarching themes that one would not ordinarily associate with them. The typical subjects of these overarching theories were the (organisation of the) cosmos, the human soul and his mind and the reality of the divine. In the interrelations between these subjects, reality was made much simpler than ordinary (sensory) experience would lead us to believe and at the same time was thought to reveal profound truths that would transform a person’s life.

The third element that must be stressed is the power secret knowledge could bring. The experience of hidden truths not only changed a person’s view of reality or transformed his life, but it also invested him (or her) with hidden powers. Here, in particular, belong those elements of secret knowledge that would teach the hidden names of divine beings, which would enable a person to lay them under his control, the formulas, words, or syllables that would influence the course of nature and the symbols with which his soul could find a path beyond this world. None of this knowledge would be useful without a proper understanding of their

origins or of the workings of reality; revealing them to the uninitiated could be perceived or presented as dangerous, in leading persons to places or stages for which they were unprepared, or as pointless, in giving someone instruments he would be unable to use.

One of the most extensive sources for this type of “secret knowledge” is the *Corpus Hermeticum* [→ Hermetic Literature I] which reveals several of the characteristics mentioned above: the visionary setting of the *Poimandres* (CH I), for instance, in which truths are revealed, first, in visual experience, and then explained by a divine teacher. The texts of the CH frequently explore the subject of silence: it is only in silence, in speechless words and soundless song, that the mind can access God. Secrecy is also enjoined explicitly, especially in CH XIII, which contains a ‘secret hymn’ that is said to be a ‘secret kept in silence’ and may not be divulged. The reasons for this silence and secrecy are located in the ‘suppression of all the senses’ (CH X.5) necessary for true understanding.

It is much more difficult to locate “secret knowledge” in those traditions that belong more firmly in the orbit of Christianity, such as Gnostic varieties of Christianity [→ Gnosticism] and → Manichaeism. In “mainstream” Christian texts and traditions themselves, the concept of secrecy (and its companion, “mystery”, which originally belongs to the realm of initiation) is often used, as is the idea of “revealing” hidden messages. It is a moot point, however, whether this knowledge was considered the special reserve of initiated members of a certain group, or rather knowledge available to all those willing to acquire it. It is often assumed that in the development of Christianity, the “esoteric” character of texts and ideas gave way to the appeal to broader audiences quite early, leaving a void in “experiential knowledge” that came to be filled by Christian mysticism. In this schematic approach to the development of the traditions (of which G.G. Stroumsa’s work is an outstanding example), Gnostic texts are frequently thought to display a longer continuation of early Christian secret or initiatory knowledge. Certainly, many of the texts from the Nag Hammadi *codices* stress the secret nature of knowledge preserved in those texts. Since we know so little about the patterns of organisation of “Gnostic” Christians, however, it is by no means certain that there were definite, imposed, restrictions in the access to this knowledge. The case of Manichaeism may be a good illustration: from the organisation of the religion, it is clear that it was centred around the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the true origin of the world and the

human soul: those who entered the religion could gain the knowledge necessary for salvation. The complex practical rules for the desired lifestyle of Manichaeans were based on the realisation of these insights. Yet, the knowledge itself (among them Mani’s written works), was by no means “secret”: it was, in fact, propagated with great zeal by Manichaeon missionaries all over the world, with no perceivable restrictions. Gnosticism was, therefore, not by definition secretive, and the differences between “exoteric” Christianity and “esoteric” Gnostic Christianity are more a matter of emphasis than of substance.

### 3. SECRET ACTS

The language used in the section on “secret knowledge” comes very close to the language necessary for secret rituals, to the language of initiation and mystery cults. The most important secret from the ancient world without any doubt was the experience of the Mysteries of Eleusis. A large number of the citizens of Athens took part in these Mysteries in some stage of their lives, and the “secret”, therefore, must have been widely known. It was guarded and enforced with much energy. It is widely assumed that the other mystery cults of antiquity, including those of the so-called “Oriental” deities (Cybele, Mithras, Isis, etc.) in part emulated the Mysteries of Eleusis. The secrecy of the rituals, in most cases, functioned as a “control for experience”, although it could be formulated in different terms. In Athenian law, “profaning” the Mysteries (i.e., revealing them either by describing them in words or by acting them out) was punishable by death. This was certainly not the case with the other, private, mystery cults, but in all cases secrecy seems to have served the same purpose: to ensure the emotional impact of undergoing the ritual. Revealing the rituals and their symbols beforehand not only meant transgressing sacred institutions, but also spoiling the effects the ritual was supposed to accomplish.

This, however, should not be pushed to its extreme. If the reports we have of some of the rituals in the mystery cults are correct (and even though the majority derives from hostile early Christian authors, there is little reason to doubt the accuracy of some of them), candidates for initiation in, for instance, the several grades of the mysteries of Mithras, knew at least some of the rituals beforehand, for they were supposed to do certain things during these rituals for which they had to be prepared (the best example is the initiation to the *Miles*-grade, during which the candidate had to shake off a wreath placed on his head and proclaim



solemnly, “Mithras is my wreath”). In general, it seems plausible to assume that the secrecy of certain initiation rituals was kept as a control for experience of the candidates, whereas the secrecy of the rituals in regular meetings (ritual meals, for instance) lay more in the special significance these rituals were thought to have and the wish to celebrate these in a fitting manner with initiated members only.

The rituals affecting the course of things in the cosmos were of a different nature. These belong more to the realm of “secret knowledge”. There is a sizeable body of literature from late antiquity, drawn from many confessional groups, which gives instructions to people wishing to perform rituals to attain a certain goal, in transforming their own lives or in influencing their surroundings. The magical papyri belong to this group, as do the possibly more public discussions and manuals of Neoplatonic theurgy [→ Neoplatonism] and handbooks and ritual instructions from Christians, Jews, and others. These are not so much group rituals destined to impose identity on new members, but specific texts and rituals imparting powers and the knowledge required for harnessing these powers.

Little is known of the social organisation(s) behind the Hermetic texts. Several scholars (most famously A.J. Festugière) have doubted whether there is a social reality behind this literature at all, but it seems unreasonable to reject this as a possibility. If there was an organisation, there must have been rituals, but we are very poorly informed about these. Hermetism, to be sure, was not a separate religion with an identifiable “church” hierarchy and specially consecrated buildings, etc. The term that seems to have stuck in modern scholarship to imagine Hermetic “communities” is that of a “lodge”, and from a number of passages in Hermetic literature, it has been possible to reconstruct the presence of gatherings of small groups of initiates, for the singing of hymns, praying, study, and a communal meal with symbolic acts. Since the language of initiation lies heavily on these passages, it is reasonable to envisage these rituals as meetings for initiates only, in which proximity (or unity) with the divine could be experienced.

The rituals of Gnostic Christians are even more difficult to reconstruct. Most evidence derives from the opponents of Gnostic varieties of Christianity. It is most likely that Gnostic Christians knew most of the rituals that were performed by Christians in general (baptism, anointment, [communal] prayer, etc.) and that it was in their interpretation that they differed from other varieties of Christianity. In addition, special rituals seem to have been devel-

oped among certain Gnostic Christians: a ritual of redemption (*apolytrōsis*), and the rites of the “bridal chamber” are among them. The details of these rituals are only poorly known, but their great importance is stressed both by early Christian opponents of Gnosticism and in Gnostic literature (e.g. the *Gospel of Philip*).

#### 4. SECRET IDENTITIES

It is beyond doubt that the secrecy of certain groups was a major element in their attraction to outsiders. From a sociological point of view, enforcing secrecy about the inner workings of a group, about the knowledge handed down and the rituals performed, helps to raise the prestige of the group. In a tolerant, benign world, this seems to be the most important aspect of secrecy: apart from being a control for experience, it is an instrument to attract new following. This certainly seems to be true for the mystery cults, which could thrive in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods by promising personal transformation and enrichment without threatening the political or religious *status quo*. The ancient world, however, was not always either tolerant or benign and the history of private religious associations also shows the other side of secrecy. Already in the 5th century B.C.E., the Pythagoreans of Southern Italy were massacred and the history of religions in the ancient world shows a large number of incidents in which religious groups were persecuted, outlawed, or executed. The final secret to be discussed, therefore, is the secret identity.

Mystery cults were, in principle, a private matter that would not interfere with a person’s social life. A person was not obliged to report his memberships and could choose not to declare it, with the exception of a number of cases: the *hierophant* of Eleusis, for instance, was not allowed to take part in other mysteries. Not declaring membership in a religious organisation therefore did not automatically imply the urge to keep such membership secret out of fear of persecution. Once an organisation had been outlawed, however, this could become a real option. The best illustrations we have of this concealment of identity belong to the history of Christianity and Islam. The traditional religions of Greeks and Romans did not as a rule interfere in the “content” of various cults and organisations. The early Christian churches were not in a position to do so, but the growing centralisation and authority of the Church brought with it repeated attempts to formulate, centralise and control the content and the practice of the religion (ideas, exegesis and ritual), which led to the exclu-

sion of a large variety of different interpretations and practices. From the moment the Church gained sufficient power to do so, this exclusion had in it the danger of persecution. Secrecy, or rather the presumption of secrecy, was used as a weapon in this battle: persons, ideas, texts, and rituals were “unmasked” in attempts to stamp out heresy. It is certain that many groups were anything but secretive in their interpretation of the requirements of Christianity, but several groups indeed chose the option of outward assimilation to mainstream Christianity, while concealing their particular interpretations and rituals. It is in Shiite Islam that this practice came to be institutionalised in the right to dissimulation (*taqiya*) in the face of danger to one’s life. In the world of antiquity, secret identities were most often figments of the imagination and instruments for repression.

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## Secrecy II: Middle Ages

There has always existed within Christian culture the notion that there are certain forms of knowledge hidden from ordinary mortals and uniquely available through God to the prophets, saints and elect (an understanding visible in some biblical passages, e.g. Amos 3:7). However, a new rhetoric of secrecy begins to emerge into popular-

ity in the later middle ages. This rhetoric, adopted from a host of neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism] and Hermetic sources [→ Hermetic Literature] into various branches of Islamic natural philosophy, was imported into Western Europe in the many works of natural philosophy, → astrology and → magic which began drifting from Arabic sources into the eager hands of Latin translators and writers in the 12th century. In regard to the popularity of the literature of secrets in the later middle ages, it is important to note that in the 12th through 15th centuries, secular learning (education in the liberal arts and philosophy) gains considerably in economic importance with the rise of the universities; and at the same time, and connectedly, due to the strengthened influence of neoplatonic thinking, worldly knowledge comes increasingly to be understood as a kind of integument for divine knowledge (as well as, in some representations, a means by which it may be attained). Books claiming to disseminate the secret knowledge of the ancients or provide knowledge of the liberal arts and philosophy through esoteric or magical means may have been particularly attractive to the emerging class which could only sometimes afford the cost of a liberal arts education; but struggling young clerics and professionals were not the only people to read and take seriously the literature and rhetoric of secrets. It is possible to find suggestions adumbrated in different kinds of medieval writing (as for example in the *De reductione artium ad theologiam* of St. Bonaventure [1221-1274]) that some esoteric knowledge might be a regular part of normal learning, or that normal learning might lead to divine knowledge; the liberal arts thus might be seen as a key to the divine as well as mundane worlds. All of these things contributed to the ethos which made the rhetoric and literature of secrets popular.

There were many late medieval books offering to deliver secrets of art or nature to the reader, often translated from or modelled on Arabic precursors, and containing a wide variety of formulas and experiments, not always particularly recondite. They included medical recipes; traditional lore about the properties of stars, herbs and stones; magical experiments; ethical advice; and advice on the care of the self. Perhaps the most influential among books of this type was the *Secretum secretorum* (in Arabic *Sirr al-Asrār*), first translated from Arabic to Latin in the mid-12th century, and purporting to have been written by Aristotle at the request of his student Alexander the Great. The book’s medieval audience believed in the attribution to Aristotle, and as the popularity of Aristo-

tle's genuine works increased, so too did the popularity of the *Secretum secretorum*, which was understood to contain the esoteric side of his doctrine. The two versions of the work came to exist in many manuscript copies, and were translated from Latin into many vernacular languages.

In the mid-13th century a Latin edition of the *Secretum* was prepared with comments and annotations by → Roger Bacon, on whom the work clearly had a strong influence, and the understanding of secrecy he found there is adapted and paraphrased by him in many of his own works. Bacon's motivations for an interest in secrecy were intensified by his frequently expressed concern to keep important information out of the hands of the Antichrist, mingled with a desire for the education of the Christian world, to the end that they might rediscover knowledge hidden from human beings since ancient times but intended to be restored in time for the coming apocalypse. Like many others, Bacon accepted the claim of the *Secretum* to transmit lore which contained the divine wisdom granted to the saints and prophets; but it is clear that this lore is conceived of as the secrets of particular causes of things in nature (not that this excludes divinity, as he notes: 'when we speak of the power of particular agents, we do not exclude the regimen of the universal agent and first cause' [*Epistola*, c. 3]). Thus Bacon's rhetoric of secrecy wraps itself around an idea of normal knowledge too: the "secrets" of Art and Nature, which are not more than the wise philosopher might deduce, are also not less than secrets of God.

Clearly in the *Secretum Secretorum*, as in Bacon's reception of it, the spiritual/magical and the mundane/technical streams of thought were not always readily distinguishable. This is certainly the case for many works in which the rhetoric of secrecy is manifest. Sometimes, however, particular books seemed to run more in one channel than another. In the more mundane/technical stream might be found books like the *Secretum philosophorum*: a late 13th century text structured in seven chapters co-ordinated with each of the seven liberal arts. The apparent concern with the normal scheme of knowledge suggested by arrangement around the liberal arts is not quite carried out in the content, though this remains mundane enough, for some of the chapters contain simple party tricks and ways of deceiving the senses, while others are filled with instructions for such things as the making of pigments or experiments to be performed with flasks and retorts. In other works, such as the *Secrets of Galen* (or *Rasis*), or the *Secrets of Women* attributed to → Albertus Magnus, the concerns are

primarily with natural or medical "secrets". While elaborating their information within an astrological framework [→ Astrology], these books did not really push the envelope of normal medieval natural philosophy.

Alchemical literature [→ Alchemy] began to enter the magical/spiritual stream in a more obvious way, though what counted as secret knowledge in alchemy might be implied to be at times technical and practical, at times spiritual, at times both at once. Certainly it is also true in alchemy that the secrets of art and nature are interwoven with the secrets of God. To the end of concealing such secrets from the common crowd, some medieval alchemical books were written in enigmatic or encrypted language; but even the more apparently straightforward of them typically gestured in the opening pages at the need for enigmatic language to keep the secrets of alchemy from the unworthy (frequently of course insisting on the importance of clarity at the same time). For example in the preface to the *Libellus de alchimia* attributed to Albertus Magnus, the author proposes to write of 'the true art, clear and free from error; however in such a way that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand', and goes on to adjure the reader to hide the book from the foolish (*Libellus*, 3). In alchemical writings, the "secrets" imparted through the text might also suggest something akin to an initiatic secret, a spiritual knowledge that could be achieved only by an operator who had gone through certain steps of purification and learning. In the *Ordinal of Alchemy* of Thomas Norton (ca. 1433-1513), the reader is enjoined that no one can attain the science unless God send him a master, and that while he must choose a successor to receive the knowledge after he dies, he is bound by sacred oath not to teach it to anyone, not even to his own children, unless virtue prove them worthy (*Ordinal*, c 1, 181ff.).

Most thoroughly steeped in the magical/spiritual channel of literature containing the rhetoric of secrecy we find a variety of different works of a theurgic or necromantic character concerned chiefly with the principles of or rituals for the invocation and/or binding of spirits. This somewhat heterogeneous category would include necromantic handbooks, works adapted from Arabic precursors like the *Liber de essentia spirituum*, and *Picatrix* (or *Ghayat al-Hakim*), and texts probably of Hebrew origin like the *Sworn Book of Honorius* and *Ars notoria*, which emphasize a direct approach to divine knowledge. For the most part works of ritual magic (including those of the necromantic type)

insist on the purity of the operator as strongly or even more strongly than the alchemical books do, and some also manifest concern with something akin to an initiatic secret. The *Sworn Book*, for example, purporting to be the only work to contain the true knowledge of → magic, begins with a narrative describing a gathering of 811 magicians convened to address the question of the preservation of the ancient wisdom in the face of opposition to magic by bishops and prelates. This council agrees on a set of oaths by which the owner of the book and bearer of its knowledge must be bound, including of course an oath not to reveal the secrets of the book to anyone but an appropriate successor. In works of this type, we might feel ourselves to be very far indeed from the realm of mundane and practical knowledge; but here too there may be found evidence of a preoccupation with the value of the entire spectrum of knowledge, not just the extra-linguistic knowledge implied by the idea of divine revelation. The goal of the *Ars notoria*, and following it the *Liber visionum* of John of Morigny (fl. 1304-1318), is the infusion into the mind of the operator of the seven liberal arts culminating in the knowledge of theology. In both works, but perhaps especially in the *Liber visionum*, the science of theology is represented as a revelation of divine secrets; but this final revelation requires the attainment (also by divine infusion) of the liberal arts as a preparatory proceeding. Here as elsewhere in the medieval literature of secrets, divine secrets and normal knowledge are closely contiguous; indeed it sometimes seems that “secret knowledge” is little more than a metonymy for knowledge itself.

Roger Bacon, *Secretum secretorum cum glossis et notulis*, in: Robert Steele (ed.), *Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi*, Fasc. V, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920 ♦ “Epistola Fratris Rogerii Baconis de Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturae et de Nullitate Magiae”, in: J.S. Brewer (ed.), *Rogeri Bacon Opera Quaedam Hactenus Inedita*, London: Longman, Green and Roberts, 1859, 523-550 ♦ *Libellus de Alchimia ascribed to Albertus Magnus*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958 ♦ *Thomas Norton’s Ordinal of Alchemy*, John Reidy (ed.), London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975.

*Lit.*: Jean-Patrice Boudet, “L’*Ars Notoria* au moyen âge: une résurgence de la Théurgie antique?”, in: *La Magie: Actes du Colloque international de Montpellier, 25-27 Mars 1999* (Tome III: Du Monde Latin au Monde Contemporain), Montpellier: Séminaire d’étude des mentalités antiques, 2000, 173-191 ♦ William Eamon, “From the Secrets of Nature to Public Knowledge: The Origins of the Concept of Openness in Science”, *Minerva* 23 (1985), 321-347 ♦ idem, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval*

*and Early Modern Culture*, esp. Part I, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994 ♦ John B. Friedman, “Safe Magic and Invisible Writing in the Secretum Philosophorum”, in: C. Fanger (ed.), *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998, 76-87 ♦ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 140-144 ♦ Robert Mathiesen, “A thirteenth-century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the Sworn Book of Honorius of Thebes”, in: Fanger, *Conjuring Spirits*, 143-162 ♦ Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, chapters LXIV-LXV, New York: Macmillan Company, 1929 ♦ Steven J. Williams, “Roger Bacon and the *Secret of Secrets*”, in: Jeremiah Hackett (ed.), *Roger Bacon and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1997, 365-391.

CLAIRE FANGER

### Secrecy III: Modernity

- I. SECRETS WITHIN NATURE AND HISTORY
  - (A. THE OCCULT SIDES OF NATURE
  - B. THE OCCULT SIDES OF HISTORY)
2. CONCEALMENT AND SECRECY IN RELATION TO TEXTS (A. EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT SECRECY B. THE DIALECTICS OF CONCEALMENT AND UNVEILMENT IN TEXTS)

The notion of secrecy is often associated with that of → esotericism, even to the point of reducing the sense of this latter term to that of the former. The typological meaning of “esotericism” as referring to secrecy should, however, be clearly distinguished from the historical meaning used in the present reference work and increasingly in general academic parlance. The problematics of the relationship between esotericism and secrecy, then, concerns the question of to what extent and in which forms secrecy is present within the discourses of the representatives of Western esoteric currents.

Given the centrality in modern and contemporary Western esotericism of → correspondences, in particular, related to concepts of living nature, imagination, and mediations, it comes as no surprise that esotericists evince a tendency to look for hidden meanings they assume to exist beneath the surface of the empirically observable world. In this understanding, Nature, History, and the works of humankind present themselves as a network of interrelated “signatures”; in other words, apparent reality is replete with secrets. That aspect is the subject of the first part of this entry. The second part concentrates on the very discourse of many esoteri-

cists, which purports to have something secret in it, and/or is characterized by a dialectics of concealment and unveiling.

## I. SECRETS WITHIN NATURE AND HISTORY

### A. THE OCCULT SIDES OF NATURE

Before the dawn of modern science, Nature as a whole appeared – not only among esotericists – as a *terra incognita* full of occult [→ occult / occultism] correspondences. The term *philosophia occulta* refers in great part to such a view, for instance in the title of one of the most influential books of Renaissance esotericism, *De occulta philosophia* (1533), by → Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. That view was to prevail also among paracelcists [→ Paracelsianism], Theosophers [→ Christian Theosophy], Rosicrucians [→ Rosicrucianism], etc. (the more recent substantive occultism has been used in a similar sense, although it had and still has other meanings as well). Occult correspondences within Nature are seen as operating at various levels of reality and as constituting, like Holy Scripture, an allegorical and symbolical unfolding of mysteries. “Occult philosophy” is therefore a matter of deciphering the *signatura mundi* in order to discover methods of finding one’s way through correspondences (between, for instance, plants, metals, parts of the human body, etc.). “Signatures” are seals that, once opened, do not so much unveil closed, definite meanings as they make new significations appear which, in turn, lead back to others, thereby providing ever new insights.

To this view three main ideas are attached. First, Nature likes to hide herself and, at the same time, be known. Second, she is full of secret energies. Third, a creative → imagination is the means by which Man has access to her secrets. The image of the goddess Isis as representing the invisible creativity of Nature is a commonplace one, well beyond the borders of esoteric literature proper. When masonic Rites happen to be of an esoteric bent, they occasionally quote the inscription that, according to Plutarch, was to be read on the Temple of Sais: “No mortal ever lifted my veil”. This resonates with the Platonic idea (see the *Timaieus*) that the phenomena of Nature have an origin not likely to be directly grasped. The metaphor “secret bosom of Nature” used by → Scottus Eriugena, referring to her proclivity to operate secretly, is echoed by what → Paracelsus called *mysterium magnum*. Similarly, → Franz von Baader, the main representative of Christian theosophy in the first

half of the 19th century, liked to emphasize that still uncompleted or unfinished products of natural processes are reluctant, as it were, to appear in broad daylight, lest the light should kill them, as exemplified by the foetus, the roots of plants, certain underdeveloped species living in the dark (like batrachians), and so on.

It is telling that in alchemical literature [→ Alchemy] the concept of secret or secrecy, far from always having the sense of intentional concealment, frequently refers, rather, to the existence of “secret energies”. This is exemplified by the widely disseminated *Lexicon Alchemiae* (1614) by Martin Ruland, which has no entry for “secret” or “secrecy”, but does have one for “Arcanum”, defined as ‘something secret, uncorporeal, which Man cannot know without experimentation. This virtue proper to any one thing operates one thousand times more effectively than that thing itself [in which the Arcanum is contained]’. Indeed, Nature and Man are seen by alchemists as containers of secret energies or seminal forces which it behooves the “philosopher” to know how to use. In such a context, imagination constitutes a power of unveiling that operates through the images and symbols of the myth and makes visible what would otherwise have remained in darkness.

### B. THE OCCULT SIDES OF HISTORY

Not only Nature is the object of esoteric interpretations, but also the whole history of mankind. History, as it presents itself in the form of documented events and visible traces, is full of gaps that are not just the result of a lack of empirical data. Indeed, concrete, tangible events are not what they would seem to be at face value (in that sense, the notion of secret History leads us back to the classical distinction between the orders of the profane and the sacred). In the context of the modern esoteric corpus, the idea often appears, for example, that one secret → tradition has been running for centuries through the apparent diversity of the philosophical and religious ones. That tradition is often believed to be maintained by certain people who ensure its continuity, despite its invisibility on the public stage. According to → René Guénon (see his *Le Roi du Monde*, 1927), there exists somewhere in this world a hidden spiritual centre regulating the life of humans. Before him, → H.P. Blavatsky had tried to convince her readers of the existence of Mahatmas, a group of sages or initiates in India and Tibet who oversee the destiny of the world. Many esoteric or para-esoteric conversations bear on an alleged secret of the Knights Templar [→ Neo-Templar Traditions], purported



to have been the link – the missing one, for the esotericizing historian – between the Gnostics [→ Gnosticism] and the Cathars [→ Catharism] on the one hand, and the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons [→ Freemasonry] on the other. Such ideas have been instrumental in nurturing conspiracy syndromes which fuelled the inspiration of pulp fictions of an anti-esoteric bent. Umberto Eco made a vivid and spicy use of such literature in his novel *Il pendolo di Foucault* (1988).

A typical example of secret History is provided in the 18th century by some esoterically oriented masonic Rites with side degrees. Two examples are given here, from among many others. Around 1750, Baron Karl von Hund attempted to legitimize the creation of his esoterically tinged masonic Rite called Strict Observance by claiming that it was, by way of uninterrupted transmission, the successor of the Knights Templar, whose existence had been carried on secretly up to that date. Within such a mythical history, the Knights Templar disbanded by Philip the Fair were to be considered one of the various transitional and contingent forms which a more ancient wisdom had taken on since the origins of the world. After having been revealed to Adam by God, that wisdom had been preserved from age to age within the bosom of lodges of initiates. In Hund's wake, the more esoterically tinged masonic Rectified Scottish Rite created by → Jean-Baptiste Willermoz in the 1770s had (and still has) its upper degrees instructions based on the teachings of the theosopher → Martines de Pasqually and partly on those of → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. These instructions present themselves as the unfolding of a comprehensive theosophical system bearing, as such, on the hidden relations between God, Man, and the universe. Willermoz and the co-founders of this Rite considered a meditation on History as being part of the initiation. But since the veracity of their teachings was not (and could not) be “proved” by resorting to undisputable documents, the legitimacy of their ritual was based on the secret of its origins. The same goes for many rituals of this sort. Thus, the knowledge on which one prides oneself is true because it is grounded in obscurity – the criterion of truth is the obscurity of the sources.

An illuminating parable of secret History is provided in Mircea Eliade's story *Adieu* (in *Bei den Zigeunerinnen*, 1980), in which a theatre curtain is pulled down, thus preventing the audience (i.e., the historians of religions, the observers “from the outside”) from seeing what is happening on the stage. Only the actors (i.e., the personages that real reli-

gious history is made of) are able to understand the play; the audience has no access to it.

## 2. CONCEALMENT AND SECRECY IN RELATION TO TEXTS

In esoteric texts the secret may be either explicit or implicit. Moreover, we often find various forms of interplay or dialectics between concealment and unveiling.

### A. EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT SECRECY

In esoteric milieus an aura of mystery is sometimes created around certain personages (Count de → Saint-Germain or → Fulcanelli, for instance), about whom legendary, long-lived stories are put into circulation. One also observes a preference for “secret writing” [→ Cryptography], to which magical powers are attributed (→ Johannes Trithemius's famous “steganography”, at the dawn of the 16th century, remains a classic example). More generally, initiatory rituals, not only those of an esoteric bent, have their own passwords and secret signs, and their members are theoretically forbidden to reveal what is going on during the assemblies. But since initiation often aims at transforming or even transmuting the candidate by providing him/her access to a *mysterium*, secrecy may simply mean here that one just could not reveal one's own experience of initiation, not so much because it is forbidden to do so, but rather because the experience is ineffable and would therefore remain incomprehensible to a non-initiate. That might well be the sense underlying the rule of *disciplina arcani* among the members of such societies (in contradistinction to the law of silence common to political or criminal secret societies, and to confessors and lawyers as well). Then again, the claim is not uncommon among esotericists that they have to refrain from saying all they know, because they resent the idea of throwing their pearls before the swine.

Besides explicit or deliberate forms of secrecy, there is the widely spread idea that an implicit secret exists within some esoteric and/or non-esoteric works. First, regarding the esoteric ones, it is a matter of assuming the presence of covert meanings in works that are already esoteric (in the sense of obviously pertaining to esoteric literature or art). Such meanings are not always supposed to have been intentionally concealed. For instance, the Christian kabbalists [→ Jewish Influences III] of the Renaissance believed to discover in Jewish kabbalah the presence of Christian truths. Neo-Alexandrian hermetists [→ Hermetic Literature IV]

enjoyed identifying in the *Corpus Hermeticum* symbols pertaining to the Christian Trinity. Many alchemists claim that in the writings of their predecessors, underneath the manifest meanings, other layers of meaning lay hidden, which had not necessarily been inserted on purpose. This is consistent with the fact that so many esoteric discourses are essentially interpretative (i.e., they consist of an exegesis of texts which in most cases are already exegeses themselves). “*Offenbares Geheimnis*” (“manifest secret”), an apt expression used by → Goethe, means that a secret within a work beckons, as it were, to the reader, informing him/her of its presence, regardless of the intention of the author.

Second, esotericists are not unfrequently bent upon convincing their readers that a secret is contained in works (of fiction, painting, sculpture, etc.) which at face value do not present themselves as esoteric. The baffled readers are thus expected to believe that the authors of these works have, unwittingly or not, inserted esoteric meanings. Such endeavours bear witness to the tendency of most esotericists of transforming one type of discourse into another. Thus, Shakespeare’s plays have been the object of esoteric glosses contending that the playwright’s main intention had actually consisted in conveying arithmological [→ Number Symbolism], alchemical [→ Alchemy] and/or astrological [→ Astrology] messages. Holy Scripture has been the object of interpretations going far beyond the common theological ones (particularly in theosophical discourses, like → Christian theosophy and Jewish as well as Christian kabbalah). ‘In all times’, writes Umberto Eco, ‘the Hermetic mind has been transforming the operational jargon of various crafts into a symbolic language’ (*Les limites de l’interprétation*, ch. II) – whereby he alludes to the fact that the vocabulary used by stone carvers, architects, chemists, and so on, has, over and over again, been utilized in initiatory rituals and hermetic texts. Indeed, alchemists often consider Greek or Egyptian mythology as an ensemble of cryptic messages that depict the stages and modes of the Great Work. As late as the 20th century, Fulcanelli (*Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, 1925) and other alchemists have scrutinized the cathedrals and other spiritual mansions, claiming to find in statuary and architecture an array of symbols witnessing to an uninterrupted hermetic tradition.

#### B. THE DIALECTICS OF CONCEALMENT AND UNVEILMENT IN TEXTS

Here we have three kinds of examples. First, the circularity of the discourse challenges the compre-

hension of the reader. Second, the secret of the discourse is the non-communication of something that is not transmissible. Third, contrariwise, other discourses present themselves more as a pedagogical agenda than a plea for secrecy, and some in this latter category go as far as making a plea for a “desoccultation of the occult”.

*A circular discourse challenges the comprehension of the reader.* This is a frequent case, and most often a frustrating one. The author gives the impression that he conceals while revealing and reveals while concealing. He multiplies veils and wrappings supposed to be reverberations of a light not very likely to be eventually grasped. Alchemical literature in particular is replete with examples of this stance. Usually, when an alchemist speaks about natural substances, he is transferring the universal principles of sympathy and resemblance into language in such a way that any word or image becomes the signified of several other signifieds, so that in the end – or even at the outset – the distinction between signified and signifier becomes blurred. What is upsetting is that we feel unable to make out which real, concrete, identifiable metals or liquids are meant. A word or an image refers less to an empirical substance than it leads back to other words or other images. The text provides us with would-be information about, for instance, the preparation of silver or gold, but that information presents itself as being intelligible only with reference to the texts of other authors. Even so, the reader who makes the effort to procure and read all (or as many as possible) of the texts hinted at or quoted in the work, finds him/herself entangled in a circular discourse that ends up by functioning as a veil which eventually seems to constitute the message itself. The paradox is that the text says countless things and, at the same time, says one main thing to which the reader is not privy (see Eco, *ibid.*).

The example of alchemy is paradigmatic in that it can serve to exemplify something that is more or less conspicuous in other esoteric discourses. In quite a few of the latter, any text (religious message, philosophical teaching, artistic work, poem, fiction, etc.) is supposed to contain a secret which, in turn, will refer us to another secret, so that there seems to be no ultimate definable secret or truth at all – at least none that is likely to be identified clearly, or called by its proper name. Bound up with that trait is the preference of many esotericists for exotic lore, hieroglyphical signs, mythological figures and settings, and incomprehensible languages attributed to a remote past. Theosophers

are lavish in circular discourses. Their work rarely presents itself, in spite of its inner coherence, as systematic sets of orderly devised propositions, but rather as puzzles made up of scattered elements, so that the reader is challenged to organize the latter into a more linear or chronological story. Many theosophers are inspired by an inner central vision (*Zentralschau*) that radiates in all directions. They are prone to employ words or images in a both literal and figurative sense, and these words or images moreover contain various levels of interrelated occult meanings likely to be illuminated by other passages in the same text – but the latter turn out to lead back to the earlier passages. To understand a theosophical text (of → Jacob Boehme, for example) entails having succeeded in finding the spot from which the author speaks. But in order for us to find this spot, we must have understood the text. That having been said, such a paradox appears to be less conspicuous or disheartening in theosophical than, for instance, in alchemical literature.

*The secret of the text is the non-communication of something that is not transmissible.* In the esoteric context we repeatedly hear that the representatives of philosophical and religious traditions of a more-or-less remote past had to veil the inner core of their doctrines. At the dawn of modern times, → Pico della Mirandola set the tone for such a statement in his *Oratio de Homini Dignitate*. To the same *topos*, Cornelius Agrippa devoted a famous and influential chapter in his *De Occulta Philosophia*, entitled “On the silence and cultivation of the things that are secret in religions”. Why so many discourses about things one is not supposed to talk about? Two factors seem to account for that paradox, which apparently began to come to the fore during the Renaissance. First, at the time, Western culture was in the process of becoming a culture of the printed book. This resulted in a change of paradigms with regard to the transmission of knowledge, which was formerly more strongly oral in character. Once printed, a teaching or message found itself bereft of part of its aura. The claim that some secrets had been preserved orally for the benefit of selected people partly made up for that loss, as it were. Second, certain people were convinced that the time had come for hitherto concealed mysteries to be made manifest. Indeed, during the Renaissance, some persons (→ Guillaume Postel, for instance) of this persuasion considered themselves as providential beings commissioned by the decrees of secret history to reform the world. With this in mind they set out to scrutinize what had remained concealed in History pending riper times. But how were they to speak about

these mysteries without making them, by the same token, stale? How to speak about, say, the Spirit who is the concealed motor, the hidden driving force of History? As such, he is inexpressible, therefore non-transmissible by way of any discourse, let alone by printed texts, which are liable to falling into the hands of readers unable to grasp their inner core. Here the plea for secrecy again comes into play, understood, as it were, as the needle of a compass pointing to a mythical “Orient” and serving to mask the impossibility of transmission. In this understanding, esoteric transmission cannot unveil secrets. Rather, it is the non-communication of what is not transmissible that constitutes the secret. Hence the abundance of discourses that illustrated this paradox in the Renaissance and have, in the wake of the latter, continued in various forms to bestow on many esoteric texts their specific colouring.

*Rending the veil: the text is meant as a desoccultation of the occult.* Desoccultation comes in two main categories, the differences between them lying in the degree to which the author relates to the traditions of the past.

Saint-Martin represents the first category. His intention was not to be secretive, but to deliver his esoteric knowledge for the benefit of as many readers as possible. To wit, he took from the hothouse of the secret masonic association of the → Elus Coëns the essentials of the theosophical teachings that → Martines de Pasqually had meant to be reserved for his initiates, and he translated → Boehme into a clear French (at least, into a language more accessible or fluid than its German baroque original). In his works, Saint-Martin not infrequently resorted to the very style in use among the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Indeed, he conceived his work as pedagogical, aimed at fostering the Regeneration of Man and Nature. Adam appears here as a child whom God had to educate. Likewise, humankind is engaged in an unceasing process of regenerating education. Saint-Martin thus developed a “pedagogical theosophy”, as it were, aimed at helping any man or woman to meditate about the essentials of Revelation in order for him/her to reach genuine adulthood. Ultimately, though, he did not so much undertake a desocculting of the occult as he tried to make the occult available and accessible without reducing myths and symbols to concepts. The same could be said of → Franz von Baader in the later period.

Typical of the second category, which is more at home in the esoteric landscape of the second half of the 20th century, is → Raymond Abellio. In contrast to authors like Saint-Martin and Baader, we

are dealing here with a deliberate “desoccultation of the occult”. Abellio was certainly not committed to explaining away esoteric or occult traditions (Western and Eastern: he dabbled in → astrology, the *Y-King*, the → Tarot, Kabbalah, etc.) by way of scientific or pseudoscientific forms of hyper-reductionism. But he was intent upon reducing them all to a small number of common denominators which he presented in a severe, abstract and geometrical manner; the final result being a geometrical three-dimensional figure he called “the Absolute Structure”. It is not by chance that the writing and publication of his work *La Structure Absolue* (1965) coincided precisely with the vogue of structuralism in France. Besides, the word “fin”, in the title of his later book *La Fin de l’Esotérisme* (1973), has in French two complementary meanings, i.e., “goal” and “end”. “Goal” refers to the *raison d’être* of esotericism (that is to say, for Abellio, the acquisition of what he considers a genuine gnosis). “End” means that esoteric texts of the past become unnecessary once their hitherto occult significations have been unveiled, which Abellio contends to have done. Once discovered, truth helps dispense with texts.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Although very much present in the context of modern esoteric currents, the notion of concealment or secrecy has varied meanings, so that it would be inadequate to specify the form of thought common to these currents. It remains that “esotericism” is still frequently used by scholars as a synonym for secrecy (see e.g. Guy G. Stroumsa’s book *Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 1996), and by a wide public in the sense of hidden knowledge/teachings about a truth behind the veil (and/or of the means to attain that truth), and of practices of concealment. Admittedly, there is no reason why it should not be so, since the term was intended in that sense from the moment it came into use in the first third of the 19th century. Nevertheless, in academic parlance it has come to designate, as already noted, a specific corpus of authors and currents, without special reference to the notion of secrecy. For these reasons it behoves the historian to be cognizant of the contexts in which the term is used whenever he/she comes across it. Depending on whether “esotericism” refers essentially to secrecy or not, the notion of secrecy finds itself either highlighted, or pushed into the background.

*Lit.*: Bernadette Bertrandias (ed.), *Le Secret*, Clermont-Ferrand: CRLMC/Université Blaise Pascal, 1999 ♦

Pierre Brunel, *L’Imaginaire du secret*, Grenoble: ELLUG/Université Stendhal, 1998 ♦ Roger Dachez, “Sources et fonctions de l’histoire secrète chez Willermoz et dans la Maçonnerie du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle”, *Politica Hermetica* 10 (1996), 79–91 ♦ Philippe Dujardin (ed.), *Le Secret: Usages et fonctions du secret. Approches comparées*, Lyon: Editions du CNRS/Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1987 ♦ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, Indiana University Press (USA), 1990 (original Italian ed. Milan: Fabbri etc., 1990), see chapter II: “Aspects of Hermetic Semiosis” ♦ Antoine Faivre, “The Notions of Concealment and Secrecy in Modern Esoteric Currents since the Renaissance (A Methodological Approach)”, in: Elliot R. Wolfson (ed.), *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, New York/London: Seven Bridges, 1999, 155–176 ♦ F. Laroque (ed.), *Histoire et secret à la Renaissance*, Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *Le sens cachée dans l’oeuvre de René Guénon*, Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1975 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant etc. (eds.), *Secret, initiations et sociétés modernes (Politica Hermetica, 5)* ♦ idem, “Du secret ésotérique”, *Politica Hermetica* 5 (1991), 66–71 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant etc. (eds.), *L’Histoire cachée entre histoire révélée et histoire critique (Politica Hermetica, 10)*, 1996 ♦ Georg Simmel, *The Secret and the Secret Society* (Kurt H. Wolff, ed.), New York: Free Press, 1950 (1st version 1906/1908).

ANTOINE FAIVRE

### Sedacer, Guillaume (Guillelmus Sedacerii), \* ?, † 1382

Very little is known of the life of this Catalan Carmelite, except that he benefited, at least during the last years of his life, from the protection of the Infante John of Aragon (future John I, who reigned from 1387 to 1395), known for the sympathy he had for the alchemists. The description, preserved in a notarized act, of thirty-four manuscripts that had belonged to Sedacer, makes it possible to determine his three main centers of interest: astronomy/→ astrology, medicine and, especially, → alchemy.

Posterity has retained only the alchemical aspect of his written work, but Sedacer was also the author of a surgical treatise, which remained unfinished and was entitled *Ars chirurgie*, a sort of summary, written in 1378 for the use of students, of works by Lanfranc (13th century) and his master William of Saliceto (ca. 1210–ca. 1280). He was moreover connected with the medical teaching milieu at the College of Medicine of Montpellier.

Sedacer’s two alchemical treatises, *Liber alterquinus* and *Sedacina totius artis alchimie*, are intimately connected: the first is a long *practica*, that is, a long series of recipes, rather roughly arranged in

four books. It was from this material that Sedacer later drew to compose *Sedacina*, ordering it, completing it, and supporting it with a theoretical introduction, but still maintaining the same plan in four books. *Sedacina*, however, suddenly stops short in the midst of the second book: the hand of death seems to have interrupted Sedacer in his work.

The term *sedacina*, invented by Sedacer to entitle his second treatise, well defines the alchemical work of the Carmelite Friar. It means not only “Sedacer’s thing”, but also, by playing on the meaning of the Catalan word *sedasser* (merchant or maker of sieves), the result of putting previous alchemical texts through a sieve. Indeed, his work is very derivative of treatises extremely widely circulated as early as the 13th century, that is, among others, *De perfecto magisterio* of pseudo-Aristotle, *De salibus et aluminibus* of pseudo-Razi and *Semita recta* of pseudo- → Albertus Magnus, to which we may add *Verbum abbreviatum de leone viridi*, a text that circulated since the 14th century under → Roger Bacon’s name. Sedacer largely drew from these sources, reproducing them word for word and juxtaposing, in some places, passages from different texts, thus developing a true “mosaic”, very characteristic of medieval compilations. Nevertheless, Sedacer knew of recent alchemical texts, and notably the treatises circulating under the names of → Arnau de Vilanova and → Ramon Llull, or again the *Rosarium* by John Dastin. He was moreover the first known alchemical author to cite Ramon Llull as an alchemical authority. Nevertheless, he is in disagreement with the ideas expressed by these authors and notably with their rejection of organic substances in making the elixir, a rejection that was provided with a precise theoretical foundation for the first time in the *Summa perfectionis* of the Latin pseudo-Geber (13th century). For Sedacer, on the contrary, it is quite as possible to make the ‘stone and not stone’ (that is, the philosopher’s stone) starting with mineral and vegetable substances as it is from animal ones. In fact, Sedacer’s alchemical work stands completely in the line of *De anima artis alchimie* of pseudo- → Avicenna, one of the basic texts of alchemy translated and rewritten from the Arabic in the 13th century and on which most of his sources depend. He himself is not a builder of theories; his alchemy is above all operative and the clearly sought-for goal is the transmutation of metals. Even in *Sedacina*, the theoretical introduction, essentially composed of *topoi*, is there only to bring in and justify the long sequence of recipes. However, one substance fascinates him more than any other: glass. The recipe for making glass, which correctly reflects the technical knowl-

edge of the time, acts as a model for many recipes for making “stone and not stone” in his works. However, even if he repeats several times ‘una via, unus modus et unus finis’ (a single way, a single process, a single purpose), to emphasize the paradigmatic character of glass making for alchemical practice, in his treatises he nevertheless gives many transmutatory recipes not stemming from this model. In fact, Sedacer primarily seeks to transmit a whole series of procedures, juxtaposing, as usual in such *practicae*, perfectly proven procedures stemming from metallurgical techniques and indications with a transmutatory purpose. Some of his recipes therefore accumulate ingredients and operations, with a concern to lose nothing and exclude nothing.

Apart from his fascination with glass, there is another characteristic aspect of Sedacer’s alchemical work: the Carmelite Friar forged a vocabulary all of his own, which he substituted systematically for that of his sources. To begin with, the titles of his two treatises are words invented by him: *alterquinus* (synonym of *alchimicus*) and *sedacina* (cf. *supra*). Above all, each substance used in a recipe is designated by a specific term (for example, *lubricus* for mercury, *rabiz* for vinegar or again *stultus saltans* for saltpeter). To constitute this stock of words, Sedacer no doubt drew on his imagination as well as on various sources, among which were medical synonymies. He has recourse to several procedures, but especially uses metaphors and terms that originate, he says, from foreign languages. For Sedacer, it is a matter of discouraging the unworthy reader; but, since he is careful to give, here and there, synonyms allowing all this vocabulary to be understood, his coding system does not seem very effective. In addition, an element of playfulness, and the sheer pleasure of inventing verbal puns, certainly also helps explain his approach.

In brief, Sedacer is a good example of an “ordinary alchemist” of the end of the Middle Ages. His work, which did not have much influence but was well distributed (17 manuscripts are known to this day), bears witness to an alchemy essentially oriented toward practice and concrete manipulations of matter. However, this does not necessarily imply that he himself put his procedures into practice, as we would expect today; indeed, it would certainly be incorrect to see Sedacer as a laboratory man who had tested all his recipes. The practical knowledge to be transmitted was mainly bookish, even if not exclusively so: the emphasis on glass, for example, probably originated from a real experiment. The notion of thought experiments – that is to say the mental contemplation of processes that accord-



ing to alchemical logic necessarily have to come to realization – provides another key to understanding the relationship taken towards practical alchemy by a man like Sedacer.

*Lit.*: Pascale Barthélemy, “Un anonyme alchimique dévoilé: le *Liber alterquinus*”, *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 58 (1991), 31-53 ♦ idem, “Du ‘belutage’ alchimique: remarques sur la méthode de G. Sedacer”, in: Jean-Claude Margolin & Sylvain Matton (eds.), *Alchimie et philosophie à la Renaissance: Actes du colloque international de Tours* (4-7 décembre, 1991), Paris: Vrin, 1993, 79-92 ♦ idem, “Le verre dans la *Sedacina totius artis alchimie* de Guillaume Sedacer”, in: Didier Kahn & Sylvain Matton (eds.), *Alchimie: art, histoire et mythes: Actes du 1er colloque international de la Société d'Etude de l'histoire de l'Alchimie*, Paris/Milan: S.E.H.A., Archè, 1995, 203-233 ♦ idem, *La Sedacina ou l'Oeuvre au crible: L'alchimie de Guillaume Sedacer, carme catalan de la fin du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1: *Étude et outils*; vol. 2: *Sedacina, édition critique et traduction, suivie du Liber alterquinus*, Paris/Milan: S.E.H.A., Archè, 2002 ♦ idem, “Les liens entre alchimie et médecine: L'exemple de Guillaume Sedacer”, in: Chiara Crisciani & Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (eds.), *Alchimia e medicina nel Medioevo* (Micrologus's library, 9), Sismel: Ed. del Galuzo, 2003, 109-130 ♦ Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, New York, 1923-1961, vol. 3, 628-632.

PASCALE BARTHÉLEMY

**Sédir, Paul** (ps. of Yvon Le Loup),  
\* 1.1.1871 Dinan, † 3.2.1926 Paris

This Breton, rather gauche in appearance and fragile in health, was employed in a bank. He had had no special intellectual education before meeting → Papus (Gérard Encausse) in 1889 at the occultist Chamuel's bookshop *La Librairie du Merveilleux*. At the time, Papus was running a vast network of periodicals, esoteric teaching, and initiatic institutions, in a half-learned, half-social enterprise in which Le Loup (whose pseudonym Sédir is an anagram of *désir*, from → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin's *homme de désir*, “man of aspiration”) found his place, writing articles for *L'Initiation* and teaching in the *Groupe indépendant d'études ésotériques* and the schools that belonged to it. He practiced → magic in the company of the alchemist Albert Poisson (1869-1894), and was initiated into almost all the secret societies that Paris had to offer, notably the Martinist Order [→ Martinism: Second Period] of Papus and the fringe-masonic groups linked to it. He was also to be found in the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix* of → Stanislas de Guaita. Sédir's publications, usually derivative, also touched on everything, ranging from tech-

niques of divination [→ Divinatory Arts] (*Urim et Thumim*) to the translation of → Gichtel's *Theosophia Practica* for the “Bibliothèque roscrucienne” of René Philipon (1869-1936), and to Hindu fakirism. However, he suddenly changed his spiritual direction after his encounter with a Lyonnais healer, → Maître Philippe, who caused him to realize the absolute superiority of Christ. After this meeting, *L'Initiation* in 1909 announced Sédir's resignation from all the initiatic organizations; he now founded another network, *Les Amitiés spirituelles*, a sort of “interior church” after the fashion of the theosophers [→ Christian Theosophy] of the end of the 18th century. The group settled in Bihorel-les-Rouen, Normandy. Sédir's thought integrated the occultism [→ occult / occultism] of the 19th century, which he never completely renounced, considering the Revelation as the résumé and crown of “natural religion” while breaking with the myth of progress. The idea that from age to age, esotericism had preserved and transmitted the purest part of the eternal doctrine [→ Tradition] served as the guiding thread in his *Histoire des Rose-Croix* (History of the Rosicrucians), reprinted by “Les Amitiés spirituelles” in 1932, a work that would notably inspire → René Guénon in his *Ésotérisme de Dante* (Dante's esotericism, 1925). Sédir's last works were devoted to → mysticism: *Commentaires sur l'Évangile* (Commentaries on the Gospel, 1908-1909) and *Bréviaire mystique* (Mystical breviary, 1910).

*Urim et Thumim*, Paris, 1890 ♦ *Le bienheureux Jacob Boehme*, Paris: Chacornac, 1901 ♦ *Les plantes magiques, botanique occulte*, Paris: Chacornac, 1902 ♦ *Le fakirisme hindou*, Paris: Chacornac, 1906 ♦ *Histoire et doctrines des Rose-Croix*, Paris: Librairie du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1910 (several enlarged new editions).

*Lit.*: Robert Caborgne, “Paul Sédir ésotériste chrétien”, *Initiation et science*, July-Aug., 1948 ♦ Philippe Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, Paris: Ocia, 1949, 45-56 ♦ Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1992, 176-195.

JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Sethians

1. THE HERESIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE
2. A MODERN DEFINITION OF SETHIANISM
3. ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE

Modern scholarship has as yet reached no agreement whether or not there existed in Late Antiquity a distinct religious group or sect that took its name from Adam's son Seth (Gen 4:25; 5:3). Whereas

some scholars express scepticism (e.g. Wisse), others feel confident in demarcating a body of Sethian literature and in reconstructing the doctrine of a distinct group of Sethians (e.g. Schenke, Turner). They claim that the Sethians were as much a distinct group as the Valentinians [→ Valentinus and Valentinians]. In the following the evidence of ancient heresiology that points to the existence of a group or groups of Sethians will be reviewed (1). Then a modern definition of “Sethianism” will be presented (2). A brief assessment of the evidence and an indication of possible topics for further exploration will form the conclusion (3).

## 1. THE HERESIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

1.1. The first Christian author to mention Sethians is Hippolytus of Rome. In *Refutatio*, V, 19-22 / X, 11 he relates their complex system which is based on the interaction of the principles of light, spirit and darkness. According to his heresiological scheme, Hippolytus claims that they derive their doctrine from the ancient physicists, the ancient theologians Musaios and Linus, and Orpheus (V, 20, 1. 4). Hippolytus refers to the ‘numberless treatises’ (V, 21, 1) of the Sethians; one of them has the title *Paraphrasis of Seth* (V, 22, 1). Perhaps this book title inspired the designation of “Sethians”; apart from it, Seth is mentioned only once as one of the three sons of Adam (V, 20, 2) and plays no role in the “system” of Hippolytus’ Sethians. According to Hippolytus the Sethians recommended to their disciples particularly the study of the doctrine of mixture and confusion as taught by, amongst others, the Peripatetic Andronicus (V, 21, 1; cf. NHC II, 1, 18, 14-19, 2 where the section on the passions agrees with the tradition of Pseudo-Andronicus of Rhodos as attested by Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, IV, 7, 16 [cf. Tardieu, 1986]). Hippolytus’ report about the Sethians is part of Hippolytus’ “Sondergut”, i.e. a group of reports about various Gnostic heresies that evince significant parallels of thought and wording amongst each other. A proper evaluation of Hippolytus’ report about the Sethians presupposes a general analysis of the “Sondergut” – a task that has not yet been completed.

1.2. Origen refers to a group of heretics that call themselves Sethians (in PG 14, 1303D; cf. le Boulleuc, II, 525, note 300).

1.3. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses*, II, 7, mentions Sethians and gives an account of their teaching different from that in Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, V, 19-22. Seth plays a prominent role: whereas Cain and Abel had been created by angels, the power above all powers, the Mother, gave birth to Seth in order to destroy the angels. The Mother

brought about the Flood in order to destroy the mixed breed that was the product of angels and men. But in Noah’s ark there was not only the pure race of Seth, but also Ham who was a descendant of angels. Thus evil continued and filled the earth even after the Flood. Later on Seth appeared as Jesus Christ. The doxography of Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, 39, and Filastrius of Brescia, *Diversarum haereseon liber*, 3, largely agrees with Pseudo-Tertullian. Lipsius (188-192) accounted for this similarity by assuming that all three derive their information from Hippolytus’ of Rome lost *Syntagma*. Epiphanius, however, dimly remembers having met with a sect of Sethians in Egypt; moreover, he claims to have ‘discovered some things about it in an actual encounter, by inquiry’ (*Panarion*, 39, 1, 2; cf. 26, 17); other things he has gleaned from their literature (ibidem). In *Panarion*, 39, 5, 1, Epiphanius informs us about Sethian pseudepigraphy: seven books are ascribed to Seth, others are called *Allogeneis* (cf. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 16 [see below]; NHC XI, 3 [see below]). Yet another book is apparently called *Apocalypse of Abraham* (see below; cf. Puech, 1936; Origen, in PG 13, 1889; this treatise should not be confused with another writing with an identical title, cf. J.H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, New York 1983, 683); there were also books under → Moses’ name.

1.4. In *Panarion* 26 Epiphanius deals with a heresy he calls “Gnostics”. He claims personal acquaintance (26, 17) and refers, amongst others, to books called *Noria* (cf. the reference NHC II, 5, 102, 10-11, 23-25; for her connection with Seth, cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 30, 9; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 39, 5, 2f.), the *Gospel of Perfection*, the *Gospel of Eve* (26, 1, 3; 2, 5; 2, 6); books in the name of Seth, *Greater / Lesser Questions of Mary*, *Apocalypses of Adam* (cf. NHC V, 5; *Cologne Mani Codex* 48-49 [ed. Koenen-Römer, 30-33]; marginal gloss at *Epistle of Barnabas* 2, 10a in the Codex Hierosolymitanus Graecus Taphou 54 [cf. Tardieu, 1981, 86]) (26, 8, 1).

1.5. In *Panarion*, 40, Epiphanius refutes the teaching of the so called → “Archontics”. In this context he cites their many apocryphal books, mentioning, amongst others, a *Lesser Harmony*, a *Greater Harmony*, *Strangers (Allogeneis)* (40, 2, 1-3), and books by Seth and under the name of Seth himself and his seven sons (40, 7, 4). He adds: ‘For they say that he had seven sons, called “strangers”, as I mentioned also in other Sects – I mean the Gnostics and the Sethians’ (40, 7, 5). Thus we can infer that the book title *Allogeneis* refers to the seven sons of Seth. Moreover, the Archontics also

spoke of other prophets, i.e. Martiades and Marsianus (perhaps a Syriac name for Enoch, alluding to Gen 5:24; cf. Tardieu [1992], 532-33, note 69), who had been taken up into the heavens and had descended after three days. Seth, the revealer and Saviour who is protected by the good God, fights against the powers and principalities.

1.6. The Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry mentions in his *Life of Plotinus* 16 sectarian Christians, ‘men of the schools of Adelphius and Aquilinus, who possessed a great many treatises of Alexander the Libyan and Philocomus and Demostriatus and Lydus and produced revelations by → Zoroaster and Zostrianos, and Nicotheos, and Allogenes, and Messos, and other people of the kind . . .’ (transl. A.H. Armstrong). According to Porphyry, Plotinus’ pupil Amelius composed 40 volumes against the book of Zostrianus, whereas Porphyry himself exposed the spuriousness of the alleged book of Zoroaster (for apocryphal “Zoroastrian” literature in general, cf. Bidez-Cumont). It has been proposed to identify the treatise *Zostrianos* mentioned by Porphyry with the Nag Hammadi treatise *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII, 1; for the name “Zostrianos”, cf. Arnobius, *Adversus Gentiles* I, 52), a suggestion that seems to be confirmed by some agreements between the terminology of NHC VIII, 1 and Plotinus, *Enneads* II,9 and by Tardieu’s brilliant discovery that part of this treatise, i.e. NHC VIII, 1, 64, 13-66, 11 (66, 12-84, 22), has a verbatim parallel in a section (49, 9-50, 21) of *Adversus Arium* I, a theological treatise of the 4th century Roman Christian Marius Victorinus. These parallel passages formulate both a negative and an affirmative theology of the One. Tardieu (1996) argued that this parallelism can be explained by assuming a common, Middle Platonist source (Numenius) for both *Zostrianus* and *Adversus Arium*. There is some scholarly controversy about the date of *Zostrianus* (NHC VIII, 1): some claim that the triad of existence, life and mind presupposes the metaphysics of Porphyry (Abramowski, Majercik) and points to a revision of the treatise after it had been criticised by both Amelius and Porphyry. Other scholars feel confident in asserting a pre-Plotinian, Middle Platonist background for this triad and other “Platonist” features of the writing (Tardieu). Tardieu has further suggested that the treatise *Zostrianus* explains or continues the treatise *Zoroaster*, just as the treatise *Messos* (the son of Allogenes, cf. NHC XI, 3, 50, 19; 68, 28; 69, 16) contains an interpretation of the treatise *Allogenes*. Nicotheos, who is also mentioned in the Bruce Codex (ed. Schmidt-Till, 342), may be another name for Enoch; Zoroaster and

Zostrianus are names of heavenly messengers, members of the race of Seth. The literature of these Roman Christians seems to focus on a kind of heretical “prophetology” (Tardieu, 1992).

1.7. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, I, 14, identified the Sethians with the → Ophites mentioned by Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 30.

1.8. In his *Liber scholiorum* (A.D. 791/2), when he is dealing with the sect of the so called → Audians, Theodore bar Konai quotes and refers to an *Apocalypse of Abraham*, an *Apocalypse of Strangers* and a *Book of Strangers* (*Mimra* XI, 63 [CSCO 69, 319-320 / French translation: CSCO 432, 239]). A quotation from the latter work (God is speaking to Eve: ‘Become pregnant by me in order to prevent the creators of Adam from approaching you’) can – with some textual variation – also be found in the reports that Agapius (A.D. 942; *Kitab al-‘Unwan*, PO 7, 562-563) and Gregor Bar Hebraeus (13th century; *On the heresies*, PO XIII, 259-260) devote to the Audians. In Agapius and Bar Hebraeus the quotation is part of a religious myth of which some further details are related (French translation by Puech [1936], 939-940f.): the Father of Life and the Mother of Life come together and produce many gods; the Father of Life creates an angel who creates all the other angels. In defiance of the Adversary (i.e. the Devil), the Father of Life creates Eve, who becomes pregnant by him and thus produces a race that multiplies. The human body is made of matter, the soul derives from the substance of the Father of Life. The jealous Adversary manages to detach a particle from the Father of Life, to clothe it with a body and send it into the world in order to call mankind to worship the Adversary. The Father of Life gets angry, and kills and crucifies Christ. In the end the Father of Life, the Mother of Life, and the divine realm produced by them will perish (!). In order to evaluate properly the information provided by Agapius and Bar Hebraeus, further research into the heresiology of these and other oriental authors is needed. The idea that Eve is at the origin of a particular divine race has clear parallels in other writings attributed to the Sethians. Puech suggested that books mentioned by Theodore are perhaps identical with the *Apocalypse of Allogeneis* referred to by Porphyry (see above), and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Allogeneis* mentioned by Epiphanius of Salamis (see above). According to Puech the schismatic church of the Audians which sprung up in the 4th century later developed into a heretical Gnostic group.

1.9. Seth plays also an important role in →

Manichaeism: he belongs, together with Noah, Abraham, Shem and Enoch, to the series of embodiments of the divine Nous (Lieu, 23; Stroumsa, 145-167). The Cologne Mani Codex quotes an *Apocalypse of Seth* (pp. 50-51, ed. Koenen-Römer, 32-35]). Serapion of Thmuis designates a "Sitianus" as a heretical predecessor of Mani (*Adversus Manichaeos*, III).

From our survey we can conclude that for Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, V, 19-22 and Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 39, the distinguishing trait of the Sethians was their production and use of (pseudepigraphic) religious literature. Neither heresiologist seems to know anything about distinct Sethian ethics, group organization, liturgy or sacramental practice. Theodoret makes an heresiological inference when he connects Irenaeus' Ophites with the Sethians. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 26 and 40, identifies "Gnostics" and "Archontics" as producers of Sethian literature; we learn from Porphyry that Roman Gnostics around 250 produced Sethian treatises. Sethian books were also read by the followers of → Mani. Later Syriac heresiology refers to the Audians as authors of Sethian books. Hence we are faced with a problem: on the one hand the heresiological tradition indicates that the production and use of certain books defines the identity of the Sethians. On the other hand it suggests that the production of Sethian literature was not the prerogative of only one religious group.

## 2. A MODERN DEFINITION OF SETHIANISM

Emulating the precedent of ancient heresiology, modern scholarship tried to identify a "Sethian" type of gnosticism by demarcating a Sethian body of literature and inferring from it the existence of Sethians. As regards the Nag Hammadi Coptic library, Schenke proposed to label the following writings as "Sethian": the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1; III, 1; IV, 1), the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (II, 4), the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (III, 2; IV, 2); the *Apocalypse of Adam* (V, 5); the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII, 5); *Zostrianus* (VIII, 1); *Melchizedek* (IX, 1); the *Thought of Norea* (IX, 2); *Marsanes* (X); *Allogenes* (XI, 3); the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (XIII). To this catalogue he added the *Untitled Treatise* of the Codex Brucianus, the teaching related by Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 29 and the doctrines described by Epiphanius of Salamis in sections 26, 39 and 40 of his *Panarion omnium haeresium* (Schenke, 1981, 588-589).

This list is compiled on the basis of a catalogue of 14 distinctive features which allow us to label a

writing as Sethian: 1. the self definition as pneumatic seed of Seth; 2. Seth as the saviour of the race of Sethians; 3. a particular version of negative theology; 4. a specific philosophical terminology; 5. the divine family triad of Father (Invisible Spirit), Mother (Barbelo), Son (Autogenes); 6. the aeon of Barbelo as consisting of Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes; 7. the four light aeons of the Autogenes (Armozel, Oriel, Daveithai, Eleleth); 8. the three or four ministers of the four light aeons, e.g. Gamaliel, Gabriel, Samblo, Abrasax; 9. the Coptic name "Pigeradamas" for Adamas; 10. Yaldabaoth as the evil demiurge and enemy of the race of Seth; 11. the division of salvation history into three periods; 12. an ecstatic prayer; 13. the baptism of the Five Seals; 14. secondary Christianization (Turner, 2000). Not all of these features are present in every text labelled as Sethian; according to Turner (136), Melchizedek (NHC IX, 1) is 'farthest removed from the core interests of the Sethian group'.

A closer look at this list reveals that three of the eleven writings selected from the Nag Hammadi Corpus can be labelled as Sethian pseudepigraphy in the sense that they are somehow attributed to Seth himself: the *Gospel of the Egyptians* pretends to be written by Seth who placed it in the mountain Charaxio; it will be revealed at the end of time (NHC III, 2, 68), the *Apocalypse of Adam* pretends to be a revelation transmitted from Adam to his son Seth (NHC V, 5, 64.85), and in the *Three Steles of Seth* Dositheos reports what he has read on three steles inscribed by Seth (NHC VII, 5, 118). A further Nag Hammadi writing, the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII, 2), mentions Seth only in the title and does not exhibit any of the features which according to Schenke and Turner allow a writing to be labelled as "Sethian".

If we enquire about the role of Seth and the Sethians in the Nag Hammadi texts of Schenke's list, we find some variation: in the *Apocryphon of John* Seth is present on two levels: he is first mentioned (NHC II, 1, 8-9) as the son of the perfect Man (Pigera-Adamas) who in turn is the product of the will of the invisible Spirit and of Autogenes (Christ/the sixth emanation from the Father). Whereas Pigera-Adamas is placed over the first of the four illuminators Armozel, Oriel, Daveithai and Eleleth (coming from Christ, the indestructibility, through the Spirit), Seth is placed in the second light aeon Oriel. Seth's seed (= Sethians, saints) have their place in the fourth light aeon Daveithai. On a lower level, Yaldabaoth, the archon in the form of a lion-faced serpent, is the product of Sophia's abortive



attempt to conceive without the agreement of the invisible spirit (NHC II, 1, 9-10). Yaldabaoth brings forth a creation of his own, thus unwittingly emulating the pleroma of the transcendent father. Among his twelve aeons there are two called Cain and Abel (NHC II, 1, 10ff.). The creation of Adam is a long and complicated process, it is Yaldabaoth who, by blowing his spirit into Adam's lifeless body (cf. Gen 2, 7), conveyed his mother's power to him (NHC II, 1, 19). When the powers realized this, they cast Adam out into the lowest region of matter (NHC II, 1, 20). Since the transcendent Father pitied Adam, he sent him the luminous Epinoia which helps, instructs and restores Adam during his stay in the region of matter. The chief archon Yaldabaoth wished to rob Adam of the luminous Epinoia, but he failed and produced only a likeness of her, that is Eve. But when Adam looked at Eve, the luminous Epinoia appeared in her and Adam pronounced Gen 2:23-24. Yaldabaoth, in a second attempt to catch the luminous Epinoia, seduced Eve – but the Epinoia had already left her. Eve gave birth to Eloim and Yave, two archons, the one with a bear face, the other with a cat face, the one righteous, the other unrighteous. Thus sexual desire came into the world through Eve, her two bastard sons rule over the order of birth and death. Their camouflage names are Cain and Abel. Adam, however, having been awakened and having seen the luminous Epinoia, the likeness of his own foreknowledge, produced the likeness of the son of man, that is Seth (Gen 5, 3 / NHC II, 1, 24). Seth is the origin of a spiritual race, the dwelling place of the aeons. They drank from the water of oblivion and did not know their origin; it is they on whom the Spirit of Life will descend, rendering them perfect and imperishable (NHC II, 1, 25). In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* Seth is mentioned as a replacement for Abel (NHC II, 4, 91; cf. Gen 4: 25). *The Gospel of the Egyptians* – like the *Apocryphon of John* – speaks of Autogenes and the four lights Harmozel, Oroiael, Davithe and Eleleth (NHC III, 2, 1-52). Seth, the son of the incorruptible Adamas, puts his seed in the fourth aeon / the third light, Davithe (NHC III, 2, 56). Seth's seed, the unmovable race is preserved in spite of the persecutions it suffers from the powers and angels. The great Seth passes through three *parousias* (the flood, the conflagration, the judgement of the powers; NHC III, 2, 63); in the last he puts on Jesus Christ 'and through him . . . nailed the powers of the thirteen aeons' (NHC III, 2, 64). *Melchizedek* contains a reference to the children of Seth (NHC IX, 1, 5).

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE

In order to warrant the inference from diverse Sethian texts to a religious group or sect called Sethians, one must first try to bring the texts we either have or whose existence and contents we can surmise into some chronological order, sketch a connection between them and try to discern a development. In this way a reconstruction of the history of Sethian literature can be attempted. As a second step one can try to view the history of Sethian literature as a history of "Sethianism" (as the religious ideology of a distinct group) or, simply, the Sethians. According to Turner, Sethianism originally arose as a coming together of two groups that had sprung up in the 1st century: on the one hand the "Barbeloites" who taught that baptismal immersion (the "Five Seals") gave access to a revelation of divine wisdom coming from Barbelo, the First Thought of God. On the other hand the "Sethites" who were 'morally earnest persons' and defined themselves as the race of Seth. The "Barbeloites" first fused with Christian baptismal groups and then, in the early 2nd century, with the "Sethites": the product of this fusion were Christian Sethians. Towards the end of the 2nd century, these Christian Sethians suffered more and more exclusion from the emerging Christian orthodoxy. In reaction to this process, Christian Sethianism redefined itself as Platonic Sethianism by shedding parts of its distinctive mythology. However, by the late 3rd century the Sethians were also attacked and rejected by the Neoplatonists [→ Neoplatonism] (Turner, 2000, 131-144).

Turner's history of Sethianism as a movement is a bold and ingenious sketch. It depends on his reconstruction of the development of Sethian literature. Turner tries to explain the ancient evidence for the production and use of Sethian literature in different contexts by assuming a later fragmentation of an originally more unified movement. However, it is doubtful whether this explanation gives full weight to the evidence provided by the ancient heresiologists. Some of the groups mentioned by them seem to have produced or used other writings whose titles we sometimes know but which might not have been Sethians by any standards. We have no indications that there was a canon of Sethian literature in the same way as there were Jewish, Christian or Manichaean canons.

Much remains to be done before we can firmly locate Sethian literature in its contemporary context. Modern scholarship has rightly emphasized its indebtedness to both Judaism and Greek philosophy. The complex mythology that deals with Seth



and Sethians has to be further explored, its roots in Jewish midrashim and apocrypha have to be determined. The problem of the precise relation between the Roman “Gnostics” and Plotinian and Porphyrian Platonism is still unsolved. It would also be important to follow up a possible link to the Valentinian school: some Valentinians designated the pneumatic race as descendants of Seth (Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 54). The relation between Sethian writings and Christian literature is equally unclear; perhaps the Sethian books can partly be read as an attempt to outflank and supersede mainstream catholic Christianity.

Bearing in mind these considerations it seems at present safer to assume that ‘Sethianism is . . . a convenient working designation for a tentatively defined network of mythological and theological relationships among certain sources, the nature of whose social historical connections is still uncertain’ (Williams, 13).

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## Silvester, Bernard → Bernard Silvester

### Simon Magus, ca. 50

1. INTRODUCTION 2. THE BIBLICAL SIMON MAGUS 3. SIMON MAGUS AS THE SUPREME GOD 4. HELENA AND THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION 5. THE “GREAT REVELATION” (APOPHASIS MEGALĒ) 6. CONCLUSION

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Simon was a Samaritan magician who lived in the first half of the 1st century A.D. and is first mentioned in the biblical book of Acts (8:9-25). The early Christian anti-heretical writers considered him the founding father of → Gnosticism, the arch-heretic, ‘from whom all heresies derived’ (Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I, 23, 2). The various and sometimes contradictory traditions about his vicissitudes and teachings make him an elusive and legendary figure. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries there were Gnostics who called themselves Simonians but their relationship with the historical Simon and

his teachings is difficult to assess. After Acts, our main sources are Justin Martyr (ca. 155), Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 180), Hippolytus (ca. 220), the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* (2nd century) and the so-called Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions* (4th century). The main elements of the teachings ascribed to Simon in these sources are the following. He claimed to be a manifestation of the “Great Power”, i.e. the supreme god, and said that his companion, called Helena, a former prostitute, was in fact his First Thought. The creators of the world, which she herself had brought forth, had imprisoned her in a female body and subjected her to a long series of reincarnations until Simon finally found her in a brothel and rescued her. Because of this salvation, Simon became in the view of his opponents a Gnostic saviour and Helena the prototype of the Gnostic believer. As could be expected, all kinds of magical tricks were ascribed to him, especially in the legends which deal with his confrontations with the apostle Peter. It is extremely difficult to determine which elements belong to the earliest layers of the Simonian tradition and which are later developments. In the following, the main elements of the traditions listed above are discussed in their chronological development, preceded by an analysis of the New Testament data about Simon.

#### 2. THE BIBLICAL SIMON MAGUS

Literary criticism has made clear that Luke’s report in Acts 8 is a combination of two sources, reflected in Acts 8:9-13 and 8:14-24 respectively. The first of these sources ascribed the mission in Samaria to the scattered ‘Hellenists’ (see 8:1 and 4) and the second to the apostles in Jerusalem. The information about Simon from the first source is, historically, by far the most important. It related the conversion of a certain Simon, a magician, by the Christian missionary Philip. Before this event, Simon had dazzled the city by his magical arts, and his claim to be ‘someone great’ had been accepted by ‘all of them, high and low’. They said (lit.): ‘This one is the power of God which is called the great’ (8:10). The scholarly debate about the meaning of this sentence has not yet come to an end, but the following observations are accepted here as ascertained: the addition ‘of God’ is typically Lukan (comp. Luke 22:69 with Mark 15:62 and Matthew 27:64) and the same holds for the expression ‘which is called’. Then the original confession of Simon’s divine status said: ‘This one is the great Power’. There is a wealth of parallels which show that this corresponds either to a claim by Simon himself: ‘I am the Great Power’ or to a confession

of the believing community: 'You are the Great Power'. As a designation of God, the term "the Great Power" was well known in Jewish, Samaritan, Gnostic and non-Gnostic early Christian literature. On the basis of the designation alone there is no reason to suppose that the early Simonians were strongly influenced by Samaritan religious ideas or represented a group of pre-Christian Samaritan Gnostics. The only certain fact seems to be that the followers of Simon, and perhaps Simon himself, declared that he was a manifestation of the "Great Power", the highest God himself.

The second part of Luke's story of Simon, Acts 8:14-24, is generally thought to have no historical value. One of its most conspicuous objectives is to point out the difference between the miracles of pagan magicians and those of Christian missionaries, since the latter are due to the gift of the Holy Spirit. The source behind this story apparently did not know that, according to another tradition, Simon was one of the new converts who received the Holy Spirit through the laying-on of hands by Peter and John. He is said to have tried to buy the power of bestowing the Holy Spirit. Peter rebukes him: 'May your money go with you to damnation, because you thought God's gift was for sale!' (origin of the term "simony"). The story ends with Simon's request to Peter to pray for him 'that none of the things you have spoken of may fall upon me'. This scene, in which the Prince of the Apostles defeats the pagan magician, provided the pattern for later legendary confrontations between Simon and Peter.

### 3. SIMON MAGUS AS THE SUPREME GOD

Justin Martyr, who also came from Samaria and whose report, in his *Apology* I, 26, may be independent of Acts 8:9ff., seems to have known a group of Simonians in Rome. He says that Simon came from the Samaritan city of Gitta and in the time of the Emperor Claudius (41-54) 'performed mighty acts of magic' in Rome and 'was reputed to be a god'. According to Justin, 'almost every Samaritan, and even a few from other regions, worship him and call him the First God', which might be Justin's own Greek interpretation of the term "Great Power". His choice of words shows that by the term "Samaritan" Justin meant someone who came from the region of Samaria. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, 120, Justin speaks about 'my people, i.e. the Samaritans', who 'err in being seduced by the magician Simon who lives in their nation'. This seems to imply that Simon was especially successful among the people Justin himself came from, the

Hellenistic Greek inhabitants of Samaria, and not in particular among the Samaritans in the specific ethnic and religious sense of the word. It seems most likely that the Simonians Justin met in Rome belonged to a syncretic religious community that had originated in Samaria and which might have adopted some specific elements of the Samaritan religion. One of these elements might be the designation "the Standing One", a divine epithet, which according to later traditions was applied to Simon (see below, sub 5). According to Justin, Simon was even honoured by the Roman Senate with a statue, erected on an island in the Tiber, with the inscription: 'To Simon, the holy god'. In *Apol.* I, 56, 4, Justin asks the Senate to destroy this statue. That such a statue had actually existed was proven in the year 1574, when a column was found on Tiber Island with an inscription of which the first words read: 'Semoni Sanco Deo'. Semo Sancus was an old Italian-Roman deity that became to be identified with the Greek Zeus Pistios. As will be shown below, Simon's followers identified Simon with Zeus, which makes it very probable that Justin knew that the Simonians of Rome claimed that the statue on Tiber Island in fact represented their Simon-Zeus. They apparently interpreted 'Semoni Sanco Deo' as 'Simoni Sancto Deo'. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, I, 23, 2, repeats this story and says that Simon was glorified by many as a god. In addition to this, he says that Simon taught that he had appeared as Son among the Jews, had descended as Father in Samaria, and had come as Holy Spirit among the other nations. He was the Supreme Power, the Father who is above everything, and accepted to be called by every name people would like to call him. This means that the Simonians considered Simon a universal god, to whom the names of all known deities could be applied, those of the Christian god included, as is shown by the trinitarian structure of his appearances.

### 4. HELENA AND THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Another aspect of the Simonian traditions first mentioned by Justin is that the Simonians not only worshipped Simon as the First God but also said that on his travels he was accompanied by Helena, a former prostitute, who was honoured as his First Thought. More information about Helena is given by Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, I, 23, 2, who probably depends here on Justin's lost *Syntagma against all Heresies*. Simon is said to have bought Helena in the city of Tyre, and to have called her his 'First Thought, the Mother of everything'. His

first thought had been to create the angels and archangels, and, accordingly, she had abandoned him and descended to the lower parts of the cosmos, where she had brought forth the angels and powers that were to create the world. But her offspring had imprisoned her, since they did not want to be held for someone else's offspring. In order to prevent her from ascending to her Father, she had been maltreated by her children, who locked her up in a female body and forced her to migrate from one body to another through the course of the centuries. The famous Helen of Troy had been one of her incarnations and she had finished as a whore in a brothel: she was the lost sheep of the parable (Luke 15:6). It seems certain that Helena is here a symbol of the fallen soul, which makes her historical existence very doubtful. The identification with Helen of Troy is understandable since this famous woman was considered adulterous and lascivious. She is also a symbol of the fallen soul in the *Treatise on the Soul* (NHC II, 136, 36). This text and also another text of the Nag Hammadi Library, the *Authoritative Teaching*, clearly express the idea that the soul prostitutes itself in the body (NHC II, 127, 22-128, 17 and VI, 23, 12-16; 23, 24-24, 22; comp. 24, 7-8: 'he puts her into the brothel'). The figure of Helena is very complex and, therefore, difficult to interpret. The idea that she is the first thought of the supreme god suggests a connection with the Greek goddess Athena, who was said to have sprung from the head of Zeus, which the philosophers interpreted as the manifestation of the thought and the ideas of the highest god (Lüdemann 54-56). Also in several Gnostic systems the first emanation of the unknowable god is called his first thought (Ennoia). According to Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, I, 23, 4, the Simonians possessed images of Zeus/Jupiter and Athena/Minerva, which they venerated as Simon and Helena respectively. It has been suggested that these identifications might be traced back to a syncretistic Zeus cult in 1st century Samaria (Lüdemann). There are, however, also many parallels between Helena-Ennoia and the Jewish Sophia, i.e. personified divine Wisdom, as well as with several Near-Eastern female deities (Ishtar, Isis) who in their turn have influenced the idea of Sophia (Fossum-Quispel). The idea of the fall of a divine emanation into the world of matter and its salvation by a Saviour is certainly not Greek but Gnostic. If it is true that Irenaeus' report in I, 23, 2, depends on Justin's *Synagma*, it seems certain that already before the middle of the 2nd century the Simonians adhered to a undoubtedly Gnostic myth, in which the highest god and his first emanation were involved in a cos-

mic drama of fall and salvation. However, in I, 23, 3, Irenaeus ascribes to Simon a full-fledged Gnostic doctrine of salvation. The Unknown Father had come down in the person of Simon to save Helena and the human beings in general 'through the knowledge of themselves'. He wanted to correct what had gone wrong under the bad government of the angels. He appeared as a man, though he was not a man, and he suffered in Judaea, though he did not really suffer, which implies that Simon identified himself with Christ. Man is saved by Simon's grace, not by righteous deeds, for deeds are not good by nature but by accident. There are strong indications that Irenaeus or his source has attributed here some specific ideas of Basilides and the Carpocratians to Simon (Lüdemann, 81-86), of which we may be sure that they were not already part of the historical Simon's teaching.

##### 5. THE "GREAT REVELATION" (APOPHASIS MEGALĒ)

In his *Refutatio*, VI, 19, Hippolytus mainly repeats the information he found in Irenaeus, with the addition of some allegorical interpretations of the Homeric Helen of Troy. More important is Hippolytus' presentation, in VI, 9-18, of an alleged writing of Simon himself, called the *Great Revelation* (*Apophasis Megalē*). Literary analysis has shown that the work Hippolytus had at his disposal was in fact a paraphrase or commentary, not the original *Apophasis* (Frickel). The paraphrase is a rather late Gnostic composition, possibly from the beginning of the 3rd-century, characterized by a strong philosophical, especially Neo-Pythagorean, influence (Aland). The fundamental idea of the original *Apophasis* can be deduced from a few literary quotations recorded in the paraphrase. The primeval Power, described as the 'root of the universe' or as fire, is in itself nothing, but potentially it contains everything, being and non-being. The universe gradually emanates from it; the visible originates out of the invisible, but the latter remains hidden in the former. The two worlds co-exist peacefully, there is no opposition between a pure divine world and a bad material world. In the paraphrase, this fundamental idea is interpreted in a Gnostic sense. It is used to explain both the presence of a divine spark in man and its possible return to its divine origin. As a result, the paraphrase neglects the peaceful co-existence of the two worlds of the original *Apophasis* and takes the usual negative Gnostic view of the material world for granted. It remains unclear, however, whether the original *Apophasis* was a mystical philosophical writing with some Gnostic leanings or a distinct Gnostic



composition. There is a general consensus that the *Apophysis* was not a work by the historical Simon and also that its paraphrase in Hippolytus has nothing or very little to do with the doctrines of the Simonians as recorded by Justin and Irenaeus. The only element that seems to point to an authentic Simonian background is at least part of the expression ‘He who stands (*hestōs*), took his stand (*stas*) and will stand (*stēsomenos*)’. It is used for the primeval Power, which originally was in its unalterable state of being, then expressed itself in the world of matter, and finally will return to its original status, and as such prefigures the fate of the Gnostic believer’s own self. According to Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VI, 9, Simon identified himself with Christ, who really is ‘the One who stands, took his stand and will stand’, which seems to suggest that the Simonians described Simon in that way (similar remarks in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, II, 22, 3-4, may be dependent on Hippolytus). What we certainly know is that the Simonians called Simon “the Standing One” (*ho hestōs*), as is testified *int. al.* by the non-Gnostic writer, → Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, II, 52, 2. As an indication of the highest god or principle this term is found in Samaritan, Hellenistic Jewish and Greek philosophical and hermetic writings [→ Hermetic Literature]. It has been taken as proof of the Samaritan background of Simonian Gnosticism (Fossum), but the evidence is far from compelling. The same holds for the connection between Dositheus, a heretic in Samaritan sources, and Simon. According to the 4th-century Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, II, 24, Dositheus succeeded John the Baptist as leader of the sect, but he was outvalled by Simon, who then came to be worshipped as the Standing One in his place. The Pseudo-Clementines are based on an earlier writing (“Grundschrift”) which was strongly influenced by Jewish-Christian ideas. The magician Simon figures in them as the opponent of the apostle Peter, but there is a broad scholarly consensus that behind Simon the real targets are the apostle Paul and (also or exclusively) → Marcion.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Already before the middle of the 2nd century there was a Simonian sect whose members worshipped Simon as the manifestation of the First God and Ennoia/Helena as his First Thought. The association of Ennoia with Helena, who was a symbol of the fallen soul, makes it virtually certain that these Simonians were Gnostics. If it is true, as accepted by many scholars, that the Jewish Sophia is hiding behind Helena, the Simonians may have

adhered to a primitive Gnostic system, in which the Highest God comes down to rescue his fallen female counterpart, thus prefiguring the salvation of the individual believer. The creation of the world by maleficent angels may also have been part of their ideas, which is the more likely if Irenaeus, who is the first to mention this, at this point is dependent on Justin Martyr. There is no evidence, however, that these ideas go back to the teaching of Simon Magus himself. If the information in Luke’s Acts is to be trusted, he seems to have been a pagan miracle worker and a strong religious personality, who proclaimed, or was by his followers proclaimed, to be a manifestation of the Great Power, the supreme god. There is no indication that at that time Ennoia/Helena was already connected with Simon. That he was influenced by some typically Samaritan religious ideas or even can be taken as a pre-Christian Samaritan Gnostic, cannot be proven with any certainty. Simon remains a very elusive figure: ‘The quest for the historical Simon (and Helena!) is even less promising than the quest for the historical Jesus’ (Meeks).

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ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK

### Sincerus Renatus (ps. of Samuel Richter), \* end of 17th century Reichau, † year and place unknown

A native of Reichau, a village of the duchy of Brieg in Silesia, Richter is said to have worked as a tutor for noble families and studied medicine, then theology, at Halle, before becoming a Lutheran pastor at Hartmannsdorf, near Landeshut (also in Silesia). His first publication, dated 1709, published 1710, and presented by the author as an ancient manuscript transmitted by initiates, was called *Die Warhaffte und vollkommene Bereitung Des Philosophischen Steins* (The True and Perfect Preparation of the Philosophic Stone). Two further works of Sincerus Renatus appeared in Breslau in 1711, entitled *Theo-philosophia theoretico-practica* (Theoretical-practical Theo-philosophy) and *Goldene Quelle der Natur und Kunst* (Golden Fountain of Nature and Art). The contents of these three works found such a reception among readers that a complete reprint was necessary in 1741. This

appeared in Leipzig and Breslau as *Sinceri Renati sämtliche philosophisch- und chymische Schriften* (Sincerus Renatus’s Complete Philosophical and Chemical Writings).

The complete titles of these texts indicate the twin foci of their content: → alchemy, and the Rosicrucians [→ Rosicrucianism]. Samuel Richter belongs within the tradition of Christian Hermeticism [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies] which included → Paracelsus, → Weigel, → Jakob Boehme, Schwenckfeld, and the pietists [→ Pietism]. He states that there can be no philosophy without theology, and vice versa, since God and Nature cannot be separated. His *Theo-philosophia* resides in the unity of faith and knowledge.

According to Richter, the whole universe has arisen out of God’s desire to manifest himself. Following the example of Boehme, Richter thought that God had first been *Ungrund*, the bottomless Divinity. Then, in order to know himself, God had to manifest in duality, divide himself, be born from himself, and so become Nature (the Latin word *natura* is derived from the verb *nascor*, which means “to be born”). Thus God initially divided into two principles: dark fire and luminous fire, or wrath and love. The fire is God the Father; the light is the Son; and the Holy Spirit manifests the eternal Wisdom. As in Boehme, this creation was realized in seven stages. It was afterwards that Lucifer appeared, who by his luminous hyper-concentration destroyed the equilibrium between light and darkness. He was thus the first creature to oppose his own will to that of his Creator, and to introduce evil into the world.

God was thereupon constrained to make a new creation, manifested by the divine Word: “Let there be light”, while Lucifer was thrown by God into the realm of death. As for man, he was originally the perfect creature in God’s own likeness. That is why he was then both male and female, able to reproduce through → magic. But when Adam felt himself to be alone, he lost the magic force of the divine *fiat*. God then created a companion for him and fed them both on the manna of Paradise, until Lucifer’s renewed intervention with the apple precipitated both Adam’s fall and the corruption of the new creation.

But before this occurred, according to Sincerus Renatus, God had introduced the ‘name of Jesus into the seed of the woman’, in such a way that Jesus is invisibly inscribed in the nature of each human being. He is ‘the true philosophers’ stone, the tincture of our inner being’, capable of purifying and redeeming him. Samuel Richter states that God has also given to outer and corrupted nature

an earthly Savior, a *Lapis philosophorum*, which every man is capable of preparing as soon as Christ has purified his soul and regenerated him.

It is evident how far removed this pastor, a disciple of → Hermes Trismegistus and → Ramon Llull, was from Lutheran orthodoxy; but in the redemption of nature, in this *Theo-Philosophia* which was in fact a philosophy of divine immanence, one finds ideas of → Heinrich Khunrath and certain aspects of → Johann Valentin Andreae's novel *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*. However, Samuel Richter modified the name of the original Rose-Cross by instituting a "Gold- und Rosen-Creutz" (Gold and Rose Cross), at the same time supposing that the last representatives of the Rosicrucian brotherhood had left Europe and settled in India to found a new community there, whose statutes he reproduced [→ Rosicrucianism II].

It is precisely in the last chapter of his vast work that one finds a collection of fifty-two practical rules to be followed by the members of the Brotherhood of the Gold and Rose Cross after their profession of faith. Among other things, one learns that after their admission they must change their name and become rejuvenated thanks to the grace of the philosophers' stone; that their Christian allegiance, whether Protestant or Catholic, must not be revealed; that they are not permitted to marry, but if need be may satisfy their desires with a woman; that they must convoke at Pentecost; that it is absolutely forbidden to them to reveal the secrets of the Art that has been communicated to them; and lastly that their Imperator must change his name and his residence every ten years.

Samuel Richter's thought carried on in the so-called "enlightened" 18th century the convictions of alchemical theorists such as Heinrich Khunrath and → Gérard Dorn, whose ideas had influenced the first Rosicrucians. Moreover, Rolf Christian Zimmermann has amply demonstrated how strongly the Hermeticism of Sincerus Rhenatus oriented what he calls the "private religion" of the young → Goethe. Finally, the Golden and Rose Cross launched by Samuel Richter had an important influence in the circles of → Freemasonry, so that one may say that he has continually been *renatus* – reborn.

*Die Wahrhaftige und vollkommene Bereitung Des Philosophischen Steins/Der Brüderschaft aus dem Orden Des Guldten- und Rosen-Creutzes/Darinne die Materie zu diesem Geheimniß mit seinem Nahmen genennet/ auch die Bereitung von Anfang biß zum Ende mit allen Hand-Griffen gezeigt ist/Dabey angehänget die Gesetz oder Regeln/welche die gedachte Brüderschaft unter sich hält . . .*, Breslau: Fellgiebels, 1710 ♦ *Theo-*

*philosophia theoretico-practical/oder der wahre Grund Göttlicher und natürlicher Erkenntniß/dadurch beyde Tincturen/die himlische und Irdische / können erhalten werden: Zugleich ein Grund aller Particularien, und Fundament der wahren Medicin. Dabey gezeigt wird, wie in der äussern Natur durch alle Regna zu verfahren/damit ein jedes Corpus wieder in seinen reinen Paradiesischen Stand gebracht werden könne durch die Chymie oder Scheidekunst; Nebst einer Erläuterung des Operis maximi und Beyfügung versprochener Experimente . . .*, Breslau: Fellgiebels, 1711 ♦ *Goldene Quelle der Natur und Kunst, bestehende in lauter wahrhaftigen und durch die Experienz bestätigten Experimentis . . .*, n.p. [Breslau]: Fellgiebels, 1711 ♦ These three works were reprinted in one volume: *Sinceri Renati sämtliche Philosophisch- und Chymische Schriften*, Leipzig, Breslau: Michael Huber, 1741.

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## Spiritualism

1. TERMINOLOGY 2. ORIGINS 3. THE SPREAD AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUALISM 4. REFORMISM AND PROGRESSIVISM 5. CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION 6. SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND 7. SPIRITUALISM OUTSIDE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

### 1. TERMINOLOGY

In its most basic form, Spiritualism is simply the belief that living men can and do hold intercourse, usually through an intermediary, with "spirits" of the dead. It is thus both a recurring possibility of human experience in all ages and a specific, historically defined phenomenon with roots in mid-19th century America. The first definition is so sweeping as to be of little use, encompassing as it does every-

thing from the trance voyages of shamans to King Saul's recourse to the Witch of Endor, and only the historical movement will be discussed here.

## 2. ORIGINS

The middle 50 years of the 19th century in America were a time of unprecedented religious and social unrest. Upstate New York, which was to witness the birth of Spiritualism in 1848 as it had already seen the birth of Mormonism, Adventism, Millerism and other new cults, was the heart of the "burned over district" where religious revivals had flourished and then died, leaving in their wake a yearning to find experience, conviction and novelty and establishing a socially accepted framework for expressing them when found. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the established, old-line Evangelical churches and their exposition of the Bible, and in New York and the entire Northeast of the United States generally those soon to embrace Spiritualism in droves had turned to the more socially conscious Universalism which denied all authority but that of the individual's own experience ("Individual Sovereignty"), rejected the uniqueness of Biblical revelation, the Church and the role of Christ and rejoiced in the fact that death no longer promised judgment and threatened hell but instead was but the gateway to continued life. This northeastern Universalist background of its first adherents was the predominant force in shaping early Spiritualism, and with rare exceptions the new movement made few inroads in the more evangelical southern states or among Catholics in America.

Although the American Shakers had been communing with the spirits of American Indians since the early 1840s (and later asserted their priority in founding Spiritualism), the origins of Spiritualism lie in the experiences in 1848 of the three daughters of John D. Fox. Fox, a Methodist, had moved to a farm near Hydesville, New York, in the vicinity of Rochester in late 1847. With him were his wife and two unmarried daughters, Margaretta (7.10.1833-8.3.1893) and Catherine (Kate) (27.3.1837-2.7.1892). The girls' older married sister, Ann Leah Underhill (1814-4.11.1890), lived nearby in Rochester. The family regularly heard mysterious knockings about the house without being able to ascertain the cause. The house was small and single-storied, and the family slept together in a loft under the pitched roof. It was there on the night of March 31, 1848 as the family prepared for bed that Margaretta and Kate responded to the knockings and precipitated Spiritualism. While the knockings were occurring, Kate snapped her fingers or

clapped her hands and her pattern was imitated. Margaretta then called out, 'Now do just as I do', and clapped her hands while counting out numbers. The knocks followed her lead. The children's mother then asked if the source of the noise was a spirit, and told it to respond with one knock for 'no' and two knocks for 'yes', and heard two resounding knocks – Yes! Communication had been established.

The family's neighbors were called in the next day, to hear the knocking and ask questions of their own. It gradually came to light that the spirit communicating was that of a peddler, slain in the house and buried in the basement – an assertion later buttressed by the father with the production of a few bones and teeth supposedly found in the basement. Seeking advice and help, the family visited Isaac Post (1798-1872), a Quaker and devoted abolitionist, who devised the long-standard method of communicating with rapping spirits by assigning each letter of the alphabet a certain number of knocks.

Among the instructions thus received from the spirit, was the command to give public demonstrations of the girls' abilities, and the first was held at Corinthian Hall in Rochester on November 14, 1848. Four hundred attended, paying 25 cents each for the privilege, and, despite some criticism that the girls were causing the rapping themselves, the audience largely gave credence to the spirits' messages of consolation to the bereaved and the continuity of life after death. In 1850 the girls visited New York City, where they gave three seances a day (at \$1.50 per person) and managed in the process to convert Horace Greeley, the editor of the *Tribune*, to the new cause. By 1852 they had removed to New York City to conduct seances, but by that time the sisters, who had never in any sense been the leaders of the new movement or believed to be in any way more holy, highly evolved or "spiritual" than those attending their seances, had become peripheral, though revered, figures in the movement. The sisters' subsequent history is marked by strife, alcoholism and confessions of fraud. As Spiritualism moved away from simple rappings, the girls tried other forms of mediumship and Kate in later years even touted her infant son as a writing medium, but despite their efforts they never recaptured the public acclaim of their youth.

## 3. THE SPREAD AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUALISM

The new movement spread immediately and widely. By the end of 1849, it was the subject of universal discussion, and seances were being held

throughout the Northeast and as far west as Ohio. New mediums (as those with the ability to communicate with the spirits were called) appeared everywhere in the Northeast, usually young women who developed the talent spontaneously after attending one of the Fox sisters' seances or simply after hearing of them. New methods also began almost immediately to be developed to facilitate the spirits' communication – and to heighten the mystery and conviction of the seances.

Circles for the investigation of the new phenomena appeared before 1850 in Auburn, Boston and Stratford (Connecticut), and an informal ritual quickly began to emerge for private seances, involving the preparatory singing of church hymns, the dimming of the seance room lights and the holding of hands around a table. By 1855 the number of spiritualists in the United States was estimated to be between one and eleven million people – in a country of only 28 million. These numbers, and all of the other frequently cited membership estimates from the rest of the century, are unreliable, but it cannot be doubted that the number of people who believed in the new phenomena and occasionally attended a seance was very large. The high point of enthusiasm in America was probably the mid-1850s. The American Civil War (1861-1865) and the beginning of the revelations of bogus and fraudulent mediums at about the same time put an end to the rapid growth of the movement, and the last quarter of the century saw the gradual diminishing of interest in Spiritualism coupled with an increasing recourse on the part of mediums to theatricality.

Almost immediately Spiritualism began to turn to ever more phenomenal, theatrical methods and demonstrations of the spirits' power. First came automatic writing, in which the entranced medium's hand was taken over to write the spirits' words, then light trance, in which the medium was inspired to speak the thoughts of the spirit, and full trance, in which the unconscious medium voiced the words of the spirit. Soon there were painting mediums, whose organisms were used by the spirits to draw scenes from the afterlife or of departed friends; slate readers, who could read the messages scrawled by the spirits between bound slates; and musical mediums, in whose presence musical instruments flew around the darkened rooms and played simple tunes. Throughout the 1850s tables and furniture shook and turned of their own accord and rapped out the spirits' messages.

By the mid-1850s a class of professionals had arisen, called "test mediums", who took the stage at public demonstrations to show the power of the

spirits. To their audiences, they were largely undistinguishable from stage magicians, and indeed the connection between stage magic and prestidigitation and this development of Spiritualism is very strong, with several of its practitioners having a foot in both camps. The Davenport Brothers, Ira Erastus (1839-1911) and William Henry (1841-1877) are a good example. Beginning in the 1850s, they traveled the United States and Europe with their wonderful show, challenging the audience in each place to invent better ways to tie them to prevent cheating. While the brothers were bound in their special cabinet the spirits would speak in their own voices and play instruments to entertain the audience. It is no accident that in 1910 Ira Davenport, in his old age, recognized his kinship with Harry Houdini. Another example is Annie Eva Fay, an American in London in the mid-1870s, who first tried to promote abilities very similar to those of the Davenports as stage magic, and then, achieving no success, turned her abilities to mediumship.

The pinnacle of this phenomenal side of Spiritualism was materialization. By the early 1870s, mediums were able regularly to produce the physical appearance of the spirits, usually as faces seen through apertures in the medium's cabinet, though occasionally as full, three-dimensional materialized bodies that could wander among and touch the attendees at seances. Notable in this regard was the English medium Florence Cook (1856-1904) whose spirit Katie King enthralled Sir William Crookes. In America, the Eddy Brothers, William (1838-1932) and Horatio (1842-1922), produced a host of materialized spirits at their house in Vermont.

From some early spiritualists' point of view, the increasing involvement of the spirits with the material world was simply a demonstration that the spirits were learning how to interact with matter. From a more cynical point of view, however, the tendency toward showmanship might more readily be explained by the competition of mediums for jaded audiences, a competition that must not be ignored in assessing the movement. Increasingly lost sight of in all this flourishing of the marvelous was any connection with the spirits' original messages, which tended to take second place to the test mediums' showmanship. Some, such as → A.J. Davis, denounced these developments as unwholesome and fraudulent, while others, such as D.D. Home, pointed out the dangers of entrusting the prosperity of the new movement to the honesty of promoters and showmen. The debate continued until the end of the century in America, with the leading spiritualist journal, *The Banner of Light*



of Boston, crediting each phenomenal claim and ignoring the increasing evidence of fraud, while its competitor, *The Religio-Philosophical Journal* of Chicago, took the opposite tack and denounced phenomenalism and publicized every occurrence of fraud. By 1900, the massive evidence of deception convinced even the *Banner*, and organized Spiritualism began to distance itself from recourse to the marvelous as proof of its message – although fraudulent phenomenal Spiritualism still existed sufficiently in the 1920s for Harry Houdini to crusade against it.

One should note in the above description of early Spiritualism the limited role assigned to the medium and the simplicity of the spirits' message. The medium was the necessary condition to the appearance of the spirits – the wire, as it were, of the spiritual telegraph (as the new phenomenon was dubbed), bridging the two worlds – but no more than that. Mediumship required no special spiritual talents or holiness, conferred no authority, and was a gift that left its possessor spiritually unchanged. It was only gradually that individual mediums, such as → Emma Hardinge Britten (1823-1899) and Cora Linn Victoria Scott (later the Rev. Cora Richmond, 1840-1923), imposed their personalities on the movement and took leading roles in guiding and developing it. The original spirit message delivered by the mediums was simply that the human individuality survived death and could communicate from the afterlife. Immortality should have been a commonplace belief in Christian America, but the spirits supplied proof to a skeptical and doubting world with their wondrous rappings.

Lacking in the simple message of Spiritualism in the early days was a coherent philosophy distinguished from that of non-spiritualists. In the truest Protestant spirit, each man was his own interpreter. Each convert brought to the new movement his or her own beliefs and easily combined them with the fundamental tenets of survival and communication, although the teachings of → Swedenborg and the Mesmerists [→ Animal Magnetism] most readily and commonly were called upon to meet the needs of the new movement. La Roy Sunderland (1802-1885), for example, who founded the first truly spiritualist journal – *The Spiritual Philosopher* in Boston in July 1850 – explained the phenomena in light of his own predilection for phreno-magnetism, calling the result “Pathetism”, just as the Rev. Thomas Lake Harris (1823-1906) turned to the teachings of Swedenborg. It remained for Andrew Jackson Davis to craft what, lacking a better alternative, the spiritualists adopted in

broad outline as their version of cosmology and philosophy.

Davis was properly a clairvoyant seer, rather than a spiritualist, and although it was his Harmonial Philosophy that American Spiritualism commonly took up as the filter through which to view its phenomena, his visions antedate Spiritualism and properly stand independent of it – a fact that required Davis in later years, especially in the debates in the 1870s over the value of marvelous phenomena and the relative merits of Spiritualism and occultism [→ occult / occultism], to explicitly avow that he believed in ghosts and was himself a medium. He saw the cosmos as a series of successive, concentric universes, thrown off from the primordial vast globe of divine central fire. God was thus immanent in man himself and in nature, and man at death began his progress through ever higher and more refined spheres of the divine.

The first publication of his teachings, a pamphlet (deliberately never reprinted) entitled by Rev. Smith, the transcriber of Davis's trance utterances, *Lectures on Clairmativeness* (New York 1845), was still decidedly Christian in tone. “Clairmativeness” was the neologism used to describe the heightened state of clairvoyance in which Davis experienced his visions. By 1847, however, when the first major compilation of his revelations was published as *The Principles of Nature*, he had become increasingly opposed to the Bible and to Christianity, rejecting the unique place of Jesus Christ and discarding the idea of the resurrection of the dead and other Christian doctrines. Davis went on to write voluminously of his visionary experiences and medical discoveries. Though he survived until 1910, his role in Spiritualism was finished by the early 1870s when he attacked the errors of phenomenal Spiritualism.

#### 4. REFORMISM AND PROGRESSIVISM

Despite its general adoption of Davis's philosophy, American Spiritualism in its first 25 years of existence was extremely limited in its cast of characters, its goals, and its view of the nature and potentialities of man. Almost without exception, the only entities who appeared at seances (or indeed who were thought to exist in the spiritualists' universe) were spirits of dead humans, and fairly recently dead humans, at that. The spirits of American revolutionary heroes such as Tom Paine, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, along with the spirits of suitably progressive American Indians, appeared most commonly at seances, joined occasionally after the Indian Mutiny of 1857 by the unrepentant spirit of Nana Sahib. Surprisingly,



non-human spirits such as angels played little role at seances; nor was there room in the worldview of the movement for the appearance of spirits of living men or of the great spiritual teachers (prophets, masters, mahatmas, adepts and the like) of the past.

All of this is understandable in the light of the fact that the understood purpose of early Spiritualism was simply to convince of immortality, nothing more. The goal was not personal fulfillment, development, perfection, individualization, psychic powers or vision in this life. Individual progress might come in the next life, since it was obvious that the spirits of the dead were more evolved and better informed than the spiritualists who attended seances, but this progress was thought to be the product of good living and morality, rather than the result of initiatic, occult or magical effort directed toward that goal. The goal of the early spiritualists, once convinced of their own survival and immortality, was profoundly this-worldly: social progress and reform here and now. An article in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* for Bastille Day 1866 made the point explicitly: 'From the earliest announcement of modern Spiritualism, it has been heralded by its advocates both public and private as a reform movement. The "Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man", "Free Speech", "Free Press", and Equal Rights under the law, whether the civil or higher law . . .'. All spiritualists were thus reformers, and, conversely, almost all of the mid-century reformers (whether devotees of woman's rights, abolition, prohibition, economic reform, or food, health and dress fads) dabbled, at least, in Spiritualism and found support among the spirits for their views.

Intimately coupled with this commitment to reform was the spiritualists' belief in eternal progress and evolution, both here and after death. In this world, the existence of the American republic was the crowning proof of progress. In the next world, in the most common cosmological mythology adopted by the spiritualists (that of A.J. Davis), the soul after death was to progress and ascend to the next level of existence, there to work out its faults before continuing its inevitable ascent through an indefinite series of worlds, each higher and more perfect than the preceding. An important corollary of this belief in progress was the spiritualists' conviction that higher truth lay in the future, not in the past, and in the developed West rather than in the benighted East. There was simply no room in early Spiritualism for the notion of hidden, secret wisdom or *prisca theologia* handed down from a past Golden Age or preserved among the adepts and masters of the East. Spiritualism thus

rejected as rank superstition the accouterments of ancient → magic and mystery, and denounced as undemocratic all thought of spiritual elites, initiation and secret societies.

Finally, early Spiritualism was unsatisfactory from a personal point of view because it was first and foremost an indirect, secondhand experience. The medium, herself frequently unconscious and in trance, mouthed the messages of the spirits to the faithful, who received them passively, in their normal consciousness, in exactly the same way as they might have received ideas from reading or from attending a sermon. The difference lay only in the special conviction imparted by the wondrous methods the spirits chose to use in communicating, and these were subject to challenge and doubt.

##### 5. CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION

Spiritualism had a brief resurgence in America around the end of the Civil War in 1865, perhaps the consequence of bereaved relatives seeking consolation from their sons and fathers dead in the war, but by the early 1870s the movement had fallen on hard times. One after another, spiritualist journals ceased publication, and the reports of seances and traveling mediums in the journals grew fewer. It was precisely at this low point that Spiritualism experienced a profound crisis that was, in the end, to transform it beyond the recognition of its earliest followers. The transformation is associated with the names of → Paschal Beverly Randolph, Emma Hardinge (Britten), → H.P. Blavatsky and → H.S. Olcott.

Randolph (1825-1875), was a black American visionary, and his visions first led him into Spiritualism, where he became a highly regarded trance medium in the mid-1850s. As he struggled to preserve his sanity from possession by the spirits, however, he came to see the dangers inherent in the medium's passivity, and sought refuge in Europe and the Near East. There he found both psychoactive drugs and a system of active magical practice involving clairvoyance through magic mirrors and sexual magic. On his return to America he founded the first of several short-lived Rosicrucian orders to promulgate his teachings. He did not deny the truths of Spiritualism, though he had denounced the immorality and passivity of trance mediums in 1858, but addressed in turn each of the perceived limitations of Spiritualism. For Randolph, man was a spiritual being, independent and immortal, who by Imperial Will and active magical practice could elevate himself in this life to a role in the celestial hierarchies. There were spirits of the dead, and mediums could communicate with them, but far beyond them were the awful denizens – gods,

powers and demigods – who ruled the universe. Man could come into contact with them through active clairvoyance and magical practice. Randolph's ideas had some success among the spiritualists of the 1860s and 1870s, but ultimately he was rejected because of his race and his eccentricities. He committed suicide in Toledo, Ohio in 1875, though his work survived in the early → Theosophical Society, the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and other occult groups, all of which arose from and built upon a spiritualist base.

Emma Hardinge Britten (1823-1899) was far more an integral part of Spiritualism. Born in England and trained as a pianist and singer, she came to New York in 1855 and almost immediately embraced Spiritualism and became an inspirational medium. Until her death, she labored mightily in the cause of Spiritualism, crisscrossing the United States, Australia and Great Britain to deliver the spirits' message. Her short standard instructions for conducting seances are still in use in spiritualist circles today, and her two massive histories of the early days of Spiritualism are indispensable to the student. Despite this effort and enthusiasm, however, Hardinge's Spiritualism was in many surprising ways unorthodox.

By her account, her occult life began long before she left England where she had functioned as a magnetic subject with a magical group in London she called the Orphic Circle. The group was secret, but the details of its workings were told by Hardinge (in the person of the Chevalier Louis de B., one of the group's members) in novel form in *Ghost Land*, in 1876, and in *Art Magic*, a treatise on magic and the magical world published later the same year, both of which excited a storm of protest among the spiritualists. For Louis/Hardinge, the universe was the familiar univocoelum of A.J. Davis, but it was populated by far more than living and dead humans, and, with proper instruction and practice, men, both in this life and after death, could become 'God-men – heavenly men, strong and mighty Powers, Thrones, Dominions, World-Builders, glorious hierarchies of Sun-bright Souls . . . Gods in person' in a never-ending ascension through the celestial hierarchies. Louis/Hardinge's most lasting lesson to Spiritualism was that there were 'no phenomena produced by disembodied spirits, which may not be effected by the still embodied human spirit, provided a correct knowledge of these powers is directed by a strong and powerful will'.

This mixture of occultism, adepts, astral projection, secret societies and practical techniques of individualization and spiritual development crys-

tallized in the mid-1870s in the work of Mme. H.P. Blavatsky and Col. H.S. Olcott, and it was upon their heads that directly fell the onslaught of threatened Spiritualism. Under the guidance of Mme. Blavatsky, Olcott in 1875 and after had begun publicly attacking Spiritualism for precisely the deficiencies already pointed out by Randolph and Hardinge, but he had the audacity, following the lead of Mme. Blavatsky, to challenge the most fundamental tenant of Spiritualism: the identity of the communicating spirit. According to Blavatsky, the entity that most often communicated at seances was the discarded psychic shell of the dead, and not the departed's immortal spirit. The outrage was enormous as every prominent spiritualist joined in denouncing the superstition of what came to be called "magical spiritualism", but when the uproar settled down, Spiritualism itself had been transformed and had incorporated into its shared presuppositions the leading thoughts of occultism: active will, individual spiritual development, magical practice, and hierarchies of beings besides man above and below him on the cosmic ladder – all of which, together with the idea of → reincarnation derived from Theosophy, formed the *koine* of Spiritualism as it entered the 20th century.

#### 6. SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND

Word of the new movement reached England almost as soon as it began. A.J. Davis's *Principles of Nature* had been published simultaneously in America and England in 1847, and the first American medium, Mrs. Maria Hayden, reached London in 1852, where she caught the attention of → Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Earl Stanhope, Dr. John Ashburner, Ms. Anna Blackwell and many others of the fringe intelligentsia, and started the first English spiritualist journal, *The Spirit World* (1853). She was the first of a wave of American mediums, including P.B. Randolph and the repatriated Emma Hardinge, to descend on England, and American mediums held a place of preference there until the 1880s. In 1855, the Scotch-born but American-raised Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886) appeared in London and created a furor among the upper classes for whom he presented his phenomenal powers. According to the awed accounts of his visitors, with his helping spirits he was able to levitate himself at will, fly in and out of open windows, rock massive tables and play instruments – all more or less in the light. Home made no contribution to the philosophy of Spiritualism, but was the most successful of the phenomenal mediums and enjoys the reputation (not totally accurate) of never having been exposed or caught in trickery.

By the end of the 1850s, England was home to a large number of spiritualists, divided largely along class and regional lines. The first major spiritualist journal was *The Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph and British Harmonial Advocate* (1855-1859), largely devoted to accounts of the wonders of the seance, followed by *The London Spiritual Magazine* (1860-1877), a Christian monthly edited by Thomas Shorter and William Wilkinson. The pre-eminent journal of the early period was *The Spiritualist Newspaper* (1869-1882), devoted to the investigation and analysis of the phenomena of Spiritualism.

England's great contribution to Spiritualism was organizational and analytical. While there had been halfhearted and unsuccessful efforts to organize Spiritualism in America beginning in the 1860s, they came to naught over the fierce independence of the American spiritualists and their aversion to dogmatic formulation, and an American National Association of Spiritualists emerged only in the 1890s and then only as a means of garbing Spiritualism, for practical and political reasons, as a church – a fact that would have struck the early adherents of Spiritualism as preposterous. Provincial British spiritualists, largely middle class in background, united under the influence of Emma Hardinge Britten to form the Spiritualists National Federation in 1891 and the organization continues today as the Spiritualists National Union. The spiritualists of London, a more educated lot, first organized as the (British) National Association of Spiritualists, then as the Central Association of Spiritualists, both of which struggled to reconcile the members' conflicting interests and then expired, to be replaced by the London Spiritualists Alliance under the direction of William Stainton Moses ("M.A. Oxon."), a noted writing medium and author. The LSA survives today as the College of Psychic Sciences – which reveals in its name the transformations that early Spiritualism has undergone since its founding. Britain also pioneered the secular, intentionally disinterested and supposedly scientific study of the phenomena of Spiritualism in isolation from its doctrine – an attempt that after 120 years has proved inconclusive. The Society for Psychical Research was begun in 1883, with such eminences as W.S. Moses and F.W.H. Myers as members, and later included such noted historians of Spiritualism as Frank Podmore.

#### 7. SPIRITUALISM OUTSIDE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

The origins of Spiritualism in France were complicated by the existence there of a well-developed form of Mesmerism, exemplified in the work of

Baron Dupotet (1796-1881) and Louis-Alphonse Cahagnet (1809-1885), who had extended the boundaries of Mesmerism to embrace many of the phenomena and experiences of Spiritualism and what came to be called magical Spiritualism. By the time American Spiritualism reached France in 1849, their investigations had already established the existence of the trance state ("somnambulism") and the value of drugs and magic mirrors for contacting the dead and the celestial hierarchies, and Cahagnet's book *The Celestial Telegraph*, which was published in English in 1848, was of considerable value in confirming the truths of Spiritualism among the educated Americans.

The situation of Spiritualism in France is further complicated by the doctrines of its leading early exponent, Hypolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (→ Allan Kardec, 1804-1869). His approach to Spiritualism was doctrinal, and he drew his doctrines from the spirits themselves, through the lips of his magnetized somnambules. His *Le Livre des Esprits* (1857), which taught the multiplicity of inhabited worlds and the role of a personal God as well as the survival of the individual soul, has never since been out of print in many languages and in a variety of countries, and it has become the Bible of the leading current of French Spiritualism – denominated "spiritism" to distinguish it, and especially its belief in reincarnation on this earth, from American and British Spiritualism. For a time in the 1860s and 1870s, two rival French spiritualist papers, Kardec's *Revue Spirite* (1858-) and Z. Piérart's *Revue Spiritualiste* (1855-1870), struggled for supremacy on behalf of the competing streams of thought, but by the end of the century spiritism had triumphed in France. At the International Spiritist and Spiritualist Congress organized in Paris in 1889 with the young Gérard Encausse (→ Papus) as secretary, the attempt was made to formulate an agreement at least on the two fundamental points of (American) Spiritualism, belief in the immortality of the soul and in communication with the spirits of the dead, but the attempt came to naught over the spiritists' insistence on the special position to be accorded Kardec's works.

While the first mediums from the U.S. and England visited Germany in the early 1850s, Spiritualism took root there only slowly. As had been the case in France, it immediately accommodated itself to pre-existing movements, especially idealism and Mesmerism (as exemplified in the Odic researches of Baron Karl von Reichenbach, 1788-1869), and the fascination with the visions and powers of the Seeress of Prevorst (Friederike Hauffe (1801-1829) [→ Justinus Kerner]). The first spiritualist journal in

Germany, *Psyche: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Odwissenschaft und Geisterkunde* (Grossenhein, 1865-1866), appropriately, reflected these interests in its title. The most notable characteristic of Spiritualism in Germany was its broader acceptance in intellectual and scientific circles, an acceptance that Spiritualism never came to have in the rest of the world. This is exemplified by the work of Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner (1834-1882) and Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887) in studying the slate-reading abilities of the American medium Henry Slade in Leipzig in the late 1870s. The fact that recourse was had to a foreign medium is indicative of the movement's lack of penetration among the population in general, though there were indigenous German-speaking mediums, such as the Hungarian Baroness Adelmá von Vay (1840-1925). The most influential German-language spiritualist journal was the monthly *Psychische Studien* (1874-1925, and then as *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie* until 1934). Paradoxically, it was founded and edited by the Russian Aleksandr N. Aksakov (1832-1903). Censorship in Russia had prevented its publication there, as it had forced *Rebus* (1881), an earlier Russian spiritualist journal that Aksakov financially supported, to be disguised as a puzzle magazine. *Psychische Studien* combined accounts of spiritualist phenomena (many of them from British and American journals) with theoretical discussions of Spiritualism and its phenomena contributed by leading scholars, all tending over time in the direction of parapsychology and away from the original simple notions of American Spiritualism.

In Spain, Spiritualism had existed in isolated pockets even before arrival of the teachings of Allan Kardec in the late 1850s, but it was his books that set the tone for and determined the path of Spiritualism in Spain in the late 19th century. The revolution of 1868 freed the movement from Catholic censorship (there had been an auto-da-fe of spiritualist publications as early as 1857), and by 1888 the Spanish spiritualists hosted the "Congreso Internacional Espírita". The leading early journals were *El Criterio Espiritista* of Madrid (1869) and *La Luz del Porvenir* of Barcelona, published by the poetess Amália Domingo Soler (1835-1909).

In Italy, unlike Spain, Spiritualism developed both along spiritualist and spiritist (Kardecist) lines, prompted initially by the visit of D.D. Home there in 1854. The first Italian-language journal, *L'Amore del Vero*, appeared in 1863, contenting itself with recounting tales of spiritualistic wonders from foreign journals, but it was superseded by the

influential *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia*, begun in Turin the next year by Niceforo Filalete (ps. of Vincenzo Scarpa), which functioned as the clearinghouse for information on Spiritualism in Italy and throughout the rest of the century.

It is always easier to discern the presence and activity of the literate classes, since they were the ones who have left traces in the surviving periodicals and publications, but the widespread nature of spiritualist activity in Spain and Italy can be gleaned from the existence of local societies whose only surviving record is their name. There were over a hundred each in Spain and Italy by 1875, many with their own small journal, indicating an active recourse to Spiritualism that continues even today, although Spiritualism there – as everywhere – has been profoundly modified by Theosophic and occult ideas. In Spain and Italy also, as in all of the Catholic countries to which it spread, Spiritualism rediscovered its original "progressive" political nature, intermingling it with a decidedly anticlerical tone.

The most striking example of the successful spread of Spiritualism (and of its ability to accommodate new strains of thought) is provided by Brazil. By the early 1870s, Spiritualism in its Kardecist form had reached Brazil, where it initially enjoyed wide support among the wealthy classes of European background despite opposition from the Catholic Church. The first journal was begun as early as 1876, and the Federação Espírita Brasileira, which continues today, was founded in 1884. Spiritualism in Brazil is perhaps the most active form of Spiritualism in the world at present, though it has taken two distinct paths, largely distinguished along class lines: one branch continues the "pure" spiritism of Allan Kardec and the other intermingles Kardec's ideas with beliefs and practices based upon Umbanda and Candomble and other alternative religions of African derivation.

By the time of the First World War, Spiritualism worldwide had been transformed by its incorporation of the leading elements of western occultism, Theosophy and → New Thought and, in America, by its adoption of the outward form of a peripheral Christian church. At present it is distinguished from the → New Age generally only by its emphasis on mediums and the seance.

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JOHN PATRICK DEVENEY

**Starkey, George** (ps.: Eirenaeus Philalethes), \* 8 or 9.6.1628 Bermuda, † summer 1665 London

The character of George Starkey has long been eclipsed by that of his fictional creation the alchemical adept Eirenaeus Philalethes, "author" of some of the 17th century's most influential and popular treatises on transmutational → alchemy. Starkey's books, published both under his own name and under that of Philalethes, render him the most widely read scientific writer from the New World until Benjamin Franklin.

Starkey was born in Bermuda, the son of a Scot-

tish minister who had settled there in 1622. As a youth, he showed keen interest in natural history, and made detailed observations of insects, especially their metamorphoses. When he left Bermuda is unclear, but as early as 1639 one of his deceased father's associates wrote to John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, looking for educational opportunities for the young Starkey. In 1643, Starkey matriculated at the fledgling Harvard College, where he received the bachelor of arts degree in 1646, and the master's probably in 1649. In 1644, he embarked upon his life-long study of chemistry and its medical applications; already towards the end of the summer of 1645 he began practical experiments in search of the Philosophers' Stone. Soon becoming acquainted with the writings of → Joan Baptista Van Helmont, Starkey quickly added the alkahest and the volatilization of alkalies to his list of sought-after secrets. By 1648, at the age of twenty-one, he had also developed a flourishing medical practice in New England. During his time in the Massachusetts Bay Colony he associated with John Winthrop, Jr., first governor of Connecticut, who was himself interested in alchemy, as well as with many skilled metallurgists, physicians, and technicians. In early 1650, Starkey married a daughter of Colonel Israel Stoughton, but whether they had any children is unknown.

In late 1650, Starkey left New England for London because, as he later recalled, he was unable to conduct laboratory experiments adequately in Massachusetts owing to the scarcity of fit equipment and supplies. In London he met the intelligencer and German emigré Samuel Hartlib – who had received reports of Starkey's prowess some years earlier – and was introduced to the circle of reformers and projectors gathered around him. In January 1651, he met → Robert Boyle (possibly acting as his physician) and soon thereafter he began tutoring Boyle in chemistry, introducing him particularly to Helmontian ideas. Starkey shared several of his most treasured chemical secrets with Boyle, and Boyle partly financed Starkey's work, including the preparation of *ens veneris*, a Helmontian pharmaceutical. Starkey's formative influence on the young Boyle was profound.

Despite Starkey's success as a physician, he gave up his practice in the early 1650s to devote himself fully to his research after the *arcana maiora*. Unfortunately, this decision, together with the depletion of his wife's dowry, resulted in his imprisonment for debt in 1653. After his release, possibly helped by Boyle, he resumed his studies and later published two works on Helmontian pharmacy – *Natures Explication and Helmont's Vindication*



(1657) and *Pyrotechny Asserted* (1658) – which incorporated his new laboratory findings. For much of the remainder of his short life, Starkey was embroiled in financial and legal difficulties, and published only brief tracts and broadsides advertising his medicines or asserting his priority over preparations co-opted by others. In the well-known mid-century battle of Helmontian “chymical physicians” versus the predominantly Galenic medical establishment, Starkey was a vociferous champion of the former. Finally, during the Great Plague of 1665, while the Royal College of Physicians fled London, Starkey and several fellow Helmontians remained, with the result that Starkey himself caught the plague and died.

In 1651, Starkey had begun telling of an anonymous alchemical adept he had known in New England. This adept, who would later bear the name of Eirenaeus Philalethes (“Peaceful Lover of Truth”), allegedly demonstrated transmutation before Starkey and gave him a small portion of the White Stone as well as several manuscripts dealing with how to make the Stone. Starkey circulated what he claimed to be some of these “American” manuscripts in the Hartlib Circle where they were eagerly received. Starkey’s first publication, appearing under the name of Eirenaeus Philoponus Philalethes (he had used the name Philalethes Philoponus for himself privately in 1651), was the verse treatise *Marrow of Alchemy* (1654-5). This work deals with making the Philosophers’ Stone, but also recounts the tale of Starkey’s dealings with the mysterious adept; while Starkey here veils his own name in anagrams (“Egregius Christo” and “Vir gregis custos”) and casts himself only as an “editor,” he later acknowledged his authorship of the book. In late 1655, during Starkey’s absence from London owing to his employment in mineral works at Bristol, one of the circulated “Philalethes” manuscripts was published without his knowledge. This work, the *Epistle of George Ripley to King Edward IV Unfolded*, was the only other Philalethes text published during Starkey’s lifetime. After his premature death, however, many more manuscripts which had circulated during his lifetime were eagerly sought after, published, and studied. These treatises adopt a “Mercurialist” approach to the Stone; they argue that a special philosophical mercury is to be prepared from common mercury, and this substance then digested with gold over a lengthy period of time to provide the transmuting powder. The Philalethes works were favored by, among many others, Sir → Isaac Newton.

Although the identity of the author of the Phi-

laethes treatises was long a matter of controversy, it is now clear that Starkey was in fact their true author. Significantly, in the *Vade-mecum philosophicum* (published 1678), Philalethes is cast as the student of a master named Agricola Rhomaeus. This name is revealed as a clever and learned word-play by translating the Latin first name into Greek and the Greek last name into Scottish dialect, which gives us “georgios stark”, as the true master, and indeed creator, of Philalethes. Starkey hid his authorship so well that even his friend Boyle did not know the truth, and long after Starkey’s death Boyle endeavored to contact the elusive Philalethes whom he believed to be living in France.

Starkey’s surviving laboratory notebooks, recently published, reveal him as an extraordinarily careful and able experimenter. Starkey combined his practical laboratory prowess with scholastic methods of logical inquiry and textual analysis and the Helmontian emphasis on quantitative analysis and weight determination. These private notes reveal how a prominent mid-17th century alchemist carried out his daily researches, reflecting upon practical results, deriving theories therefrom, and using theory in return to propose new “conjectural processes” to be tested in the fire. Moreover, Starkey’s writings also reveal much about the secretive, allegorical style of alchemical treatises, for while the Philalethes tracts contain some of the most elaborate and bizarre imagery in all of alchemy, the very same processes are described in clear, detailed, and reproducible terms in Starkey’s private papers and letters. Thus, the conscious use of alchemical *Decknamen* and allegory to encode practical laboratory secrets in a measured, organized way is apparent. Starkey also developed corpuscular theories of matter, expressed both in works published under his own name and under that of Philalethes.

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LAWRENCE M. PRINCIPE

**Steiner, Rudolf**, \* 25.2.1861 Kraljevec (Croatia), † 30.3.1925 Dornach (Switzerland)

Rudolf Steiner was born in Kraljevec, Croatia (then part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire) on 25 February 1861, although his official birthday is the 27th, the day he was baptised. He was an eldest son, with a sister and a younger brother born later. Having worked originally as a forester, Steiner’s father was employed at the Austrian railways, mostly in the more remote parts of the Austrian-Hungarian empire. Steiner received a formal Roman-Catholic education, but this was largely for reasons of tradition and conformism: his father considered himself a *Freigeist* (“free spirit”) and had strong anti-clerical sentiments.

Already as a child, Rudolf had clairvoyant experiences. When he was seven years old, he had a vision of an aunt committing suicide, but could not share this experience with either his parents or anyone else in his surroundings. As he tells us in his autobiography, he instead retreated into his soul, finding there an inner life that was full of spiritual experiences, especially with regard to the beautiful natural surroundings that formed the background of his youth. The only comfort in his loneliness was geometry, which showed him a world of the spirit that was completely detached from sensible, material reality. Geometry as well as science, especially cosmology, were among his earliest interests. In October 1872 Steiner entered the *Realschule*, a technical high school in Wiener Neustadt, graduating with great success in 1879. At age sixteen, he discovered Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* which he clandestinely read during the boring history lessons, but without finding any answers to the questions that occupied him, and without being aware of Kant’s place in the history of philosophy. On the whole, Steiner was very much a self-taught pupil, finding his own way in German literature, philosophy and higher trigonometry and calculus.

In 1879 Steiner registered as a student of geometry and physics at the Technical University

(*Technische Hochschule*), with the intention of becoming a teacher at a *Realschule*. Nevertheless, his most inspiring teacher during this period was Karl Julius Schröer (1825-1900), who was neither a mathematician nor a physicist, but a rather isolated professor of German literature. Schröer has been a very important influence on Steiner. He introduced him to → Goethe and the thought of the *Weimarer Klassik* in general, which was to become one of Steiner’s most important preoccupations in the years to come. Schröer was one of the few to seriously study the very philosophical, but in the mind of many also very undramatic and unperformable second part of Goethe’s *Faust*. Steiner would later not only give extensive commentaries on it, but would also bring it to the stage in its entirety.

Furthermore, Steiner took many courses in philosophy, especially those taught by Robert Zimmermann (1824-1898) and Franz Brentano (1838-1917). Although as a student he took a very critical attitude towards these figures, Brentano’s philosophy in particular was to become a life-long interest. In his later *Von Seelenrätseln* (On Enigmas of the Soul, 1917) Steiner states that a consistent elaboration of Brentano’s phenomenology would have led the man straight to a more spiritual understanding of the human soul, something which, however, Brentano himself never achieved. Again, Steiner’s most important philosophical studies were extra-curricular. Right at the beginning of his student years, he discovered the *Wissenschaftslehre* by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), which provided him with the basis on which the rest of his philosophical work would be built. Fichte’s philosophy centres around the “I” (*Ich*) that posits itself in an act of non-empirical self-perception. The “I” is thus the self-identical centre or focal point of all diverse and qualitatively different acts of consciousness. Having discovered by means of Fichte the true nature of the human spirit and its pure thought activity, Steiner then struggled with the question of finding the bridge from this solipsistic “I” to external nature. The answer came in 1881-1882 by means of his contact with Felix Kogutzki (1833-1909) a collector of medicinal herbs who lived in the country, but whom he met on the train to Vienna, where Kogutzki sold his herbs. Kogutzki transmitted to Steiner a non-academic, traditional and spiritual knowledge of nature, which the latter would later refer to as the last vestiges of Rosicrucian wisdom [→ Rosicrucianism]. In his four *Mystery Dramas* of 1910-1913, Steiner gives a portrayal of Kogutzki in the person of Felix Balde. In the so-called “Document of Barr”, a series of auto-

biographical notes for the French theosophist → Edouard Schuré (1841-1929), and in an autobiographical lecture of 4 February 1913, Steiner emphasizes that Kogutzki acted as an intermediary who introduced him to an even more important person. Using theosophical terminology, he refers to this person as one of his two “Masters”, who initiated him (the other one being Christian Rosencreutz himself). Steiner suggests that in the years following his “initiation”, this unknown “Master” gave him a few further tasks. He was to devote himself, first, to the respiritualisation of the decadent, materialist Western civilisation, and especially its intellectual foundation, the physical sciences; and second, to the public teaching of a Christian, non-Oriental understanding of → reincarnation and karma.

The only tangible outcome of this encounter with Kogutzki is a manuscript that Steiner sent to the philosopher Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1897-1888) in 1882 and that was found in Vischer's *Nachlaß* in 1938. In this manuscript, entitled “Einzig mögliche Kritik der atomistischen Begriffe” (Only Possible Critique of Atomist Concepts), Steiner sketches how pure thought can grasp what he calls the “Ideas”: pure, non-empirical essences reminiscent of Plato, which can then be recognised in nature through sense experience. In this way, nature can be seen as the external revelation of the spirit that man can also sense from within. This conviction would become the nucleus of Steiner's subsequent philosophical and scientific work.

Soon after his contact with Kogutzki, Steiner started reading Goethe's works on the natural sciences. Through the mediation of Schröer, this led in 1882 to an invitation by Josef Kürschner to edit these works for his “Deutsche National-Literatur”. Steiner would only finish this project in 1897. In his introductions and notes, and in publications such as his 1886 *Grundlinien einer Erkenntnistheorie der Goetheschen Weltanschauung* (Basic outlines of an epistemology of the Goethean worldview, 1886), Steiner states that Goethe's work in the natural sciences was more than just a haphazard set of empirical observations combined with a poetical, idealist look at nature; it was the application of a consistent epistemology, which Steiner calls phenomenological. Steiner describes Goethe's method as a path that leads from empirical observation to the experience of the objective Ideal Type; in the case of plants this is the so-called “Urpflanze”, the objective Idea that underlies the diverse appearances and metamorphoses in empirical reality. Thus, in the 1880s and 1890s Steiner developed his

philosophy, which can be seen as a reintroduction of the objective idealism of Hegel and Schelling at a time when philosophy was dominated by the subjectivism and anti-Idealism of neo-Kantianism. Steiner, however, did not simply restore Hegel's abstract speculations, but combined his dialectical method with the empiricism or phenomenology of Goethe and a conception of the free, non-empirical thought activity of the “I” that was ultimately derived from Fichte. In fact, whereas Goethe had claimed ‘never to have thought about thinking itself’, Steiner applied Goethe's phenomenological method not just to external phenomena but to thought activity itself.

Steiner had to develop this philosophy in a non-academic context. In 1882, he had decided to quit his studies and devote his time to the Kürschner edition and other literary activities. In order to gain a living he was forced to become a private tutor in rich Viennese households. His most memorable job was with the rich Jewish family Specht, that had many connections with members of the Viennese elite, including Sigmund Freud's collaborator Josef Breuer (1842-1925). Steiner's education of the youngest, mentally retarded son was such a success that the boy was later able to get a university education and become a dermatologist. These experiences and the ones with his own deaf and dumb younger brother became the basis of his later *Heilpädagogie*, an orthopedagogical method geared at the mentally handicapped that has become an international movement. In this period, Steiner also became a political editor of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* and came into touch with members of the cultural elite of Vienna, such as the poets Marie Eugenie delle Grazie (1864-1931) and Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938), and the neo-Thomist professor of theology Wilhelm Neumann (1837-1919). The poet Friedrich Eckstein, personal secretary of the composer Anton Bruckner, introduced Steiner to → alchemy, Rosicrucian writings, modern theosophy [→ Theosophical Society] (Sinnet's *Esoteric Buddhism* and Mabel Collins' *Light on the Path*) and the theosophical circle around Marie Lang (1858-1938). In letters and personal conversation with Rosa Mayreder, however, Steiner still showed himself quite critical of the “Schwacheisterei” (feeble-mindedness) of the theosophists. From the correspondence between Eckstein and Steiner we learn that Steiner was, nevertheless, profoundly interested in Eckstein's discoveries of the alchemical and Rosicrucian symbolism in Goethe's *Märchen* (The Fairytale of the Green Snake and the White Lily), his unfinished *Geheimnisse* (Secrets) and *Faust II*. In fact, this kind of esoteric reading of

Goethe's poetical works would later mark Steiner's transition from his philosophical to his esoteric career.

Steiner's work on the Kürschner-edition led to an invitation from the recently grounded Goethe-Archives in Weimar to edit Goethe's works on natural sciences in the framework of the new, critical edition, the famous *Weimarer Ausgabe*. Steiner moved to Weimar in 1890 and stayed there until 1897. He complained bitterly about the bad salary and the boring philological work, but found the time to write his main philosophical works during his Weimar period. These are, first, his doctoral dissertation, which was accepted by the University of Rostock in 1891 and turned into a book in 1892 under the title *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Freiheit* (Truth and Science: Prelude to a Philosophy of Freedom); second, his *opus magnum*, the *Philosophie der Freiheit* (Philosophy of Freedom) of 1894; and third, his 1895 book on Nietzsche, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit* (Friedrich Nietzsche: A Fighter Against His Time).

Steiner's high hopes that his philosophical work would gain him a professorship at one of the universities in the German-speaking world were never fulfilled. Especially his main philosophical work, the *Philosophie der Freiheit*, did not receive the attention and appreciation he had hoped for. In this work, Steiner develops his definitive version of objective idealism. The world initially appears to us in its separation between sensible experience ("Beobachtung") and intelligible idea ("Begriff"), or in other words, matter and form of knowledge. By uniting the experience of the object with its non-empirical idea in the act of knowledge, the human mind restores the original unity of Essence ("Begriff") and Appearance ("Beobachtung") of the object itself. This act of knowledge is a free creation of the human spirit that by its very creation is part of evolving reality itself. Steiner thus strongly repudiated the neo-Kantian subjectivism that dominated the philosophical scene in his days. While the first part of the book develops his epistemology, the second part propounds his ethics, which has its center in the free individual. Moral acts are not a matter of obedience to general rules or abstract duties, but acts which originate in knowledge of a unique situation which is founded upon a freely captured idea ("Intuition"). This general idea becomes individualized through the moral subject's individual feelings and experience, or in other words through love and respect for other people and through moral phantasy. Steiner here criticizes the abstract duty ethics of the Kantians, on the one

hand, and the dominant Schopenhauerian pessimism, naturalism and anti-intellectualism, on the other. Both parts of the book are clearly complementary and centre around the concept of freedom. The act of knowledge presupposes a free act of human consciousness, while free, moral acts presuppose knowledge of the situation through the Intuition. Both epistemology and ethics are concerned with the free human act, which is nevertheless part of an objective reality that, precisely through these free human acts, has the character of an evolving, dynamic whole. In 1918, long after Steiner changed his philosophical for his esoteric career, Steiner issued a second edition of this work, which substantially differed from the original one. He now claimed that the individual appropriation of its contents by the reader would provide the experiential basis for a spiritual path that turns conventional, materialist thought into an organ for spiritual experiences by which the free individual gains access to the spiritual world. While there is certainly a certain tension between the "philosophical" version of 1894 and the "esoteric" version of 1918, it must be said that the description of the intuition in 1894 as a non-empirical, spiritual ("geistiges") capture of the objective idea does constitute a bridge to Steiner's talk of a spiritual world and spiritual experiences in 1918.

During Steiner's Weimar years, Elisabeth Förster, Friedrich Nietzsche's sister, tried to engage him in her project of editing both the published and the unpublished works of her brother, who had now fully fallen victim to mental illness; but these attempts ended in an open conflict. These circumstances may perhaps explain, partially at least, the surprising contents of Steiner's small book on Nietzsche of 1895. It consists of a short summary of the main elements of Nietzsche's philosophy, combined with remarkably extensive passages in which Steiner praises Nietzsche as an *unzeitgemäße* hero who shows us a way out of our decadent civilisation. These passages stand in stark contrast to the criticisms of Nietzsche voiced by Steiner prior to 1895, and especially to a number of publications from 1899 onwards, which speak of Nietzsche's philosophy as a 'psychopathological problem' and as the ramblings of a man 'who is not one of the leading figures of the age'. Part of the explanation may be, not only that Steiner hoped to be able to flee from the Goethe Archives and work for Elisabeth Förster, but also that his book on Nietzsche immediately followed his own main philosophical work. Steiner fully identifies himself with his subject, and to a large extent his summaries tell us more about his own philosophy than about that of

Nietzsche. This is especially true of the concept of *Übermensch* (Superman), which Steiner interprets as the free, autonomous individual that becomes intellectually aware of his own motives of action, realising these while respecting the autonomy of the other members of his community. Steiner thus explains away Nietzsche's biologism, his anti-intellectualism, his glorification of unconsciousness impulses and the Superman's destructive, anti-social and profoundly egoistic behaviour. After having completed his book, Steiner was introduced to Nietzsche himself. According to his own much later report in his autobiography, he was able to gain a spiritual insight in Nietzsche's soul, that dwelled freely in the spiritual worlds, detached from his ailing body that lay idly on the couch. Whether or not Steiner already fully realized this in the 1890s, it seems that this observation integrated both his positive and negative judgments of Nietzsche. On the whole, he saw Nietzsche as a truly great mind and a philosophical idealist, who would have agreed with most of Steiner's own philosophical positions if he had not, due to his weak sense of objective truth, become a victim of the materialism and scientism of his age, leading him to his bizarre and even dangerous later philosophy that was but a prelude to his insanity.

In 1897 Steiner moved to Berlin, where he became the chief editor of the literary journal *Magazin für Literatur*. He engaged in contacts with most of the leading writers and artists in Berlin. He also became a member of several literary and philosophical clubs, such as the circle around Ludwig Jakobowski (1868-1900) which comprised writers such as Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945) and Erich Mühsam (1878-1934), and the *Giordano Bruno Bund* founded by Bruno Wille (1860-1928), which propagated a non-confessional, anti-clerical monism according to which matter was completely permeated by spirit. Moreover, despite his harsh words about socialism in the *Magazin für Literatur*, Steiner accepted an invitation to teach in the *Arbeiterbildungsschule*, a social-democratic school for the working classes founded by Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900). It appears that the turn of century was also a personal turning-point for Steiner. In his autobiography he speaks about a crucial inner experience that occurred shortly before 1900: he had a spiritual vision of what he calls the Mystery of Golgotha, Jesus Christ's redemptive, world-transformative death and resurrection.

In fact, Steiner's life did change considerably after 1900, though the evolution of his thinking seems to have taken place gradually. First of all, he gave up his editorship of the *Magazin für Literatur*.

Moreover, in the years immediately after 1900 Steiner not only became active within the → Theosophical Society, but simultaneously grew closer to Christianity as well. The very combination of these two facts already makes it clear that Steiner occupied a rather unique place within the theosophical current. In 1900 he was asked by Countess Brockdorff, leader of a theosophical circle in Berlin, to give a memorial lecture on Nietzsche, who had died in the same year. This led to an invitation for further lectures. Steiner now decided to speak about *Goethes geheime Offenbarung* (Goethe's Secret Revelation), having written an essay under the same title in 1899. In his lecture, Steiner discusses the esoteric, more in particular Rosicrucian sources of Goethe's work, especially in his fairy tale on the green snake and the white lily.

Thus, the transition from Idealist philosopher to esoteric teacher was marked by a discussion of Goethe, who, according to Steiner, not only stood on an Idealist basis, but was also profoundly influenced by the alchemical-Rosicrucian tradition. In his explanation of Goethe's fairy tale, Steiner states that the snake that sacrifices itself stands for the lower forces of the soul which have to be transformed in order to serve as a bridge to the higher, spiritual worlds. After this, the secret temple, which stands for the old esoteric wisdom and currents exemplified by the Rosicrucians, will be able to rise to the surface, i.e. become publicly known. In fact, these two themes (as well as many others that can be traced in the fairy tale) of sacrifice and transformation of the natural soul, and the public revelation of old, secret doctrines preoccupied Steiner in the following years.

Steiner also lectured on *Die Mystik im Aufgang des neuzeitlichen Geisteslebens* (Mysticism at the Dawn of the Modern Age), which he turned into a book in 1901. Discussing late medieval and early modern "mystics" such as Eckhart, Tauler, → Nicholas of Cusa and → Jakob Boehme, Steiner shows that external knowledge of nature and inner, mystical experiences do not exclude each other but, on the contrary, mutually enrich each other. He claims that, *mutatis mutandis*, modern natural science should be combined with an inner, "mystical" path. On the one hand, this will prevent the spiritual path from drifting off into foggy, uncontrolled speculation, while on the other, it will prevent natural science from becoming materialist and anti-human. What we witness here is a metamorphosis of his earlier philosophical position which tried to combine Idealist philosophy not only with Goethean physics but also with the modern scientific method (the subtitle of *Philosophy of*



*Freedom* is: “Seelische Beobachtungs-Resultate nach naturwissenschaftlicher Methode”, i.e. “Results of observations of the soul by means of scientific method”), which is actually quite reminiscent of Brentano’s program of a “scientific” philosophy of mind. Steiner now tried to combine spirituality or “mysticism” with modern physics.

Steiner deepened his relation to the Christian tradition in a subsequent series of lectures, *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache* (Christianity as a Mystical Fact), which also resulted in a book (1902). Here, Steiner gives his own version of perennialism [→ Tradition]: Christianity was foreshadowed by the secret wisdom that was transmitted to a few chosen ones who were allowed to be initiated in the Greek and Egyptian temples. The initiates had to go through inner processes of death and resurrection, after which they were shown all kinds of secrets concerning both the macrocosmic and microcosmic world. Christ did not just teach these things, but physically went through all these processes in broad daylight, thereby turning secret knowledge into a public, physical fact. Spiritual knowledge, which, until then, had only been accessible either after natural death or by the artificially-induced “inner” death in the temple, could henceforth be acquired by each and every person by means of our natural, daily consciousness.

In subsequent years, Steiner came to a deeper understanding of the importance of precisely this “mystical” fact. His spiritual experience in 1899 may have made a deep impression, but it nevertheless took him quite a struggle to shake off his earlier quite dismissive attitude towards Christianity, apparent in his book on Nietzsche and in many other places. In the years around 1900, for example, we find him defending Ernst Haeckel’s (1834-1919) version of Darwinism against his creationist critics in a number of publications. True, Steiner tried to avoid Haeckel’s materialism by combining it with Goethe’s idea of metamorphosis, but he certainly did not spare Haeckel’s Christian critics. In the years after 1900 Steiner was able to find his own access to what, using theosophical vocabulary, he called esoteric or true Christianity: a Christianity which went beyond the denominational differences and theologies of ordinary Christianity, of which he had been so critical.

Together with his later second wife Marie von Sivers (1867-1948), Steiner became the leader of the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1902, the year in which he also publicly announced himself to be a theosophist. He did so by means of a lecture on *Monismus und Theosophie* (Monism and Theosophy) for the *Giordano Bruno Bund*, of

which he continued to be a member until 1905. Steiner considered it important to give a public statement of this fact, because of his preoccupation with the public revelation of old, secret knowledge. He shared this preoccupation with → Madame Blavatsky, whose *Secret Doctrine* and other works he had gotten to know and appreciate around 1902.

The following years, Steiner led an amazingly productive life as a writer and teacher within the Theosophical Society. He founded his own journal, *Luzifer-Gnosis* and, together with Marie von Sivers, his own publishing house, the *Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag* (in 1908). By these means he was able to disseminate an incredible amount of books and lectures, all of which were to a certain extent tributary to Blavatsky and other theosophists, but also gradually emancipated themselves to a considerable extent from theosophical vocabulary and approaches. Despite his success as an esoteric teacher, Steiner seems to have suffered from being shut off from academic and general cultural life, given his continued attempts at getting academic positions or jobs as a journalist.

In the years after 1902, Steiner composed a series of works that are known as his “basic” books. Among them is *Theosophie* (Theosophy) of 1904, which contains a spiritual psychology according to the three-fold division of body, soul and spirit (“Geist”) and the four-fold division of physical body, etheric body, astral body and “I”. This “I” or spirit is described as the immortal core which reincarnates in a new body. In 1904/1905 Steiner wrote his *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* (How does one attain knowledge of the higher worlds?; translated as “Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment”) which describes a path for developing spiritual knowledge of higher worlds, divided into the three levels of → imagination, inspiration and intuition. It also contains Steiner’s version of the theosophical doctrine of Chakras. Finally, mention must be made of *Geheimwissenschaft* (Secret Science; translated as “Occult Science”) of 1910, which is Steiner’s most voluminous work. It not only describes the planetary evolution of the earth, but also human evolution. This is also the book in which he fully discusses the central importance of Christ’s death and resurrection for both the earth and humanity. It allows man to overcome and transform evil, described here for the first time in its dual character of Ahriman and Lucifer. Furthermore, in a series of lectures, such as *Die Apokalypse des Johannes* (The Apokalypse of St. John) of 1908, *Von Jesus zu*

*Christus* (From Jesus to Christ) of 1911, and several lecture series on the four gospels, Steiner provided the basis for one of his core doctrines, namely his Christology. Furthermore he gave an enormous amount of other lectures all over Europe on a wide range of topics.

Besides the descriptions of the spiritual path contained in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* and elsewhere, that were meant for the general public, Steiner also privately taught pupils in his *Esoterische Schule* (Esoteric School). This school comprised three “classes”, related, respectively, to, imagination, inspiration and intuition. The third class, which was intended to spiritually coach people in their daily, professional life, does not seem to have functioned, but the first two classes did. The first class, active from 1904 until 1914, worked with spiritual exercises based on theosophical literature such as Collins’ *Light on the Path*. Until 1907, this group was formally part of the Esoteric School of Theosophy. However, in that year Steiner decided to withdraw his “first class” from the EST in the wake of several scandals, the most important of which cantered around → Annie Besant’s claim that the Mahatmas who had appeared at → Henry Steel Olcott’s death bed had nominated her as his successor. Annie Besant in fact agreed with Steiner’s decision, but interpreted it in terms of a division of labour: Steiner, who supposedly knew nothing about Oriental wisdom, would concentrate on his Christian-Rosicrucian spiritual path, whereas Besant herself would be responsible for the Oriental yoga-path.

Steiner’s second class, active from 1906 until 1914, had a more ritual and artistic, and less intellectual character. Steiner adopted the Memphis-Misraïm rite of John Yarker’s masonic order, of which both he and Marie von Sivers became members. In this connection they had to get into contact with Theodor Reuss (1855-1923), who would later be involved in the so-called → Ordo Templis Orientis (OTO), associated with → Aleister Crowley and centered on sexual magic. Despite many allegations to the contrary, it seems that Steiner’s contacts were merely formal, and occurred before the somewhat adventurous OTO-affair. Likewise, Steiner’s relation to → Freemasonry was a rather loose one, and during the First World War Steiner even publicly accused Anglo-American masonic lodges from manipulating politics in order to gain world dominance. In several lectures he describes masonic forms and rituals as dead entities, which have to be resurrected from a completely new perspective. For instance, Steiner gave his own interpretation of the masonic *Tempellegende*, which

tells the story of the antagonism between King Solomon and Hiram, the temple architect. Steiner sees it in terms of the deeper division between a current that comes from Abel and another one that comes from Cain; or in other words, the current of the priests (that according to Steiner was eventually represented by the shepherds present at the birth of Jesus), and the current of the inventors, builders and cultivators of the earth (represented by the kings or magi who paid their homage to Jesus). In many ways, Jesus Christ thus reunited these two historical currents within humanity.

The period from 1910 until 1914 was a very eventful one. Steiner wrote his four *Mystery Dramas* (three further ones were planned, but never written), which showed on stage the karmic connections of an esoteric group of people and their evolving relations to Christ and Lucifer/Ahriman over several incarnations. In these plays, Steiner and Marie von Sivers continued an artistic impulse that they had already initiated at the 1907 World Conference of the Theosophical Society in Munich, when they had decorated the conference room with occult symbols largely derived from the Rosicrucian tradition and had staged Edouard Schuré’s mystery plays. This artistic impulse would find its culmination with the building of the *Goetheanum* (initially called *Johannesbau*) in Dornach (Switzerland) from 1913 onwards, after several attempts to build similar edifices in Stuttgart, Malsch and Munich had failed. The *Goetheanum*, completely constructed out of wood, and one of the first examples of organic architecture, was not only meant to provide a headquarters for Steiner’s esotericism, but also to be a visible realisation of the Goetheanist ideal of a new synthesis of religion, art and science – domains that had fallen apart in the secularized, materialist western world.

From 1910 onwards the relations between Steiner and the leaders of the Theosophical Society, especially Annie Besant, became more and more strained. This finally led to a break between Steiner and the Theosophical Society, the immediate cause of which was the movement around Jiddu Krishnamurti and the foundation of the *Order of the Star in the East* in 1910/1911, which venerated him as the incarnation of “Maitreya the Christ” (Christ and Maitreya the Buddha taken together). Initially, Steiner tried to avoid open criticism of this development, but he did start a series of lectures where he explained his view of the second coming of Christ (e.g. *Das Ereignis der Christus-Erscheinung in der ätherischen Welt*: Christ’s Appearance in the Etheric World, a number of separate lectures in 1910). According to Steiner, the Second Coming

should be understood as the apparition of Christ in the etheric world, and not as a new physical incarnation. From 1933 onwards, humanity would, according to Steiner, develop new organs for experiencing Christ in the spiritual world. By his redemptive act Christ had already transformed the physical world and man's physical body and hence he did not need to reincarnate again in a physical body. In this connection, Steiner also extensively discussed the figure of Christian Rosencreutz and the Rosicrucian manifestoes of the early 17th century [→ Rosicrucianism I]. Steiner took the biographical accounts in the *Fama Fraternitatis* and the *Chymische Hochzeit* as largely authentic reports of real occurrences. According to Steiner, Rosencreutz is the leading Master of the modern West, who will help us find the etheric Christ.

Steiner thus increasingly stressed his own adherence to Western, Christian esotericism as opposed to the orientalism of Besant c.s. At the same time, however, he continued to pledge allegiance to theosophical perennialism by stressing the important contributions of the Vedanta tradition to the development of esotericism, the similarities between Christ and Krishna etc., in a number of lectures, such as *Die Bhagavad Gita und die Paulusbrieve* (The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul, 1912-1913), which followed up on earlier lecture series such as *Der Orient im Lichte des Okzidents* (The Orient in the Light of the Occident) of 1909. Nevertheless, in these lectures Steiner did present Indian spirituality as a stage of preparation for Christianity, and certainly not as an equally high or even higher form, as Besant did. In this connection, Steiner also suggested that the breathing exercises of the yoga tradition were good for ancient Indians but not for modern Europeans, who had to follow the purely spiritual, more intellectual path described in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. According to Steiner, breathing exercises tie our souls more to our physical body, whereas we should try to liberate ourselves from it. After a series of events in 1913, the rift between Steiner and Besant could no longer be repaired. Steiner's group founded the *Anthroposophische Gesellschaft* on 28 December 1912, which had its first official meeting from 3 to 7 February 1913. Steiner himself did not become a member of the board of this society, which used the term "anthroposophy" that he had mentioned from time to time in his lectures. After the break, Steiner came to consistently refer to his own esotericism as "anthroposophy", and increasingly used his own terminology instead of the old theosophical vocabulary, which was also deleted from the new editions of works such as

*Theosophy and Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*.

During the First World War, Steiner continued to oversee the building activities in Dornach, undertaken by a very mixed and colourful group of local workers and exiled anthroposophists from many European countries, and to give his lectures on a wide range of topics. In response to the war, Steiner in these lectures intensely focused on political and social questions. Drawing from the theosophical doctrine of races as well as the Romantic cultural psychology of Herder and others, he devoted special attention to the problem of the different *Volksseelen* (the souls of the several European peoples, especially those of *Mitteleuropa*) and their specific tasks. Steiner showed himself highly critical of President Woodrow Wilson and what he called Anglo-American dominance in general, defending the position of Germany and Austria. In lectures, memoranda to both the Austrian and German governments (to which Steiner had access thanks to high-ranking anthroposophical officials), a book (*Die Kernpunkte der sozialen Frage* [The Core Issues of the Social Problematic], 1919; translated as "Towards Social Renewal: Basic Issues of the Social Questions) and a pamphlet (*Aufruf an das Deutsche Volk* [Appeal to the German People]), Steiner outlined his vision of a new political and social philosophy that avoids the two extremes of capitalism and socialism. Steiner propagated the so-called tri-partition of society, distinguishing between the domain of the state or the legal sphere, responsible only for inner and outer security; the domain of cultural life, in which different national, religious and other groups should freely organise their own education and culture; and the domain of economical life, which should be based on free associations of producers and consumers who coordinate needs and prices. In this way Steiner tried to give a new content to the slogan of the French Revolution: liberty (cultural life), equality (state/legal sphere) and fraternity (economic life). The independence of cultural life from the state, in particular, was intended as a solution for the problems of the multi-ethnic Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

At the request of Emil Molt (1876-1936), director of the Waldorf-Astoria Tobacco Factory, Steiner also became involved in the founding of a new type of school, the *Waldorfschule*, for which he provided the curriculum and the pedagogical philosophy. This pedagogy is based on Steiner's idea of the tri-partition of the human organism, a doctrine on which he had worked from 1904 onwards, but which came to full blossom in this period. Steiner divided the human organism in the

region of the head or nervous-sense system, seat of the activity of thought; the heart-lung region or rhythmic system, seat of the activity of feeling; and the metabolic system, seat of the activity of will. This tri-partition became the very core of Steiner's anthropology; and in many publications he traced what he called an occult physiology, studying the relation of the human organism to the Trinity, the celestial hierarchies, its development in life after death, the soul's path through the diverse planetary regions, etc. Steiner's educational philosophy is based on the principle that all three aspects of the human organism should be harmoniously mobilised in a child, avoiding the customary overemphasis of the intellectual pole.

On New Year's Eve 1922/1923 the *Goetheanum* was set on fire and completely destroyed. In the final years of his life, Steiner not only drew up a plan for a new *Goetheanum* built of concrete, which was only realised after his death, but also worked towards a new constitution of the Anthroposophical Society, which was re-founded during the so-called Christmas Conference (*Weihnachtstagung*) of 1923. After long hesitation, Steiner decided to become the president of a society that tried to combine external life with inner spirituality, in an attempt to revitalize the academic, cultural and professional domains. The heart of the new society was formed by the *Freie Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft* (Free Highschool of Spiritual Science) which besides a general section was divided into several professional sections (medicine, physics, agriculture, education, arts etc.), with the task of doing spiritual scientific research according to Steiner's guidelines. Steiner thus gave a new form to his Esoteric School, again divided into three classes. He only managed to develop part of the meditations for the first class.

As for the sections, Steiner developed the basics for a new medicine, based on the tri-partition of the human organism (*Grundlegendes für eine Erweiterung der Heilkunst* [Foundations for an Expansion of Medicine] of 1925, translated as "Fundamentals of Therapy"). He did so together with the Dutch physician Ita Wegman, who not only became a very close collaborator but also played a vital role in the re-foundation of the Anthroposophical Society. Steiner moreover put down the foundations for a new, so-called bio-dynamic agriculture, based on knowledge of the spiritual, especially astrological [→ astrology], forces operative in the earth. He further helped the founders of the *Christengemeinschaft* (Christian Community), a movement for religious renewal that tried to reunite Catholicism and Protestantism, by giving them new sacraments.

The Waldorf Schools, bio-dynamical agriculture, the Christian Community, and anthroposophical medicine have all become worldwide movements. Finally, before his death on 30 March 1925, Steiner gave a series of lectures in which he developed his definitive understanding of reincarnation and karma (*Esoterische Betrachtungen karmischer Zusammenhänge*, "Esoteric Studies Concerning Carmic Connections").

Steiner's immense oeuvre is edited in the *Gesamtausgabe*, published by the Rudolf Steiner Verlag in Dornach (Switzerland), which is still not finished. Many of his works have been translated into English and are available through Rudolf Steiner Press and other publishers.

*Lit.:* G. Ahern, *Sun At Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and the Western Esoteric Tradition*, Wellesborough: The Aquarian Press, 1984 ♦ C. Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie*, Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1997 ♦ R. McDermott, "Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy", in: A. Faivre and J. Needleman (eds.), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, New York: Crossroad, 1992, 288-310 ♦ R. Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang*, Dornach, 1925 (*Gesamtausgabe* no. 28).

CEES LEIJENHORST

## Stella Matutina

The Order of the Stella Matutina was the largest and most successful of the three segments into which the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn divided in 1903. At the time of that division the Isis-Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn remained in the hands of → A.E. Waite who interpreted the workings of the Order in a mystical sense, while those members who remained loyal to → S.L.M. Mathers continued the magical tradition. The Stella Matutina followed a rather different path, which reflected the credulity and psychic enthusiasms of its founder, Robert William Felkin (1853-1926), and which may best be described as the path of magical fantasy.

A former medical missionary, who was then a lecturer on tropical medicine at the Edinburgh Medical School, Felkin was initiated into the Amen-Ra Temple of the Golden Dawn in March 1894, taking the motto of *Finem Respice*. His first wife entered the Order at the same time as Soror *Per Aspera ad Astra*. Felkin came to believe that the Secret Chiefs of the Order – whom he referred to as the Sun Masters – communicated with him through automatic writing, and when he moved to London in 1896 his apparent psychic abilities impressed the more credulous of his fellow members

of the Isis-Urania Temple. In 1903 they gave their allegiance to Felkin and joined the newly founded Amoun Temple of his Stella Matutina Order.

Felkin was not the only significant member of the new Order. J.W. Brodie-Innes, a Scottish lawyer and minor novelist, joined him in providing teachings from the Sun Masters, and when → W.B. Yeats resumed his involvement with the Golden Dawn it was within the Stella Matutina: in July 1912 Felkin approved Yeats's advancement to the Grade of Theoricus Adeptus Minor. And while Waite disapproved of the magical emphasis of the Stella Matutina, he remained on reasonably friendly terms with Felkin, eventually, in April 1907, establishing a concordat between their two branches of the Golden Dawn. Despite the significant differences of approach, the concordat survived for five years.

A naïve belief in both past and present Secret Chiefs was only one of Felkin's many articles of faith. He also believed that he could find them in the flesh, and in 1906 he made his first visit to Germany in search of both living and dead adepts. Felkin failed to find the tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz, but on a visit four years later he did meet → Rudolf Steiner. Their first meeting was brief, but Steiner impressed him greatly and Felkin believed that he would provide a link between the Stella Matutina and the German adepts who had supposedly inspired the Golden Dawn.

Early in 1911 Felkin sent one of his disciples, Neville Meakin, to receive both initiation and teaching from Steiner. Meakin had been chosen on the advice of Ara Ben Shemesh, one of the discarnate entities with whom Felkin had been communicating on the astral plane since 1908, but Meakin's sudden death soon after his return to England prevented him from passing on what he had received from Steiner. Felkin now had no option but to go himself to meet Steiner once more. Accompanied by his second wife, Harriet Davidson – his first wife had died in 1903 – Felkin went again to Germany in 1912, and they returned home convinced that they had both received initiation into high Rosicrucian grades. Steiner later denied, in a conversation with A.E. Waite, that any initiation had taken place during the ceremonies that Felkin and his wife observed, but he did admit to teaching them a series of psychic “processes”. These were duly incorporated into the ritual practices of the Stella Matutina, but it is unlikely that they formed any part of the ceremony which Steiner attended during his visit to London later that year.

These “processes” were not the only innovations made by Felkin. He was utterly convinced that he

and his wife received “directions and instructions” from Christian Rosenkreutz in person, and that they had visited “great secret hidden Temples”, albeit on the astral plane. This conviction led, in 1909, to a requirement that all members of the Order sign a pledge accepting without question the ‘messages and communications, the teachings and the rituals of the Order of the Stella Matutina’. Such material came largely through Felkin, his wife and his daughter, although by 1915 he was advising ‘the more clairvoyant and clairaudient’ members of the Order that they, too, might ‘get direct instruction from C.R.C. himself.’

Felkin's credulity was, however, offset by his personal integrity and his medical skill – qualities that were praised by A.E. Waite, even as a final breach was opened between the Stella Matutina and his own branch of the Golden Dawn. The two Orders had co-operated in the production of printed grade rituals in 1910, but Felkin did not adhere to the terms of the concordat. These required him to be the sole head of the Stella Matutina, and when Waite discovered that Felkin was maintaining the old system of three Chiefs the concordat came under severe strain. It finally broke in 1912 when Felkin was persuaded by Brodie-Innes that he could no longer work with Waite, because Waite's denial of the reality of the Third Order, and thus of the Secret Chiefs, removed legitimacy from his Order.

Two years later Waite closed down his Independent and Rectified Rite when his own scepticism came into conflict with the growing credulity of the majority of his members. Many of these promptly joined the Stella Matutina, and by November 1915 its numbers, which were evenly divided between men and women, had grown to eighty-three Outer Order members and forty in the Second Order. It was now an international body, for at the end of 1912 Felkin had made an extended visit to New Zealand and founded a new Temple, named Smaragdum Thalasses No. 37. This was established in a house named ‘Whare Ra’ – by which name the Temple itself came to be known – at Havelock North in Hawke's Bay, but no satisfactory explanation has ever been given for its odd, non-sequential numbering.

After a further visit to Germany in 1914, Felkin and his family moved permanently to New Zealand in 1916, but before leaving England he revised the structure of the Stella Matutina. Felkin remained Chief of the Order, but appointed Miss Stoddart (Soror Het Ta) as Imperator of Amoun Temple in his place, and founded three new Temples. These were Hermes No. 28 at Bristol, and two new Temples in London. One of these, Merlin, was



for the former members of Waite's Independent & Rectified Rite, and the other, known as The Secret College, was restricted to freemasons who were also members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. This proved to be the high-water mark of the Stella Matutina, its subsequent history in England being one of continuing decline.

In New Zealand Felkin was more successful. The Temple at Havelock North had a permanent vault, through which passed a flow of new adepts, happy to accept Felkin's authority and eager to receive the teachings that came through him. The affairs of the Stella Matutina in England were very different. Miss Stoddart's psychic visions took on a darker hue until she could see nothing but evil in the Order. Felkin attempted to reason with her – he suggested that it would be better to co-operate with true Rosicrucians than to fear 'imaginary black Rosicrucians' in Germany or elsewhere – but her obsession grew, and she became convinced that Ara Ben Shemesh and other astral entities were all part of an international Jewish-Masonic conspiracy against western civilisation. Finally, in March 1923 Miss Stoddart left the 'awful incubus' that the Order had become for her.

By this time only the Amoun Temple remained in London, with the Rev. A.H.E. Lee, one of Waite's former members, as Imperator. Although its membership in England was much reduced the Stella Matutina continued, and skilful management by his wife and daughter ensured that Felkin's death in December 1926 did not result in difficulties for the Order. All went well until 1933 when Francis Israel Regardie joined the Hermes Temple in Bristol.

Regardie had received the first two grades of the Golden Dawn in 1926 and 1927 in the Societas Rosicruciana in America, which had incorporated them in its working after the rituals were printed in *The Equinox* in 1909-10. He advanced rapidly but became dissatisfied with the inadequacy of the teachings given and the poor quality of the rituals worked in the Temple. To save the Order from the imminent extinction which he believed it faced, Regardie decided to give to the world all that he knew about the Golden Dawn. Between 1936 and 1940 he published almost all of the Stella Matutina rituals and Knowledge Lectures and such of its history as he knew. The immediate reaction of the Order, and of other branches of the Golden Dawn, was to withdraw still further from public view. The onset of World War Two added to the Order's troubles and its activities in England were suspended until the war had ended.

Paradoxically, publication of the rituals, albeit inaccurate and incomplete, benefited the members of the Stella Matutina: ready access to the printed

text removed the need to make manuscript or typescript copies, and there was a brief surge in membership of the Hermes Temple during the late 1940s. It proved, however, to be short lived and the Order went into its terminal decline. In 1970 the Hermes Temple closed down, and Smaragdum Thalasses entered its final decade. The Stella Matutina had effectively ceased to be, but the actions of its most errant member were destined to give it a vicarious afterlife. During the 1970s Regardie's ritual texts were reprinted several times and their availability led aspiring adepts to found new Golden Dawn Temples throughout Europe and North America. Some of these have survived into the present century, continuing to work the grade ceremonies as practised in the Stella Matutina. It is doubtful, however, that their members appreciate how much greater a debt they owe to Dr. Felkin than they do to → Westcott, Mathers or Waite.

[Francis] Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn: An Account of the Teachings, Rites and Ceremonies of the Order of the Golden Dawn*, 4 vols., Chicago: Aries Press, 1937-1940.

*Lit.*: Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn. A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887-1923*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972 ♦ Francis King, *Ritual Magic in England, 1887 to the Present Day*, London: Neville Spearman, 1970 ♦ [Christina Mary Stoddart], *Light-bearers of Darkness: By Inquire Within. For some Years a Ruling Chief of the Mother Temple of the Stella Matutina and R.R. et A.C.*, London: Boswell, 1930.

ROBERT A. GILBERT

Suavius, Leo → Gohory, Jacques

Sufism, Neo- → Neo-Sufism

### Summit Lighthouse (Church Universal and Triumphant)

Summit Lighthouse is the original name for an eclectic, → New Age religious organization that since 1974 has called itself Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT). The group has its roots in such New Age forerunner traditions as Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society], → New Thought, the Arcane School [→ Alice Bailey], and the Saint Germain Foundation. In particular, CUT has adopted the Saint Germain Foundation's belief in a hierarchy of spiritual masters known alternatively as the Great White Brotherhood or the ascended masters. This hierarchy's purported mission is to inspire the

spiritual evolution of the human race and to communicate their esoteric teachings through carefully selected messengers. Theosophy, the Arcane School, the Saint Germain Foundation, and Summit Lighthouse each claim that their founders were designated emissaries of the Great White Brotherhood.

CUT also draws from New Thought and the Saint Germain Foundation a belief in the power of the spoken word. New Thought teacher Emma Curtis Hopkins (1853-1925) taught that a verbal affirmation using the words “I AM” – the name by which Yahweh was revealed to Moses in the Hebrew scriptures – connects the speaker’s intention with the Divine Self that is every human being’s true nature. Through positive “decreeing”, persons can call on the Divine Spirit to change negative outer conditions and bring about physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Both the Saint Germain Foundation and Summit Lighthouse adopted versions of decreeing, and it remains a primary spiritual practice for CUT members. The practice also resonates with various forms of affirmation across the spectrum of American Christianity that “claim God’s promises to believers”, from the more mainstream ministries of Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, and Robert Schuller, to Unity and the Church of Religious Science. CUT’s particular version of decreeing remains close to that of its predecessor movement, the Saint Germain Foundation, but differs in the actual speaking rate utilized, which has increased. The overall tonal quality produced by this rapid-fire decreeing resembles a buzzing or humming sound that is difficult to decipher in terms of words or phrases.

New Thought teacher Annie Rix Militz (1856-1924) claimed that the goal of human life was not continual → reincarnation, but ascension, a spiritual reunion between the individual soul and the God Self in heaven. Militz taught that ascension was not the exclusive domain of Jesus, but rather the crowning stage of human evolution, open to everyone. Summit Lighthouse adopted this teaching and postulated a tripartite being in humans that includes the I AM Presence (the spark of God at the core of each person), the Christ Consciousness (the mediator between the divine and the human worlds), and the soul (the mortal aspect of being that is made immortal through the rite of ascension). In CUT’s cosmology, members can achieve ascended master status after death if they faithfully walk the path of initiation revealed through the church’s messenger, wed themselves to the Christ Consciousness, balance their karma, and

break free from the continuous round of physical incarnations.

Summit Lighthouse was founded by Marcus (later “Mark”) L. Prophet (1918-1973), a student of the Saint Germain Foundation and its spin-off rival, the Bridge to Freedom. The Bridge emerged during the late 1940s and early 1950s at a time when the Saint Germain Foundation was embroiled in a prolonged lawsuit alleging mail fraud. One of the foundation’s New York members, Geraldine Innocente († 1961), began receiving dictations in the 1940s that she claimed emanated from the ascended masters. After several years of discreet circulation among foundation members in Philadelphia and New York City, these dictations were published under the pseudonym of Thomas Printz in 1951. This publication and widespread dissatisfaction among Innocente’s partisans with the Saint Germain Foundation led to the formation of the Bridge to Freedom, whose mission was to spread the message of the ascended masters as communicated through Innocente. Soon, however, other claimants to messengership for the ascended masters emerged. One such claimant was Mark Prophet. Prophet at first published his messages anonymously in a monthly publication sponsored by the Lighthouse of Freedom, a Bridge to Freedom spin-off established in Philadelphia during the 1950s. In 1958, Prophet founded his own organization, the Summit Lighthouse, to spread the messages of the ascended masters in the New Age. His dictations were published in the form of small booklets entitled *Pearls of Wisdom*; *Pearls* is still CUT’s most important publication and is available in its entirety on CD ROM.

Summit Lighthouse grew very slowly during the 1960s, its membership consisting mainly of middle-aged, middle-class women and men who had been involved with The Saint Germain Foundation, the Bridge to Freedom, or the Lighthouse of Freedom. Prophet conducted classes in a hotel in downtown Washington, D.C., and delivered “dictations” from the ascended masters in these public forums. He also traveled around the United States, visiting subscribers to the *Pearls of Wisdom* and organizing study groups. During this period Prophet created an organization of disciples called the Keepers of the Flame Fraternity. In return for a monthly tithe, Keepers received a series of graded lessons that detailed the path of ascension, the practice of decreeing, the mission of the ascended masters, and the special mission of the United States in bringing about the coming Golden Age of freedom and spiritual illumination. Similar in con-

cept to the correspondence course offered by the Ancient and Mystical Order of Rosae Crucis (AMORC) [→ Rosicrucianism III], these lessons drew upon the rich traditions of Western esotericism and gnostic Christianity that had long been present in the American cultic milieu. Keepers of the Flame members also constituted a core group of believers that in time became the foundation for Church Universal and Triumphant.

Prophet left his wife and children and married Elizabeth Clare Wulf (b. 1939), a student, in 1963. Although Mark Prophet continued to deliver the dictations from the ascended masters at public classes and Sunday services, he began privately to train his wife as a co-messenger. Following a move to Colorado Springs in mid 1966, the Summit Lighthouse began to attract increasing numbers of counterculture youths. In time, a sizable contingent of these young persons were invited to move into the Prophets' large mansion and to devote their lives to the ascended masters' work. Mark and Elizabeth Prophet became personal gurus for these young persons in a style similar to that of other spiritual communities of the period. The Prophets continued to send out the *Pearls of Wisdom* and hosted seasonal conclaves that brought together Keepers of the Flame and other students from around the world. They also inaugurated Montessori International as an alternative educational institution that combined secular and spiritual education for children. Though based primarily on the teachings of Maria Montessori and the ascended masters, these schools drew on an eclectic mix of educational theories and innovations. The Prophets instituted Ascended Master University (later called Summit University) in 1972 to give interested students an intensive immersion in CUT's esoteric doctrines. Students came to live at the movement's teaching centers, took classes, participated in decreeing and dictation sessions, ate in common, and came under the personal guidance of the Prophets. This early vision of a New Age mystery school would find its fulfillment in 1977 with the inauguration of Camelot, the church's 218-acre campus on the grounds of the former Thomas Aquinas College near Malibu, California.

When Mark Prophet died from a sudden stroke in 1973, Elizabeth Prophet began to put her personal stamp on the movement. She renamed the group Church Universal and Triumphant and relocated to Southern California. The Summit Lighthouse became the official name for the organization's expanding publishing arm.

The most important books published at this time

were *Climb the Highest Mountain* (1972), by Mark L. and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, and *The Great White Brotherhood in America* (1976), by Elizabeth Clare Prophet. These books acknowledged the movement's roots in earlier versions of ascended master activity, but claimed to be a further revelation under the direct sponsorship of the Ascended Master El Morya for the Aquarian Age. These books and other teachings published by the church proclaim CUT as the true church of both Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ, who are revered as ascended masters of the highest order. The publications also lay out a gnostic vision of creation, postulating a Great Central Deity that emanated from itself individual sparks which were each a perfect replica of divinity. These sparks of God then became entangled in matter and lost sight of their divine identity. The purpose of the ascended masters' teachings is to lay out a path of initiation whereby the human soul can be reunited with its eternal I AM presence and ascend to higher realms. During the 1980s, in works such as *The Lost Years of Jesus* and *The Lost Teachings of Jesus*, the church portrayed Jesus as a great teacher and gnostic revealer who traveled to Tibet and India before beginning his public mission in the West. Like other esoteric Christian groups, CUT claims that many of Jesus' inner teachings were discarded by an increasingly worldly orthodox church. Part of CUT's mission is to make these inner teachings of Jesus available for present day Christians as humanity enters a new spiritual dispensation. These lost teachings include the art of spiritual healing, the use of affirmations, decrees, and mantras to dispel evil conditions and the laws of karma and reincarnation.

By the late 1970s, Elizabeth Clare Prophet was a well-known figure in New Age circles. She appeared on television and radio and went on a series of national tours billed as "Stumping for Higher Consciousness". Her presentations used sophisticated visual and sound technologies and included public dictations and initiatory blessings using the many jeweled rings Prophet wore. The church espoused a strong position on controversial social issues, encouraging its members to speak out against abortion, pornography, communism, and terrorism. Like its predecessor The Saint Germain Foundation, the church is unabashedly patriotic, continually reaffirming the special role of the United States in the earth's spiritual evolution. In its sanctuaries an American flag stands among the various pictures and statues of Gautama Buddha, Jesus, → Saint Germain, and Lord Manjushri. In

spite of this strongly nationalistic subcurrent, however, the group has never espoused versions of British Israelism or anti-Semitism. From its earliest years, church members came from diverse racial, national, and socio-economic backgrounds, and much of the group's growth today is taking place in Latin America and Russia.

CUT received national and international publicity during the late 1980s when it built a sophisticated network of fallout shelters beneath the Grand Teton mountains on its ranch property just north of Yellowstone Park in southern Montana. These shelters were constructed after the ascended masters forecast (through Prophet) a possible nuclear exchange between the United States and the former Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991. Following the destruction of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas, in 1993, CUT was portrayed in the national media as another "Waco waiting to happen", and Prophet appeared frequently on such American television programs as *Nightline*, *Larry King Live*, and *Oprah* defending her church's intentions. She emphasized during these media appearances that her community was not an armed compound of apocalyptic extremists, but rather a broad-based movement of well-educated, patriotic men and women that posed no threat to American society. Prophet also claimed to be the sole messenger for the ascended masters in the New Age, taking care to distinguish between her dictations and the "channeling" and "spiritualism" of the New Age movement, which she disparaged.

Following this period of intense but ultimately failed apocalyptic expectation, the church has lost more than one third of its membership, downsized its staff from 600 to about 70, and begun selling large parcels of its Montana property to raise operating funds. In 1996, CUT's board of directors inaugurated a period of reconstruction and reorganization. It appointed a Belgian corporate executive as its president and made a concerted effort to redirect itself away from apocalypticism and toward co-creating a golden age of spiritual illumination and self-empowerment. During 1998-1999, Prophet announced that she had suffered from epilepsy since her teen years and that she was now the victim of Alzheimer's disease. Prophet relinquished both temporal and spiritual authority in the church in July 1999. CUT is now focused on the electronic and print distribution of Prophet's writings and the creation of New Age spiritual communities around the world. It regularly broadcasts its decreeing rituals and public meetings around the world via the internet.

CUT is gradually moving to routinize its charisma and now shares its leadership among three presidents, a board of directors, and a twenty-four member council of elders. It is also adapting itself to entrepreneurial currents long present in the New Age subculture. The church's internal news organs now speak of "business plans" that provide "consistency and integration among all of the organization's products, services, and communications", and "fiscal balance". Although Elizabeth Clare Prophet no longer lives on the church's ranch – she currently resides in Bozeman, Montana, about seventy miles away – she remains a revered figure in the movement.

Mark L. Prophet & Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Climb the Highest Mountain: The Everlasting Gospel*, Colorado Springs: The Summit Lighthouse, 1972 ♦ idem, *Science of the Spoken Word*, Colorado Springs: The Summit Lighthouse, 1974 ♦ Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *The Great White Brotherhood in the Culture, History and Religion of America*, Colorado Springs: Summit University Press, 1976 ♦ idem, *The Lost Years of Jesus*, Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1984 ♦ idem, *The Lost Teachings of Jesus*, 2 vols., Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1986, 1988.

*Lit.*: James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (eds.), *Church Universal and Triumphant in Scholarly Perspective*, Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publication, 1994 ♦ David Stuppel, "The 'I Am' Sect Today: An Unobituary", *Journal of Popular Culture* 3 (Spring 1975), 897-905 ♦ Bradley C. Whitsel, *The Church Universal and Triumphant: Elizabeth Clare Prophet's Apocalyptic Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003.

PHILLIP CHARLES LUCAS

## Swedenborg, Emanuel, \* 29.1.1688 Stockholm, † 29.3.1772 London

### 1. SCIENTIFIC PERIOD 2. SPIRITUAL CRISIS 3. VISIONARY PERIOD

Without exception Swedenborg's biographers see his religious crisis in mid-life as the defining experience of his biography. His response to this crisis created his place in history. Despite considerable achievements during the first half of his life, Swedenborg is remembered as a seer, a mystic, a revelator or a theosopher and not as an inventor, scientist, mining expert or philosopher. Clearly none of the activities of this multifaceted genius during the first half of his life would warrant his inclusion in this volume. And from a scientific perspective, if he is remembered at all, it is as a rather minor figure on a very broad stage. While biogra-

phers differ as to the nature of the relationship between the two phases of his life, they all acknowledge that a profound shift took place. The scientist and philosopher became a biblical exegete and theologian. The very public man sought anonymity. The author of elaborately produced, expensive and elegantly written books suddenly shifted to publishing plain and inexpensive works in simple Latin prose.

Swedenborg's reputation and influence rests on his authorship and his claims in the eighteen religious works he published between 1749 and 1771 – from the *Arcana Coelestia* (1749-1756) to *Vera Christiana Religio* (1770-1771). He published his books anonymously until 1768. It is on the title page of *Amore Coniugiali* that he wrote for the first time, 'Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swede'. Although the modifier of his signature changed on the title pages of the three additional works he published, he acknowledged authorship of all of them. However, his claims about his inspiration and his purpose remained constant throughout the whole of his religious corpus: he believed he was called to reveal the internal sense of the Bible and to announce a new "True" Christianity. He said he was able to do this because, as he wrote in the first volume of the *Arcana* # 68, he had had direct experience of the spiritual world: *vidi, audivi, sensi*, 'I have seen, I have heard, I have felt'. Furthermore, while he clearly stated in his final work, # 779, that he was 'called' to write and publish, he never attempted to organize a new religion. Today, however, there are many Swedenborgian or New Church (name taken from Revelation 21:2) organizations worldwide [→ Swedenborgian Traditions].

### 1. SCIENTIFIC PERIOD

Swedenborg's family background provided the motivation and the models for both the scientific and religious paths in his life, but his drive for systemization and synthesis seems to have been his own. His father, Jesper Swedberg (1653-1735), was a Lutheran priest with pietist leanings and a strong belief in the supernatural. He was ordained in 1683, was elevated to Dean of the Cathedral in Uppsala in 1693 and became the Bishop of Skara in 1702. While involved in various Church controversies, Bishop Swedberg is remembered for his contributions to education and for the many hymns that he wrote.

Swedenborg's mother, Sarah (1666-1696), was the modest and pious daughter of a wealthy mine owner, Albrecht Behm, whose family traced its lineage to King Gustav Vasa (1496-1560). The wealth that Sarah Behm brought to her marriage to Jesper

Swedberg in 1683 came in the form of a partial interest in several iron mines. Mining was therefore not a distant echo in Swedenborg's life, but a very practical and vital concern. It is not surprising that in his adult life he was drawn to develop expertise in this field.

Emanuel was one of Jesper and Sarah Swedberg's nine children. The children were ennobled in 1719 and at that time took the name of Swedenborg. Emanuel was third child and second son. In June of 1696 Swedenborg lost both his mother, Sarah, and his older brother, Albrecht, within a ten day period due to an epidemic. Swedberg married for a second time in 1697 to a kind and wealthy widow by the name of Sarah Bergia (1666-1720). No children were born of this marriage, but she was a warm and loving mother to Swedberg's seven remaining children. During his early formative years Swedenborg absorbed the religious atmosphere of his home. In later life, he wrote in a letter to Gabriel A. Beyer of Göteborg, 'From my fourth to my tenth year I was constantly engaged in thoughts upon God, salvation, and the spiritual diseases of men'.

Swedenborg matriculated at the University in 1699 at the age of eleven. Until that date, he had been tutored at home, where among other subjects he certainly learned Latin and perhaps Hebrew. At the time that Swedenborg became a student at Uppsala University the controversy between the conservative Aristotelian professors and the modernizing Cartesian ones had been decided by royal decree (1689) in favor of the Cartesians. The caveat was that Lutheran theology should remain untouched by the new approach. The Swedish scholar Inge Jonsson has interpreted this as a victory for the Aristotelians.

Nonetheless because Swedenborg chose to study with the Philosophy faculty, which at that time was also the umbrella discipline for the natural sciences, he most certainly absorbed the Cartesian perspective. Later in life, when Swedenborg develops his own philosophical system, he appears to draw on both Aristotle and Descartes, as well as the empirical sciences which he absorbed during his first trip to England.

During the years while Swedenborg was a student in Uppsala, a strong interest was evident among the faculty and students in the study of Hebrew and its application to Rabbinical texts. The only direct evidence of Swedenborg's connection to this golden age of scholarship is his signature on a thesis presented to the faculty in 1699 by Benedict Lund written under the direction of Johan Palmroot. It was entitled: *Lucos Hebraeorum & Veterum Gentilium*. Noting that Swedenborg



attended the university during this fertile period of Hebrew studies may be of particular interest to scholars with an interest in Swedenborg's knowledge of the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences]. Another possible link between Swedenborg and esoteric Judaism is his uncle, Eric Benzelius, who had a deep and abiding interest in "Orientalism". In 1716-1718 he published a two-volume work entitled *Notitiae Litterariae* which focuses on 'Res Judaeorum'. In Volume One, Chapter Six, he specifically touches on the Kabbalah and its foremost document the *Zohar*.

One year after Swedenborg graduated from the University in Uppsala, he sailed from Sweden to London, England: the center and frontier of natural science in the 18th century. He was intent on mastering mathematics and applied mechanics. During his stay he developed relationships with some of the leading scholars in Europe, such as the astronomers John Flamsteed (1646-1719) and Sir Edmund Halley (1656-1742). He worked for a while as an assistant to Flamsteed in Greenwich and then moved to Oxford in 1712 to learn from Halley. He also studied the new calculus of → Newton, but it is unclear whether he ever met him.

It would appear that it was during his first trip to England that he read Thomas Burnet's *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (1681). Inge Jonsson sees in this work the 'decisive stimulus' of Swedenborg's cosmology, although he suggests that Swedenborg's effort was much broader in scope. Burnet attempted to account for the creation of the earth, and used the classical myth of the world egg to do so. Swedenborg used the concept of 'how [the earth] lay *in ovo*' (257) in part III chapter IV of his *Principia* (1734). Swedenborg, however, does not refer to Burnet's work in any of his letters to Benzelius during his first stay in England.

He does refer to the work of a Dr. John Woodward (1665-1728) who was the author of a book entitled *A New Theory of the Earth* (1695) in which he attempted to give scientific proof of the scriptural account of the flood. He also refers to the work entitled *Astronomia* (1701) by David Gregory M.D., a Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. Swedenborg read this work during his first trip to England, perhaps while he was resident in Oxford. Gregory's work presents various theories of the motion of the planets developed by such philosophers as Kepler, Descartes, and Leibniz. Swedenborg made extensive use of Gregory's work in his *Principia*.

Swedenborg left England for the Continent toward the end of 1712, in pursuit of more sci-

entific knowledge and information. He also notes that he visited with Anton van Leeuwenhoek to learn more about his pioneering work utilizing a microscope. Swedenborg would later cite van Leeuwenhoek's observations in his own anatomical studies. From Leiden Swedenborg traveled to Utrecht and was resident in the city at the time of the Peace Congress in 1713. At the conclusion of the Congress, he pressed on to Paris carrying with him letters of introduction to important diplomatic and cultural personalities.

Once settled in Paris, he first met with Abbé Jean Paul Bignon (1662-1743), another correspondent of Erik Benzelius and a man of great learning and renown in France. Through him Swedenborg was introduced to the mathematician Paul Varignon (1654-1772) and the astronomer Phillipe de la Hire. He visited the Royal Library, attended the public meetings of the Royal Academy of Sciences, explored the bookstalls in search of works that would advance his interests, and was awed by his visit to Versailles. In fact, the gardens of Versailles appear to have encouraged him to write some Ovidian fables that he would publish just prior to his return to Sweden.

Swedenborg began his journey homeward in the spring of 1714. He stopped in The Hague for several weeks, and then went to Hanover with the hope of meeting Leibniz, who was unfortunately in Vienna at the time. He no doubt had a letter of introduction from Eric Benzelius, who had met Leibniz in 1696. Disappointed he traveled to Hamburg and then to Swedish Pomerania. He lived for a time in Rostock and while there sent his brother-in-law, Eric Benzelius, an inventory of inventions that had occurred to him during his travels. In a letter dated September 8, 1714 he wrote a list of fourteen items that include a submarine, a 'flying carriage', a siphon, sluices, pumps, and 'a method of conjuring the wills and affections of men's minds by means of analysis'.

He moved to Greifswalde a short time later in order to publish two works he had written during his trip abroad. It is noteworthy that both were literary efforts and not scientific or mathematical treatises. One was a collection of poems entitled *Ludus Heliconius* (1714) which he enlarged and reissued in Skara in 1716. The other was a collection of political allegories called *Camena Borea* (1715).

In November, while Swedenborg was engaged in these efforts and his usual studies, Charles XII suddenly arrived in Stralsund, Pomerania after a strenuous and lightening quick journey from Bender, incognito and accompanied by only two compan-

ions. To commemorate the Swedish King's heroic return from five years of semi-captivity in Turkey, and fourteen years of military adventures in Eastern Europe and Russia, Swedenborg wrote and published *Festivus Applausus* (1714/1715).

With the coming of the King, security in Swedish Pomerania deteriorated and just prior to the encirclement of Stralsund, by Danish, Saxon and Prussian troops seeking Charles, Swedenborg managed to secure passage home to Sweden on a yacht. After a five-year journey, he arrived back at his father's home, Brunsbo, in Skara in July of 1715. At the age of twenty-seven, finding gainful employment was the major task ahead of him. He had gone abroad to immerse himself in the practical sciences of his day. He had dreams of using science and technology to modernize Sweden. There were few positions in which he could accomplish those dreams in the traditional social structure of Sweden.

Upon his return home, initially Swedenborg seems to have wanted some sort of academic position, but as one was not forthcoming he turned his energy into creating another kind of position for himself. He became the editor and publisher of Sweden's first practical scientific journal called *Daedalus Hyperboreus*, and published six issues between 1716 and 1718. The publication of *Daedalus* brought Swedenborg into contact with two very significant Swedes, the inventor Christopher Polhem (1661-1751) and the King, Charles XII. *Daedalus* featured Polhem's inventions, which of course pleased the inventor. A job as Polhem's assistant quickly followed for Swedenborg. Early in 1716, Polhem was called to Lund by the King and he brought his assistant, Swedenborg, with him.

Swedenborg successfully organized the transport of the King's ships overland, to surprise the Norwegians at Fredrikshald, but became concerned about 'intrigues' and chose not to accompany the King to the siege of the Norwegian fort. The death of the King on November 30, 1718 affected the Swedish nation and Swedenborg's own fortunes. When Ulrika Eleonora ascended the throne, on March 17, 1719, the "Age of Freedom" came to Sweden. Two months later, on May 23, the Swedenborg children, along with the children of other Bishops, were ennobled by the Queen in order to strengthen her hand in two houses of the Riksdag – the Clergy and the Nobles. Swedenborg took his responsibilities as a member of the House of Nobles seriously and during his lifetime he wrote several memorials dealing with economic matters. *Modest Thought on the Fall and Rise of Swedish Money* was presented in 1722, and *The Balance of Trade* was submitted in 1723.

In 1716, Polhem had been instrumental in securing an appointment from the King for Swedenborg on the Board of Mines, as an extraordinary assessor. However, given the shift in the political climate after the death of Charles XII, it was not until 1724 that Swedenborg was actually seated on the Board in a paid position. The Board of Mines was the oversight agency for all the mines in Sweden. The position of assessor entailed the many administrative, technical and judicial responsibilities necessary in dealing with Sweden's most important industry.

In 1733, he asked for a leave of absence from the Board in order to go abroad to publish his first major work, *Opera Mineralia*. He published the three volumes in Dresden and Leipzig in 1734. The first volume contained his cosmology, and the second and third volumes were scientific studies of Iron and Steel, Copper and Brass.

In his cosmology he presented both a nebular hypothesis and an intriguing atomic theory of matter. His aim was to explain the origins of the universe using mathematical and mechanical principles. Put in other words, he wanted to explain the relationship between the Creator and the world of creation. Starting with Descartes' vortical theory, he postulated that the mathematical point underlies all natural particles, and that it follows geometrical rules. This indivisible point exists midway between the infinite (which created it), and the finite world of nature (of which it is the source). It is devoid of extension and is created by motion from the infinite. While not substantial, and therefore not subject to being put in motion, it contains within it a *conatus* or a tendency toward motion. The first point stands two-faced like Janus seeing both universes simultaneously. Endowed with the tendency toward motion, points give rise to aggregates that are progressively complex. The first finite is created out of this process, containing two tendencies: one toward equilibrium and the other toward disequilibrium. Elementary particles therefore are composed of both passive and active substances.

Believing that he adequately understood how the universe was created from the first natural point, in another shorter work that he also published in 1734, in Dresden and Leipzig, Swedenborg raised the question of the nature of the infinite and its relationship to the finite. The small book is entitled *Prodromus Philosophiae Rationcinantis de Infinito et Causa Finali Creationis; deque Mechanismo Operationis Animae et Corporis*. Drawing on his earlier effort in the *Principia*, in which he demonstrated that the entire universe is subject to

mechanical laws, in this new work he argued for the spatial extension of the soul. It was his belief that in this way atheism and materialism would be intellectually undermined.

While the *Principia* began with acknowledgement of the creator as the first cause of creation, and at the end of that work Swedenborg suggested that it is to the infinite that all creation must return, it is in *De Infinito* that he attempted to demonstrate both the existence of the creator and that the creator is the first and final cause of creation.

According to Martin Lamm (1915; 2000), Swedenborg's line of reasoning regarding the spatial extension of the soul resembles that of → Henry More and Andreas Rüdiger, among others. Lamm indicates that Swedenborg was familiar with both More and Rüdiger, and found in their work support for his own. His familiarity with Rüdiger is noted in an anonymous review of the *De Infinito* in *Acta Eruditorum* in 1735, which contains praise for Swedenborg's effort 'to explain the commerce of the soul and body by means of "physical influx"'. The review acknowledged, however, that some might find this characterization of the soul 'somewhat gross'.

In *De Infinito* Swedenborg also found it necessary to demonstrate why the role of human beings in nature should be examined at all. An exploration of the human place in creation would only be justified if human beings played a unique or discrete role in creation. He argued that since human beings resemble nature as to their body and organs, or as to means, if they are undifferentiated from the rest of nature as to ends as well, then the principles that explain the 'least of creation' would likewise explain the human – thus making any further examination of nature unnecessary.

In the same small work, Swedenborg also demonstrated to his own satisfaction that the human played a unique role in the relationship between the infinite and the finite, thus providing him with the philosophical foundation for his next major project – the charting of the soul's domain in the human body. The focus of this great effort, to which he devoted his tremendous energy over the next ten years, was 'to reveal the immortality of the soul to the very senses'; and it resulted in two works: *Oeconomia Regni Animalis* (Amsterdam 1740/1741; two volumes) and *Regnum Animale* (The Hague 1744/London 1745; three volumes). Swedenborg had published his first effort after five years of intense study, in which he sought to understand all the systems of the human body. For a time he did his own investigations, having learned dissection in order to do so. But he soon abandoned

this method, because he found that relying on his own observations blinded him to the worth of the findings of others.

In a manuscript written in the early 1740s, one sees that Swedenborg indeed relied on both anatomical and philosophical insights from countless others, in writing the *Oeconomia* and *Regnum Animale*. The manuscript in question has come to be known as *A Philosopher's Notebook*. It was translated and edited by Alfred Acton and published in 1931 by the Swedenborg Scientific Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In this notebook Swedenborg has copied quotations from the works of Aristotle, Plato, Rydelius, Leibniz, Malebranche, Descartes, Wolff, Grotius, Bilfinger, and Spinoza, among others. And in the quotations themselves one finds the names of over one hundred and fifty additional philosophers and writers. The notebook also has several hundred citations from the Bible.

Swedenborg commenced *Regnum Animale* because he was dissatisfied with his first attempt to find the principal cause through which the microcosm of the human body operated. This new effort was to be a seventeen-part work, but in the end he published only studies of the digestive system, the glands, the urinary system, the respiratory system, and the organs of taste, smell, and touch. Left in manuscript form and not published in this series were studies of the remaining senses, the reproductive system, and works entitled 'Rational Psychology,' and 'The Fiber'.

It is in an effort to trace the world of cause from the world of effect that Swedenborg elaborates his concept of representations and → correspondences. He had begun a discussion of correspondences in a short unpublished work entitled *Clavis Hieroglyphica*, written in 1741, and again picked up the theme in his *Philosopher's Notebook*, citing such philosophers as Plato, Malebranche and Bilfinger. The unpublished works are filled with examples, but finally in *Regnum Animale* he presents the concept of correspondences as a general principle or doctrine in which the physical world may be viewed as purely symbolic of the spiritual world.

## 2. SPIRITUAL CRISIS

It is during this same period, when Swedenborg was publishing what he hoped would be his *magnum opus*, that he experienced his life-altering spiritual crisis. The crisis began simply enough, with dreams that were sufficiently disturbing for Swedenborg to wake up and record them. He wrote them down in what was originally a travel diary, begun when he left Sweden in the summer of 1743,

on a journey to The Hague to publish his *Regnum Animale*. This private journal would remain unpublished until 1859, long after Swedenborg's death. At that time, 99 copies were produced by G.E. Klemming, entitled *Swedenborgs Drommer*. Altogether the journal contains 286 entries, with the first ten devoted solely to observations and events during his trip. It is perhaps the oldest and longest series of dreams ever recorded. Almost immediately Swedenborg began to interpret his dreams in addition to documenting them, and in March of 1744 he instituted a dating system for them. The dreams and experiences were revealing and intense. He believed that they were communications to him about his spiritual state of health. In one dream he is lying beside a pure woman, who he believes to be his guardian angel. He is told by her that he smells ill. This signaled the beginning of a period marked by fierce temptations. These, at times, brought him to the edge of despair. It is then, he wrote, that the real temptation began.

Over time his temptations began to alternate with experiences of blessedness. For example, on the night of April 6-7, the day after Easter, he heard a great thunder and was cast prostrate on the floor. In prayer he sensed the presence of Jesus Christ and he saw him face to face. Jesus asked him if he had a clean bill of health. Swedenborg replied, 'Lord, thou knowest better than I. 'Well do so', was the answer. This exchange appears to harken back to an incident in Swedenborg's youth, when he arrived in London for the first time in the spring of 1710. The ship he sailed on was quarantined due to the presence of bubonic plague in Sweden, the country of inbarkation. London officials made it clear that no one was to leave the ship. Nonetheless Swedenborg was enticed by young friends already in London to come ashore. He was discovered by the authorities and would have been hanged without some intervention on his behalf because he had no "clean bill of health".

It is not until October that the states of temptation subsided, leaving Swedenborg with a deep sense of peace and a feeling of innocence. Included in the entries for October 26-27 is one that contains Christ's admonition to Swedenborg not to undertake anything without him. Save for a few questionably dated notes written perhaps six months later in May of 1745, Swedenborg's personal dream journal comes to a close in the fall of 1744. Although he continued to see the third volume of *Regnum Animale* through the press, after this last dream experience the larger project itself, of which that work was only a small part, was abandoned.

### 3. VISIONARY PERIOD

Swedenborg was seeking direction, and his next effort can be viewed as an offertory to God. While still in London, early in 1745, he published the first two parts of *De Cultu et Amore Dei*. It is a charming prose poem in which science and mythology are blended to tell the story of creation and of the life of the first couple in paradise. The work draws on Swedenborg's cosmological and psychological studies in the *Principia* and in the *Soul's Kingdom* series. Shortly after publishing the first two parts of *De Cultu et Amore Dei*, Swedenborg returned to Sweden and re-immersed himself in the study of Hebrew in order to read the Old Testament in its original language.

Ever since 1724, Swedenborg had faithfully attended to his duties on the Board of Mines, and he had become a highly respected member. In 1747, he was appointed to fill the position of President by unanimous vote. He declined the honor, however, and asked to be relieved of all his duties on the Board so that he might devote himself to 'an important work' which he now had in hand. That important work was the *Arcana Coelestia*.

Over the next three years Swedenborg attempted three additional interpretations of the creation story before he published the first volume of his *Arcana Coelestia* in London in 1749. After *De Cultu et Amore Dei*, the second attempt was a small work written in 1745 entitled *The History of Creation as given by Moses*. It is a work of only forty-three numbered paragraphs and it covers only the first three chapters of Genesis. The third attempt has been called *Adversaria in Libros Veteris Testamenti* or *The Word Explained* and was written in four volumes between 1746-1747. The fourth effort has been labeled the *Index Biblicus*. It is a work in several volumes that has never been published in a critical Latin edition. A portion of its contents have been taken from the manuscript, translated and rearranged in a work entitled *The Schmidius Marginalia together with The Expository Material of The Index Biblicus*. It was edited by E.E. Iungerich and published in 1917 by the Academy of the New Church.

What is significant about these three interpretations after *De Cultu* is that they document Swedenborg's unfolding understanding of the sacred story of creation, now specifically located in the book of Genesis, and what sources and methods he discovered were relevant in his attempt to uncover its deeper or hidden meaning. In *De Cultu et Amore Dei*, natural science provides the framework, and reason provides the standard of truth, whereas in the these next three unpublished works

Scripture becomes the source of truth. This is clear in what Swedenborg writes in # 19 of *The History of Creation*: ‘whatever does not absolutely agree with things revealed must be pronounced wholly false’.

These works also demonstrate a dramatic change in style, compared to his philosophical works, and a change in terminology particularly with reference to God, as Swedenborg attempts to understand his true essence. The Supreme Being of *De Cultu* becomes Jehovah God in *The History of Creation*, and God Messiah in the *Adversaria* and in the *Index Biblicus*. However, in the edited version of the *Index Biblicus*, he also declared that Jesus Christ is the very entrance to all of holy scripture.

In the *Arcana Coelestia*, the God Messiah of the *Adversaria* becomes the Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the world. God is one, and Swedenborg rejects traditional understandings of the Trinity: ‘These three Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the three essentials of one God, and they make one as soul, body, and operation make one in man’ (*Arcana Coelestia* # 163:2). While Inge Jonsson writes that ‘Those who want to understand the fundamentals of his [Swedenborg’s] system should devote greater attention to his activities as a scientist than to his theosophical period’ (1999, 21) the reader clearly will not understand the particulars of Swedenborg’s theology from his science. While his science provides an indispensable foundation and framework for his theology, Swedenborg refined his understanding of God as well as other important concepts in his study of scripture – not through his cosmology or his physiology and psychology.

The publication of the first of the eight volumes of the *Arcana* in London in 1749 marked the beginning of Swedenborg’s career as a theologian and revelator. In this work he gives a line-by-line and often word-by-word interpretation of the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus* as well as inter-chapter material which he claimed were drawn from his experiences in the spiritual world. During the next twenty-two years he published works on a wide range of theological topics.

Although in agreement with many Christian teachings and practices, Swedenborg called his theology a new Christianity. It contains a radical and rational Christian message. In the first paragraph of the *Arcana*, the reader is told that ‘the mere letter of the Word of the Old Testament . . . contains deep secrets of heaven, and everything within it both in general and in particular bears reference to the Lord, to his heaven, to the church, to religious belief, and to all things connected with them’. In

# 508 of his last work, *Vera Christiana Religio*, it is stated that ‘now it is permitted to enter into the mysteries of faith with understanding’. Furthermore he claimed that the much feared and long-awaited Last Judgment foretold in Revelation was in fact a spiritual event that took place in 1757. The judgment was spiritual and not natural, according to Swedenborg because the Word itself is internally and therefore essentially a document that addresses spiritual matters. ‘The new heaven and the new earth’, that are to be established according to the book of Revelation, is the new church, both in the heavens and on the earth. Swedenborg made clear in his works that the Second Coming, was now at hand. It does not refer to a physical coming of the Lord a second time, but points to the coming of the Lord now fully revealed in the spiritual sense of the Word. The Second Coming is, therefore, a spiritual event that may now take place in the heart of every individual who acknowledges the Lord made fully visible in *Vera Christiana Religio*.

Swedenborg claimed that the Judgment of Christianity resulted from the fatal separation of faith and charity within all the Christian churches of his day, which left them spiritually dead. This separation was the result of their longstanding and fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the Trinity, and thus of the act of redemption and the means of salvation. If God is one in essence and person, and that essence is divine love and wisdom, then the traditional understanding of the passion of the cross among Christians no longer makes sense. Traditionally, the angry Father sent his only begotten Son, Jesus, into the world to atone for the sins of the human race by his fulfilling the law and suffering on the cross. But according to Swedenborg, in his *Doctrina Hierosolymae de Domino* (Amsterdam 1763) ‘the Lord came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify his human, and the passion of the cross was the final combat whereby he fully conquered the hells and fully glorified his human’. In Swedenborg’s understanding of the Trinity the Soul of the Father through the Holy Spirit provided Jesus with the infinite love and the divine means to subject the hells he has assumed within himself by taking on the body through Mary. In this way he restored human freedom in spiritual things. The merit of Christ is not something that can be borrowed at the moment of death, but rather, is a power that everyone can call on when faced with one’s own spiritual temptations in life. The Lord gives eternal spiritual life to everyone whose choices over a life-time indicate a true desire for salvation. However, for those who freely choose the evil in their heart and do not seek to



mend their ways in life, Christ's merit does not magically save them in death.

Swedenborg emphasizes in his extensive and detailed descriptions of the spiritual world, that we create and choose our own heaven or our own hell after death. By the choices we make in life, we bring with us the texture, color, shape, form and substance of our spiritual life. For those who subdue their love of self and the world, in order to usefully serve the Lord and the neighbor, the joys of heavenly life await. For those who indulged their love of self and the world and who inwardly despise the Lord, the neighbor and useful service, a frustrating life in hell unfolds. In Swedenborg's view true happiness abounds in heaven because life there corresponds to and is filled with love and wisdom from the Lord. The social consequences of good loves are harmony and beauty. While those who live in hell may love it, the social consequences of their evil and competing desires are constant conflict, mutual torment, and ugliness. In the presence of angels, hellish environments appear dark, rocky, and barren and smell dank and putrid. However, because those in hell love it, it seems beautiful to their mind's eye.

Swedenborg states that heaven is built in the cooperative form of what he calls the "Grand Man", where everyone contributes to the life of the whole, and where the whole, infused with the heat and light of God's love and wisdom, nurtures everyone. Heaven is based on the marriage of good and truth, and married couples form one angel and together make the smallest heavenly society. Hell, on the other hand, whether more or less diabolical, is based upon the love of dominion. Every resident in hell sees him- or herself as the center deserving all honor, all obedience, all pleasure and all things. Hell provides as much satisfaction as possible to those who live there, given the fact that everyone there wants, schemes, and plots to have it all alone.

Swedenborg's theological works employ the concepts outlined above to construct a new religious worldview. He continued laboring to reveal its form and substance during the last third of his life. Although he began his project in anonymity, an event in 1759 revealed him to be the author of these strange and wonderful books. Swedenborg was staying in Göteborg on the West Coast of Sweden in July, having just returned from a year-long trip to London where he had published five separate theological works, including *Heaven and Hell* and *The Last Judgment*. While dining at the home of William Castel on the 19th, he had a clairvoyant experience of seeing a fire raging through Stockholm over three hundred miles away. He reported

the progress of the fire to his dinner companions, and was relieved when the fire stopped before it reached his own house. The next day he was called to the provincial governor's house to give a detailed description of what he had seen. On July 21st a messenger arrived from Stockholm with a letter reporting the disaster, which coincided exactly with the account given by Swedenborg. Before long the story was circulating both in Sweden and abroad, arousing great curiosity. This and other stories of Swedenborg's extraordinary powers gradually led people to associate his name with the anonymous theological volumes published in London and Amsterdam.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was one of those who became curious about Swedenborg because of his reported clairvoyant experiences. A Fraülein von Knobloch had written to him seeking an explanation concerning the remarkable stories circulating about Swedenborg. After some inquiries, Kant wrote to her and gave her an essentially favorable report about Swedenborg's character. He also purchased the eight volumes of the *Arcana* and read them. However, in 1766 Kant published his *Traüme eines Geistersehers*, a satire on Swedenborg and his spiritual experiences and philosophy, in which he criticized Swedenborg's work as an example of the "dreams of metaphysics" generally. Kant sent Moses Mendelsohn a copy of the book, eager for his comments. Mendelsohn was particularly critical of its tone. In response Kant wrote, 'I had to rid myself of my suspected knowledge of all these anecdotes'. This was necessary, according to a small but important scholarly tradition, because Kant feared that others would wonder whether his own philosophy was tainted with metaphysical dreams. Kant's text was published anonymously, but eventually his authorship became known, and as his fame spread in the years following, the mere fact that he had critiqued Swedenborg had a detrimental effect on Swedenborg's reputation.

Swedenborg continued to write and publish new works throughout the 1760s, traveling when necessary to publish his works outside of Sweden, so as to avoid censorship. Toward the end of the decade, two Lutheran priests in Göteborg became convinced of the truth of the ideas they found in his books, and began to use them in their teaching at the gymnasium and in sermons. As a result, they were removed from the theological faculty, although they were permitted to continue teaching Latin and Hebrew. In the fall of 1769, they were charged with heresy, and tried before the Consistory. The findings were inconclusive and the case was sent to Stockholm for resolution. Although

there was some talk of bringing charges against Swedenborg himself, he had many friends in the highest circles in Sweden, so the charges were never brought.

In July 1770, Swedenborg set sail from Sweden for the last time, with his manuscript of *Vera Christiana Religio* in hand. During the next year he saw the work through the press in Amsterdam. Upon its publication, he traveled to London, also for the last time. In December he suffered a stroke, and although he partially recovered, he remained essentially bed ridden. During this period he received word that John Wesley would like to talk with him, but he died on March 29, 1772, before a meeting could take place. On two occasions prior to his death, Swedenborg was asked whether what he had written was true, and he is reported to have replied, 'I have written nothing but the truth, and could have said more, if it had been permitted'.

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JANE WILLIAMS-HOGAN

## Swedenborgian traditions

→ Swedenborg never tried to establish any kind of esoteric or religious organization during his lifetime: what he left behind were his writings, his message regarding the inner meaning of the Holy Scriptures and the coming of a new Christianity. However, already during his life, his work had found some enthusiastic readers; consequently, it is not surprising that some of them attempted to establish groups based upon Swedenborg's teachings as they understood them. The most enduring organizations have been church-like groups, usu-

ally calling themselves "New Church" or "Church of the New Jerusalem". Indeed, according to Swedenborg, the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation means the New Church, which succeeds the Christian Church and is established by means of Swedenborg's revelations. Consequently, dealing with Swedenborgian traditions leads one to pay attention to small religious groups and a variety of associations related to them and founded for the purpose of spreading what the Swedenborgians call "the Writings" (with a capital "W"), i.e. the theological works of Swedenborg.

Probably the first organized effort to make those works more widely known was the creation of the "Society for printing, publishing and circulating the Writings of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg" in Manchester in 1782. The key figure in that undertaking was Rev. John Clowes (1743-1831), Rector of St. John's Church in the same city. A minister of the Church of England, Clowes remained in that ecclesiastical position to the end of his life, while translating many of Swedenborg's works and openly preaching New Church doctrines from his pulpit. Clowes felt that the newly revealed doctrines were bound to influence the existing Churches and that he could use his position for spreading them more effectively than if he would have severed his affiliation with the Church of England. Contrary to the path which others would follow, he did not feel the need for a separate church organization. In this way, from the very beginning of the Swedenborgian movement, there was a "non-separatist" tendency, even if it rarely found organized expression. To this day, there are people who remain affiliated with other religious bodies (or with none) while accepting Swedenborg's message entirely or in part. Interesting also was the emphasis put from the beginning upon publishing "the Writings". Swedenborgian recordkeepers used to be eager to proclaim impressive numbers of published books and translations in various languages. To a large extent, however, these numbers were not the result of a heavy demand from a wide audience (even if titles such as *Heaven and Hell* have always tended to sell quite well, due to the nature of the subject), but of organized missionary efforts combined with the dedication of a few, able, and persevering editors and translators.

Similar attempts to promote and distribute Swedenborg's works took place in Scandinavia. In 1786, the Exegetic and Philanthropic Society was founded in Sweden. Several of its members belonged to the nobility, and even the brother of the King became a member. The Society wanted to preserve and publish Swedenborg's writings, but the

interests of its members were not confined to Swedenborg; they were also strongly attracted to → animal magnetism, and a few of them were interested in → alchemy. It is striking to observe how Mesmerism actually had a strong influence on a number of early Swedenborgians, even during the 19th century. → Jean-François-Etienne Le Boys des Guays (1794-1864), who became the indefatigable translator and promoter of the New Church doctrines in French-speaking countries, was strongly involved in magnetism at the time he discovered Swedenborg. In any case, after its initial successes, the Exegetic and Philanthropic Society had trouble, due in part to the failure of the gold-making schemes of some of its founders, and it was disbanded in 1789. Subsequently and in a more discrete way, another society, Pro Fide et Charitate, was organized in Sweden in 1796 in order to continue the publication of Swedenborg's works. It survived until the 1820s, and it was not before 1871 that a New Church group was granted official recognition by the Swedish government.

Due in part to the greater freedom granted to “non conformist” religious groups, it was not in a Nordic country, but in the United Kingdom that the New Church as an organization was born. In 1783-1784, a few individual readers of the writings of Swedenborg began to meet regularly and soon took the name of ‘The Theosophical Society, instituted for the purpose of promoting the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem, by translating, printing, and publishing the Theological Writings of the Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg’. Some of the people who participated in the meetings of the “Theosophical Society” were not satisfied with attending religious services presided over by ministers who believed in the New Church message but remained members of the Established Church. These “separatists” were not convinced by the arguments of those ministers, that the “Heavenly Doctrines” would in this way gradually and insensibly permeate the Church of England. Consequently, they decided that it was time to establish public worship. They met in July 1787 ‘for the purpose of forming, by the Divine Mercy of the Lord, the New Church upon earth’ and for the first time celebrated Holy Supper as well as New Church baptisms. In 1788 they opened a chapel in London and adopted the denomination of “The New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem in the Revelation”. It is important to realize that a number of participants came from Methodist or Dissenting religious backgrounds. Actually, no less than six Methodist preachers joined the nascent New Church. As several historians have correctly

observed, the familiarity with Protestant Nonconformity played a decisive role in the emergence of the New Church as an independent organization. The first General Conference took place in 1789. The organized General Conference of the New Church still exists today, along with other church organizations (the most important other ones being headquartered in the United States). Organized Swedenborgianism manifests itself to this day through those religious denominations as well as through associations devoted to publishing and spreading the message, such as the Swedenborg Society in London (founded in 1810) and the Swedenborg Foundation in the United States (founded in 1849 as the American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, which changed to its current name in 1928).

While Swedenborgianism thus took the form of religious denominations in the English-speaking countries, ‘French and German interest in Swedenborg had arisen mostly among speculative Freemasons and students of the occult’ (Lineham). In the formative years of the Swedenborgian movement, religious believers and seekers of a secret spiritual knowledge interacted quite extensively. The French → *Illuminés d’Avignon* gathered around → Dom Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716-1796), who translated elegantly, but not very faithfully, some of Swedenborg's writings. In 1786, Pernety sent an emissary to the English Swedenborgians. He tried to impress them, giving them to understand ‘that he and his society were in possession of some grand secret, which he was not then at liberty to divulge, because the time proper for its disclosure had not yet arrived’ (Hindmarsh). But the English Swedenborgians in the end were not very impressed and the relations with the Society in Avignon were soon discontinued.

It should not be assumed that all British Swedenborgians were immune to occult interests, however. Although the name of the distinguished soldier is not even mentioned in Hindmarsh's history of early Swedenborgianism, Lineham indicates that one of the early members of the Society in London was General Charles Rainsford (1728-1809). Rainsford was well-known for his interest in alchemy, → Rosicrucianism and → Freemasonry, and was also the translator of at least one of → Robert Fludd's treatises into English. In addition, some of the apostles of Swedenborgianism, well-known for their contribution to the cause, were active Freemasons. A French surgeon resident in London, Bénédict Chastanier (1739-1816?), was among the early followers who devoted much zeal to spreading the cause of the New Church and at the same



time made no secret of his masonic involvement. For a long time, there have been unconfirmed rumours according to which, as early as 1767, before he left France, Chastanier had already formed a Lodge of “Theosophical Illuminati” (*Illuminés théosophes*), sympathetic to the ideas of the New Jerusalem. This would then still have been during Swedenborg’s lifetime. In October 1935, the magazine *Theosophy* presented Chastanier and his alleged Lodge as one of the precursors of → H.P. Blavatsky’s mission. Unless documentary evidence appears, however, the existence of a Swedenborgian inclined lodge at such an early period must be considered with much caution and skepticism. On the other hand, it is true that Chastanier published in 1787 a project for a Swedenborgian periodical (‘Plan d’un Journal Novi-Jérusalémite’), which he addressed to ‘all the lovers of the Truth who have already tasted it in the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as well as to all the Freemasons who currently are seriously looking after it’. Obviously, Chastanier saw Swedenborg’s revelations as opening the way to a deeper understanding of spiritual truths. This was confirmed later in the address presenting his project, in which he stated that Freemasons only know the external symbols, while Swedenborg would open to them the understanding of their internal meaning.

It is not surprising that there were other important early followers of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem who were also Freemasons. One example is J.P. Moët (1721-1807), Royal Librarian at Versailles, who was the first to translate the entire theological work of Swedenborg into French (part of it would be published after his death). But was Swedenborg himself a Freemason? There have been authors who claim it. In its October 27, 1869 issue, the American New Church periodical, *New Jerusalem Messenger*, printed the translation of a document provided by a leading Freemason in Lund (Sweden), according to which Swedenborg had been initiated in London in 1706. But, as Tafel observed, the problem is that Swedenborg did not travel to England until 1710, and none of the attempts to explain this discrepancy in the dates has been very convincing. While claims still circulate that Swedenborg became a Freemason, no conclusive evidence has been presented that he was one.

Of more interest to us are the later references to Swedenborg in some Masonic circles. While it is not at all clear that Chastanier practiced a Swedenborgian rite, later there were attempts to establish such a rite. In 1870, Samuel Beswick (1822-1903) published in New York a book under the title:

*Swedenborg Rite and the Great Masonic Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*. The volume not only claimed to summarize Swedenborg’s Masonic contacts during his travel and to give indications about the activities of a Swedenborgian rite during the late 18th century; it also stated that, ‘[i]n the year 1859, a number of Swedenborgians who had taken the higher degrees were initiated into the Swedenborgian degrees’ in the United States. It further stated that the Swedenborgian Rite was now called ‘the Primitive and Original Rite of Symbolic Freemasons’, consisting of six degrees. The first three were the common degrees of the York Rite, and the other three formed the Swedenborgian Rite proper. According to Beswick, all the higher officers of the Order were Swedenborgians, although it was also open to non members of the New Church. Beswick himself came from a Swedenborgian family in the United Kingdom and was ordained a New Church minister in the United States, although during his life he had turbulent and tense relations with Swedenborgian religious denominations. Regarding the Swedenborgian Rite and its rebirth, however, Beswick’s report seems exaggerated, as R.A. Gilbert’s research has shown. But Beswick managed to recruit a few members for his Swedenborgian Rite in the United States and Canada. It also spread to the United Kingdom, but ceased to exist in the early 20th century, although one cannot rule out the possibility of a revival somewhere in some form. The assertion by a Swedenborgian author that ‘the Writings [of Swedenborg] have exercised a considerable influence on that Ancient and Honorable Fraternity’ (*New Philosophy*, October 1977, 148) seems overstated.

As Robert Kenneth Jones has observed, the Swedenborgian movement is at variance with the prevailing culture, while at the same time accommodating itself to it. Due to the nature of Swedenborg’s ideas and to his claim to have been chosen to inaugurate a new Christianity, there have always been interactions between Swedenborgians and the “cultic milieu” (as defined by sociologist Colin Campbell). Not only were Swedenborgians obviously open to ideas considered as unorthodox in their times, they were also deeply convinced that the influx of the New Dispensation would be felt more and more in the entire world, well beyond the borders of New Church societies (this is the so-called “permeation theory”, which for a long time remained quite popular with some sections of the New Church). Thus they would be receptive to new trends and movements. Even if this may seem quite puzzling today, there was a wave of enthusiasm for Fourierism in some Swedenborgian circles in the



1840s. Much more of a challenge, however, was the phenomenon of → Spiritualism. Since Swedenborg had claimed to have gained access to the spiritual world, would not other people be able to do the same? Spiritualism was attractive to some Swedenborgians, but in the eyes of those who claimed to be “orthodox” New Church members, it rather presented a serious threat. The uniqueness of Swedenborg’s revelations could become diluted among a proliferation of other channels; in addition, in some messages allegedly received by mediums from Swedenborg himself, the latter sometimes “corrected” his earlier teachings upon the basis of new knowledge supposedly acquired after death! For instance, Swedenborg supposedly communicated by automatic writing to James E. Padgett (1852-1923) that he – Swedenborg – had been ‘a failure’ because ‘I prevented, by my preconceived ideas of what the truth should be, the real and pure truth from coming to me and thence to humanity’. Obviously, Padgett himself was expected to do better! Such messages could hardly have delighted true Swedenborgians, and many members of the New Church were actually quite suspicious of people claiming to communicate with the spiritual world; in their eyes, Swedenborg’s revelations had an authority which those later “channels” could not match.

In more recent years, the → New Age has been attractive to some Swedenborgians, but it has also led some scholars (especially German theologians) to look for its roots and to conclude that Swedenborg played a key historical role. For instance, Hans-Jürgen Ruppert has observed that Swedenborg not only influenced various figures of the New Age movement, but that some of his teachings correspond more or less (according to Ruppert) to the core idea of New Age itself: the passage from the Christian era to a new dispensation. Thus Swedenborg provided the earliest pattern (*Ur-Modell*) for alternative religious groups. Similarly, British New Church minister Michael W. Stanley estimates that Swedenborg ‘should be seen as the Father of the New Age’, beyond the external appearances of writings ‘colored by the . . . thought forms and jargon of the eighteenth century’. This opinion is subject to debate: although it cannot be denied that elements of Swedenborg’s message have become part of the multifaceted cultic milieu, it is somewhat difficult to identify Swedenborg’s specific and direct influence. His name is sometimes quoted, but mixed with many others – and mainly by people who obviously have never seriously read his writings. Moreover, while the New Age is post-Christian, Swedenborg remains very strongly

Christocentric. From the perspective of the history of religions, the Swedenborgian impulse has provided elements to alternative religious strains, but this has not prevented Swedenborg and the New Church from remaining within the sphere of Christianity. The way in which much organized Swedenborgianism has tended to cling to the external forms inherited from Christian culture may constitute a significant indication.

Swedenborg can be claimed as a precursor or a prophet by people of diverse orientations, and his writings can also be understood in different ways. However, if we examine Swedenborgian traditions in their organized and lasting forms, we encounter primarily small religious denominations, not esoteric societies. It is true that some members of the smallest of those denominations, The Lord’s New Church (see below), have in recent years attempted to present the doctrines of the New Jerusalem as “Esoteric Christianity”. But for them, the term “esoteric” refers to a non-literalist, or symbolic, approach; they do not understand it in the sense of esoteric knowledge reserved for a small elite. According to this perspective, ‘Esoteric Christianity looks beyond what is external into what is internal’ and ‘The theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are among the finest examples of Esoteric Christianity ever given to the world’. This is an interesting, but apparently still isolated attempt among New Church organizations.

Statistically, Swedenborgianism belongs to the smaller traditions of Christianity, and several of its branches have decreased (or only experienced a rather modest growth) over the past decades. While nobody knows exactly how many New Church members there are around the world, estimates numbering them around 30.000 worldwide seem realistic (although there are some figures going up to 50.000 and more). The largest group of Swedenborgians is currently found among black South Africans, and may be 15.000 members strong (note that Swedenborg’s writings took a quite positive approach toward Africans). As already mentioned, the General Conference of the New Church is the oldest existing organization, with less than 1500 members. In the United States, the Swedenborgian Church of North America (formerly called the General Convention of the New Jerusalem), organized in Philadelphia in 1817, currently claims around 2.000 members. The General Church of the New Jerusalem, with a worldwide membership that is slowly increasing (now 14.000 members), broke from the Convention in the late 19th century. It is headquartered in Bryn Athyn (Pennsylvania), not far from Philadelphia, a borough which has

a majority of Swedenborgian residents and only Swedenborgian schools. The General Church always emphasized the importance of a distinct New Church education for the future of the movement, so that children could 'be kept in the church sphere until they can think for themselves': 'The true field of evangelization is with the children of New Church parents'. The smallest Swedenborgian denomination with headquarters in the United States, the Lord's New Church which is the New Jerusalem (often simply called "Nova Hierosolyma"), is the result of a schism from the General Church over doctrinal issues in 1937 and has its headquarters in Bryn Athyn as well, but it does not gather more than a few hundreds followers worldwide. In addition to those main church organizations, there is a variety of church groups (usually small, except in Africa) in European countries and other parts of the world: the New Church is even present in places such as Korea, Japan and Sri Lanka. Most of the groups outside of America feel a special affinity with the doctrinal orientation of one of the three religious bodies headquartered in the United States, and sometimes get support from one of them. The story of the New Church and its pioneers in each country cannot be summarized here – and the impact of Swedenborg's works has quite often gone beyond those small groups, influencing to some extent authors, philosophers or artists. Although some of them have occasionally misunderstood Swedenborg, they have contributed to his fame.

The issues which led to separations among the religious bodies identifying with the New Church have been related to both doctrinal and organizational questions. For instance, both the General Conference and the Swedenborgian Church (formerly General Convention) developed a structure of a congregational type, while the General Church insisted upon the role of the priesthood and the implementation of an episcopal structure. In addition, while the Swedenborgian Church is a member of an ecumenical body such as the National Council of the Churches in the U.S.A., the General Church emphasizes the distinctiveness of the New Church, which succeeds the old Christian Church and has to be kept separate from it. The occasional heated debates not only concern the structure of the Church but also deal with some specific issues of the faith. Most of these are too specific and would require too much space to be discussed here, but some even touch on questions such as vaccination and other medical practices.

One of the most essential differences of opinion among Swedenborgians concerns the extent to

which Swedenborg's writings must be considered as authoritative. This has been a question discussed since the early times of the Swedenborgian movement. Members of the General Conference and the Convention usually believe that Swedenborg's writings contain divine truths indeed, but would not define them as an additional Scripture: the writings illuminate and explain the meaning of the Old and New Testaments, and offer a doctrinal foundation for the Church. According to the beliefs of the General Church, however, Swedenborg's writings are fully authoritative. Not only do they explain the internal sense of the Old and New Testaments, but they should be accepted as Sacred Scriptures revealed by the Lord. Finally, the Lord's New Church considers the theological work of Swedenborg as the Third Testament in the fullest sense of the word, i.e. to the extent that it contains an internal sense which can be drawn out of it. It is a complete revelation in itself, and not just the doctrine of the Church or the inspired explanation of the deep meaning of the Old and New Testaments.

Despite differences, Swedenborgian denominations cooperate when it comes to the publication of Swedenborg's writings. As already mentioned, the amount of printed material published by Swedenborgians has always been quite impressive compared to their numerical strength, and the theological works of Swedenborg continue to be republished, or published in new translations. For instance, recently the Swedenborg Foundation has launched a New Century Edition in English. The wide circulation of those books has no doubt contributed to the impact of Swedenborg; independent of the increase or decrease of particular Swedenborgian groups, their continual publication will ensure that interest in Swedenborg can remain alive and, perhaps, will even give rise to new branches of the Swedenborgian tradition.

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JEAN-FRANÇOIS MAYER

## Tarot

Card games in general and tarot cards in particular, like children’s and adult’ games, make a particularly strong appeal to the symbolic → imagination. Whereas the standard pack of cards has been able to serve as a tool for divination [→ Divinatory Arts] mainly by combining the interpretation of signs with chance procedures, tarot cards have added to this function the desire to tap the secrets of the gods, by including a system of references and symbolic connections of an esoteric type, correlated with the planets and the cosmic hierarchies. The introduction of card games in Western culture can be traced back no further than to 1375 Florence, where Nicola della Tuccia (*Chronicle of Viterbo*, 1379) ascribed to them an Oriental origin under their initial name, *naibe*. However, all the

images of these initial cards have been lost, and the same is true of the rules of the game. The cards that circulated in Germany and Italy around the beginning of the 15th century bore figures reflecting the culture and social problems of the time, and they multiplied rapidly thanks to the progress in the art of engraving; the “tarocchi” ascribed to Mantegna (1460) fall into this category. Given this context, the hypothesis according to which the tarot has an ancient Egyptian origin can be relegated to the realm of fiction. Moreover, the first elements of a divinatory and esoteric interpretation of the tarot do not seem to have appeared before the 18th century, particularly in France, after the number of cards and the figures on them had become sufficiently standardized.

The so-called “Tarot of Marseille” (actually of Italian origin), around which → Antoine Court de Gébelin formed his “Egyptian” interpretations in *Le monde primitif* (1781), has 22 cards, like all the other games. They are known as the “major arcana” or as “trumps” (derived from “triumphs”), and go from “Juggler” to “Fool”, with the “Emperor” and “Empress”, the “Hermit”, the “Pope”, the “Popess”, the “Hanged Man”, etc., in between. Each card carries an inscription, a sequential number, and more or less fixed colors in which blue and red predominate, though there are important variations from one game to the other. The Pope and the Popess are often replaced by Jupiter and Juno, the Juggler by the Magus, etc. The pack is completed by 56 common cards or minor arcana (53 in French games), divided into four suits: Swords, Cups, Wands (or Scepters), and Coins (or Pentacles), each numbered from 1 to 10 plus the court cards Page, Knight, Queen, and King. In English and French the game is called tarot; in German and Dutch *Tarock* or *Tarok*, derived from the Italian *tarocchi*; Spanish has retained a name close to the original, *naipes*.

Court de Gébelin, in the spirit of the → Egyptomania of his time, attributed the paternity of the tarot to the god Thoth/Hermes [→ Hermes Trismegistus], interpreting the game as a hidden text, a *mutus liber* (silent book) similar in nature to the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This hypothesis was circulated in the masonic community to which Court de Gébelin belonged, thanks to Alliette (→ Etteilla), a Parisian cartomancer and Grand Magus of the lodge of “The Perfect Initiates of Egypt”, who two years later published a *Maniere de se récréer avec le jeu de cartes nommées tarots* (Manner of Recreating Oneself with the Card Game Known as Tarot; see Bibliography). Alliette here revealed the true meaning of the game as a veritable synthesis of pri-

mordial knowledge, thanks to some modifications that he made of the figures. A secret society of the “Interpreters of the Book of Thoth” was founded in 1790.

It fell to the occultist [→ occult / occultism] → Eliphas Lévi to construct the most complete system of tarot in his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (1856), by making of divination the secret of secrets. His argument included a historical dimension, according to which the *Ars Magna* of → Ramon Llull had actually been a cryptic commentary on the tarot. The decisive argument, for Lévi, was provided by → Guillaume Postel, whose *Clef des choses cachées depuis la constitution du monde* (Key to Things Hidden since the Constitution of the World, 1546) contained an illustration of a key ornamented with geometric designs and accompanied by an inscription that could be read as R O T A in one direction and T A R O in the other. These were two quite arbitrary interpretations, especially since the passage of Postel concerns an interpolation in the Franckenberg edition (Amsterdam 1646). Lévi adopted Alliette’s assertions wholesale, but relativized them by claiming that while Alliette had presented the truth, he, Lévi, had finally unveiled it by re-establishing the symbolic → correspondences in their precise meaning. ‘The tarot, this miraculous book, inspiration of all the sacred books of the ancient peoples, is, because of the analogical precision of its figures and numbers, the most perfect instrument of divination, which can be used with complete confidence’ (*Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, vol. 1, ch. 10). In a later work, *La clef des grands mystères*, Lévi analyzed the symbolism of numbers with reference to the cards, but for unknown reasons stopped at 19, although stating that the sacred language (Hebrew) had 22 letters. The occultists followed in Lévi’s footsteps. → Stanislas de Guaita planned his series of works forming *Le serpent de la Genèse* (1891-1897) in three volumes – I. *Le temple de Satan*, II. *La clef de la magie noire*, III. *Le problème du mal* – with seven chapters in each volume in the order of the cards (the 22nd, the World, serving as a conclusion). Guaita was preceded by Paul Christian (ps. of Christian Pitois) in *L’Homme rouge des Tuileries* (The Red Man of the Tuileries; 1863). → Papus (Gérard Encausse), brilliant popularizer of the great themes of *fin de siècle* occultism, followed with many references scattered throughout his oeuvre and two entire works dedicated to an interpretive synthesis: *Le tarot des Bohémiens* (The Tarot of the Bohemians/Gypsies, 1889, reissued in 1911) and *Le tarot divinatoire* (The Divinatory Tarot, 1909). He reworked and classified the labors of his

predecessors, stressing the cryptic aspect of this primordial revelation: a veritable Bible for the “Bohemians” and preserved in popular traditions, albeit confusing good and evil, the fall and “reintegration” of man. The concordance with the *Archéomètre* (1910) of → Saint-Yves d’Alveydre, who had supposedly reconstituted the primordial language, showed that the universal key to symbolism could indeed be found in the secrets of the tarot. Some Freemasons were also concerned with the interpretation of the game; one example is Oswald Wirth (1860-1943), former secretary to Guaita and renovator of the symbolism of French → Freemasonry, who published *Le tarot des imagiers du Moyen Age* (The Tarot of the Medieval Artists) in 1926. These speculations crossed the English Channel at the end of the 19th century with → Arthur Waite, a disciple of Lévi who published *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* in 1910, while in 1913 → P. D. Ouspensky published another study of its symbolism as a “model of the universe”, in the light of oriental religions and of → Carl Gustav Jung’s depth psychology. The occultist and paramasonic society of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn played a large role here; the notes of one of its founders, → MacGregor Mathers, were collected by Israel Regardie in a *Golden Dawn Tarot*. But it was above all → Aleister Crowley, one of its most conspicuous members, who systematically integrated the tarot in his magical and masonic speculations, with the help of → astrology and the kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences V]. In *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1930) and *The Book of Thoth* (1944), Crowley changed the names of the major arcana and interpreted the trumps as hieroglyphs charged with universal energy. His tarot and that of Waite published by Rider are the most widespread in the English-speaking world, and are constantly reprinted.

One of the most remarkable examples of the tarot’s capacity to furnish a basis for esoteric and mystic meditation can be found in the works of → Valentin Tomberg, *Méditations sur les 22 arcanes majeurs du tarot* (1980), prefaced in the French edition by the Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. The latter situated the enterprise in the framework of “spiritual readings”, supported by Christian as well as non-Christian traditions and by esoteric exegeses. Tomberg’s “inner experience” illustrates the expansion of the field of tarot to embrace literature and the arts; in this context von Balthasar cites *The Greater Trumps* (1950) by Charles Williams (1886-1945, a friend of T.S. Eliot and J.R.R. Tolkien). *The Golem* (1915) by → Gustav Meyrink is also based on an interpretation by



means of the tarot; Jean Paulhan (1884-1968) prefaced Paul Marteau's *Le tarot de Marseille* (The Tarot of Marseille, 1949).

The publication of tarot packs today covers a wide cultural radius, ranging from Central America to Germany, and offers an amazing variety of illustrative styles. Lady Freida Harris painted the *Tarot Thoth* cards after Crowley's instructions (the originals are at the Warburg Institute); Pamela Colman Smith, member of the Golden Dawn, painted those of the Rider-Waite edition. The *Tarot of Xultun*, painted by Peter Balin in Guatemala, combines symbolic iconography with Indian mythology; photographs have been used for the *Tarot of Mountain Dreams* (a version of Rider-Waite). There are tarots of advertising (Alitalia, of cubist inspiration) and calendar tarots using titles of popular songs (Pop rock, New York 1972); pen and ink designs are frequent. California has furnished many versions connected with new forms of religiosity of the → New Age type: *The New Tarot for the Aquarian Age*, modeled after Crowley (designs by John Cook, 1968) and the *Aquarian Tarot* designed in "Art Déco" style by David Mario Palladini (Morgan Press, 1973). The quantity of literature on the tarot is impressive: the bibliography of Gérard van Rijnberk (*Le Tarot*, 1947) contains more than a thousand titles, while a semi-exhaustive list of 1700 titles has been compiled by Stuart Kaplan, *The Encyclopedia of Tarot* (1978-1986).

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JEAN-PIERRE LAURANT

## Templars → Neo-Templar Traditions

**Théon**, Max (ps. of Louis Maximilian Bimstein; also known as Aia Aziz),  
\* ca. 1848 Warsaw, † 4.3.1927  
Tlemcen (Algeria)

Théon was Grand Master of the Exterior Circle of the → Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (H.B. of L.) around 1884, and later (about 1900) founded the *Mouvement Cosmique* mainly under another pseudonym (Aia Aziz). Furthermore he is known as a practitioner of occult [→ occult / occultism] medicine and adept in practical occultism, and as the author of an initiatic work of over 10.000 pages written in collaboration with his wife, their teachings being known as the *Philosophie Cosmique*. Little is known about Théon because of his reticence in regard to public life, and his habit of involving himself only from a distance in the groups which he directed. It must be added that Théon himself remains the sole source for what little we know about him.

A Jew, and the son of a rabbi, Théon was initiated into Hasidic circles at an early age; but he is also said to have received "oriental initiations" at a later stage, which seems to be corroborated by his knowledge of the Vedas and of Sanskrit. Having left Poland, he seems to have been in Paris in 1870 and in Great Britain in 1873. Using Peter Davidson and Thomas H. Burgoyne as intermediaries, while remaining "under a veil" himself, he launched the H.B. of L. in 1884. In 1885, in London, he married Mary Ware (ca. 1843-1908), a poet of Irish origin who, the year before, had founded the Universal Philosophic Society under the pseudonym of Una. The "scandal" which dealt a severe blow to the H.B. of L. in Great Britain obliged the couple to leave London for southwest France in 1886. In 1888 they settled permanently in Tlemcen where, in semi-retreat, they cultivated an intense "psychic cooperation" involving techniques of trance and exteriorization aiming at the attainment of super-



natural powers. One of Théon's direct pupils in practical occultism was Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), who would later become famous as "The Mother" of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and the founder of Auroville.

The Théons' techniques were used by them to clairvoyantly explore humanity's past, even at its most distant. The result was a series of long initiatic narratives that were translated into French – sometimes poorly – by their secretary. In 1899 Max Théon contacted French circles of magnetisers, but his articles encountered the animosity of the spiritualists. In 1901 he launched the *Revue Cosmique*, thanks to → F.-Ch. Barlet (1838-1921), formerly representative of the H. B. of L. for France, almost every article of the magazine being anonymous. The enmity of → Papus hindered the spread of the movement in the French occultist world, so that the *Mouvement Cosmique* remained confined to a very small public, especially after Barlet's resignation of his position of director in 1902. The most important personalities in the group were Julien Lejay, Louis Lemerle and Louis M. Thémanlys (1874-1943). In 1908 the Théons came to Paris, but in september Mme Théon died in Jersey, which put an end to the *Revue Cosmique* after seven years of publication. After the return of Théon to Tlemcen in 1909, Thémanlys reorganized the movement under his direction. A new magazine, *Le Mouvement Cosmique*, begun to be published in 1913. In 1919 Théon tried to give a new impulse to the movement; but he returned to Algeria a year later, and the magazine ceased its existence in 1921. Thémanlys continued to introduce the movement's ideas in some artistic and literary circles; but at Théon's death in 1927, its success had remained limited, although persons such as Claire Boas de Jouvenel and Marc Séménoff had become interested in the group's ideas.

The influence of the *Philosophie Cosmique* has hardly reached beyond France, except through publications of Peter Davidson in the U.S.A. There was, however, an indirect influence in India, via "The Mother" and Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), and in Russia, where the ideas of Russian Cosmism, a broad intellectual movement based upon the teachings of Nikolai Fedorov (1828-1903), are remarkably close to those of the Théons.

According to Théon, the *Mouvement Cosmique* was simply the continuation of the H.B. of L. under another form. However, the teachings of the *Philosophie Cosmique* seem much richer and more original than those of the H.B. of L. While inspired more particularly, although only implicitly, by the

kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], they are quite far removed from the ideas of the occultist movements of the end of the 19th century. The *Philosophie Cosmique* presents itself as non-dogmatic, aimed at practical realization, and based upon the primordial Tradition anterior to all religions, referred to as the *Tradition Cosmique*. The central idea of its vast and ambitious cosmogony is that the entire cosmos is material, except the *Sans Forme* (Formless) or *Impensable* (Unthinkable). The material world is regarded as a set of nested spheres surrounding the Nucleolus, that is, the first manifestation (Love, Light, Life) of the *Sans Forme* (which is not referred to as God or the Absolute, because in our present time matter does not completely and freely reflect the triune manifestation). The main reason why his material vesture is incomplete is that the "Hostile one", a being of very high origin, occupies the *Etat nerveux* ("nervous plane", which amounts to the astral plane of the occultists), the state closer to the world of material substance (there are three other and more "subtle" worlds, each with seven states or planes), and influences the *degré nerveux* ("nervous degree" which corresponds to "the Vital" of "The Mother" and Sri Aurobindo) of man, creating lack of balance on earth. The "Hostile One" has deprived man of his "true physical body", the immortal body of his origin; and the divine task of man consists, according to the Théons, in recovering this body. Attainment of this goal will result in physical immortality, at least for divine humanity (for the Théons, there are four levels of terrestrial life: mineral, vegetal, animal and psycho-intellectual or "human Divine"); this victory over death will allow man to conquer the *Etat nerveux* and unify the cosmos.

A modern magus who appeared totally unadapted to the social realities of his time, Théon ended up, paradoxically, proposing a series of ideas that are thoroughly modern: the primacy of love and liberty, the quest for progress and individual development, the prolongation of life, mistrust of political and religious ideologies (which are considered to be merely masks for politics), and the absence of a division between animal and man. Despite the veil of mystery that surrounds his initiatic path, Max Théon stands at the crossroads of Eastern and Western spirituality, as one of the most attractive figures of the movement devoted to the "disoccultation of the occult" (i.e., initiation by and through daily life rather than submission to the techniques of occult initiations, and public teachings rather than secret instruction) which he tried to pioneer. His work sought to demonstrate that

there need not be a contradiction between the wisdom of the past and the perspectives of endless progress offered to modern man.

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CHRISTIAN CHANEL

## Theosophical Society

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### 1. OVERVIEW

The organizations identified with the dissemination of teachings collectively known as Theosophy and derived primarily from the writings of → Helena P. Blavatsky (1831-1891) and her associates and followers may be referred to as Theosophical societies. The one society that has a direct or administrative link back to the first president and co-founder of the original Theosophical Society, → Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), is currently the largest and most international of all the surviving societies: the Theosophical Society, with headquarters in Chennai (Adyar), India [henceforth identified as the Theosophical Society (Adyar) or abbreviated as TS]. It is this organization that is

most closely associated by the general public with its co-founder and leading theoretician, H.P. Blavatsky. Unlike other, lesser well-known organizations, the Theosophical Society (Adyar) allowed her teachings to languish for a time in the early 20th century while under the leadership of its second President, → Annie Besant (1847-1933). Rather than looking to Blavatsky’s teachings as the direct font of Wisdom, the Society’s leaders, especially Mrs. Besant and her close associate, → Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854-1934), developed a set of teachings currently known as Second Generation Theosophy. Although the Theosophical Society (Adyar) at present bases its Theosophy primarily on Blavatsky’s interpretation, the Society is nonetheless perceived by many within the broader Theosophical Movement as more liberal than either of the two other principal organizations that have remained consistently faithful to her teachings: the Theosophical Society, with headquarters in Pasadena, California [henceforth identified as the Theosophical Society (Pasadena)], and the United Lodge of Theosophists [henceforth identified as the ULT].

The Theosophical Society (Adyar) claims direct descent from the original Theosophical Society, which was inaugurated in New York City on November 7, 1875. The members of this original Society opened membership to those with varying backgrounds and beliefs, all united, in the words of the Society’s own description, ‘by their approval of the Society’s Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others’. In the opinion of the original Society, and certainly of its descendants, Truth or Divine Wisdom (*theosophia*) is found, at least in part, in all religions; it thereby accepts the expected consequence that all religions should be studied rather than condemned. It also places much emphasis on study – of Theosophy, of religions, of philosophies, and indeed of any field that may express the Divine Wisdom as it is understood by the Society and its members.

### 2. ORIGINS AND THE NEW YORK YEARS

The roots of the Theosophical Society may be found in the fascination with science and the increasingly popular view during the second half of the 19th century that the spiritual realm was scientifically verifiable and that its inhabitants – spirits – were in communication with the physical realm. The modern spiritualist movement [→ Spir-

itualism] was initiated in 1848 with the mysterious rappings in a Hydesville (New York) farmhouse. The publicity surrounding these rappings excited the imagination, hopes, and faith of people from all levels of society, so much so that by the 1870s almost twenty-five percent of the population of the U.S. claimed some manner of association with spiritualism. Side by side with this popular movement there existed an esoteric tradition with long-standing antecedents in the Western world that appealed to prominent minds in philosophy and science.

Both these movements – Spiritualism and Western esotericism – were embodied in H.P. Blavatsky by the time she arrived in New York in 1873. Her claim to have experience in spiritualist mediumship and in acquiring both practical and theoretical knowledge of the Western and non-Western esoteric currents contributed to the creation of the Theosophical Society in 1875. Although much is written by and about Blavatsky regarding her reasons for coming to the United States (including her assertion that she did so primarily in order to establish a society that would advance esotericism or the Ancient Wisdom), there can be no doubt that her primary role in the foundation of the Theosophical Society was as a charismatic raconteur who gathered some of the leading spiritualists and Western esotericists in her apartment in New York City, where she related her adventures in search of the Ancient Wisdom and sought to demonstrate the practical side of esotericism and → magic. On one occasion, September 7, a participant in these gatherings, George Henry Felt (1831-1906), gave a lecture variously titled “The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians” or “The Cabala” (depending upon the source summarizing the lecture). Felt suggested an explanation of the Egyptian and Greek Canon of Proportion, and revealed that he had discovered how to cause “elementals” or “creatures evolved in the four kingdoms of earth, air, fire, and water” (identified as gnomes, sylphs salamanders, and undines) to manifest. One or both of these claims led to the suggestion by Colonel Olcott, only one day after Felt’s lecture, to form a society for just this sort of study. The suggestion led to the inauguration of the Society on November 17. Thus, the persons directly responsible in forming the nascent society were Olcott, who first suggested the idea and later contributed to its organization; Felt, who presented the lecture that provoked Olcott’s suggestion; and Blavatsky, who had created and sustained interest in esoteric topics for the participants of these soirées and who assented to Olcott’s suggestion that a society be formed to promote occult research. It is not clear

how involved Blavatsky was in the initial proposal of the society. Olcott related how he wrote his suggestion to form a society on a note that he passed to Judge. The note was then passed to her, who ‘read it and nodded assent’.

It was Olcott, the newly elected President of the TS, who voiced the purpose of the Society in his inaugural address on November 17 and in its by-laws. The by-laws make it quite clear that the objects of the Society were ‘to collect and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the universe’. In his inaugural address, Olcott suggested that the study of theosophy or the “Divine Science” was to be investigative and unbiased rather than doctrinal: Olcott conceived of the Society as an organization for research whose scope of interests included the “unseen universe” and the powers therein. Both were subsumed under “magic” – interpreted by Blavatsky, in *Isis Unveiled*, as “spiritual Wisdom”; accordingly, “magicians” were persons capable of causing nature to be their servant. Felt’s promise of manifesting the elementals, by procedures discovered by him, was just the kind of experiment that appealed to Olcott.

During these early years in New York, mediums were tested; experiments were conducted in psychometry, thought reading and mesmerism [→ Animal Magnetism]; and papers were read. However, the TS soon proved to be more than an organization for research. For reasons never fully explained, it became a secret society in early 1876, most likely in connection with psychic experiments, including attempts to achieve out-of-body experiences, which were never intended for public exposure. Such types of practice, clouded in → secrecy, survived well into the mid-1880s. Incidentally, the theoretical side of magic or “spiritual Wisdom” – as articulated in Blavatsky’s writings, particularly her *Isis Unveiled* (1877) – attracted no less an inventor than Thomas A. Edison (1847-1931), who applied for Fellowship status on March 27, 1878, and was formally admitted on April 5.

Shortly thereafter, information about a South Asian organization known as the Ārya Samāj and its leader, Swami Dayānand (Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī, 1824-1883) was presented to the Society by the head of the Bombay branch, Hurrychund Chintamon. The information was attractive enough to cause the Council of the TS to ‘unanimously [resolve] that the Society accept the proposal of the Ārya Samāj to unite with itself, and that the title of the Theosophical Society be changed to the “Theosophical Society of the Ārya Samāj”’. This association came to an end in 1882, when Olcott realized that the Hindu fundamentalist

Ārya Samāj had little in common with the Society's goals. Another initiative taken in order to expand the influence of the Society came with the formation of the British Theosophical Society, which was organized in London on June 27, 1878, by the Treasurer of the TS, John Storer Cobb.

Prior to Olcott's and Blavatsky's departure from the U.S. in 1878, an event took place that had little to do with the teachings or practices of the Society but helped to identify its character. This was the death of one Joseph Henry Louis Charles, Baron de Palm, who, shortly before his death, just two months after joining the TS on May 20th, 1876, had requested a funeral that would 'illustrate the Eastern notions of death and immortality'. This led to considerable publicity and public interest in what was called a "Pagan funeral" by the New York press. Negative reactions against the Theosophical leaders caused a delay in the cremation service until December 1876. The cremation of Baron de Palm was described by Olcott as 'the first scientific cremation in America' and the introduction of 'the Hindu mode of sepulture'.

### 3. PASSAGE TO INDIA

Olcott and Blavatsky's decision to leave New York for India came in May 1878. Prior to their departure, Olcott requested General Abner Doubleday (1819-1893), a prominent Civil War general who had joined the TS only as recently as June 30, 1878, to be Acting President. Having departed from New York on December 18, 1878, on New Year's Day, Olcott and Blavatsky arrived in England, where they remained for seventeen days before departing on January 17, 1879 aboard the ship *Speke Hall*. An administrative decision made by Olcott on the day of their departure, known as Foreign Order, No. 1, formally appointed Doubleday as President, *ad interim*; David A. Curtis, a journalist, as Corresponding Secretary, *ad interim*; George Valentine Maynard as Treasurer; and William Quan Judge (1851-1896) as Recording Secretary. The journey to India lasted almost a month, and Olcott and Blavatsky entered Bombay Harbor on February 16, 1879.

Soon after their arrival in Bombay, on February 25, they received a letter from an individual who was to become an invaluable contact for both the travelers and the Society: the editor of the *Pioneer* (Allahabad), A.P. Sinnett (1840-1921), who wished to make their acquaintance. The friendship of the editor of a prestigious newspaper proved to be a Godsend for the pair, for Sinnett helped to publicize many of their activities, including Olcott's first address in India, "The Theosophical Society

and Its Aims", which took place on March 17, 1879. Later in the year, Sinnett publicized their intention to establish a journal called *The Theosophist*, the first volume of which was published in Bombay in October 1879 and which is still published today at International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society (Adyar). One reason for publishing this journal was to provide non-Western scholars with an opportunity to publish articles about the religions of South Asia – Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism.

Sinnett was soon to have a significant impact on Theosophical teachings by engaging in alleged correspondence with two of the Mahātmas or Masters of Wisdom that Blavatsky claimed to have had as her teachers. These Masters were believed to be the sources of the Ancient Wisdom and so provided the authority behind Blavatsky's interpretation of this Wisdom. The correspondence lasted for approximately five years (1880-1885), with the principal teachings summarized by Sinnett in *Esoteric Buddhism*, first published in 1883. Sinnett was to have a significant influence – positive and negative – on the British TS in the years following these publications.

### 4. THE 1880S

The Theosophical Society remained in the public eye due to widespread curiosity about the activities of its President (Olcott) and Corresponding Secretary (Blavatsky). In May 1880, with six additional members accompanying them, they went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), to the great delight of the Sinhalese populace. There they created new branches of the TS and "took *pānsil*" or the Five Precepts ceremony: an act required for conversion to Buddhism. According to Olcott's statement in his chronicle of the early TS, *Old Diary Leaves*, their participation in this ceremony was regarded by them not as a conversion to Buddhism but merely as confirmation of his and Blavatsky's status as Buddhists – an important observation, considering their earlier connection with Buddhism, and by implication, Eastern Theosophy. During this first visit to the island and following their confirmation as Buddhists, the two initiated what Olcott called the 'beginning of the second and permanent stage of the Buddhist revival begun by Megittuwatte (Gunananda Mohottivatte, an activist monk who organized the Society for the Propagation of Buddhism and a debater who often engaged in public debates with Christian missionaries), a movement destined to gather the whole juvenile Sinhalese population into Buddhist schools under our supervision . . .' (*Old Diary Leaves* II, 166). The out-

come of their activity was the establishment of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, which consisted of seven lay branches (Kandy, Colombo, Pānadure, Bentota, Galle, Matarar, Welitara) and one monastic branch. Furthermore, a number of prominent monks became members of the Society, thus establishing a close relationship between the Theosophical Society and the Buddhist population of Ceylon. This relationship was further strengthened by the founding, through Olcott's efforts, of Buddhist secondary and Sunday schools, which provided an opportunity for Sinhalese to be exposed to Buddhist and Western education. Olcott would continue to actively participate in the Buddhist revival throughout the 1880s and 1890s.

Blavatsky and Olcott's association with the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka and their early involvement with the Ārya Samāj of Swāmī Dayānanda helped to create the perception that the TS was tilting more toward an Eastern philosophical perspective. Olcott, through his words and deeds, gave the impression that the Buddhist and Hindu philosophies, as he understood them, were closer to the Ancient Wisdom than was Christian Wisdom. Furthermore, Blavatsky's anti-clerical statements made it very clear that she had no love for the brand of Christianity that was practiced in Europe and evangelized in India and other parts of the colonized world. Their move to India was, of course, perceived as the most blatant example of such a shift in emphasis from Western to Eastern esotericism.

It was because of this shift that, as early as 1881 or 1882, George Wyld (1821-1906), the president of The British TS, became so disenchanted with the Theosophical leaders that he attempted to establish – unsuccessfully – an independent society aligned with Christian rather than Buddhist or Hindu teachings. Having failed in his attempt, Wyld resigned from the TS in 1882.

On January 3, 1883, → Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-1888) joined the TS, and only four days later, during the Annual General Meeting, she was elected to the Presidency of the Theosophical Society of Great Britain (its new name). Together with Edward Maitland (1824-1897) as Vice-President, she took immediate steps to change the direction of the Society. Like Wyld before her, Kingsford – a Roman Catholic and co-author (with Maitland) of *The Perfect Way; or, the Finding of Christ* (1882) – attempted to focus on Catholic theosophy rather than the Oriental (i.e., Hindu and Buddhist) Theosophy of Blavatsky. Kingsford and Maitland's agenda, however, was challenged with the arrival of A.P. Sinnett in England in April 1883. His recently published book *Occult World* (1881) and

the soon-to-be-published *Esoteric Buddhism* (June 1883), engendered considerable interest among the Fellows of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society (the new name of the Theosophical Society of Great Britain as of June 1883). *Esoteric Buddhism* detracted attention from Kingford's Christian esotericism; and Sinnett was perceived by Maitland to be too much of a popularizer and propagandizer. After the book had been published, Sinnett initiated a study group in order to examine the book's contents more carefully; and a resolution was passed by the Lodge, advocating the study of esoteric philosophy as taught by the Masters of India. For Kingsford, the issue was whether *only* the Theosophy of the Masters as represented in *Esoteric Buddhism* should be studied, or whether Theosophy itself should be perceived in broader terms: 'We are one at heart, for he [Sinnett] has been taught by his Oriental Gurus the same esoteric doctrines which I have found under the adopted pagan symbols of the Roman Church . . . Greek, Hermetic, Buddhist, Vedāntist, Christian – all these Lodges of the Mysteries are fundamentally one and identical in doctrine'. Yet, by the end of 1883, Kingsford and Maitland had come to perceive *Esoteric Buddhism* from a much different perspective. They were sharply critical of the book and perceived Sinnett as a purveyor of "transcendental physics" instead of esotericism. Sinnett, on the other hand, viewed Kingsford as a non-believer of sorts. By April 1884, the time of the election of officers in the Society, it was suggested (either by Kingsford or by Olcott, depending on the source) that the London Lodge organize into itself two branches: one to study Oriental Theosophy, the other – which was to be called either The Hermetic Theosophical Society or the "Hermetic Lodge, T.S." – to study Hermetic or Christian theosophy. Olcott thereupon offered a charter to Mrs. Kingsford to form a separate Hermetic TS; and after discussion with her colleague C.C. Massey (1838-1905) she accepted the offer. The "Hermetic Lodge, T.S." was organized only two days after elections were held for office within the London Lodge on April 7, 1884; these resulted in the election of G.B. Finch, an ally of Sinnett's, to the office of president and of Sinnett to that of vice-president and secretary. Many members of both the minority Kingsford-Maitland group and the Sinnett faction in the London Lodge desired to participate in the instructions on esotericism offered by both branches; but they were prevented from doing so as the result of a rule issued by Olcott that disallowed dual membership in both branches. On Olcott's suggestion, the charter of the Hermetic Lodge of



the TS was returned, thus making it possible for Kingsford to form an independent Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies], which was inaugurated on May 9, 1884. The Hermetic Society's stated aim was to concentrate on the study of the Hermetic teachings, the schools that were based upon them – the Pythagorean, Platonic, and Alexandrian – and the Greek Mysteries. This Society and its founder, Anna Kingsford, reflected an alternate path by maintaining an exclusive focus on Western esotericism, thus resisting the growing influence of Hindu and Buddhist esotericism as interpreted by Blavatsky.

This resistance to the eastern Theosophy of Blavatsky and Sinnett was also shared by Kingsford's and Blavatsky's mutual friend and sometime Theosophist, the Countess of Caithness (*née* María Mariátegui, 1830-1895), who herself became President – on June 28, 1883 – of the recently inaugurated Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident in Paris. In 1884, she published a work reflecting the Société Théosophique's range of study, *Théosophie universelle*, the first part of which was subtitled *La Théosophie Chrétienne*, and the second *La Théosophie Bouddhiste*.

This difference of opinion regarding the Ancient Wisdom among the leaders of the TS was nothing compared to the uproar created by the conclusions of the Society for Psychical Research after its investigation of the phenomena associated with the TS. Established in 1882 'to examine, without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis', the SPR's interests were similar to those that inspired Olcott's original concept of the TS. But whereas the SPR was involved only with the investigation of psychic phenomena, the TS claimed to be the fount and focus of such phenomena (whether "real or supposed", in the words of the SPR). An SPR committee had been established to investigate certain claims of the TS: the supposed existence of highly evolved Mahātmās or Masters, the letters they allegedly addressed to Sinnett *et. al.*, and the 'evocation of sound without physical means'. The so-called Mahātma letters were unusual not only because of their alleged authorship but because of the way they were produced. In the words of the SPR Report (1885), these letters, and other 'ponderable objects', were transported 'through solid matter' and appeared by means of 'precipitation of handwriting and drawings on previously blank paper'. The investigation began on the 11th of May 1884, when Olcott was interviewed by F.W.H. Myers (1843-1901) and J. Her-

bert Stack (?-1892). It was followed by interviews with other members of the Society, including Blavatsky. The conclusions of the first (preliminary and provisional) report of the SPR, issued in December 1884, were somewhat tentative. They acknowledged 'a *prima facie* case, for some part, at least, of the claim made, which, at the point which the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research have now reached, cannot, with consistency, be ignored'.

Two months prior to the appearance of the SPR's first report, an exposé had appeared in *The Madras Christian College Magazine* of September and October 1884, containing fifteen letters purportedly written by Blavatsky to her housekeeper and Assistant Corresponding Secretary and Librarian at Adyar, Emma Coulomb. Coulomb's husband (Alexis Coulomb) was a member of the Managing Committee, whose duty it was to oversee the Adyar headquarters. For the background to the publication, one has to go back many months in time. The Coulobms had both been expelled from the TS after Mme. Coulomb threatened to expose Blavatsky if she did not receive a Rs. 3000 bonus. Having been forced to leave the headquarters, she and her husband stayed in a house provided by a group who published the *Christian College Magazine*. The published letters implicated Blavatsky in a scheme to produce fraudulent phenomena. Such revelations convinced the SPR that further investigation of the TS was in order, so it dispatched one of its members, Richard Hodgson (1855-1905), to India in November 1884, for a period of three months. Hodgson's investigations caused the SPR to conclude that the accusations were true, and that a massive fraud was perpetrated by Blavatsky. The letters supposedly written by the Mahātmās Koot Hoomi Lal Sing and Morya had been written by either Blavatsky or her Theosophical assistant and chela (disciple), Damodar K. Mavalankar, who had also arranged for the letters to be received through the Shrine (a cabinet located in the "Occult Room" opposite Blavatsky's bedroom at the Adyar headquarters). The Mahātmās themselves were mere fictions, and none of the phenomena claimed by Theosophists at Adyar could be substantiated. As for Blavatsky's motive, Hodgson concluded that it was neither due to the 'aloe-blossom of a woman's monomania' nor due to her desire for monetary gain. It was his suspicion, rather, that she was a Russian spy and that the TS was actually a political organization. This suspicion was nothing new. It dated back to the time of Blavatsky and Olcott's passage to India, at which time the British Indian government became interested in her activities.

Because of its suspicion, the government had kept her under surveillance during her first year in India. Hodgson concurred with the government's suspicions that 'her real object has been the furtherance of Russian interests'. This second SPR Report, better known as the Hodgson Report, was issued on June 24, 1885, dealing a major blow to the credibility of Blavatsky as well as of the Society.

After leaving India for the last time in 1885, Blavatsky eventually settled in England, where she completed her *magnum opus*, *The Secret Doctrine*, in 1888. Just prior to its publication, she established a new organization, the "Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society" (ES), whose primary purpose was to offer esoteric instruction. Administratively independent of the ES, Blavatsky in fact acted as its leader. She was known as the Outer Head – the Inner Heads being the Mahātmas, with whom she was supposed to have direct ties.

When Blavatsky and Olcott left the United States in 1878, the Society had been in a moribund state. While its membership grew in the following years, especially in India, the American TS remained relatively unchanged. After Abner Doubleday's interim Presidency, an American Board of Control was established in 1884, followed by the establishment of the "American Section" of the TS under its General Secretary, William Q. Judge. Judge, one of the co-founders of the TS, was to become responsible both for the revitalization of the Society in the U.S. and the eventual separation of the American Section from the parent organization. These events took place over the course of ten years, with Judge taking on an ever-increasing role in the leadership of the international Society.

The final significant event of the 1880s was the addition to the Society's membership of one of the most prominent activists in labor activism and Fabian socialism, → Annie Besant (1847-1933). Besant's membership was important for the prestige and public profile of the TS, because of her activism and her superior communicative skills. She soon became Blavatsky's key disciple in the ES, the co-editor of Blavatsky's magazine *Lucifer*, and, after Blavatsky's death, the Outer Head of the Eastern School of Theosophy (the new name for the ES). In effect, together with Judge (who served as Outer Head of the EST in America and Vice-President of the TS) she became Blavatsky's successor, and a major interpreter of her teachings.

##### 5. DIVISIONS AND DISSENSIONS

Strong personalities and disagreements over teachings invariably lead to schisms and splits within organizations, large and small. The TS is no

exception, as was already demonstrated by the founding of the Hermetic Society under Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland over the issue of Christian versus Eastern Theosophy. We have seen that a similar situation arose in France: like Anna Kingsford, Lady Caithness was more inclined to discuss Christian Theosophy in her works *Old Truths in a New Light* (1876) and *Théosophie universelle* (the first part entitled *La Théosophie Chrétienne*). Caithness had introduced Theosophy – in embryonic form – in France as early as 1878, according to one account, but certainly by 1883, with the founding of *La Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident*, recognized by Olcott as an official branch of the TS. Although Lady Caithness's views of Theosophy were close to those of Blavatsky, she had an independent streak that resulted in her resignation from the TS on at least two occasions in the mid-1880s. A person of her talent and influence might well have separated herself from the TS permanently; but unlike Kingsford, rather than rejecting the Eastern Theosophy of Sinnett and Blavatsky, she internationalized it. The unity of French Theosophy was more seriously challenged by the former Theosophist → Papus (Gérard Encausse) who by 1891 had come to consider Blavatsky and Olcott as frauds.

It was not until 1895 that the TS met its most serious challenge – not in France but in the United States, involving the TS's highest-ranking officials – Olcott, Besant, and Judge – and its most important section – the American. In the years preceding 1895, W.Q. Judge was accused of forging letters from the Mahātmas. This charge brought an internal investigation by a Judicial Committee in 1893 and 1894; it did not rule on the issue, however, since it considered it out of its jurisdiction. A resolution was brought by Mrs. Besant during the Society's December 1894 convention in Adyar, that Judge resign his vice-presidency of the TS. He refused to resign, and by February 1895 told Olcott that he intended to withdraw from Adyar. This intention to withdraw from Adyar's authority became a reality at the American Section's convention in April 1895, with the delegates voting on the proposal and appointing Judge President for life of the "Theosophical Society in America". This Society continues down to the present under its current name the Theosophical Society. It has had an impact on the Theosophical Movement, especially under the activist leadership of Katherine Tingley (1847-1929), who established a well-known community and headquarters at Point Loma (San Diego, California) in 1897 and who renamed the Society "The Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical

Society” in 1898. The Society moved from Point Loma in 1942 and is currently headquartered in Pasadena, California.

This schism would not remain the only one. After Judge’s death in 1896, Ernest T. Hargrove († 1939) became the new President of the TS in America, but the true power resided in the Outer Head of the Eastern School of Theosophy. Although the identity of the Outer Head was unknown at the time of Hargrove’s accession to the Presidency, it was soon revealed to be Katherine Tingley. Because of her activism and reformism, some members soon grew disenchanted with her redirection of the Society. Hargrove, increasingly aware that his role as President was becoming ineffectual, resigned the office in 1897 and, after an unsuccessful attempt to take power during the 1898 convention, formed his own group and held a convention that same year. Known as The Theosophical Society in America, with headquarters in New York City, and known from 1908 simply as the Theosophical Society, it had attracted some of Theosophy’s most informed and intellectual followers. Some of the best articles on Theosophy are found in its magazine, *The Theosophical Quarterly*, which was published from 1903 to 1938. The Society as an organization has been inactive since 1935.

In the same year, 1898, a second group issuing from Tingley’s Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society was founded by Dr. William H. Dower (1866-1937) and Mrs. Francia LaDue (1849-1922). Known as the Temple of the People, the organization emerged from the Syracuse (New York) Lodge. By 1903, the Temple’s community and headquarters, known as Halcyon, relocated in California. The purpose of the community was to lay the ‘mental, physical, and spiritual foundations of the coming sixth race’, reflecting the Theosophical notion that humanity evolves through seven major groups called Root Races.

In 1909, another organization, the United Lodge of Theosophists, was organized in Los Angeles by a former member of The Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society and Hargrove’s Theosophical Society, Robert Crosbie (1849-1919). Although a member of Hargrove’s Society when he formed the ULT, it would appear that he reacted more against the methods and policies of Tingley, whose organization he left in 1904. Of the two societies, the ULT resembles Hargrove’s TS to a greater degree: assuming the role of anonymity on the part of its members, only far more strictly, maintaining an intellectualism similar to that of

Hargrove’s TS, and maintaining the teachings of Blavatsky and Judge as its basic source of Theosophy. At present, ULT lodges and study groups are found in the US, India, and Europe.

Many more organizations have originated from a Theosophical society or are inspired by Theosophical teachings. When a tally was taken in 1930, one official in the TS (Point Loma) noted that there were twenty-two Theosophical organizations. How many more have come into existence since 1930 is difficult to determine.

#### 6. THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY UNDER ANNIE BESANT

Following the death of Col. Olcott in 1907, the Presidency of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) passed to Annie Besant. Her influence prior to achieving this office and her association with Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854-1934) helped define the course of the Society under her tenure. Like Olcott, she displayed an activist role as leader of the TS. Olcott’s activism was focused on the Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist cause in South-east Asia, and the establishment of the “Pariah schools” in India for the benefit of the depressed classes. Besant’s activism was more wide-ranging, covering the areas of education, politics, social reform, and the introduction of ritual as an important element of the Society’s activities. Her involvement with the establishment of the Central Hindu College in Benares in 1898, together with the formation of the Home Rule League, the drafting of the Home Rule Bill (1925), and the creation of the Theosophical Order of Service in 1908 are but a few examples of her activism. Furthermore, Mrs. Besant, along with Leadbeater, were responsible for introducing a new emphasis and focus within the Theosophical framework. This was but the latest challenge to Blavatsky’s interpretation of Theosophy, a challenge that dated back to George Wyld’s version of Christian Theosophy (1880), Subha Row’s (1856-1890) interpretation of Eastern Theosophy based on Vedāntic philosophy, and the above-mentioned interpretations of Anna Kingsford and Lady Caithness, to name but a few. From the mid-1890s until well into the 20th century, Besant and Leadbeater were collaborating on the study of occult phenomena, and from 1898 they were also investigating “Esoteric Christianity”. Their research was temporarily halted as a result of the resignation of Leadbeater from the TS in 1906 on charges of immoral conduct – more specifically, pederasty. After Besant’s election as President in 1907, Leadbeater resumed his collab-

oration with Besant. Their occult investigations resulted in a body of publications that served as the basis of a new and developing form of Theosophy, somewhat related to the Theosophy of Blavatsky but containing elements that had little or nothing to do with the earlier teaching. The differences were documented by Margaret Thomas in her privately circulated booklet, *Theosophy or Neo-Theosophy* (1924 or 1925), which cites twenty-six areas of disagreement between Blavatsky's Theosophy and Besant's and Leadbeater's "Neo-Theosophy". Nowadays referred to as "second generation Theosophy", it differed from the earlier teaching in four significant ways: (1) The introduction of Catholicism and its attendant sacraments into the Theosophical Society (Adyar), through the agency of the Old (later Liberal) Catholic Church and through the efforts of its Presiding Bishop, James Ingall Wedgwood (1883-1950) and his close associate, C.W. Leadbeater. (2) The claim, based on a psychic reading by Leadbeater in 1909, that a young Indian boy, Jiddu Krishnamurti (1896-1886), would serve as the vehicle of the World Teacher, the Christ or Maitreya. This assertion led to the establishment, shortly thereafter, of an organization to promote this belief, the Order of the Star in the East. (3) Emphasis on the writings of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater as the main purveyors of Theosophical teaching, to the almost total exclusion of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky. (4) Emphasis on the acquisition and practice of psychic or occult powers rather than on the theoretical understanding of the occult.

The Liberal Catholic Church, an organization that was to become an important ally of the TS, has its roots in the Old Catholic Church in Holland, an independent organization that separated from the Pope in Rome in 1702. This Dutch Church spread to Great Britain with the consecration of Arnold Harris Mathew (1852-1919) as Old Catholic Bishop for England on April 28, 1908. By 1915, most of the clergy in the Church were members of the TS and the Order of the Star in the East, including its future leader, Bishop Wedgwood, and Leadbeater, whom Wedgwood consecrated as Bishop on July 22, 1916. Although Theosophists were associated with various elements of the Old Catholic Church, it was Wedgwood who was largely responsible for introducing Theosophical teachings into Church doctrine and for making the Church into a vehicle for the coming World Teacher, Lord Maitreya. Archbishop Mathew's demand that Wedgwood and his fellow Theosophists resign from the TS and Order of the Star in

the East led to a schism from Mathew's Old Roman Catholic Church at the end of 1915. The Church under Wedgwood became in effect the Theosophical section of the Old Catholic Church. The schism from Mathew's original body was officially recognized on September 6, 1918, at a synod fixing the new name of Wedgwood's Church as the Liberal Catholic Church. From this time on, the Church was to play a significant role in the TS (although having no official or administrative connection with it), especially in the 1920s when J. Krishnamurti was being prepared for his special role as the vehicle for the World Teacher, who was expected soon to "take possession" of Krishnamurti's body.

The promotion of Krishnamurti as the vehicle of the World Teacher or Lord Maitreya was perhaps the single most important project of the TS under Besant. Along with the discovery of the vehicle for the World Teacher came the requisite preparations for the Teacher's coming, including the training and education of young Jiddu. This led to the establishment, as already stated, of an organization whose main purpose was to promote the idea of the coming World Teacher: the Order of the Star in the East, founded by George Arundale (1878-1945) in Banares in 1911.

In the minds of some Theosophists, however, all this was a distortion of Blavatsky's Theosophy. One serious consequence was the departure from the Society of the influential General Secretary of the German Section, → Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who took with him fifty-five of the sixty-nine German lodges under his leadership. A new society, the Anthroposophical Society [→ Anthroposophy], was established under his leadership in early 1913. Moreover, within the Theosophical Society itself there existed a sizable minority of members who opposed the "post-millenarianism" of Mrs. Besant. It resulted in a "Back to Blavatsky" movement, first mentioned in the November 14, 1917 issue of a fairly well known publication devoted to prison reform and Theosophical matters, the *O.E. Library Critic*. Its editor, Henry Newlin Stokes (1859-1942), used this phrase to refer first to the writings by H.P. Blavatsky and to Theosophical literature faithful to her teachings, expanding it later to include those Theosophical lodges within the TS and independent Theosophical groups that remained faithful to her teachings. The most important such group within the Society was the Theosophical Society Loyalty League, established in Sydney, Australia in 1921. Its organ, *Dawn*, published articles from November 1, 1921, to November 1, 1924, emphasizing what it perceived as the pernicious

infiltration of the Liberal Catholic Church within the Society.

Despite the activities of the Back to Blavatsky movement and the TS Loyalty League, the millenarian fervor surrounding Krishnamurti and the World Teacher continued unabated throughout the 1920s. Indeed, Mrs. Besant confidently declared in 1927 that the World Teacher had already arrived.

On August 3, 1929, however, Krishnamurti himself, after some years of increasing doubt about the claims made by Mrs. Besant and her followers, rejected his role as the vehicle of the World Teacher and dissolved the Order of the Star (as it was called at the time of its dissolution). He continued, however, as a teacher and educator outside the Theosophical fold, eventually becoming one of the better-known popular philosophers of the 20th century. The TS, on the other hand, suffered a significant drop in its membership and popularity.

#### 7. THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AFTER ANNIE BESANT

Mrs. Besant never fully recovered from the shock of Krishnamurti's abandonment of his Messianic role. After her death in 1933, she was succeeded by George Arundale (president from 1934-1945), who was an activist like Mrs. Besant, but focused on the needs of the TS itself rather than on external activities such as had been pursued by both Olcott and Besant. Examples are the establishment of the Besant Educational Trust and Besant Memorial School in Adyar in 1934, whose main purpose was to provide Theosophical education; and the foundation in 1936, by Dr. Arundale's wife Srimati Rukmini Devi (1904-1986), of the International Academy of the Arts (later known as Kālakshetra, 'the Field or Holy place of Arts'), which had as its object (1) '[t]o emphasize the essential unity of all true Art'; (2) '[t]o work for the recognition of the arts as vital to individual, national, religious and international growth; and (3) '[t]o provide for such activities as may be incidental to the above objects'. Associated with the second purpose of Kālakshetra was the revival and development of the ancient culture of India. To Dr. Arundale, Indian dance revealed occult ritual or, in his words, 'the occultism of beauty'. Furthermore, the Society's publication activities continued through the Theosophical Publishing House and the Vasanta Press.

Arundale was succeeded by Leadbeater's protégé, C. Jinarājadāsa (president from 1946-1953), who, among his many contributions to the Society, displayed an active interest in publishing documents centering on the history of the Society. As one of the foremost Theosophical authors, Jinarā-

jadāsa displayed a distinctly scholarly bent in his publications. Furthermore, in order to carry out the third object of the Society ("To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man"), he inaugurated in 1949 the School of the Wisdom at the International Headquarters at Adyar, on the anniversary date of the TS's own inauguration, November 17.

Jinarājadāsa was succeeded by N. Sri Ram (president from 1953-1973) – who was responsible for building the current Adyar Library building – John S. Coats (president from 1973-1979), and the present International President of the TS, Radha Burnier (1980-present).

The Theosophical Society currently focuses on educational and welfare activities. These include The Olcott Educational Society, which controls The Olcott Memorial School and Olcott Memorial High School; the Social Welfare Centre, which cares for infants of working mothers in the vicinity of the Headquarters; the Animal Welfare Centre; the Vocational Training Centre for Women; and the Besant Scout Camping Centre. The TS's primary activity, however, is the dissemination of Theosophical teaching, not only those of Blavatsky but also those of a number of Theosophical writers after her.

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JAMES A. SANTUCCI

## Theosophy, Christian → Christian Theosophy

**Tomberg, Valentin**, \* 26.2.1900 Saint Petersburg, † 20.2.1973 Majorca

A Russian-Baltic Lutheran by birth, already as a young man Tomberg began to move in the esoteric circles of Saint Petersburg, joining the → Theosophical Society in 1917. The Bolshevik Revolution having taken a heavy toll on his family, he fled in 1918 to Tallin (Reval, in Estonia). There he married in 1922, held (after several other jobs) a position at the Estonian postal administration, and in 1925 was elected to the Vice-Presidency of the German-speaking branch of the Estonian Anthroposophical Society [→ Anthroposophy] (in 1932 he became Secretary General of the Baltic Anthroposophical Society branch). At the age of thirty-one

he experienced a spiritual revelation which, he claimed, put him in contact with the angelic world. From 1930-1938 he gave many lectures on Anthroposophy and contributed articles to journals of that movement. Some of these works were published as early as 1933 in volumes titled *Anthroposophical Considerations* (on the Old and the New Testament), which went through several editions. The same year he married for the second time. Over the 1930s he distanced himself little by little from the Anthroposophical Society and he eventually resigned in 1937. This change of orientation was due partly to his own Christianity, which was more christocentric than → Rudolf Steiner's, and partly to various conflicts within the European Anthroposophical Society Sections after Steiner's death in 1925. In 1939 Tomberg came to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, where he gave many lectures (most of which were subsequently published), in particular on the return of Christ in the ethereal world. He then settled in Amsterdam, where he made a living as a translator and language teacher, and for many months had to hide with his family from the Nazis. At the end of the war he converted to Catholicism, then enrolled at the University of Cologne to study Law under the direction of Ernst von Hippel, and was awarded an LLD in International Law. In this connection, he authored two treatises in German (*Degeneration und Regeneration der Rechtswissenschaft*, Bonn 1946, new edition 1974, and *Die Grundlagen des Völkerrechts als Menschheitsrecht*, Bonn 1947). In 1948 Tomberg left Germany and definitely settled in England, where, thanks to his remarkable linguistic gifts, he held a good professional position at the BBC. He retired in 1960, and spent the rest of his life in Reading, near London, where from 1963 to 1967 he devoted himself to the writing of several works, among which are his *Meditations on the Tarot*. While traveling in Majorca in 1973 he died of a stroke.

Tomberg's career as an author can be divided into two main periods: the one before and the one after his conversion to Roman Catholicism. During the first, his writings were rooted primarily in the context of Steiner's Anthroposophy. During the second, his written output was more personal and original. With the exception of his two studies in German devoted to International Law, his oeuvre consists mainly of a number of works (published either anonymously or posthumously) of an esoteric character. These – and mostly the *Meditations* – were to make him famous after his death.

It is obvious that in terms of presentation, Tomberg's *Meditations* was influenced by a work of the Russian Vladimir Chmakov (a name which Tomberg

quotes only occasionally): *The Great Arcana of the Tarot, the Absolute Beginning of the Synthetical Philosophy of Esotericism* (in Russian, Moscow 1916; repr. Moscow 1993). Both Chmakov's book and Tomberg's *Meditations* are subdivided into twenty-two chapters whose contents only tenuously correspond to their titles. Each title consists of the name of one of the Major trumps, but seems merely a formal pretext for introducing reflections not actually related to the symbolism of the card (not unlike Montaigne's *Essais* or → Foix-Candale's *Le Pimandre d'Hermès Trismégiste* in the 16th century, in which the titles of the chapters are likewise only loosely related to the discussions they announce). Taken as a whole, Tomberg's *Meditations* is nonetheless characterized by a very coherent unity of thought and inspiration. Not at all a new method for reading the Tarot, it is, rather, a synthesis of the life-long meditations of a Christian hermeticist.

The author of *Meditations* is well versed in both Christian theology and the literature of modern Western esoteric currents (15th to 20th centuries), primarily spiritual → alchemy, classical theosophy [→ Christian Theosophy], → *Naturphilosophie*, as well as the more recent so-called Occultist current [→ occult / occultism]. The book is a blend, as it were, of those currents and of Roman Catholicism as Tomberg understood it. He finds himself in contradiction with regard to Catholicism, however, in so far as he declares himself a defender of the belief in → reincarnation. With regard to what he calls "hermeticism" [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies] (i.e., esotericism as the form of thought of modern Western esoteric currents), he discusses a great many of its representative figures, and defines the hermeticist as the theologian of a Holy Scripture which is that of "the World". In other words, for Tomberg there are two complementary theologies: the first or classical one is that of the established Churches, the second one is a hermeticism, which is ultimately a Philosophy of Nature. Like the romantic *Naturphilosophen* (to whom, nevertheless, he barely refers), throughout his book he evinces a strong tendency to think in terms of polarities at all the levels of reality (material, psychic, spiritual, divine, etc.), in the existence of which he believes. Although also very much at home in the literature of the Occultist current – especially the francophone one of → Stanislas de Guaita, → Papus, etc. – Tomberg is quite critical of many forms of practical → magic, and in this connection may be said to stand in the wake of the form of theosophy represented by, for instance, → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, whom he appreci-

ates and with whom he shares many commonalities. Indeed, Tomberg can be considered a theosopher in the classical sense of the term, although he only uses the word in the context of discussions of the ideas of the Theosophical Society. In addition, he lavishly reflects on figures representative of classical Christian → mysticism. In an original and creative way, he compares Christian mysticism to both Eastern mysticism and Western hermeticism. Furthermore, Tomberg discusses some major issues of psychoanalysis, aligning with → Carl Gustav Jung, whose views he tries to complement by adding to analytical psychology the dimension of what he calls "transconsciousness". In sum, *Meditations* may be defined as both a compendium of modern Western esotericism and a stimulating critique of some of its aspects, containing many profound thoughts and beautiful poetic passages. In terms of contents and reception it has to be positioned among the foremost books in Western esotericism published in the 20th century.

Written in French but first published in a German translation (1972), *Meditations* went through several translations and editions. The felicitous initiative of publishing the manuscript is mainly to the credit of Martin Kriele, a German jurist (and successor of Ernst von Hippel, see above) who considered himself Tomberg's spiritual heir. In the 1970s and 1980s, under the pretext of respecting Tomberg's anonymity, the editors and publishers of the book have contributed to the creation of an aura of conspiratorial mystery around its author. This insistence on → secrecy has been partly responsible for the *Meditations*' success, but eventually, and not unexpectedly, lost force. Be that as it may, the interest in Tomberg triggered by his *Meditations* is mainly responsible for the subsequent publication and/or re-edition of some of his other writings. As a matter of fact, the reception of Tomberg's works already has a complex and rich history (especially since the beginning of the 1970s). This reception has taken on three main aspects.

First, a great many enthusiastic readers have authored laudatory articles on Tomberg, mainly on the *Meditations*. Second, Tomberg is the subject of severe criticism in a plethora of writings emanating from the Anthroposophical Society (Favre 1996, 227 nt 9). For example, Prokofieff (see Bibliography) warns Anthroposophists to steer clear of him. He considers Tomberg as a secret disciple of the Jesuits, a Catholic agent inimical to the "true" message of Rudolf Steiner (the fact that Cardinal Hans Urs von Balthasar was chosen by the editors of *Meditations* for writing the preface served to fuel such a critique) and as a hermeticist infected with

the occultist stream represented by → Eliphas Levi, Stanislas de Guaita, Papus, etc. And third, since the beginning of the 1990s there has been an increasing amount of objective scholarly studies devoted to Tomberg. Most important among them are the publications of the Ramsteiner Kreis (The Ramsteiner Circle), a Society established in 1990 to study Tomberg's life and works.

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ANTOINE FAIVRE

## Tradition

1. INTRODUCTION 2. PRISCA THEOLOGIA AND PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS 3. MAIN AUTHORS AND DEVELOPMENTS
4. THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS
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6. PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY IN GENERAL CULTURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Primarily in Western esoteric contexts, but not exclusively there, a wide range of terms have been used to refer to the idea that there exists an enduring tradition of superior spiritual wisdom, available to humanity since the earliest periods of history and kept alive through the ages, perhaps by a chain of divinely inspired sages or initiatory groups. In tracing the development of this idea through its main historical stages, we will restrict ourselves to those authors and currents who explicitly align themselves with such a tradition under one of its common names – e.g. *prisca theologia*, *prisca sapientia*, *pia philosophia*, (*philo*)*sophia perennis*, *perennial philosophy*, *perennial wisdom*, "the wisdom of the ancients", or simply "Tradition" with a capital T – rather than widening the field so as to include any theory focused on the need to recover a lost spiritual world-order. The term "philosophia perennis" has been used in the latter sense notably by Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, in a major study (1998) which includes so much that most mystical and esoteric as well as many additional philosophical traditions from antiquity to the period of → Romanticism can be seen as falling under the umbrella. Although it is true that the authors and currents treated below under the heading of "tradition" typically evince a sense of nostalgia

for a lost or diminished world-order of wholeness and truth (an interesting exception, however, will be discussed at the very end of this overview), it is by no means the case that every author in whom we find such longings perceives himself and his work as a link in the chain of those who have preserved Truth and Wisdom through the ages. What characterizes the currents and authors treated here, however, is precisely this sense of being part of a trans-historical “community”, of which it is believed that all members would basically have agreed among one another, had they been able to meet. Thus, for example, an author like → Jacob Boehme – treated under the heading of “philosophia perennis” by Schmidt-Biggemann – is not included, precisely because his work is presented as a new and original revelation rather than as a reformulation of enduring truths. In contrast to authors like Boehme, representatives of “tradition” as understood here typically engage in exegetical commentaries on earlier religious and philosophical texts and traditions, in order to demonstrate that – apparent contradictions notwithstanding – all of them contain the same universal verities; this is very different from what we find in authors like Boehme, who concentrate their exegetical enterprise not on human texts and traditions but on the Bible itself understood as God’s Word.

## 2. PRISCA THEOLOGIA AND PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

Already Plutarch referred to the ‘ancient, venerable theologians’ (οἱ τε παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι, or “prisca theologi”: *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* 33, 103A-B; cf. *De Iside et Osiride* 10) as the ‘oldest philosophers’, and a high regard for pre-platonic philosophers as teachers of religious wisdom can be found in various classical, (neo)platonist as well as Christian authors (see e.g. Diogenes Laertius, → Augustine, Lactantius, Iamblichus, Proclus, Michael Psellus, and many medieval theologians interested in the → Hermetic literature). To understand how such references came to be interpreted by the Renaissance proponents of prisca theologia, obviously in a Christian context, they must be seen in connection with what various other classical sources had to say about *μαγεία* or magic. Its practitioners (the Magi) were recognized not only among the Persians, but also among the Egyptians, Babylonians, Syrians and Indians. And beginning with Pseudo-Plato (*Alcibiades* 1.122A) there existed a tradition – e.g. Diogenes Laertius, Dio Chrysostomus and Porphyry – which held that this *μαγεία* was not a black art but the ancient “worship of the gods” (Albert de Jong, *Traditions*

*of the Magi* [1997], 393, 400). Combining these two traditions, it was natural for Renaissance philosophers to conclude from the sources at their disposal that true philosophy had not begun with the Greeks and true religion had not begun with the Hebrews; the two had their common origin in a much more ancient “prisca theologia” or “prisca sapientia”, also known as magic and widespread in the ancient world; and of course – by the very fact that it was “true” – this ancient wisdom had to be compatible with the fundamental tenets of Christianity.

In terms of its underlying macrohistorical assumptions [→ Macrohistories], this thesis contained an inherent paradox that has not been systematically analyzed by scholars. In 1964 Frances Yates opened her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* with the statement that ‘[t]he great forward movements of the Renaissance all derive their vigour, their emotional impulse, from looking backwards’, and continued by nicely formulating the fundamental paradox: ‘progress was revival, rebirth, renaissance of antiquity’ (1964, 1). She did not, however, call attention to the deeper roots of the same paradox: the very superiority of Christianity with respect to earlier religions would seem to imply a doctrine of progress, whereas the idea of a superior prisca theologia would seem to imply a doctrine of degeneration.

It might be suggested that the concept of a “philosophia perennis”, which is historically later than that of “prisca theologia” (see below), reflects a certain awareness of this paradox and perhaps an attempt at solving it. The earlier term emphasized the idea of a wisdom that has been lost, forgotten, overlooked or neglected, and should now be recovered (implicitly admitting, even if this was not the conscious intention of its defenders, that Christianity had so far failed to recover it), whereas the later one emphasized the continuity of true wisdom through the ages. The perennial wisdom had always been present: the fundamental verities of true religion – monotheism, the Trinity, the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, and so on – could be found already in the religious wisdom of the ancient philosophers. This emphasis on “enduring truth” might mitigate the danger of making the ancient wisdom superior to the more recent religion of Christianity, but of course it did not really solve the problem: if the fundamental verities of Christianity had already been known before the birth of Christ, did this not undermine the uniqueness of the Christian revelation and perhaps even make it superfluous? But the logical solution – perceiving Christianity as superior to any earlier



religious wisdom, implying a macrohistory of religious progress – would imply the inferiority of the “ancient wisdom” and thereby undermine the very project of either a *prisca theologia* or a *philosophia perennis*. From a historical perspective, this inherent paradoxality might be seen as the main creative impetus that has propelled the continuing quest for “tradition”: the very fact that the problem could never be definitely solved made it necessary to keep trying.

### 3. MAIN AUTHORS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Perhaps not surprisingly, the originator of the Renaissance *prisca theologia* discourse was not a Christian. The Byzantine platonist → Giorgios Gemistos Plethon (1355/1360–1454) believed in a universal religious philosophy, the principles of which were ‘as old as the universe and were always among mankind’. The most ancient representative of this wisdom known to Plethon was Zoroaster, whom he believed to have flourished some 5000 years before the Trojan War and be the author of the Chaldaean Oracles (actually written in the 2nd century C.E.). From here, Plethon outlined a chain of sages: in chronological order the universal religious wisdom had been proclaimed by Zoroaster, Eumolpus (founder of the Eleusinian mysteries), Minos (the Cretan lawgiver), Lycurgus (the Spartan legislator), Iphitus (the reviver of the Olympic games), and Numa (reformer of Roman religious worship). By means of the Pythagoreans the original Zoroastrian wisdom had finally reached Plato. Plethon, who had little respect for the Egyptians, never mentioned Hermes Trismegistus.

→ Marsilio Ficino’s *Theologia Platonica* presents Plato – read by Ficino through neoplatonic lenses – as essentially a religious author. That the foundational tenets of his “theology” did not originate with him but had very ancient origins is already suggested in the “Argumentum” that prefaces Ficino’s famous translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (1463; publ. 1471). Ficino here describes a genealogy of wisdom – explicitly referred to as *prisca theologia* – consisting of six main figures: Mercurius (Hermes) Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus (an Orphic teacher of Pythagoras), Pythagoras, Philolaus, Plato. Except for Trismegistus, the genealogy is derived from Proclus (*Theologia Platonica* I, 5), but Ficino explicitly follows → Augustine (*De civ. Dei* XVIII, 39) in placing Hermes after Moses, who may have been learned in all the arts of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22) but cannot have derived his wisdom from Hermetic sources. This primacy accorded to Moses did not last, how-

ever: from 1464 on and until the end of his life, Ficino decided to give precedence to Zoroaster as the very earliest *prisca theologia* (largely because of the authority of the biblical story of the Magi, interpreted as Zoroastrians, who had worshipped the Christ Child as ‘the ultimate Zoroastrian’; see Allen 1998, 37–40, cit. 39). Zoroaster preceded not only Hermes Trismegistus, but even Moses; in fact, associating Zoroaster with the Chaldaeans as well as the Persians, Ficino suggested that Abraham himself had already taken the Zoroastrian wisdom with him when he set out from the city of Ur of the Chaldaeans in quest of the promised land (Allen o.c., 39). Accordingly, in Ficino’s *Philebus*-commentary (1469) and in the *Theologia Platonica*, finished in 1474, Philolaus has vanished and Zoroaster is added as the very first authority in the list, with Hermes as the second one (see e.g. *Theol. Plat.* 4.2.1; 6.1.7; 10.3.5; 17.1.2; 17.4.4; 17.4.11). Interestingly, although Ficino mentions Zoroaster more than seventy times in his work, and almost fifty times with reference to the Persian Magi, and although he clearly associates him with magic, he made no reference to the traditional topos of Zoroaster as the one who had invented it (Stausberg 1998, 163; and cf. 503–569).

That Ficino – undoubtedly inspired by Plethon – gave Zoroaster the first place in his chain of wisdom is of great importance for understanding how the *prisca theologia* could come to be seen as support for a revival of → magic and the occult philosophy [→ Occult/Occultism] in Renaissance culture. Since the neoplatonic theurgy of the Chaldaean Oracles was attributed to Zoroaster, the chief of the Magi and earliest in the chain of wisdom, nothing could be more logical than seeing *prisca theologia* and *mageia* as equivalent. Hence the conclusion, attributed to → Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, that ‘Zoroaster . . . in practicing magic, took that to be the cult of God and study of divinity; while engaged in this in Persia he most successfully investigated every virtue and power of nature, in order to know those sacred and sublime secrets of the divine intellect; which subject many people called theurgy, others Cabala or magic’ (Pico as quoted by Pietro Crinito, see Walker 1972, 50). It must be noted that, remarkably, Hermes Trismegistus is the only *prisca theologia* not listed as a magician by Pico (Farmer 1998, 121); perhaps because he wanted to avoid the notorious problem of the “god-making” passages in the *Asclepius* (23–24, 37–38), condemned by Augustinus as idolatrous. Pico differs from Ficino not only in his explicit defense of *mageia* as the ‘perfect and highest wisdom’ and ‘nothing but the absolute consummation



of the philosophy of nature' (in contrast, of course, to the 'execrable and monstrous' practices of *goëteia*; see *De hom. dign.*), but notably also in espousing a syncretism so extreme and all-encompassing that it ended up relativizing the very exclusivity of the *prisca theologia*: truth could be found in many, indeed in all traditions, including Averroes, the Quran, the kabbalah, and even Aristotle and the medieval scholastics (Schmitt 1966, 513; cf. Farmer 1998).

While Ficino gave chronological priority to Moses over Hermes (although not over Zoroaster), others argued that Hermes had lived much earlier. Thus → Lodovico Lazzarelli referred to Diodorus Siculus, who in his *Bibliotheca Historica* I. 13ff. had related how first the gods and then men reigned in Egypt. Since it is known that Trismegistus 'lived among the gods in the time of the gods' – which is taken to mean 'perfect and true men and sages' –, Lazzarelli concludes that therefore he cannot have lived in the period of the Pharaohs, who were 'neither divine nor true and perfect men, but can scarcely be called human at all' (1st Preface to Correggio). And in his *Crater Hermetis* (3.1) he quotes Porphyry (Fragment 323 F), according to whom the Egyptians were the first 'to pass on the tradition', which moved on from them to the Phoenicians and the Assyrians, and from there reached the Hebrews. In Lazzarelli, then, more clearly than in either Ficino or Pico, it is Hermes Trismegistus who stands at the origin of the *prisca theologia*. Zoroaster is mentioned only once (*Crater* 30.1), with reference to Pseudo-Plato's Alcibiades 1.122 A (see above), and Lazzarelli does not discuss his place in the chronology. Lazzarelli is also interesting in how he handles the paradox of *prisca theologia* mentioned above (sect. 1). In an attempt to solve the problem of the god-making passages in the *Asclepius*, he argues that Hermes had lapsed into idolatry because as a pagan he was not yet capable of perfectly understanding the message revealed to him; only Christians are capable of this, and only in his own days has the harmony between hermetism and Christianity been fully revealed – in the person of Lazzarelli's master → Giovanni "Mercurio" da Correggio, the "hermetic Christ". Thus Lazzarelli comes close to achieving the impossible: defending the *prisca theologia* within a discourse of "progress" – not, of course, of the divine truth as such, but of its correct understanding and expression by human recipients – from Hermetism, via Christianity, to the synthesis of both in his own times.

A clear preference for Hermes over Zoroaster is also to be found in → Francesco Giorgio. Although

Giorgio generally mentions Zoroaster in a positive sense, Hermes is given much greater prominence. Among all the *prisca theologi* he has revealed the highest and most sublime wisdom, derived not from books or human science but directly from the divine source itself (*In Scripturam Sacram Problemata* c. 316, VI). Giorgio frequently refers to all the other standard *prisca theologi* but – espousing rather a "philosophia perennis" approach – seems somewhat less concerned with genealogies and more with the general theme of a continuity of wisdom: he tends to merely give lists of authorities rather than putting them in a clear chronological order. The exception to this is his insistence on the priority of Moses: in the end, all the non-biblical authorities in his many lists, Hermes included, are imitators of Moses, the only man who ever spoke with God face to face.

→ Francesco Patrizi's genealogies of wisdom are strange variations on Ficino's, and surprisingly start with Noah's son Ham, usually considered the originator of idolatry, superstition and demonic magic. Patrizi's genealogies exist in several variations, but their main elements seem to be that Ham is either identical with Zoroaster or had a son of that name, who was a contemporary of Abraham and was known in Egypt as Osiris. Zoroaster/Osiris's counselor there was a certain Hermes Trismegistus, whose grandson was likewise called Hermes Trismegistus. This younger Hermes was a little older than Moses, and wrote the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Orpheus adopted the Hermetic wisdom when he came to Egypt, and took it with him to Greece, from whence it was passed on from Aglaophemus and Pythagoras to Plato and his pupils.

The Italian *prisca theologia* tradition was adopted by many later authors during the 16th century and beyond. In addition to the central *prisca theologi* already mentioned, other names came to be added. Among the more frequent candidates were Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Noah, the Brahmins, the Druids (popular among French authors, for obvious chauvinistic reasons), and the Sybils. But later genealogies of ancient wisdom might also include e.g. Asclepius, Musaeus, Daedalus, Homer, Lycurgus, Solon, Heraclitus, Aristotle, Eudoxus, Democritus, Plotinus, Numenius, Philo of Alexandria, Origin, Augustinus – in short, anyone considered an authority by the author in question. Special mention must be made of the French authors (including, among many others, → Lefèvre d'Étapes, → Champier, → Lefèvre de la Boderie, and → Foix-Candale) who adopted the *prisca theologia*-tradition from Italy. They provide often very different lists of ancient sages, but in line with their

cautious attitude towards magic (Walker 1972, 63), Hermes tends to be given precedence over Zoroaster. The crucial question always concerned, rather, the relative priority of Hermes Trismegistus and Moses. Most French authors (e.g. Champier, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Louis le Caron, Philippe de Mornay) preferred the safer because more obviously orthodox option of making Hermes a contemporary or successor of Moses, thus making sure that the origins of wisdom could be located with the Hebrews, from where it could have been passed on via Egypt to other Gentile nations. A minority of French authors (e.g. Foix-Candale) followed Lazarelli in giving chronological priority to Hermes; but those who chose that option were careful to restrict the pre-Jewish revelation only to those religious truths that could be attained by natural reason (Walker 1972, 70).

The entire edifice of the *prisca theologia* obviously rested on belief in the great antiquity of the founding authorities and their writings: Zoroaster and Hermes. In 1567, Gilbert Genebrard in his *Chronographia* gave arguments why Hermes could not have been a contemporary or predecessor of Moses but must have lived in more recent times, and additional arguments were adduced by Matthieu Beroalde in 1575. Jean van Gorp (*Hieroglyphica*, 1580) even went as far as denying that Hermes had ever existed. Patrizi's four-volume *Discussiones peripateticae* (1581), which strongly restated the *prisca theologia* perspective, was attacked in 1584 and 1585 by a pupil of Genebrard, the humanist grammarian Teodoro Angelucci, who used all the arguments given by Genebrard, Beroalde and van Gorp. Responses by Patrizi and his friend Francesco Muti did not succeed in changing Angelucci's mind, and in a long letter to Antonio Persio written in 1588 (first published by Mulsow in 2002) he wrote down the most thorough criticism of the *prisca theologia* edifice known to us from the 16th century. In 1614, finally, Isaac Casaubon published his *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI*, in one chapter of which he correctly dated the *Corpus Hermeticum*, thus definitely undermining the intellectual foundations of the *prisca theologia* edifice. As for the *Chaldaean Oracles*, their attribution to Zoroaster seems to have been first questioned by the Calvinist theologian Theodore Beza; and from the 17th century on, an increasing number of scholars (e.g. Petrus Lambecius, Theophilus Spizelius, Johann Heinrich Ursinus, Thomas Burnet) came to recognize them correctly as products of hellenistic platonism from the period after Christ.

The term *philosophia perennis*, as distinct from

*prisca theologia*, was first introduced in 1540 by the theologian and biblical scholar Agustino Steuco, then librarian of the Vatican. A representative of the liberal wing of 16th-century Catholic theology, Steuco was a staunch opponent of the Reformation. In fact, both the *prisca theologia* and the *philosophia perennis* in the Renaissance in general seem to have been largely a Roman Catholic affair: not by chance, Casaubon's 1614 attack on the authenticity of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was the product of a Protestant scholar criticizing a church history in Counter-Reformation style (Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1588-1607). As explained by Walker (1972, 126f.), the few Protestants influenced by the Ancient Theology belonged to the more liberal wing of the Reformation, that based its arguments on an appeal to reason; but most Protestants either neglected the *prisca theologia* or heaped scorn on it.

Steuco's large work *De perenni philosophia*, dedicated to the author's friend and protector Pope Paul III, was reprinted several times during the 16th century and enjoyed much prestige until far in the 17th century. Although it also came in for its share of criticism, it was never placed on the Index, contrary to some other works by Steuco that were hit by official condemnations. Its key theme, which defines the very concept of *philosophia perennis*, is the existence of 'one principle of all things, of which there has always been one and the same knowledge among all peoples'. As pointed out by Schmitt, Steuco's narrative is lacking in any concept of progress. Instead, he emphasizes either continuity or degradation: in the first stages of history knowledge is still perfect, being handed down by God himself; then it gets dissipated and scattered; and finally, 'it seems to us to be like a mere story or dream' (Schmitt 1966, 517). After the Flood, the perfect divine knowledge began to decline, as many things had not been written down and were forgotten. The *vera philosophia* was kept alive only by the few, mainly among the Chaldaeans, Armenians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians and Phoenicians. From the Chaldaeans the true wisdom was passed on to the Jews, who transmitted it to the Egyptians, from whom it traveled on to the Greeks, who finally introduced it to the Romans. Steuco roughly follows Ficino's genealogy of wisdom but strongly emphasizes Hermes Trismegistus, who is mentioned no less than 214 times (against 16 times for Zoroaster and 96 for Orpheus; Crociata 1987, 234-239) and whose importance might be equal even to that of Moses. Somewhat like Pico, he is engaged in a project of extreme syncretism, trying 'to make nearly everyone agree' (Schmitt o.c., 523).

This includes the philosophy of Aristotle, who is treated with respect but clearly seen as inferior to the tradition flowing from ‘divinus Plato’ (*De per. phil.* III, 10).

Charles B. Schmitt has traced the reception history of Steuco’s work through the 16th and 17th centuries up to the early 18th, discussing defenders of his approach as well as critics (1966, 524-531). An important late adherent of this history is Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who was long believed to have invented the term *philosophia perennis*. He used it in a much quoted letter to Remond (August 26, 1714): ‘Truth is more widely spread than one might think, but it is very often obscured . . . In calling attention to these traces of truth among the Ancients . . . one would be drawing the gold from the mud, the diamond from its mine, and light out of darkness; and that would in fact be *perennis quaedam Philosophia*’. Important here is that Leibniz seems to have been the first to mention the term *philosophia perennis* without specific reference to Steuco. The result was a rupture in the transmission history of the term: while Steuco’s work fell into oblivion and Leibniz’s fame caused his reference to be picked up by later authors unaware of its Renaissance precedents, “*philosophia perennis*” now began to be used in a new, more general and often vaguer way.

#### 4. THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS

*Prisca theologia*, *philosophia perennis* or related concepts of a primordial or universal tradition of wisdom play only a minor role in the predominantly Protestant esoteric traditions of → Paracelsianism, → Rosicrucianism and → early Christian Theosophy (Favre 1999, 12-16). The phenomenon of an “invention of Tradition” only re-emerged as a major trend in Western esoteric currents with → Freemasonry in the early 18th century. The *Constitutions* of James Anderson (1723) contain a grand mythical history of the Order, beginning with Adam, who had ‘the Liberal Sciences, particularly Geometry, written on his heart’ by the Grand Architect of the universe. He taught it to his sons, and from there it spread all over the world. Almost all biblical personalities of any importance are presented as masons and experts in geometry and architecture, and the story of how this knowledge was transmitted is carried on from biblical times to the 18th century. The *Constitutions* furthermore refer to the existence of a ‘Religion in which all Men agree’, and which allows each Brother the freedom to form his own particular opinions. Thus we see re-emerge the basic themes of a primal wisdom carried on through the ages until it reaches its

present-day representatives, and of a universal religion that transcends external worship and the disagreements of dogmatic theology. But in spite of its prominence in the *Constitutions*, the mythical history of the Order has not come to play a great role in regular Freemasonry; it continued to be further developed mostly in the various systems of “high-grade” masonry, where all kinds of legendary and esoteric materials could be used to construe narratives (often quite fantastic) of how the true knowledge had been passed on. For example the para-masonic → neo-Templar traditions believed in a secret transmission of knowledge since the suppression of the Knights Templars in the middle ages, and the system of the Philaethes proclaimed the existence of ‘a science as ancient as men on earth’ that has been passed on by tradition and that is able to give ‘the greatest possible happiness to man’. This tradition is like the trunk of a tree, from which have sprung the ‘occult sciences, known under the name of magic, kabbalah, hermetic philosophy, theosophy, pneumatology, theurgy etc.’, all of which are seen as closely related to Freemasonry. Important later authors who include a variety of earlier esoteric currents and the occult sciences within a masonic context are e.g. → Jean-Marie Ragon de Bettignies (*La philosophie occulte*, 1853) and John Yarker (*Scientific and Religious Mysteries of Antiquity* [1878], *The Arcane Schools* [1909]).

The notion of “tradition” begins to play a role in the Christian theosophical current only during the later 18th century. Johann Friedrich Kleuker (1749-1827), in his commentary on the first books by Saint-Martin, speaks of a ‘chain of Tradition’ that can be perceived through all periods of history. This ‘continuous thread’ has its origin in ‘an original light’, and ultimately leads back to the Creator himself. → Louis Claude de Saint-Martin himself, in *De l’esprit des choses* (1802), speaks of a “mother Tradition” written by God in the very hearts of men and anterior to any books or human traditions. The latter are only “copies” of the one Tradition, it being understood that the Jewish and Christian ones are more faithful to the original. The macrohistorical notion of degeneration – in line with basic Christian theosophical notions of the Fall – is clearly implied in Saint-Martin’s description of ‘all traditions of the earth . . . as ruins of a fundamental mother-tradition’ (o.c. II, 147). The same notion of a “mother-tradition” is also adopted by → Franz von Baader (*Sämtliche Werke* IX, 371-381).

In → Swedenborg, although his system has no room for a concept of the Fall, we find remnants of

classic golden-age theories and the idea of a gradual decline of wisdom. The members of the “most ancient church”, before the Flood, were “celestial people”; their “adamic intellect” allowed them to communicate directly with the angels and have an intuitive grasp of the truth. They were followed by the “most ancient” church after the Flood, the members of which no longer had an intuitive grasp of the truth, but could read the signs of divine wisdom in nature, and expressed it by means of an elaborate system of signs, images, emblems and hieroglyphs. The third, “Jewish Church” represented a further stage of decline; but the Old Testament still contained the true wisdom in a coded form, which the Jews themselves did not understand. The birth of “the Lord” in the person of Jesus Christ was the beginning of the fourth Church, which declined and degenerated, and will now be replaced by the fifth or “New Church” based upon Swedenborg’s own revelations. Swedenborg may be seen as a boundary case in terms of the concept of “tradition” as understood here. His work does not contain any concept of a *philosophia perennis* carried on by inspired sages through history; but one might say that his revelations are intended to lead humanity back to a *prisca theologia* or primal divine wisdom, which has been reinstated by “the Lord” in successive stages of history. In describing those stages, however, Swedenborg does not focus on persons (there are no significant references in his work to e.g. Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Pythagoras, or Plato) but on *Churches*: even many persons mentioned in the Old Testament are interpreted as codes for Churches and divisions of Churches.

It is interesting to compare Swedenborg’s approach with that of another 18th-century author, → Antoine Court de Gébelin in his *Le monde primitif* (9 vols.; 1773-1782). Both attempt to recover an original wisdom that was known to the most ancient peoples, and a lost harmony between heaven and earth, and both believe that the original knowledge was once expressed in the “hieroglyphic” language of myth and symbol. Both also combine Protestant backgrounds with a rationalist approach of “demythologization”, that seeks to decipher ancient traditions according to an allegorical method. Both, furthermore, do not concentrate on the philosophers of antiquity but are mostly interested in how the wisdom of the ancients flows into the Hebrew tradition and is passed on from there. But different from the case of Swedenborg, Court’s strongly neoplatonic and neopythagorean approach explicitly refers to e.g. the Hermetic writings and kabbalistic traditions.

Later than Swedenborg and Court, but still representing a somewhat similar approach, is the neo-Pythagorean esotericist → Antoine Fabre d’Olivet. Fabre believed that all doctrines were derived from ‘a grand Unity, the eternal source from which everything flows’ (*Histoire philosophique du genre humain* I, 1). This original unity corresponds with an original language revealed directly by God. From the four antediluvian idioms of this language derive the three primordial idioms of Hebrew, Sanskrit and Chinese, all three of which are hieroglyphic languages that contain deep esoteric truths. The “Tradition” or primitive revelation was passed on from Egypt to, notably, → Moses, Pythagoras and Orpheus; but Fabre also refers to Buddha, writes that Orpheus derived his ideas from Ram, Zoroaster and Krishna (“Krischnen”), and suggests that Moses’ knowledge has its origins in Atlantis. In other words, we find in his works a confused reception of *prisca theologia* and *philosophia perennis* traditions combined with a new interest in Hinduism and Buddhism, typical of his time. However, it is important to realize that, all these references to historical traditions, persons and lines of transmission notwithstanding, Fabre’s approach is explicitly non-historical. Undoubtedly in reaction to the “historicism” typical of the Romantic era, he is at pains to distinguish between “allegorical” and “positive” history. The latter merely records dates and events, and is inferior to the former. Allegorical history, which alone is worthy of study, freely includes fictional and mythological elements, and ‘arranges events that may never have happened into a dramatization of the spiritual destiny of humanity’ (McCalla 1998, 259). The very distinction between fiction and truth in historiography is rejected as the sterile product of the ‘cold chronologists’. This attitude already foreshadows the blanket rejection of academic historiography typical of the 20th-century Traditionalist current, and in fact Fabre d’Olivet must be regarded as a major source for the latter (Faivre 1999, 22).

The general idea of a “primitive Tradition” (also referred to e.g. by → Joseph de Maistre), the rise of “historical consciousness” in the early 19th century, the new knowledge of and appreciation for oriental religions, and the Romantic quest for a universal mythology and symbolism, all combined to produce a novel genre of esoteric and occultist historiography in the 19th century. While presenting themselves as factual and descriptive histories, in fact its representatives typically mix up fact and fancy, history and myth, thus producing highly fantastic narratives carried by the Romantic attraction

of arcane secrets, long forgotten or suppressed by the establishment but now finally revealed. Thus → Éliphas Lévi in his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (1854-1856) proclaimed ‘the discovery of the grand secrets of religion and the primitive science of the magi and the unity of the universal dogma’; and his *History of Magic* (1859) is a thoroughly confused and highly Romantic amalgam of traditions beginning with the ‘fabulous origins’ of magic in the books of Enoch, continuing with Zoroaster, the Indian gymnosophists (descended from Cain and the source of → gnosticism), the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus and the → Tarot, the Greeks (incl. Orpheus), Pythagoras, and the Jewish kabbalah. Although Plato gets less attention (he had ‘less depth but more eloquence than Pythagoras’, and his ‘doctrine’ was derived from Egypt; o.c., 124, 127), one still recognizes here the main stages of the traditional *prisca theologia*; but with the important qualification that all these traditions of ancient wisdom are now seen as reflections of “kabbalah”, understood in a universal sense [→ Jewish Influences V].

Many books based upon essentially the same approach have been published since the second half of the 19th century and throughout the 20th, in the contexts of occultism and modern Theosophy. They typically trace their authors’ own beliefs and religious allegiances back to the teachings of ancient “mystery schools” in East and West, and most of them are in fact attempts at comparative study of religions from an esoteric point of view. All of them claim a universal wisdom, as programmatically formulated e.g. by → Anna Kingsford in *The Perfect Way* (1881, Introduction): ‘there has been in the world from the earliest ages a system which . . . being founded in the nature of Existence itself, is eternal in its truth and application, and . . . is no other than that which all the great religions of the world have, under various guises and with varying degrees of success, striven to express’.

One particular title must be highlighted here, not only because of its enormous influence (it has been reprinted many hundreds of times, and translated into many languages), but because it explicitly combines the original Renaissance concept of *prisca theologia* with a 19th-century project of “comparative religions” on occultist foundations. → Edouard Schuré’s *The Great Initiates: A Study of the Secret History of Religions* (French orig. 1889) is based upon a genealogy that places the sources of wisdom in India, but has it flow from there by way of Egypt to Israel and Greece, finally to culminate in Christianity: his genealogy of “great initiates” consists of Rama, Krishna, Hermes, Moses, Or-

pheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus (Schuré published a separate treatise devoted to Buddha). Schuré writes that the truth has always been available to man: it can be found in all the great religions and sacred books, if only one knows how to read them. Referring to Leibniz’s mention of a *perennis quaedam philosophia*, he explicitly announces a “comparative esotericism” that proves the great antiquity, continuity, and unity of esoteric doctrine in East and West.

##### 5. TRADITIONALISM/PERENNIALISM

Occultist historiographies as discussed above are engaged in an “invention of tradition” within a 19th-century historicist context: uncritical and naive though they may be in their use of sources, and questionable though their underlying assumptions may be, they are nevertheless attempts at writing actual histories of the “ancient wisdom” and its continuation through the ages. Their implicit respect for historiography – i.e., the importance attached to sources and documents as “proof”, see e.g. the mysterious books referred to by → H.P. Blavatsky as basic to *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* – makes their approach different from that of the so-called “perennialist” or “Traditionalist” current represented by authors like → René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, → Frithjof Schuon, → Julius Evola, Seyyed Hosseyn Nasr and many others. As summarized by Antoine Faivre (1999, 33), the perennialist perspective is based upon three postulates: (1) There exists a primordial Tradition of non-human origin – humanity has not invented but received it – which has progressively gotten lost, and of which the various historical traditions and metaphysics are the *membra disjecta*. The source of this Tradition cannot be identified by means of scholarly historiography. (2) Modern Western culture, science and civilization is inherently incompatible with Tradition; never before has humanity been alienated from the latter as seriously as today. (3) The Tradition may be recovered, partially at least, by focusing on the common denominators of the various religious and metaphysical traditions. Such research cannot be neutral but requires the seeker to embrace the fundamental Traditional values and perspectives, and preferably to have undergone “initiation”. The Tradition can only be understood from the perspective of Tradition itself; the very idea of neutral, “disinterested” historical research in which the evidence of surviving sources is the ultimate yardstick reflects a modernist and historicist perspective incompatible with Tradition.

→ René Guénon, usually seen as the “founder”



of the 20th-century “perennialist” or “traditionalist” school, was born in a milieu of strict Catholicism, and his concept of tradition owes much to his early familiarity with the French current of Roman Catholic “traditionalism”, including authors such as Jean-Sébastien Devoucoux (1804-1870), → F.-G. Lacuria (1806-1890), Jean-Baptiste Pitra (1812-1889) and Alexis de Sarachaga (1840-1918). Guénon does not use the term “*philosophia perennis*” but prefers to speak of “the primordial tradition” or simply “metaphysics”. He never clearly defines it, not even in the chapter “What must we understand by Tradition?” in his *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues* (1921); but one may summarize his perspective by saying that Tradition for him stands, quite simply, for the enduring Truth as he sees it. This Truth is based upon certain metaphysical “first principles”, which are therefore universal by definition. They cannot be doubted: any attempt to “prove” their truth by arguments means putting the cart before the horse, for these principles themselves should be accepted as the foundation and starting point, in order for any correct understanding of reality to be possible at all. It is therefore internally consistent that Guénon refuses to play by the rules of the historian and does not underpin his statements by source quotations; and all the more so since “historical consciousness” itself is a product of modernity, which is considered the antithesis of Tradition in all respects. Likewise, he does not appeal to the authority of earlier wisdom traditions or inspired teachers and sages; he merely takes it as axiomatic that, through the ages, the Truth has always been available, and has been perceived by those who opened their eyes to it. But it has become ever more difficult to do so, for while the Tradition was still integral to the most ancient cultures (and now still survives notably in primitive, Chinese, Hindu and Islamic ones), a gradual process of degeneration has taken place, reaching its final and lowest point in the present “Kali Yuga” based upon the “reign of quantity” that dominates the modern West: whereas Traditional cultures were based upon correct metaphysical principles, modern Western culture indoctrinates the population with values and principles that are the very antithesis of Tradition. It is not possible to lead the world back to Traditional culture by means of reforms; the cycle will have to run its course, after which a fresh one will begin. Those who embrace Traditional values therefore have no other option than an “inner emigration”, being in the world but not of it, perhaps in Traditionalist communities that are like islands of truth in the general sea of modernist error.

As for Western esoteric currents, they have no special prominence in Guénon’s vision. The various French occultist currents and orders in which he was himself involved during his early years he later came to reject as perversions, and he wrote books against → spiritualism and the perspective of the → Theosophical Society. About the hermetic/alchemical, paracelsian and Christian theosophical currents since the Renaissance – a period which for him represented not a rebirth of ancient wisdom but one more stage in the process of degeneration – he knew little, and cared less. We discuss him in the present context, therefore, not because he identified himself as belonging to the history of Western esotericism but because, as a matter of historical fact, his perspective has come to play an important role in its subsequent development, particularly in the French context. For Guénon himself, the trans-historical “community” with which he identified consisted simply of those in East and West who had let themselves be guided by metaphysical Truth, regardless of their religious allegiance.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) had already developed convictions very similar to Guénon’s by the time he encountered the latter’s writings, by 1930, and began to correspond with him. He preferred the term “primordial doctrine”, but did use the term “*philosophia perennis*” as well; both are synonymous for him with Tradition. Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) is similar to Coomaraswamy in that both found their inspiration originally in the interpretation of art. For Schuon, the perennial wisdom is the key to understanding the “transcendent unity of religions”, and in this he has been followed notably by the influential contemporary historian of religions Huston Smith.

Clearly, in these and similar contemporary authors as well, we are no longer dealing with anything that could be defined as “Western esotericism” in the historical sense of the word (see → Esotericism): Tradition, or perennial philosophy, has become an approach to the comparative study of religions and cultures in general, or even a general philosophical perspective on reality as such. Tradition is not *a* tradition, esoteric or otherwise; it is seen as the true metaphysics than can be found in *any* “authentic” tradition. This has not prevented some representatives of the “perennialist” or “traditionalist” school from writing books about Western esoteric currents from their perspective; examples are e.g. Julius Evola’s writings on the hermetic tradition, Leo Schaya’s book about kabbalah, or Titus Burckhardt’s studies of alchemy, and one might add here the masonic interests of authors such as e.g. Constant Chevillon and Jean Tourniac.

But even if some Traditionalists have a more than average interest in at least some Western esoteric currents, their perspective is applied quite as easily to e.g. Tibetan Buddhism (e.g. Marco Pallis), Islam (e.g. Seyyed Hossein Nasr) or Christianity (e.g. Jean Borella).

The vitality of the perennialist or traditionalist milieu is reflected in the flourishing of conferences and colloquia with titles such as “Science and Tradition”, “Tradition and Modernity” and so on, and the publication of quite a number of journals (see details in Faivre 1999, 37, 40f.). In the English language alone, one may think of *Studies in Comparative Religion* (1967-1987), *Sophia: A Journal of Tradition Studies* (since 1995), *Parabola: The Magazine of Myth and Tradition* (since 1975), and *Avaloka: A Journal of Traditional Religion and Culture* (since 1986); in other languages there are journals like e.g. the Italian *Rivista di Studi Tradizionali*, the Spanish and South-American *Axis Mundi: Cosmologia y pensamiento tradicional*, *Symbolos (Arte, Cultura, Gnosis)* and *Epimelia: Revista di Estudios sobre la tradicion*, and the French *Études Traditionnelles* and *Connaissance des Religions*. The scope of such periodicals goes far beyond the domain of Western esotericism; rather, selected currents of the latter tend to be interpreted in strongly religionist fashion as depositories or survivals of Traditional wisdom, their greatest common denominator (and attraction) being their distance from “modernity”. The same common denominator applies to quite a number of influential authors who do not strictly belong to the Traditionalist current but have been influenced by it to some degree; to this group belong e.g. the historian of religions Mircea Eliade, the islam scholar → Henry Corbin, the physicist/philosopher Basarab Nicolescu, the philosopher/anthropologist Gilbert Durand or the philosopher and writer → Raymond Abellio, to mention only a few.

#### 6. PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY IN GENERAL WESTERN CULTURE

Finally, a few words must be said about concepts of “*philosophia perennis*” (or clearly related expressions, such as “*sophia perennis*”) in modern and contemporary Western culture outside the specific domains of Western esotericism and Traditionalism. Since the early 20th century the term has been in use in neo-thomist or neo-scholastic Roman Catholic circles, inspired by authors such as e.g. Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain, where it refers, precisely, to the enduring truth of Roman Catholic theology and philosophy as expressed

particularly by Thomas Aquinas. The term has even been used in this sense by Pope John Paul II, in an address to students (‘Address on the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times’, Rome, 17 nov. 1979). Probably more widely influential has been the book by Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, first published in 1944. Exemplifying the “rupture” in the transmission of the term, referred to earlier, Huxley mentioned neither Steuco nor any of the Traditionalists, but did refer to Leibniz, in this study devoted to ‘the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds’ as well as the psychology and ethics related to it.

In the wake of Huxley’s book, the vague notion of a “perennial philosophy” has come to enjoy a certain vogue in the domains of alternative spirituality and the → New Age movement. Thus we find that even the notorious Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (now referred to as Osho) has published a book (also available as videotape) called *Philosophia Perennis*, devoted to a commentary on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras. Implicit and partly explicit belief in a perennial wisdom is widespread in the New Age movement (see references to e.g. → Edgar Cayce, David Bohm, Matthew Fox, Vivianne Crowley, Caitlín and John Matthews, Stanislaw Grof, Willis Harman, Peter Russell, George Trevelyan, Shirley MacLaine, and the Ramala community, in Hanegraaff 1996/1998, 327-330).

A particularly interesting case, finally, of perennial philosophy in the wake of Huxley is the influential American transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber. In the earlier phase of his career he made many references to his own ideas as a psychological application of the *philosophia perennis*, understood by him as grounded in “unity consciousness”, and usually illustrated with examples from Hinduism and Buddhism (see e.g. *Eye to Eye* [1983], 126-133). In sharp contrast to practically all traditional understandings of the concept (whether in its Renaissance or Traditionalist manifestations), but in line with the mainstream of New Age, Wilber sees no contradiction between his belief in a perennial philosophy and the pronounced evolutionism typical of all his writings. Any sense of nostalgia for a lost or diminished world-order of wholeness and truth, present to some degree in all authors and currents discussed above, is rejected by Wilber as reflecting a Romantic sentimentalism that mistakenly looks backwards in search of a lost paradise, instead of aspiring to transcendence as the final term of the evolution of consciousness. It is not in the “pre-personal” stage of mere indiffer-

entiated fusion but in the “trans-personal” stage of integrated wholeness that salvation can be found; with this message, the philosophia perennis has definitively left the realm of history that has been our concern here, and entered the domain of the mind.

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WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

## Trithemius, Johannes, \* 1.2.1462 Tritenheim, † 16.12.1516 Würzburg

### 1. LIFE AND WORK 2. THEORY OF MAGIC 3. TRITHEMIUS’S INFLUENCE

#### 1. LIFE AND WORK

Benedictine abbot of St. Martin at Sponheim, 1483-1505, and of St. Jacob at Würzburg, 1506-1516. Notable for writings in the fields of monastic instruction, mystical theology, ecclesiastical history, Christian humanism, demonology, and → magic. In his capacity as a working magician Trithemius is counted among the pioneers of the art of cryptography, his foremost contributions in this area consisting of his uncompleted *Steganographia* (c. 1500) and *Polygraphia* (1508).

Following youthful stays in Trier and the Netherlands, Trithemius settled in Heidelberg for the completion of his formal education. While there he fell into company with some of the foremost German humanists of his day, among them Conrad Celtis (1459-1508), Jacob Wimpfeling (1450-1528) and → Johannes Reuchlin, joining them in forming the Rhenish literary sodality. On assuming the Sponheim abbacy he transformed his cloister into a renowned seat of Christian learning containing over two thousand handcopied and printed volumes. In time, however, resulting from a combination of the disruptions caused by numerous outside visitors and his reputation as a stern taskmaster who busied his charges in the cloister’s scriptorium even as the novel technology of printing was making handcopying anachronistic, Trithemius came into such acerbic conflict with his Sponheim monks that he reluctantly severed connection with them and his magnificent library. Following temporary stopovers at Cologne and Berlin as a guest of the margrave-electors Joachim of Brandenburg, Trithemius took up permanent residence in the more austere surroundings of Würzburg.

In his monastic and mystical roles Trithemius, an active participant in the Bursfeld reform movement, inscribed numerous sermons exhorting learned piety and delineated successive stages of spiritual ascent following guidelines laid down by, among others, Jean Gerson (1363-1469) and → Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). In his historiographical role he composed chronicles, annals, catalogs,

biographies, and an autobiography, in which capacity, prodded by a zeal to establish hereditary links between contemporary Germans and the ancient Trojans and Druids, he did not demur from fabricating such ancient chroniclers as Hunibald and Meginfrid. In his humanist role he advocated the union of eloquence with knowledge, in the furtherance of which he encouraged linguistic skills in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. It is, however, in his demonological and magical roles that Trithemius most famously has come to the attention of successive generations.

According to a story put into circulation soon after his death Trithemius was once summoned to the court of Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) where, in a dramatic demonstration of his necromantic powers, he conjured from the dead, together with sundry ancient heroes, Maximilian's deceased wife Mary of Burgundy. That a comparable feat was contemporaneously ascribed to a certain Doctor Faustus (c. 1480-c. 1540) at the court of Maximilian's grandson Charles V (1500-1558) was not lost to the demonological critics of both men. It apparently did not help his case that, in the first documented evidence of the historical personage behind the Faustus legend, Trithemius presented a highly unflattering epistolary portrait of its subject. For despite Trithemius's efforts to distinguish between his own divinely sanctioned magic and the illicit magic of Faustus, he subsequently accrued a diabolical legend of his own resembling that of Faustus. What decisively separates Trithemius's legend from its Faustian analogue is that, whereas Faustus did not leave behind so much as a written word about the motivation for his magical interests, depending for that on others incorporating it into their own agendas, Trithemius bequeathed a formidable scholarly corpus documenting his own motivation.

Until 1499 Trithemius' reputation rested primarily on his monastic, mystical and humanist writings. Then, in that year, his magical notoriety burst onto the historical stage like a lightning bolt, signaled by a 1499 letter to a Carmelite friend, Arnold Bostius (1445-1499), announcing the birth of the art of steganography, a form of cryptography ostensibly invoking angels for the conveyance of secret messages. Far from having himself invented the art therein described, Trithemius assured Bostius, he had been instructed in its principles through a divine revelation. Inasmuch as the intended recipient had deceased prior to the letter's arrival, the prior of his cloister gained access to its contents and, aghast at what he therein encountered, insti-

gated the abbot's necromantic legend. If the unforeseen disclosure of the Bostius epistle can be said to have delivered the first serious blow to Trithemius's reputation, a second severe blow was inflicted in the following decade by the French scholar Carolus Bovillus (c. 1479-1553), who, following a 1503 Sponheim visit in which he was given access to the partially completed *Steganographia*, condemned its author in a widely circulated letter as a diabolically inspired sorcerer.

Instead of deterring Trithemius from his excursions into the arcana as might be expected, the uproar incited by the Bostius and Bovillus affairs rather had the effect of motivating him to enlarge on and sharpen his theoretical justification of magic. Notable testimonies to this response are found in a defense of magic inserted by Trithemius into his autobiographical *Nepiachus* (1507), extensive prefaces to his *Steganographia* and follow-up *Polygraphia* – the latter purged of the suspect planetary-angelic system of cryptic mediation, and lengthy explicative epistles to selected correspondents. Trithemius's histories in turn furnished sundry anecdotal illustrations for fleshing out his occult principles on the stage of everyday life. Also interlocking his occult with his historiographical methods was a willingness on his part to counterfeit ancient sources for the buttressing of his postulates. For much as Trithemius's "discovery" of Hunibald and Meginfrid in his histories has subsequently proved to be spurious, so can that of a certain ancient cryptographer Menastor in his exposition of steganography.

While appearing to emphasize methods of exorcism more than the inculcation of sorcerers in his demonological treatises, Trithemius nevertheless bears responsibility for encouraging the witch persecutions [→ Witchcraft]. His *Antipalus maleficiorum* (1508), select entries in his *Liber octo questionum* (1508) addressed to Emperor Maximilian, and a preface and outline for a projected encyclopedia of demons – all establish Trithemius's positioning as an unabashed apologist for the witch hunts. Echoing a misogynist bias characterizing a prior treatise on this subject, the *Malleus maleficarum* (1484), Trithemius was in no danger of confusing the sorcery of illiterate female witches with his own interests in occult subjects. The same cannot be said, however, for his unfavorable portrayal of many learned male magicians, among them → Simon Magus and Apollonius of Tyana (1st cent. A.D) in ancient times and → Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio and Faustus in his own day.

## 2. THEORY OF MAGIC

Central to Trithemius's critique of illicit magic is a radical distinction, with such revered prior authorities as St. → Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas to back him up, between miracle and magic. When entering into the arcana on his own, however, with such ancient "pre-Christian" sources as the Greek Pythagoras, the Egyptian → Hermes Trismegistus, and Hebrew kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] as his guides, he effectively reformulated the miracle-magic relationship bequeathed through the Augustinian-Thomist legacies. St. Augustine and St. Thomas had vehemently condemned magic in principle as a demonic instrument intended to lure souls into the Devil's service by feigning true miracles. Trithemius, on the other hand, in keeping with a medieval tradition of ritual magic, distinguished between a diabolically sponsored utilization of magic geared to submerge souls in the demon-infested world and a divinely sponsored utilization of magic geared to lift the human soul above the demon-infested world. Put another way, Trithemius's aim was to transform the Hermetic *magnum miraculum* into a *magnum miraculum Christianum*.

Trithemius's express object in his occult writings, facilitated by the three ancient languages of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew promoted by the Christian humanist movement, was to chart a way, through magical means, to the same unobstructed vision of God – the so-called Beatific Vision – which traditional mystical theology assigned to the culminating stages of spiritual ascent. In keeping with his mystical-magical program Trithemius conceived a series of meditative stages leading from the bounds of finite nature to the boundless realm of God, with the occult sciences [→ occult/occultism] facilitating ascent comprised of Hermetic alchemical [→ alchemy] and natural magic, → astrology, Pythagorean numerology [→ Number Symbolism], Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism] spirit-magic and kabbalah. Distinguishing "true astrology" from a false look-alike denying freedom of the will, Trithemius placed it in the service of "true alchemy" as presented in the Hermetic Emerald Table. He in turn, in several epistolary expositions of his occult theory, coalesced his astrological and alchemical precepts with Pythagorean numerological and kabbalistic ones geared to direct the soul of the magus, as he put it, from the worldly finite to the divinely infinite realms. Guiding each purgative step in the ascent to mystical-magical illumination for Trithemius was the rule of esoteric → secrecy, a principle in his mind simultaneously fulfilling two cardinal

requisites of his occult methodology. The first requisite was to explain why the motive for his magical inquiries had been misunderstood by uninitiated critics, and the second requisite, to furnish a hermeneutic device for protecting the soul of the initiated from contamination by the demons and their human confederates, the witches and sorcerers.

The astrological and angelical backdrop for Trithemius's occult theory is set forth in his *De septem secundeis* (1508), the celestial scheme of which, adopted from → Peter of Abano, establishes a repetitive succession of cosmic-historical cycles governed in turn by seven "secondary intelligences", so-called because they are held to rule under the supervision of the "First Intelligence", God the Creator. Adopting the names of these ruling powers from kabbalah, Trithemius identified them in hierarchical order as Orifel in the sphere of Saturn, Anael in the sphere of Venus, Zachariel in the sphere of Jupiter, Raphael in the sphere of Mercury, Samael in the sphere of Mars, Gabriel in the sphere of the moon, and Michael in the sphere of the sun. According to the chronological scheme presented by Trithemius each planetary angel is appointed to rule for an interval of 354 years and four months, with the seven-interval cycles repeated in continuous revolutions until they are apocalyptically terminated.

By this scheme Trithemius not only envisaged a cosmological context for the discernment of patterns of history, but also, by extending those historical patterns beyond the present, rationalized the possibility of accurately predicting the future. The supposition guiding this tract, like his affiliated historical writings, was that prophecy is an extension of history into the future, and, conversely, history is consummated prophecy. Of the more intriguing passages in this regard, one near the close of the tract, addressed to the third rule of Martial Samael assigned to Trithemius's own time, foretells an imminent religious schism suggestive of the impending Protestant reformation.

Following the identical cosmic scheme, signifying an inner linkage between his cosmographical and steganographical operations, Trithemius conceived of a system of angelic mediators for the conveyance of his cryptographical communications. In the furtherance of his steganographical objectives he subordinated to the seven planetary angels two subservient realms of spirits, the first comprised of 31 regional or district spirits ruling over as many domains or mansions, and the second comprised of 24 temporal spirits ruling over the hours. In addition he subjected to the regional and temporal



angels a multitude of subsidiary angelic attendants likewise accessible to steganographical invocations. Planetary harmony, Trithemius was persuaded, is the outward celestial manifestation of the inward occult harmony suffusing and binding all things; hence, he reasoned, the magus, to gain access to the inner workings of nature, must also gain access to the planetary spheres and to the secondary intelligences ruling over them.

As testified by the 1499 expository letter to Bostius and the later attack on Trithemius's magic by Bovillus, the magical abbot's detractors pointed principally to his steganographical methods, explicitly invoking the assistance of the planetary angels and their regional and temporal subordinates as evidence for his sorcerous intentions. His strategy in warding off such attacks consisted not only of distinguishing what he held to be his licit natural and angel magic from the illicit magic he had so strenuously condemned in his demonological writings. It also consisted of shifting focus to a less suspect form of cryptography, termed polygraphy, the enigmas of which, with the help of a key he himself furnished, were expressly decipherable in linguistic terms free of angelic trappings. Tracing its origins to the ancient world, foretold by Egyptian hieroglyphics, Trithemius counted among its more prominent ancient gentile practitioners, together with the spurious "Menastor", Archimedes, Cicero, and Augustus Caesar. As for its more prominent early Christian practitioners, Trithemius cited among them St. Cyprian, the Venerable Bede, and, serving as a prime paradigm for Maximilian's benefit, Charlemagne.

As the preface to the resulting *Polygraphia* makes clear, the shift in methodology between the two forms of cryptography, steganography and polygraphy, in no way meant a shift away from the theory of magic undergirding their practical applications. If it can be viably maintained that Trithemius's annexation of a key to his steganographical tract bolsters a fully linguistic analysis of his codes and ciphers along the same lines as those guiding his polygraphical operations, it can equally be averred that his polygraphy as fully as his steganography was directed to higher spiritual ends commensurate with those spelled out in his mystical theology. In his polygraphical as in his steganographical theory Trithemius made clear his belief that magic, while having the kinds of practical applications that made it appealing to such secular patrons as Emperor Maximilian, Count-Elector Philip of the Palatinate, and Margrave-Elector Joachim of Brandenburg, at bottom is aimed at a transmundane

goal, to wit, the conveyance of the magician's soul from earth to Heaven.

### 3. TRITHEMIUS'S INFLUENCE

Finding an apt precursor and alter ego in his German predecessor → Albertus Magnus, Trithemius claimed among his own more notable disciples → Agrippa of Nettesheim, who dedicated the first edition of his *De occulta philosophia* (1510) to the abbot. Although a widely promulgated report that Trithemius had tutored → Paracelsus in the arcana is not so easily verifiable, there is no question that various subsequent representatives of the Paracelsian movement [→ Paracelsianism], among them → Jacques Gohory (= Leo Suavius, † 1576) and → Gérard Dorn (16th cent.), elaborated on the precepts of their master under that working assumption. Across the channel → John Dee expressly credited Trithemius, following a chance discovery of a manuscript copy of the *Steganographia* while on a diplomatic assignment to Antwerp in 1563, with stimulating the composition of his kabbalah-inspired *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564). It was, however, through his occult specialties of steganography and polygraphy that Trithemius exercised the most patent and durable impact on future generations – a legacy which, while still exercising influence on modern day enciphering practices, found in the two centuries following his death its most outspoken and sustained train of emulators. Among the more expressly indebted beneficiaries of Trithemius's cryptic methods during this period, all presenting prefaces to their relevant tracts attesting to the abbot's pious intentions, were Sigismund of Seon († 1634); Duke August II of Braunschweig-Lüneburg under the pseudonym Gustavus Selenus (1579-1666); Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz (1606-1682); and Wolfgang Ernst Heidel († 1721).

Complicating the course of Trithemius's posthumous reputation is the fact that he presented in his demonological writings the same kinds of arguments as have been leveled against him by many of his critics. The posthumous debate surrounding his name understandably intersected not only with the witch hunts which he helped to foster, but also with Reformation polemics and the unfolding scientific revolution. Whereas Protestant critics tended to perceive a connection between Trithemius's magic and his "superstitious" Catholic beliefs and monastic way of life and Catholic critics tended to view his magic as a well-meaning but errant excursus from an otherwise impeccable career in the promotion of learned piety, Protestants and Catholics

alike could be found to make use of his cryptological methods, and even to enlarge on them, with the practical intent of hiding their true thoughts from the uninitiated. And whereas some receptive to the emerging currents of philosophical rationalism took Trithemius to task for engaging in what they characterized as superstition, others, including such admiring members of the English Royal Society as John Wilkins (1614-1672) and Robert Hooke (1635-1703), praised Trithemius's cryptological techniques even as they rejected the occult principles on which they were based. The trend among these was to present the abbot as a pioneer in their campaign to produce a universal cryptic language to complement that of mathematics, commensurate, as it were, with their quest for a universally valid scientific method.

Following the latter strategy, the trend has been to convert Trithemian cryptology from an esoteric discipline based on ancient occult theory to an exoteric discipline of language independent of occult theory. Until recently the task of reducing Trithemian cryptic methods to wholly linguistic terms has been impeded by the resistance of the third, unfinished book of the *Steganographia* to a cryptological solution. That obstacle, with the help of the computer, having now been overcome (see bibliography), the way would now seem clear to sever the cryptographic techniques invented by Trithemius from the theoretical precepts on which they are ostensibly founded. However, while Trithemius's steganographic methods are now established to be radically free of a need for angelic-astrological mediation, still left intact is an underlying theological motive for their contrivance. For as the preface to the *Polygraphia* equally establishes, the everyday practicability of cryptography was conceived by Trithemius as but a secular consequent of the ability of a soul specially empowered by God to reach, by magical means, from earth to Heaven.

In his pursuit of the infinitely removed heavenly realm Trithemius openly favored the will over the intellect, a bias conditioning his mystical theology before it was restated as a basic guideline of its derivative magical theology. While freely admitting to its practical application, Trithemius conceived of his magical specialty, cryptography, as at bottom a *spiritual* instrument intended to assist the soul of the adept in achieving eternal bliss. Through this underlying incentive behind his magic, the name of Trithemius has come to occupy a place of honor at the table of modern theosophy. Just as significant for posterity, however, are the practical applications of his cryptological speculations, establishing his

credentials as being on the cutting edge of modern techniques in the art of encoding and enciphering.

*De septem secundeis, id est, intelligentiis, sive spiritibus orbes post Deum moventibus libellus sive Chronologia mystica*, Cologne: apud Ioannem Birckmannum, 1567 ♦ *Polygraphiae libri VI*, Basel: M. Furter, 1518; Cologne: apud Joannem Birckmannum & Theodorum Baumium, 1571; Strassburg: sumptibus Lazari Zetneri, 1600 ♦ *Steganographia, hoc est, ars per occultam scripturam animi sui voluntatem absentibus aperiendi certa*, Frankfurt/Main: ex officina typographica Matthiae Beckeri, sumptibus Joannis Berneri, 1605, 1608, 1621; partial English edition: *The Steganographia of Johannes Trithemius*, Adam McLean (ed.), Fiona Tait, Christopher Upton and J.W.H. Walden (trans.), Edinburgh: Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, 1982 ♦ *Paralipomena opusculorum Petri Blenensis et Ioannis Trithemii*, Johannes Busaeus (ed.), Cologne: apud Ioannem Wolfraht, 1624 ♦ *De demonibus* (proemium and chapter headings), in: Klaus Arnold, "Additamenta Tritheimiana: Nachträge zu Leben und Werk des Johannes Trithemius, insbesondere zur Schrift *De demonibus*", *Würzburger Diözesan-Geschichtblätter* 37-38 (1975), 256-67.

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## UFO traditions

Among contemporary religious and esoteric phenomena, there are some which seem so closely associated with modern ideas and themes that it might be considered premature to associate them with a word like "tradition", evocative of something with roots in a relatively long past. The esoteric currents associated with UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) represent such a case. The emergence of the "flying saucer" phenomenon is usually

associated with Kenneth Arnold's (1915-1984) sightings in June 1947. However, research done over the past decades has clearly shown that the UFO theme existed already earlier: certain pre-1947 books of fiction contain most of the elements subsequently associated with manifestations of extraterrestrial entities, including the physical shape of the spaceships. As has been demonstrated by Bertrand Méheust, a number of novels published between 1880 and 1945 had developed an approach which "technologized magic" and "resacralized technology", thus creating features from which the UFO myth would extensively borrow. Moreover, and of direct relevance for issues dealt with here, groups of UFO believers did not appear out of the blue, but received much of their inspiration from the occult milieu [→ occult/occultism], with which a number of "contactees" were actually familiar. An adequate overview of UFO beliefs therefore needs to trace their pre-1947 roots.

The prehistory of the UFO traditions probably begins around the 18th century, and as observed by Gordon Melton, → Emanuel Swedenborg can be considered an appropriate point of departure. Some of Swedenborg's theological treatises have occasionally been a source of embarrassment even for the Swedish seer's most fervent admirers, and *De Telluribus in Mundo nostro Solari* (Earth in the Universe) is an obvious case. Did not Swedenborg claim to have spoken with spirits of the Moon and of other planets? Most of the content of this treatise can actually be found in Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*, but the fact that Swedenborg also published it as a separate volume indicates that he attributed some particular importance to it. And in this he was not alone: *Earths in the Universe* was actually the first of his books translated and published into German (by → Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, 1770), and four German editions appeared during Swedenborg's lifetime. It was also one of the first volumes translated into French (by → Pernety in 1782). If the treatise has embarrassed late 20th century Swedenborgians, during the 18th century it was seen, on the contrary, as a rather attractive approach to solving the riddle of the plurality of the worlds. Swedenborg was not alone in his speculations about inhabitants of other worlds: his famous critic, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), not only seriously considered the hypothesis that there could be human beings on other planets, but even the possibility that they might be places of residence for people from Earth in future incarnations after their present life.

However, Swedenborg was not the first "con-

tactee": while his reports do not belong to the category of literary utopias or fantastic voyage novels, neither did he claim to have travelled to other planets in his physical body aboard some spaceship or to have spoken with extraterrestrial entities descended to Earth for bringing some message. Rather, he claimed to have spoken with spirits and angels who lived on those other planets, having been transported there in the spirit while his body remained on our Earth. Still, his style of writing is not unlike contemporary travel reports, in which an explorer depicts exotic civilizations. The extraterrestrials turn out to have human forms, even if they may have some peculiar features: for instance, the residents of Venus are giants. Interestingly, Swedenborg explains that there are also inhabited planets outside our solar system, and claims to have met some of their representatives as well. In any case, none of these extraterrestrials are presented as messengers of a new religious doctrine: Swedenborg's universe is Christocentric, and Ernst Benz has even suggested that Swedenborg was a pioneer in the elaboration of a cosmic Christology.

Several other philosophers commented on the plurality of the worlds in their works. Among the recipients of new revelations, → Lorber received dictations about the Moon, Saturn and their inhabitants, which are still read with interest by some UFO believers today, especially in German-speaking countries. But most important for the emergence of the UFO tradition was the current of 19th century → Spiritualism. If one reads the *Revue spirite* published in Paris from 1858, it is easy to discover, from its very first year of publication, articles mentioning the plurality of worlds. It dealt with such topics because communications received by several mediums confirmed the existence of living beings on other planets; the acknowledgement of the plurality of inhabited worlds was therefore widespread in Spiritualism from its very first years. Spiritualism offered the possibility to get in touch with other planets without needing a spaceship. As with Swedenborg, there is definitely a fascination with the exotic: undoubtedly it is not just by chance that the medium Elise Müller, alias Hélène Smith (1861-1929) – who was closely examined in Geneva at the end of the 19th century by the renowned psychologist Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920) and described in his book *Des Indes à la planète Mars* (1900) – reported about civilization on Mars in one series of communications, and had India as the background of another series; the popularity of spirits of American Indians among some mediums is a well-known phenomenon as well.

Spiritualism thus offered unlimited venues for discovering exotic cultures and exploring unknown territories. But from a doctrinal perspective, there was more at stake. According to the Spiritualist school led by → Allan Kardec (1803-1869), the plurality of worlds and the plurality of existences were closely related: human beings incarnate successively on different planets in accordance with different levels of spiritual evolution. Such views opened grandiose perspectives on an interplanetary brotherhood. And it may be more than a coincidence that the famous French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) was also associated with the Spiritualist movement. Even though he eventually admitted that Spiritualism had brought him no new knowledge in the field of astronomy, early in his life he had published a book titled *La pluralité des mondes habités* (1862), in which he declared his belief that people on other planets in space belong to ‘our immense human family’, and stated that ‘The doctrine of the plurality of the worlds has led us to the gates of a religious belief built upon the real system of the world’. In a later work, *Les terres du ciel* (1877), however, he speculated that residents of other planets were likely to be completely different from what we are, and possibly had forms we were not even able to imagine.

Spiritualism did not exist in isolation: it frequently tended to interact with other alternative worldviews, as one can see from the list of participants and topics dealt with at Spiritualist international congresses. Thus, the → Theosophical Society obviously could not remain immune from the interest for other worlds. In his book *The Inner Life* (1910-1911), → Leadbeater described the ‘present conditions of the planet Mars’ as ‘by no means unpleasant’, and not overcrowded; the Martians, he explained, ‘are not unlike ourselves, except that they are considerably smaller’ – once again, we find a perception of extraterrestrials as basically human or humanoid beings. Leadbeater’s work also reads somewhat like the description of an utopia: ‘it is the custom to hand over all the children to the State at a very early age to be reared and educated’, ‘they have absolutely no religion . . . , nothing is true but what can be scientifically demonstrated’. Leadbeater did not claim to have physically traveled to Mars: astral travel could obviously do the same job. Most interesting is his mention of the existence of a secret society on that planet, whose members had developed ‘a good deal of power’: ‘Some at least of the members of the secret society have learnt how to cross without great difficulty the space which separates us from

Mars, and have therefore at various times tried to manifest themselves through mediums at spiritual seances, or have been able, by the methods which they have learnt, to impress their ideas upon poets and novelists’. Here we have a hint about a possible role of extraterrestrials not just as beings who obligingly reply to inquisitive mediums, but as agents who take deliberate action to deliver selected information to their terrestrial counterparts. Leadbeater’s suggestion that such information could be transmitted through fictional literature as well is worth noticing, since some UFO enthusiasts continue to hold such beliefs even today: for instance, members of the American group Heaven’s Gate (who committed suicide in March 1997) considered popular science fiction entertainment series as valuable sources of information and explained that ‘the context of fiction can often open the mind to advanced possibilities which are, in reality, quite close to fact’.

But there was more to the Theosophical Society than Leadbeater’s astral scouting into other worlds. → Blavatsky’s elaborate system could obviously not limit itself to only this Earth: ‘Every celestial body in space, of whatever kind or type, is under the overseeing and directing influence of a Hierarchy of spiritual and quasi-spiritual and astral beings’. Most of the planets inside as well as outside our solar system are inhabited by human beings. Similar to Kardecist teachings, each planet corresponds to an evolutionary stage in mankind’s progress. Most important of all, Theosophical teachings are said to go back to a visitation of our Earth by “Adepts” from Venus. The careful research conducted by Wiktor Stoczkowski has shown how the ultimate roots of the Ancient Astronaut theory – according to which the origins of mankind and of civilization go back to extraterrestrial intervention – can be found in Blavatsky’s doctrines and cannot be understood without that preexisting occult milieu. As this French anthropologist has correctly observed, this does not mean that advocates of the Ancient Astronaut theory have read Blavatsky’s works in depth: due to the numerous and diverse posterity (legitimate or otherwise) of the Theosophical Society, Theosophical teachings have had such widespread influence that its basic ideas can become familiar even to those who have not been in direct contact with Theosophical literature.

Venusian Masters returned to the scene with Guy Warren Ballard (1878-1939) and his → “IAM” Activity. Published in 1934 under the pen name of “Godfré Ray King”, his *Unveiled Mysteries* culminate in the narrative of an assembly of

Masters at a mysterious American retreat, welcoming visitors from Venus ‘robed in white scintillating garments, surpassing all powers of description’: ‘Their brilliant, piercing, violet-blue eyes were beautiful and fascinating’. The Venusians were obviously much more advanced than the people of Earth, for Ballard and his family were allegedly given the opportunity to take a first glimpse at ‘tremendous’ Venusian inventions which ‘will come into use on earth in the Golden Crystal Age we have now entered’. While it may be going somewhat too far, as some scholars have done, to claim that “I AM” was the first religious movement built on contact with extraterrestrials (in fact it was mainly built on contacts with “Masters”, following the pattern of the Theosophical Society, while transforming it), it has definitely some features which would become part of the subsequent UFO religions: the description of attractive, handsome extraterrestrials, with piercing eyes, evoking the idea of divine messengers; the superiority of the extraterrestrial; and their message of relief and salvation for the Earth, which will be able to overcome its predicaments thanks to the extraordinary technological knowledge brought from other worlds.

After the 1947 sightings, it did not take long for the first contactees to emerge. While the importance of the occult milieu in relation to this development is emphasized here, it should be clear that there were other dimensions involved as well. When one reads the literature of UFO believers in the late 1940s, it is striking to see how the “things seen in the sky” (→ C.G. Jung) are constantly associated with the nuclear threat: the extraterrestrials were manifesting themselves in order to warn mankind of the risk of self-destruction (and possibly to evacuate those deemed worthy to escape, in case annihilation could not be prevented). While equipped with superior technology, the entities from other worlds were seen as much wiser than human beings in their use of it. In any case, there are strong reasons to assume that the UFO myth would not have unfolded the way it did without the horror of Hiroshima at the end of World War II.

*Flying Saucers Have Landed* was the title of a book published in 1953, in which George Adamski (1891-1965) claimed to have met a being from Venus, in November 1952. Significantly, from the very beginning the Venusian made it clear to Adamski that concern about atomic weapons was the reason for the extraterrestrials to contact earth. The Venusian provenience is worth noticing as well: it remains on the line of the Theosophical inheritance, and actually there are several direct references to Theosophical literature in the first

part of the book, written by a co-author. Adamski insisted that one should not make a religious belief out of UFOs; but this did not prevent him from publishing a *Science of Life Study Course* (1964), based upon teachings supposedly delivered to him by the Venusians. Especially interesting is the fact that Adamski re-used materials he had already published many years before his alleged contact with UFOs: the title of that earlier book had been *Wisdom of the Masters of the Far East* (1936), connected with Adamski’s launching in the 1930s of a “Royal Order of Tibet”. In his 1964 work, Adamski replaced the words “Royal Order of Tibet” by “Space Brothers”. In the 1930s, he claimed to have lived as a child in Tibetan monasteries and – while preaching an eclectic universalist doctrine very far from anything Tibetan – he had explained to the *Los Angeles Times* (8 April 1934) that he had ‘learned great truths up there on the roof of the world’. What matters is not the obvious fact that Adamski – who had also published a novel in 1949 called *Pioneers of Space: A Trip to the Moon, Mars and Venus* – was a fraud, but that he had a previous career in the alternative religious milieu, and how easy it was for him to just continue propagating the same views in a new, extraterrestrial garb.

Not all contactees claimed to have physically met extraterrestrials. George W. Van Tassel (1910-1978), one of the early contactees, originally claimed to have been in psychic contact with beings from other worlds since 1952. It was only at a later point, in 1953, that he reportedly was allowed to enter a flying saucer. Since mediums had already been transmitting information about life on other planets long before the popular wave of flying saucers began, it is not surprising that some mediums now began to channel messages from extraterrestrials; in fact, such messages became increasingly common during the 1950s. As Ellwood and several other scholars have observed, religious belief in UFOs and Spiritualism are of the same type: ‘Both presuppose an order of spiritually significant beings between the human and ultimate reality, with which one can have conversational and disciplic relationships. . . . interaction with them opens up a sense of expanded consciousness and cosmic wonder. . . . In both there are physical phenomena or “traces” which serve to support belief, but which for real believers are like “signs” in a religious sense . . .’. This does not mean that all mediums began enthusiastically to receive communications from extraterrestrials: it has been observed that the ‘adoption of extraterrestrials as spirit guides is much more prevalent among → New



Age channelers than among traditional Spiritualists' (Porter).

As could be expected, contactees – psychic or otherwise – incorporated a number of previously-held beliefs. Extraterrestrial contact became one more step in an occult career. A well-known case is the group led by Dorothy Martin, alias Sister Thedra († 1992): not very large or influential in itself, it was the subject of a famous book by three American sociologists, *When Prophecy Fails* (1956). Martin had been acquainted with occult teachings as early as in the 1930s, became involved in Dianetics [→ Scientology], and was fascinated by the teachings of “I AM”, before she herself began to receive messages from Sananda (Jesus in an earlier incarnation), now a resident of the planet Clarion. In the typical style of UFOs' warnings about impending disasters, in August 1954 she received a message informing the world that cataclysmic changes would soon change the face of America and other continents, while the lost continent of Mu would rise again before the end of that same year. The failure of this prophecy did not prevent her from continuing her activities for the rest of her life, and founding the “Association of Sananda and Sanat Kumara” in 1965.

Another good example of interaction between UFO belief and the occult milieu was George King (1919-1997), founder of the Aetherius Society (referring to the name of a Venusian Master). He came ‘from a family imbued with occult inclinations’ (his mother was a psychic and clairvoyant) and had himself developed a keen interest in the occult and yoga, before he was contacted in 1954 by a Cosmic Master and was called to become the “Voice of the Interplanetary Parliament”. King referred to the Great White Brotherhood, to Adepts and to a whole range of terms typical of the Theosophical current – while mixing them in a quite eclectic way with elements taken from a number of other systems with which he was familiar. Among UFO religious groups, the Aetherius Society represents one of the most obvious derivations from Theosophy – Theosophical Adepts being transformed into “Cosmic Masters” or “Gods from Space”. In some cases, like Ashtar (see below), the multiplication of newly-revealed entities leads to the creation of a ‘pantheon consist[ing] of a wide range of gods, goddesses, and spiritual masters from various planets’, Ashtar and Sananda siding together with “Lady Athena” as a kind of new Trinity (Wojcik). This is not unlike Ballard’s “I AM”, with its many Masters. Ellwood has suggested that UFO beliefs could also be seen as a reinvention of polytheism.

Although the connections should by now be clear enough, UFO religious groups have often developed into more than just a variation on general occult teachings. Rather, they have amalgamated some elements from esoteric traditions with other beliefs, very often including a millenarian message, since, as we have already seen, extraterrestrials do not just come in order to share some inspired wisdom, but also to preserve humanity from impending threats. Thus they could be described as modern religions of salvation. A good example are the mediums and groups claiming to receive messages from Ashtar, Commander of a fleet of spaceships sent by the Galactic Federation in order to rescue Earth. With a number of these mediums – not necessarily connected with each other – Ashtar’s messages have taken a decidedly catastrophic tone: disasters are likely to occur within the near future, but the chosen ones will be rescued. One can see here an obvious influence from premillennial dispensationalist scenarios, according to which a “rapture” will take place in order to spare the elect from having to go through the “Great Tribulation”: Ashtar’s “Evacuation” is a transparent adaptation of the rapture to a UFO based scenario. This shows that UFO beliefs do not necessarily have to build upon themes from esoteric traditions only, but may quite as easily borrow elements from the Christian tradition – or any other one. In Italy, Giorgio Bongiovanni (b. 1963) declares to have received from the Virgin in Fatima the stigmata of Christ, first on his hands (1989) and later on his forehead (1993); and at the same time he poses as a spiritual successor of the Sicilian contactee Eugenio Siragusa (b. 1919), despite the latter’s disavowal. Certain Christian groups have incorporated UFO themes as well. One example was Father Michel Colin (1905-1974), who claimed to be the Pope, assumed the pontifical name of Clement XV and created a Renovated Catholic Church; he spoke about “interplanetary” beings and told his faithful that the elect would be taken to Planet Mary. Some Danish followers of Adamski felt attracted toward Clement XV.

Groups of believers in UFOs will frequently borrow from esoteric themes and sometimes be completely immersed in the occult milieu, but they do not necessarily have to. For instance, the Raelian Movement – at this moment the largest UFO group worldwide, most other UFO groups having remained quite small – holds a materialistic worldview and has little to do with esotericism in any form. The founders of Heaven’s Gate had been familiar with Spiritualist and Theosophical

doctrines, but they finally construed a doctrine which to a large extent drew its inspiration from Christian mythology (admittedly with major revisions). UFOs seen as celestial saviors can adjust to a variety of theological backgrounds and develop into new religious beliefs: due to the classical association between the sky and transcendence, the sheer fact that UFOs are seen in the sky can easily endow them with religious connotations. UFOs come from heaven, extraterrestrials seem omniscient, they are close to perfection or at least much more advanced than people of the Earth, they offer salvation from man-made disasters threatening to destroy our planet: as observed by Ted Peters, these are covert religious structures which can easily become a vehicle for a modern religious mythology. In this manner, Extraterrestrials are transformed into the angels of a technological and scientific era. Due to aspirations found in some occultist trends since the 19th century and to a pre-existing interest for extraterrestrial life, it is therefore not surprising that modern esotericism has sometimes become associated with an emergent UFO mythology.

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## Valentinus and Valentinians

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### 1. SOURCES AND THEIR PROBLEMS

The Valentinian school represents the most important heretical Christian current of the 2nd

and 3rd centuries AD, whose traces are still evident as late as the 7th and 8th centuries. The name “Valentinians” is first found in Justin (*Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 35, 6) and Hegesippus (in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 22, 5), and also in the form ‘those who stem from Valentinus’ (frequent in Origen), while Irenaeus, → Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and others speak of “Valentinus’s school”. The group was distributed throughout the Mediterranean area (especially in Rome, North Africa, and Asia Minor), and formed its own social and cultic-ritual community apart from the nascent church of the Catholic majority. This division took place through a long process (*Interpretation of Knowledge*, NHC XI, 1, reflects on this), and despite ample source-material it is very difficult to form a picture of the historical development of the Valentinians. The sources fall into two groups. The first consists of the Church Fathers’ arguments against the Valentinian heresy, in texts marked by a polemic that somewhat distorts the subject (Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VI, 42, 1 reports that a Valentinian group has taken issue with Irenaeus’s distorted representation of them). These authors are not primarily interested in historical truth, or else are inadequately informed on the matter. They often do not use original sources, and repeat secondhand reports which they treat in a careless fashion. The second source is preserved through the discovery of the papyrus collection at Nag Hammadi, containing many original texts in the Coptic language that were probably translated from the Greek and written down in the 4th century A.D. These texts are handed down without information on their authorship or the time and place of their origin, so that controversy often exists over whether a text is authentically Valentinian, or whether it just shows Valentinian influences. The name of Valentinus himself only appears once, in a polemical context (*Testimonium of Truth*, NHC IX, 3, 56, 1ff.). None of these sources reveal much about the social realities of the Valentinians. One four-line epigram found in the Via Latina in Rome is offered as evidence (Guarducci 1983), but is debatable because of its fragmentary nature.

The very existence of the Valentinian writings creates a further problem. One may assume that they gave out their teachings at different levels, intended for different hearers (on the practice of keeping certain doctrines secret, see Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos*, 1). We can differentiate roughly here between “exoteric” and “esoteric” teachings, whereby an exoteric writing would be closer to the positions of the majority church, and merely leave unstated the doctrines consid-

ered to be particularly heretical. Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses [AH]*, 1 praef.) already writes: ‘They speak as we do, but their meaning is all to the contrary’. Such a text, however, cannot then serve as evidence for a specific stage of development within Valentinianism. The contents of the “esoteric” writings certainly included the cosmogonic myth, in which the entire theology and philosophy of the Valentinians is contained. This myth is preserved in many different and in some respects contradictory variants, and was surely revealed only to certain well-prepared hearers. The differences between these versions show that the myth was not a dogmatic, fixed system for the Valentinians, but a highly versatile means of setting forth their teachings about God, creation, and redemption (its prototype was surely the Platonic myth in the *Timaeus*). Each author constructs his own interpretation of certain basic ideas and structures of thought common to the Valentinians, and neither can it be excluded that various versions of the myth may be attributable to one and the same author, distinguished further by their degrees of abstraction. The myth provides the background for the Valentinian exegesis, applied especially to Paul and John, but also to the synoptic gospels, and already employed a highly sophisticated allegorical method. Here the Valentinians seem to have been in advance of the common Christian exegetes: Valentinus’s famous pupil Heracleon undertook the first coherent commentary on a New Testament text.

The reconstruction of the history of the Valentinians is further hindered by the fact that only a few original fragments remain from their founder, Valentinus, whose spirit and rhetorical gift were acknowledged even by his opponents (Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 4). Attempts to ascribe further texts to him remain controversial. This slim basis has even led to Valentinus been seen as a Platonically-inclined *Vermittlungstheologe* (intermediary theologian) who stayed within the framework of the majority church; thereafter his pupils and their pupils supposedly invented the heretical myth of the “fall” of Sophia and the origin of the world through an inadequate world-creator. Such a view must ignore certain vital elements in the fragments, and cannot well explain why the different pupils should have propounded such similar ideas independently of their master. It is said of the pupils that they split into an Italian school – Ptolemaeus, Heracleon, Secundus – and an Eastern one – Axionicus in Antioch, Bardesanes, Theodotus (thus Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VI, 35, 7; it is astonishing that he ascribes Bardesanes to the

Valentinian school). Following Tertullian's statement that only Axionicus preserved Valentinus's teachings intact (*Adv. Val.*, 4, 3), Valentinus would have to be included on the Eastern side. But even this report of a split is unhelpful, since so few characteristics of these schools can be reconstructed, and an unambiguous attribution of the surviving texts to one school or the other seems impossible (e.g. Markos is attributed to both). As in the cases of Secundus and Axionicus, we know little more of the other Valentinians than their names: Alexander (Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 15f.: Christ without earthly and human body), Theotimus (Tertullian, *Adv. Val.*, 4, 3 calls him the exegete of the "pictures" of the Law), Florinus (Irenaeus wrote letters to him and asked Victor to take legal action against him; see Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 20, 4-8), Candidus (with whom Origen disputed circa 230 A.D. in Athens; see Rufinus, *De adulteratione librorum Originis*, 7; Jerome, *Adversus Rufinum*, 2, 18f.).

Consequently, all that today's interpreter can do is to place the various texts and reports side by side, without being able to sort them into a definite historical context or a demonstrable sequence. Among the few fragments of Valentinus, there is above all Irenaeus's exposition of the Valentinian teachings (*AH*, I, 1-20, circa 180 A.D.) and a parallel exposition in Clement (*Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 43-65, circa 200 A.D.), and a related myth transmitted by Hippolytus (*Refutatio*, VI, 29-36, circa 220 A.D.); possibly one should also include the "Naassene tract" transmitted by Hippolytus, V, 6-10. The Church Father Epiphanius preserves an original "Letter to Flora" by Ptolemaeus (*Panarion*, 33, 3-7), and a "Valentinian doctrinal letter" (*Panarion*, 31, 5, 2-6, 10) which with its complicated speculations on Aeons probably represents a later development of Valentinianism. Origen's Commentary (225-250 A.D.) preserves extracts of Heracleon's exegesis of John's Gospel, and there are also Valentinian interpretations in *De principiis* and his Commentary on Romans. Last of this group, Clement of Alexandria collected excerpts attributed to Theodotus. In contrast, Tertullian's *Adversus Valentinianos* (circa 210 A.D.) depends for the most part on secondary sources; and the same applies to the anti-heretical writings of Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius, Filastrius of Brescia, and Theodoret. It is very doubtful that Justin's lost *Syntagma* can be reconstructed from these late sources. Finally, Valentinian influence is visible in the *Acts of John* (94-102, 109).

Among the Nag Hammadi discoveries, the texts of the Jung-Codex (NHC I) are the ones that most

belong within a Valentinian milieu. In almost all of the five texts included there, the authorship of Valentinus or one of his better-known pupils has been considered, without any consensus being reached. The most important texts, which are related to each other in many respects, are the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I, 3, Frg. in XII, 2) and the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I, 5), to which may be added the short but, in terms of style and content, no less demanding *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I, 4). The majority of scholars accept the Valentinian origin of these three texts. Considering their extraordinary quality, it is evidently problematic that scholarship favors an attribution of them to an unknown Valentinian; even if we knew no more, it would be improbable that their author was an "Anonymous". The *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* (NHC I, 1) and the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I, 2) are possibly of Valentinian origin. The second codex contains the uncontestedly Valentinian *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3): an anthology of extracts of very different genres (aphorism, parallel, paranesis, polemic, exegesis, treatise), including among other things valuable information on the sacraments of the Valentinians. Lastly there are two texts in the eleventh codex, unfortunately only fragmentarily preserved, for which a Valentinian origin is generally accepted: the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (NHC XI, 1) and *A Valentinian Exposition* (NHC IX, 2), with five supplements on the *Anointing*, *Baptism* (A and B) and *Eucharist* (A and B). The influence of Valentinian teachings is detectable in *The Exegesis on the Soul* (NHC II, 6), *The first and second Apocalypse of James* (NHC V, 3 and 4), *Authoritative Teaching* (NHC VI, 3), and *The Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII, 2). A special problem is posed by the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1, III, 1, IV, 1 and BG 8502,2). This text, preserved in both a short and a long version, has clear parallels to the texts excerpted by Irenaeus in *AH*, I, 29-30. This Church Father claims that the adherents of this teaching, whom he calls "Gnostics", stem from → Simon Magus and are in turn the spiritual forerunners of Valentinus (*AH*, I, 11, 1). In accordance with this theory, many scholars see in the *Apocryphon of John* a non-Christian, Sethian [→ Sethians] (or Ophite [→ Ophites]) myth, which Valentinus first christianized. The alternative view, which is preferred here, sees in Irenaeus's theory the polemical attempt to discredit the Valentinians by tracing their origins to → Simon Magus, the apostle's opponent. Irenaeus invents the sect of "Gnostics" as link between Simon and Valentinus, and attributes to them a mythical scheme that does in fact show clear influences of Valentin-



ian teachings (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 27, 1, 2 makes the Valentinians depend on the “Gnostics”, as does Theodoret, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium*, 1, 13). In this view, the *Apocryphon of John* first appeared around the middle of the 2nd century in a Valentinian milieu.

## 2. VALENTINUS

Little is known of Valentinus's life. ‘He came to Rome under Hyginus (136-140 A.D.), passed the best of his age under Pius (140-155 A.D.), and remained until Anicet (155-166 A.D.)’ (Irenaeus, *AH*, III, 4, 3). The text does not state that he taught in Rome unopposed; on the contrary, Tertullian reports that → Marcion and Valentinus ‘were thrown out by turns’ (*De praescriptione haereticorum*, 30, 2). He was probably born in Egypt around the turn of the century, and certainly studied Platonic philosophy (possibly in Alexandria; thus Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 31, 2, 3). His teacher was supposedly Paul's pupil Theodas (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, VII, 106, 4; a certain Theuda is named in NHC V, 4, 44, 18). Although he must have taught in Rome for a considerable time, he seems to have been unknown to Justin, who stayed in Rome at about the same time; nor does Justin's pupil Tatian mention him. It is difficult to judge the veracity of the report that Valentinus wanted to become a bishop, but was refused (Tertullian, *Adv. Val.*, 4, 1f.). Valentinus is also said to have lived in Cyprus, and there first fallen away from the “true faith” (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 31, 7, 2). Beside the few surviving extracts from sermons and letters, Pseudo-Anthimus (= Marcellus of Ancyra?) testifies to a work entitled *On the Three Natures* (*De sancta ecclesia*, 9).

Valentinus is said to have written Christian psalms (Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 17, 1; Origen, *Enarrationes in Jobum*, 21, 12), and among the fragments there is also a short hymn in meiuric dactylic meter (Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VI, 37, 7). This presents the divine trinity of Father (called Bythos), Mother (presumably Sophia), and Child. This new-born child is identified with the divine world of Ideas, the Logos. Another fragment specifies the visionary recognition of the identity of the new-born child and Logos as the starting-point of the heretical myth (Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VI, 42, 2): Valentinus sees the connection of the philosophical logos-conceptions with the biblical account of the child in the manger. Valentinus's importance can be seen in the fact that he made what was probably the first comprehensive attempt to interpret the New Testament report against the background of contemporary Greek philosophy.

The realization that the order of the cosmos and the ensoulment of man have their origin in this child is described as the eschatological event of the “harvest” that is anticipated in this life (following John 4, 35-38). The divine act that caused the appearance of the world and of man attains its goal in human knowledge: that which God sowed at the Creation, man harvests through this knowledge. At the same time, this knowledge is the dissolution of the cosmos, that is, of its transitory parts (Clement, *Strom.*, IV, 89, 3); according to the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I, 4), in this knowledge the resurrection of the dead already takes place (cf. 2 Tim. 2, 18). The cosmos of Valentinus is indeed ruled through and through by God, but as a material creation it is subject to death. Man can only escape this if, thanks to his knowledge, he turns away from the transitory and returns to the divine. Jesus lived this in exemplary form: his *enkratia* went so far that although he ate and drank, he did not digest (from a letter to Agathopus in Clement, *Strom.*, III, 59, 3). This failed attempt to picture the divinity and humanity of the Redeemer in concrete terms points to the later problems that would arise from the further encounter of Greek thought with the Christian kerygma.

Additional traces of Valentinus's cosmology and anthropology are visible in two fragments (Clement, *Strom.*, II, 36, 2-4 and IV, 89, 6-90, 1). Valentinus takes from the concepts of middle Platonism the distinction between the highest God and lower creator-figures. To God is connected the transcendent level of being of the Ideas, which Valentinus, like his philosophical colleagues, seems to have understood as God's thoughts, motions and emotions (Tertullian, *Adv. Val.*, 4, 2). As lower actors, a host of angels (the plural coming from Genesis 1, 26) took part in the origin of mankind, and the Demiurge in that of the cosmos. The effects of the divine world of Ideas are personified in the Logos (also called Aion); in the creation of man, the motive force that emerges from the Idea of man is made manifest in the “Anthropos” (primeval man; the Anthropos being the aspect of the Logos that is concerned with the creation of man). Logos and Anthropos bestow the divine element, platonically speaking: the form that stamps the matter and makes it the image of the Ideas; this form also gives its name to the individual thing. The effects proceeding from matter, however, are symbolized in mythological language by the angels and the Demiurge. The world and man can only arise through the collaboration of the divine and demiurgic powers; but the lower powers are in a state of ignorance in relation to the divine. This is why the



angels were alarmed when newly-created man, bearing the divine within him, gave evidence of divine knowledge, and why the cosmos remains so inferior a copy of its original model. Evil arose because the angels refused knowledge and separated man from God. The emotions and the evil deeds that result from them are, according to Valentinus, the consequence of ignorance of the divine. These emotions are frequently described in colorful language as demons in the hearts of men, which only fail when man is enlightened by God (Clement, *Strom.*, II, 114, 3-6). In Valentinus's conception of the creative powers as being ignorant of the divine, he differs both from the majority of his Christian fellow-believers and from his philosophical colleagues. Only by ignoring his negative view of the creative powers can one imagine that he had not abandoned the framework of the majoritarian theology of the 2nd century. This ignorance of the lower creators marks the world, and especially man. Only through the revelation of God in his Son can man be freed from the state of ignorance which makes him subject to the demons. For man is not capable by himself of overcoming the material world and becoming 'Lord over the creation and all things temporal' (Clement, *Strom.*, IV, 89, 3). Therefore Valentinus criticizes a theology that promises man that he will overcome death through suffering bodily martyrdom. He, however, who has recognized God through his revelation also recognizes the divine in himself, which Valentinus calls 'the law written in the heart' (from a sermon *On Friends*, Clement, *Strom.*, IV, 52, 4). Man now understands himself as a 'child of eternal life' (Clement, *Strom.*, IV, 89, 1). The self-manifestation of God through his Son, who gives man the saving knowledge, thus stands at the center of Valentinus's theology. But this Son is the same being who at the creation, as Logos or "Anthropos", creates the prerequisites for this knowledge: he gives man a divine element, the 'seed of the higher being', which first put man in the position of gaining knowledge (Clement, *Strom.*, II, 36, 2). Valentinus thereby attempts to link anthropology with soteriology, with the help of Platonic traditions. Since man, in this view, is simultaneously subject to matter and its powers, he is in danger of falling victim to ignorance and the emotions that result from it. From the fragments the question arises of how the ignorant, lower creative powers, beside God and the world of Ideas connected to him, could ever have come into existence at all (Ptolemaeus poses this question explicitly at the end of his *Letter to Flora*). The Valentinian myth tries to offer an answer to this question. In view of the inner coherence and

well thought-out structure of Valentinus's teachings, which are evident in the fragments, it is unlikely that it was the pupils who first sought to answer this question with the help of a myth. We have to assume that Valentinus himself created a cosmogonic myth that explained the existence of deficient creative powers; but what form it took can no longer be reconstructed. An important witness to it is Irenaeus's account *Against Heresies* (*AH*, I, 1-9). Scholars have attributed this myth to the Valentinian pupil Ptolemaeus on the basis of a brief remark at the end of the eighth chapter, which however is only found in the Latin translation. But it appears from Irenaeus's Foreword that this Church Father excerpted writings (*Hypomnemata*) by persons who called themselves 'pupils of Valentinus'. Since Irenaeus refers to several different versions of the myth (the two chief ones are known as Systems A and B; Irenaeus treats further versions in *AH*, I, 11-21), it can no longer be clarified in what relation the outlines by the "pupils" stand to Valentinus himself. A parallel to one section of this myth is offered by part of the excerpts attributed to Theodotus (Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 43-65); another mythological sketch, similar in many points but unfortunately very damaged, is offered by the *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2).

### 3. TWO MYTHOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

The myth in Version A begins with the description of the Pleroma, the "fullness" of the divine, transcendent world: out of a "Forefather" (*Propator*) who is also called "Depth" (*Bythos*) there arise thirty Aeons ("Eternities") who are grouped into a first Eight (*Ogdoas*), a Ten, and a Twelve (Pythagorean number speculation [→ Number Symbolism] being in the background). All the Aeons are organized by pairs in syzygies: at the top are "Forefather" and "Silence" (*Sige*), who is also called "Thought" (*Ennoia*). Unlike the God of the Old Testament, who creates through the word (Genesis 1), the Valentinian God does so through silence. Next there arise "Reason" (*Nous* or "Monogenes") and "Truth," "Word" (*Logos*) and "Life" (*Zoe*), "Man" and "Church", who together comprise the Eight. Irenaeus ascribes this sequence of Aeons expressly to Valentinus (*AH*, I, 11, 1), and they also underlie the *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2, where a further 100 and 360 Aeons proceed from the 30; cf. Secundus in Irenaeus, *AH*, I, 11, 2). A comprehensive exegesis of the Prologue to John's Gospel, handed down by Irenaeus, suggests that the first eight Aeons were named in relation to this text (*AH*, I, 8, 5; cf. Clement, *Excerpta*,

6f.). The remaining 22 Aeons present philosophical concepts (“Mixture”, “Insight”, “Desire”, etc.) and models of Christian virtues (“Faith”, “Hope”, “Love”, etc.), and the final Aeon is “Wisdom” (*Sophia*). The 30 Aeons correspond to the 30 years of Jesus’ life, and since each one reveals the divine Pleroma, his life presents an image of transcendent eternity (cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 37f.).

Nous alone knows the Forefather. This fact becomes the cause of all later events, because the Forefather prevents the Nous from sharing its knowledge with all the other Aeons. The reason given for this is that they should first arrive at a thought of, and a desire for knowledge, which leads to seeking it. Basic to this is the Platonic principle that the act of knowledge must arise from a consciousness of previous ignorance, and from longing to overcome it (the concept of “longing” and “seeking” is found, e.g. in Plato, *Meno*, 84c). One who already believes that he knows will not seek, and thus never arrive at knowledge. This epistemological approach is used in the myth in question to describe the occurrences in the Pleroma. The Aeons, too, before they know the Father, experience a phase of ignorance, or rather of non-actualized knowledge, which they must recognize as such, because only thus will the longing arise to seek the unknown. The divine goes through a kind of crisis: in order for knowledge to take place as act, it must first experience the absence of knowledge. This absence explains the appearance of the world, for the lack of knowledge leads to emotions, which in their further development form the material substratum of the world. The myth does not try to give any account of the world’s arisal in terms of natural philosophy (how could ignorance turn into matter?), but describes the cosmos as it is presented to man: it is characterized by a lack of knowledge and is therefore a strange and threatening place; within it and without it, man can find no access to God. Consequently the cosmos dissolves again when knowledge of the divine is achieved and all ignorance is overcome. The remarkable thing about this solution of the question of why there is evil in the world (theodicy) lies in the fact that ignorance has its origin on the divine plane of being of the Aeons, and is expressly willed by the highest God. Thus the material cosmos that arises from this is an unavoidable station on the way of the divine to itself, i.e. to the actualized knowledge of its highest cause.

In the myth, the crisis that the Aeons experience is precipitated by the Aeon Sophia. She separates herself from her companion Theletos (the “Willed”) and seeks in passionate excitement

(*tolma*) for her Father. Her search takes a form that was not willed by God, for together with the ignorance provoked by the Father, there was the danger of a false kind of seeking. Sophia represents the natural-scientific form of the search for God, which tries to grasp him objectively without realizing that the Father is ungraspable. In the figure of Sophia, the myth distances itself from the attempts to reach wisdom by the philosophical schools, who in Valentinus’s view ignored the transcendent divinity of the Father. In the myth, Sophia is stopped by a barrier (*Horos*) which surrounds the Father and is identified with the cross, and is thereby convinced that the Father is ungraspable. Her intention (*Enthymesis*) and her passion (*Pathos*) are banished from the Pleroma. The banished Enthymesis becomes, as outer Sophia or “Mother”, the decisive actor in all subsequent events. The action of the Horos is understood as a crucifixion; the Christian redemption event already takes place archetypically in the Pleroma: it is an act of knowledge and a separation from all the non-divine (on Horos, cf. *Valentinian Exposition*, NHC XI, 2, 26, 32ff., where four powers are attributed to it: ‘a separating one, a consolidating one, a formative one and a substance-providing one’). Similarly all the other Aeons are led to knowledge by Christ and the Holy Spirit, who are now emanated. The events in the Pleroma thus comprise a self-contained salvation story: the arisal of the divine, its existence in ignorance, and the knowledge through revelation and final trial.

The history of the “misfortune” (the expression “fall” is problematic) of a divine being is characteristic of the Valentinian myth, and this event is recounted in ever new ways. In another version of the myth (B), presented in the so-called “gnostic” collection used by Hippolytus (*Refutatio*, VI, 29ff.) but already known to Irenaeus (*AH*, I, 2, 3-6), Sophia’s fate is described as follows. The divine Father exists alone as “Monas” without a female partner (the Valentinians, according to Hippolytus, were divided over the question of whether the highest God should or should not be thought of with a female element beside him; see *Refutatio*, VI, 29, 3; cf. *Valentinian Exposition*, NHC XI, 2, 22, 23-27, which even attempts to combine both approaches). The Father, who is alone in himself, first emanates the “Dyas”, the first duality of a pair of Aeons (“Nous” and “Truth”), out of whom come a further 13 pairs of Aeons (the ground of creation here being named Love, which seeks an object); Sophia, the 28th Aeon, wants to give birth like the Father without her companion “Will”, but brings forth only a formless creation, a miscarriage; cf. *Valentinian*

*Exposition*, NHC XI, 2: 'That she should suffer, then, was not the will of the Father, for she dwells in herself alone without her consort'. This event is accompanied by states of ignorance, sorrow, fear, and dismay; the Aeons turn pleadingly to the Father. Thereupon two further Aeons, Christ and Holy Spirit, are emanated, who complete the number 30; they remove the miscarriage from Sophia and form it into the outer Sophia, who is in no way less wise than the Aeons in the Pleroma. A Platonic doctrine also underlies this theme, concerning the relation of substance (imagined as female) and form (imagined as male). Sophia's attempt to give birth without spiritual form fails; her creation needs additional formation by the Redeemer; in the same way, everything earthly and cosmic is regarded as formless, and must be newly formed by the knowledge that Christ brings.

The story of salvation in the uppermost realm repeats itself at a middle level in the fate of the outer Sophia, who is called Achamoth: in System A she finds herself outside the Pleroma and is formed as to her existence, but not as to knowledge. She too must realize her condition of exile from the Pleroma and feel longing for the divine. But she also suffers emotions in her ignorance; eventually she turns upward beseechingly. Thereupon a second Christ (the "Soter") comes down and, as revealer and redeemer, brings her the form of knowledge and the detachment of her emotions. Out of the latter arises the matter (*Hyle*) of the world, and out of her beseeching, the psychic. Moreover, the outer Sophia brings forth the "pneumatic" seeds, which are sowed in (certain) men as the divine element. She gives birth to the pneumatic sparks at the sight of the angels who accompany her redeemer.

The salvation history of the Aeons and Achamoth repeats itself at a third level in mankind. The similarity of events is reflected in the vertical line of descent (upper Sophia – lower Sophia – pneumatic seeds). The human pneuma must also be formed, i.e. must attain to knowledge. This formation, which is achieved by the earthly Christ, is the actual goal of the entire mythical event. As with the Aeons in the Pleroma and with the lower Sophia, the man who possesses a pneumatic core finds himself in a state of ignorance; he must become aware of this lack and apply himself to the search for the divine.

#### 4. ANTHROPOLOGY

This condition of man is clear from his three parts, or rather modes of existence: he has a pneumatic seed, but also carries within him a hylic (material) man and a psychic man (the visible body,

a fleshly covering, is counted as a fourth element). In his hylic aspect, his ignorance and fallen state are evident in the emotions. His psychic part stems from Achamoth's beseeching of the divine. For the human soul, this means that it has a decisive part in the redemptive act of knowledge; for man must turn to his redeemer in order to find knowledge there. The myth indicates that the soul or psychic man possesses free will (*autexousios*). Thus it is in no way predetermined which man will attain saving knowledge; the soul chooses freely whether to turn to Christ, or not to do so. Only when this conversion is made can the divine be formed. Beside this aspect of free will, there is, however, a doctrine of human classes, which became a chief object of criticism on the part of the Church Fathers. According to this, there are three different natures among mankind, represented by Cain ("hylic"), Abel ("psychic"), and Seth ("pneumatic"). Clement especially accused Valentinus (calling him 'the naturally redeemed') and his students of preaching predetermined salvation, without appreciating the crucial function of the soul. The myth teaches that men are not all created equal: only a few possess the divine pneuma; they are called "pneumatics" and the "chosen". The reasons or criteria by which one soul receives a pneuma and another not are seldom stated. This pneuma-doctrine represents the attempt to interpret the Pauline doctrine of grace with the help of a Platonic doctrine of natures. Man can reach salvation through the pneuma; however, it is not within his power to possess it – it is not at his disposal but is a gift. Yet the possession of the pneuma does not guarantee salvation; it must be formed with the help of the freely-acting soul, i.e. it must attain the knowledge of its divine origin; cf. *Apocryphon of James*, NHC I, 2, 5, 3-6: 'He will reckon you to have become beloved through his providence by your own choice'. If this does not occur, the divine pneuma, which cannot die, must be sowed in another soul. Next to the "pneumatics" are the "psychics", who possess no pneuma but can still turn to the Redeemer. They are the "called"; they do not attain pneumatic knowledge, but remain at the stage of faith and must do good works (see, however, e.g. the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, NHC I, 4, where faith is the mark of the pneumatics). These "psychics" refer to the Christians of the majority church who reject the Valentinian teaching, but can still attain a limited salvation. The third class of men is the "hylics" or the "choics" (the "earthly men"), in whom the soul (the psychic man) does not even manage to turn to Christ, but is totally given over to the lower parts of the soul or to material interests. This doctrine of human

classes fulfils two distinct requirements: it attempts on the one hand to explain the difficult relationship between grace and freedom, and on the other, to define the relationship of the Valentinian Christians to those of the Church and the rest of their environment.

The foundations of Valentinian ethics follow from the distinction between pneumatics and psychics. The pneumatic, through his knowledge, has left the earthly world behind; it has a neutral value (*adiaphoron*) for him. The psychic, in contrast, must prove his faith repeatedly through good works; the precepts of the law apply to him. The Church Fathers criticized this scheme and accused the Valentinians of ethical libertinism, expressed especially in sexual debauchery. The truth of these accusations is difficult to ascertain: the original sources from Nag Hammadi are marked throughout by an ethical rigor and an ascetic attitude, as for instance *Interpretation of Knowledge*, NHC XI, 1, 21, 31f.: 'But if we surmount every sin, we shall receive the crown of victory'. Nevertheless, some Valentinians may have demonstrated their superiority to the world through activities that seemed offensive to their Christian environment (e.g. eating sacrificial meat, taking part in gladiatorial combats). It is also possible that in situations of persecution they denied their Christianity, seeing this confession before the earthly rulers as irrelevant to their salvation. Thus Heracleon in his commentary on Luke 12, 8-11 reckons it better to confess through faith and conduct than by mouth; the latter is required 'when it is necessary and good sense demands it' (Clement, *Strom.* IV, 71, 4).

In System B, an identical soteriology is developed with a different anthropological model. Every man consists of body and soul, but before the revelation, every soul was filled with demons: in pre-Christian times, all men were hylics. Christ comes into the world to bring the emotions of the soul into order, i.e., he comes to drive out the demons. This happens when the human soul uses the power that it possesses from the pleas and beseeching of the outer Sophia – and that is its free decision – and turns to Christ. Such a man becomes a psychic. But again, it depends on divine grace whether the "Logos" is sown through the encounter with Christ, so that a man attains perfect knowledge and becomes a "gnostic" ("one who knows"). The classes of mankind arise in System B through the encounter with Christ; but here, too, the doctrine concerns the problem of grace and free will.

##### 5. THE BRIDAL CHAMBER

As the formation of knowledge in the case of Achamoth is presented as unification with the

Redeemer who descends to her from the Pleroma, so the Valentinians also use a sexual metaphor for the redemption process of the human pneuma. Perhaps this derives from Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*, for the pneuma-sparks are seen as female, and as uniting with their male companions, the angels (cf. Clement, *Excerpta*, 21). The pair of Sophia and Redeemer (*Soter*) thereby represents the totality of human pneuma-sparks and angels; in the myth, this is shown through genetic relationships: the angels are brothers of the Redeemer, the pneuma-sparks creations of Sophia. The saving knowledge is presented in the image of the bridal chamber in which the two separated parts find themselves together again. It is debatable whether besides baptism (and anointing) there was an independent rite of the bridal chamber (possibly as sacrament for the dying), in which the union was ritually symbolized. At any rate, one reads in the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3, 67, 27-30): 'The Lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber', and Irenaeus states of a Valentinian group (*AH*, I, 21, 3): 'For some of them frame a bridal chamber, and solemnize an initiation, with certain invocations upon those who are being perfected, and they say that what they do is a spiritual marriage, after the similitude of the marriages on high'. Possibly this is a matter simply of a "pneumatic" interpretation of baptism, expressed in specific formulae and prayers; cf. *Gospel of Philip*, NHC II, 3, 69, 25-27: 'Baptism includes the resurrection and the redemption; the redemption takes place in the bridal chamber'. That which is forgiveness of sins for the "Church Christians" is for the "gnostic" Christians "redemption" (*lytrosis*), through which the pneuma can return to its heavenly home (cf. *Tractatus Tripartitus*, NHC I, 5, 128, 33-36: 'Baptism is also called "bridal chamber" because of the agreement and the indivisible state of those who know they have known him'). Others, according to Irenaeus, rejected baptism and preferred only an anointing (cf. *Gospel of Truth*, NHC I, 3, 36, 17ff.); a few dispensed with sacraments altogether and saw "redemption" in knowledge alone.

##### 6. COSMOLOGY

To the anthropological event that sets Achamoth in motion, there corresponds the cosmological event. Achamoth herself represents in the cosmos the eighth and outermost sphere of the fixed stars ("Ogdoas"), beyond the seven planets known in Antiquity. In philosophical terms, she represents the noetic World-Soul which surrounds the cosmos and ensures its ever-constant motion. Above her is

the transcendent world of Ideas, bound to no space, which is represented in the myth by the thirty Aeons. In her function as noetic World-Soul, Achamoth is also that which forms everything below. From the psychic substance that arose out of her appeal to the divine she brings forth the Demiurge, who dwells in the Sevenfold ("Hebdomas"); beneath him are the other planetary rulers. The Demiurge, an image of God the Father (Clement, *Excerpta*, 47, 2), is not hostile to the divine; rather, he is also destined to turn eventually toward the Redeemer. Until the revelation, however, he as well is a prisoner of ignorance and defined by emotions. In this condition he forms, as creator, everything psychic and material, whereby – without knowing it – he is guided by the outer Sophia. The result is a principal distance vis-à-vis the world and all the orderings in it: 'The rich have become poor, and the kings have been overthrown! Everything is prone to change. The world is an illusion! – lest, indeed, I rail at things to excess!' (*Treatise on the Resurrection*, NHC I, 4, 48, 24-30). The Demiurge is identified with the God of the Old Testament. His ignorance shows itself especially in the expression of Isaiah 45, 5/46, 9: 'I am God and none beside me'. It is he, too, who made the hylc and psychic man in Paradise, the fourth heaven. The demotion of the Creator of the world and of man met with the most decided resistance from the Church Christians. For the Valentinians, it was the consequence of their assessment of the visible world as the place of ignorance and emotions. The transcendent God of knowledge cannot have anything to do with this world; only the pneuma-sparks that are in it have the possibility of surmounting it and returning to the divine Pleroma. When all the pneuma-sparks have reached perfection, the world perishes. Sophia rises to the Pleroma and, together with the Redeemer, becomes a syzygy. The duplication of Sophia lasts, therefore, only for the duration of the world, and is abolished at the end of time; as long as the world lasts, however, the juxtaposition of the transcendent Pleroma and the cosmic "Ogdoas" is constitutive. Like Sophia and the Redeemer, at the end-time the pneuma-sparks and the angels will find their bridal chamber in the Pleroma, having left behind what is psychic and material. The Demiurge and everything psychic that has turned to Christ will find its salvation outside the Pleroma in the highest sphere of heaven ("Ogdoas") (cf. Heracleon, Frg. 13, in Origen, *Comm. on John*, X, 33). Everything else will perish in a final conflagration.

#### 7. CHRISTOLOGY

The act of knowledge, which takes place first on the highest plane of the Aeons, secondly outside

the Pleroma, and finally in man, becomes possible through the revelation; there are consequently three Christ-figures who act on their respective levels of being. This threefold nature prompted much criticism and also much confusion among the Church Fathers (and the Valentinians themselves?), so that it is often unclear which Christ is being discussed. Apparently the Valentinians also argued about whether the earthly Christ, who has assumed nothing material, possesses a psychic or only a pneumatic body; and this supposedly brought about the split into an Italian and an Eastern school (Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VI, 35, 5-7). In Christ's martyrdom, only his psychic part is capable of suffering; this suffering has the purpose of attaining the state of emotionlessness ("apathy") (Clement, *Excerpta*, 61, 3). Crucifixion and resurrection are the place at which Christ finally overcomes death, by deceiving the earthly powers which seek to kill him, and thereby robbing them of their power. This salvation, however, does not apply to anything bodily or material: that must perish. In order to understand the threefold nature of the Christ figure, one must refer to the Platonic model of archetype and copy, which is of great significance for the Valentinian myth: 'For all things here, they say, are types (*typoi*) of the things there' (Irenaeus, *AH*, I, 7, 2). The archetype is not to be understood in a historical sense, as if it existed in space and time at an earlier period. It is more a supra-temporal model for earthly events, and stands outside historical development. In this sense, the redemptive event on the level of the Pleroma and the outer Sophia is only the archetype for the fate of the human pneuma; and likewise the higher Christ figure is the supra-temporal model for the earthly Christ. The myth which proceeds in temporal sequence is not to be taken literally in this respect. What is historical is God's revelation through the Son, which is the beginning of the revolution that will have reached its goal when everything divine in the world has attained knowledge. This historical event has archetypes outside space and time, which can elucidate the meaning of earthly events but are not themselves part of history.

#### 8. THE TRIPARTITE TRACTATE

The discovery of manuscripts at Nag Hammadi has given us access to an extremely important and original text, which describes in a similar way how the divine came out of itself, created the world and man, and returned to itself again. The text has come down without a title, and was named by the first editors, on account of its division into three parts of different length, the *Tripartite Tractate* (I, 5). Part I (51, 1-104, 3) describes the Father and



his emanations and the fate of the Logos; Part 2 (104, 14-108, 12) is devoted to the creation of man; and Part 3 (108, 13-138, 27) to soteriology and eschatology. With 88 pages it is one of the longest of the Nag Hammadi texts, and also one of the best-preserved. Until now, no attempt to attribute it to an author has met with universal consent; the author seems to have come to terms with the Church's criticism of the Valentinian teachings, and perhaps under Origen's influence to have attempted a new version of the myth in the 3rd century AD, in order to minimize the doctrinal difference between the "majority church" and Valentinianism. The most important points at which he diverges from the system as transmitted by Irenaeus, or makes different emphases, are as follows. The unity of God is emphasized (as in System B): he alone is responsible for the existence and the being of the cosmos. "Son" and "Church" are his first creations (not presented as syzygies), which cause all the other Aeons to appear and which embrace them. These are not thirty Aeons organized in pairs, but the entirety of all divine powers. The author chooses an astonishing image to explain their unity and multiplicity (58, 21-29): 'Those which exist have come forth from the Son and the Father like kisses, because of the multitude of some who kiss one another . . . , the kiss being a unity, although it involves many kisses'. Their creation is not understood as a temporal beginning, but as the transition from a merely potential existence (in the mind of the Father) to an actual one in the consummation of God's self-knowledge. Thereby the Father is understood as static, the Son as "spreading himself"; this points to the Platonic-Pythagorean doctrine of the transition from "unity" to "duality", and to the doctrine illustrated by Numenius of a first Nous at rest and a second Nous in motion (cf. *Valentinian Exposition*, NHC XI, 2, 22, 21ff.). The crisis of the divine does not condemn the female Sophia, but the male Logos, though he acts from similar motives; it is said that his actions are free, and in concord with the will of the Father (77, 6-11): 'It is not fitting to criticize the movement, which is the Logos, but it is fitting that we should say, about the movement of the Logos, that it is a cause of an organization which has been destined to come about'. After his change (*metanoia*), the Logos divides (cf. the duplicated Sophia), and part of him returns to the Pleroma. The "Redeemer", called "Son", enlightens the lower Logos, who now orders the lower world (*oikonomia*) with the help of the (ignorant) Demiurge which he has created (103, 4-5): ' . . . whom he too used, as a hand and as a mouth and as if he were his face'. The different classes of mankind first distinguish themselves, as

in System B, in the encounter with the Redeemer, whose incarnation in body and soul is emphasized; in a similar way, the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I, 4, 44, 13-15) states that the "Son of man" has taken on flesh. The rather conventional interpretation of the Paradise story is also interesting: the expulsion was willed insofar as man must learn the consequence of ignorance – death – so that he can appreciate the blessing of its overcoming. Especially striking is the fact that the "psychics", who are divided into several groups, should have the same expectation on the other side as the "pneumatics" (123, 21-29). Not without reason does the text end with a hymn to the Revealer (138, 22-27): ' . . . the Lord, the Savior, the Redeemer of all those belonging to the one filled with Love, through his Holy Spirit from now through all generations forever and ever'.

#### 9. PTOLEMAEUS

After Irenaeus had excerpted the myth (with its variants) from the available 'writings of the pupils of Valentinus' (*AH*, I, Preface), he tried to show the contradictory nature of the Valentinian doctrines (I, 11-21). Beside Valentinus, Marcus, and some un-named ones, he also mentions Ptolemaeus and his school (I, 12, 1). Unfortunately he mentions no more than that the highest God brought forth the first pair of Aeons, Nous and Truth, with the help of two (creative) states of mind (*diatheseis*): through his Thinking and Willing (cf. *Gospel of Truth*, 37, 13ff.). Here the Aeons are seen as the product of God's thought and will, whereas Tertullian reports that Ptolemaeus understood the Aeons as self-subsistent beings (*personae substantiae*) outside God (*Adv. Val.*, 4, 2); possibly the Valentinian doctrine (System B) was meant, according to which God stands without a companion beside the other Aeon-syzygies. How Ptolemaeus's myth continued remains unknown. Nor is anything more known of his life. Most unclear is the question of whether the Ptolemaeus named by Justin in his second Apology as having suffered martyrdom in Rome around 152 AD is identical with the Valentinian Ptolemaeus (*Apol.* 2, 9). The only certain source is his *Letter to Flora* (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 33, 3-7), in which Ptolemaeus treats the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, in pretentious style and with a methodical philosophical dissection. The author of the Law, he says, is the Demiurge, who stands in the middle between the perfect Father-God and the Devil (which shows an anti-Marcionist tendency). The Demiurge, in contrast with the perfectly good Father, is only just. However, not only the Demiurge but also → Moses and the oldest of the Hebrews were responsible for

parts of the Law. Within the parts given by the Demiurge one should distinguish three types: a) the Ten Commandments as pure lawgiving, which the Savior, the son of Father-God, completed (the lawgiving of the Demiurge, therefore, having been imperfect); b) the laws involving injustice (e.g., “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”), which the Savior repealed; c) symbolic or typical laws, i.e. the directions for worship, to which the Savior gave a spiritual meaning (fasting, for instance, means abstinence from all evil deeds). The criterion of the latter two types is the Savior’s words and conduct; with his appearance, the age of symbols and images ends and that of truth begins. At the end of the letter, Ptolemaeus refers to the myth, which explains how the middle, the material, and evil could come forth from the perfect good. As in Valentinus, the letter gives evidence of Platonic trains of thought, which are blended with the interpretation of the biblical text.

#### 10. HERACLEON

Heracleon is only mentioned by Irenaeus once, in passing (*AH*, 2, 4, 1), yet Clement calls him the ‘most eminent’ representative of the school (*Strom.*, IV, 71, 1; cf. Origen, *Comm. on John*, II, 14). He must have flourished in the second half of the 2nd century, but it is not known where (at Rome and/or Alexandria?). Apparently “memo-randa” (*hypomnemata*) were made from his exegesis of John, which Origen cites in his commentary on John’s Gospel (48 fragments) and criticizes (Heracleon’s interpretation of Luke 12, 8-11; see above). We do not know how extensive and thorough this exegesis was, but it probably began with John 1:3. This might suggest that Heracleon was silent about his Aeon doctrine, because in his exegesis he was addressing a general public. In his interpretation, which also draws on the other gospels, Paul, and the Old Testament, there is a myth in the background whose exact form can no longer be reconstructed. What is clear is the disparagement of the Demiurge who is also the law-giver, as opposed to the highest God. Beneath him is the Devil (*Diabolos*), who symbolizes matter and its powers. The Logos takes part in the creation of the world and of man; he is the ‘true creator’ (Frg. 22, Origen, XIII, 19). Heracleon emphasizes the historical significance of the coming of Christ: ‘Now at last he is here’ (Frg. 8, Origen, VI, 39); henceforth the Old Testament can be understood as an image of salvation history. The chief message of the surviving fragments concerns anthropology and soteriology. The three classes of men, “pneumatics”, “psychics”, and “choics”, are identified

with the various people who converse with Jesus. Man consists of soul and body. If the soul rules over the body and follows the divine will through its own free decision, it attains a limited salvation, like John the Baptist or the son of the royal official (John 4:46-53, Frg. 40, Origen, XIII, 60); the soul of the “choic,” on the other hand, is subject to bodily urges, so that he deserves to be called the son of the Devil. The only one who can attain gnostic knowledge is he whose soul carries a pneumatic seed within it; but as in the myth related above, even this kind of soul is in a state of ignorance and sin before the coming of the Redeemer: its divine core must be illuminated. Heracleon finds this destiny of the “pneumatic” illustrated in the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42, Frg. 17-23). Her six lovers represent her entanglement in material evils; but she seeks to be freed from it and comes to Jacob’s Well: she hopes to find God by practicing obedience to the Law. This attempt cannot succeed; it is only in the encounter with the Revealer that she can recognize her ignorance, the cause of her former sins, and overcome it. Her knowledge is described in the image of the uniting of her soul with her heavenly companion. Only thus can the soul find its original “fullness” and attain salvation and immortality.

#### 11. THEODOTUS

Theodotus the Valentinian also remains a shadowy figure. Among Clement’s works are preserved ‘extracts [*epitomai*] from Theodotus and from the teachings of the so-called Eastern school of Valentinus’s time’. We cannot be certain from this that Theodotus was Valentinus’s contemporary. Hippolytus mentions a Theodotus from Byzantium (‘the Cobbler or Leather-seller’) and a Theodotus the Banker (Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, VII, 35f.), but the teachings ascribed to them have little agreement with those in Clement’s *Excerpta*, in which it is very difficult to decide which extracts are attributable to Theodotus. Beside portions that contain Clement’s own arguments, others are ascribed to the Valentinians in general (also introduced by “They say”); the parallel version to Irenaeus’s myth is unfortunately given without any indication of origin (*Excerpta*, 43, 2-65). A few extracts are introduced with “Theodotus says”, or “he says”. Among these is an interpretation of I Cor. 15:29, on baptism for the dead. This applies to the angels, who have themselves baptized for the sake of the human pneuma-sparks that represent their other halves. The angels need this pneumatic part, because only thus can they ascend (*ibid.*, 35). The “Mother” brought forth these pneuma-sparks as

her minor children, who first acquire a “father” through their formation by the Savior (*ibid.*, 68). The Church represents the totality of the sparks that were elected before the world’s foundation (*ibid.*, 41, 1f.). Like the angels, Jesus was baptized when the “Son” or “Monogenes” descended on him in the form of a dove (*Excerpta*, 22, 1-3; cf. 26, 1). Jesus’ visible parts, according to Theodotus, stem from Sophia; the Logos clothed himself with them when he descended (*Excerpta*, 1, 1f.); a psychic Christ seems not to be envisaged here. His archetype is the Christ whom Sophia brought forth after her exit from the Pleroma, but who left her and rose to the Pleroma. At his request, Jesus, the Paraclete, was sent to Sophia (*Excerpta*, 32, 2f., cf. 23, 2 and 39). Sophia however, after Christ’s ascension, brought forth the inferior Demiurge (*ibid.*, 33, 3). This doctrine of Christ’s origin replaces the duplication of Sophia in Irenaeus’s account (or the division of the Logos in *Tripartite Treatise*, NHC I, 5); the ascending Christ corresponds to the higher Sophia, the one left behind to the lower. Irenaeus specifies that this was Valentinus’s own teaching (Irenaeus, *AH*, I, 11, 1); likewise the *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI, 2, 33, 35-37) says: ‘These things Sophia endured after her son had hastened upwards’. It is possible that in this detail Theodotus stayed true to the mythic design of his teacher. In another interesting detail, Theodotus speaks against abstinence from human reproduction: the latter is needed because only thus can the elect seeds come into the world, so as to find knowledge there (*ibid.*, 67). A longer extract is devoted to fate (*heimarmene*), which determines human life together with the various powers that manifest in the stars; with baptism their rulership ends. Baptism is understood as rebirth, and this also is an act of knowledge: ‘It is not the bath alone that frees, but also the knowledge of who we were, what we became, where we were, wherein we were thrown, whither we strive, wherefrom we are freed, what are signified by birth and rebirth’. (*ibid.*, 78, 2). He who attains this knowledge in baptism receives the ‘seal of truth’ and is untouchable by all other powers.

## 12. THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

The most famous scripture of the Valentinian school is the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I, 3), so called from its incipit. Irenaeus confirms this title as Valentinian and mentions the work’s difference from the canonical gospels (*AH*, III, 11, 9; probably derived from that is Ps.-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses*, 4, 6). According to Irenaeus, the text must have been written before 175 A.D.; when

he gives its date as ‘not long ago’ (*ibid.*), he presumably means that it does not come from the time of the canonical gospels, but is of recent date. The original language of the text was probably Greek; a Latin word also occurs (*forma* in 27, 2; cf. *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 55, 8 and 61, 12), and there are stylistic reminiscences of Oriental wisdom-literature and hymnody. There is much debate about the genre of the text, which was first described as a homiletic reflection on the good news brought by the Redeemer. This seems to be the sense of the work’s title “On the Gospel of Truth”; the author attempts therein to explain the significance for mankind of the true message of the Redeemer, which is presented in the (canonical) gospels that he cites. At the end, the author speaks in the first person to his readers (42, 41-43, 5): ‘It is not fitting for me, having come to be in the resting-place, to speak of anything else . . . , it is fitting to be concerned at all times with the Father of the All and the true brothers’. A structural analysis of the text is almost impossible, since the author’s argument has no clear sections and is interwoven with numerous repetitions, anticipations, reinforcements, and digressions. The text can be regarded as a demythologized variant of the Valentinian myth, for the systematic main points concerning the divine doctrine, especially the question of theodicy, anthropology, and soteriology, are not given in the form of a cosmogonic story, but in a didactic form that uses a rich and very demanding imagery, and contains many reminiscences of the New Testament scriptures. Consequently, no distinction is made between the three levels: Pleroma, heaven and earth; the Aeons are simultaneously the human pneuma-sparks, and the transcendent Son and Name of God is simultaneously the earthly Jesus.

This avoidance of a narration unfolding in time is particularly visible in the figure of “error” (in Greek, the feminine *planē*), which characterizes the cosmos and human existence before the coming of the Redeemer. “Error” and its associated emotions arise because the Pleroma, the entirety of divine powers or emanations, is ignorant of God, who as in the *Tripartite Tractate* appears as a unity (“Monas”) without a female element (22, 27-33): ‘It was a great wonder that they were in the Father, not knowing him, and (that) they were able to come forth by themselves, since they were unable to comprehend or to know the one in whom they were’. As in the myth, ignorance is needed because it is the prerequisite for the search for God (17, 4f.). Only because God at first withheld knowledge (envy having no part in it), could he enable the return to him in perfect knowledge (19, 4-6). The

cause of the godless world lies in God, even if he did not create it (18, 1-3): 'Oblivion did not come into existence from the Father, although it did indeed come into existence because of him'. The arguments about "planē" thus substitute for the myth of fallen Sophia and the Demiurge. It is interesting that beauty is counted among the works of "error" (17, 19f.); it seduces those situated in the middle (man's interior). But the Son and the Holy Spirit enlighten them and give them truth instead of (earthly) beauty. Only then do they advance from a potential to an actual existence. Through the revelation of the Son 'the aeons may know him and cease laboring in search of the father, resting there in him, knowing that this is the rest' (24, 16-20). The author teaches the predestination of those who come to knowledge (e.g. 21, 26f.; cf. *Treatise of the Resurrection*, NHC I, 4, 46, 25-29): 'We are elected to salvation and redemption, since we are predestined from the beginning not to fall into the foolishness of those who are without knowledge'. Beside the chosen there is only the group of "materials" (31, 1), who will perish; a middle group of Church Christians is not mentioned (cf. *Valentinian Exposition*, NHC XI, 1, where however the middle "psychic" seems lacking). This circumstance may point to the origin of the text at a time when the division of the Valentiniens from the majority church was not yet complete, or else it may be an indication that it is an "exoteric" scripture that sought not to alienate the members of the majority. The emphasis on the vicarious death on the cross may also point in this direction: "error" persecutes and kills the Revealer, but in doing so can only affect its own work, the body. Jesus sheds the "perishable rags" and clothes himself with "imperishability" (20, 31f.), cf. *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I, 4, 45, 14-17): 'The Savior swallowed up death. . . for he put aside the world which is perishing. He transformed himself into an imperishable Aeon'. In the same way, those who attain the repose of knowledge simultaneously cast off lack, i.e. the ignorance that turned into matter. From the experience of salvation comes the urge to pass on this knowledge (32, 35-37): 'Speak of the truth with those who search for it and of knowledge to those who have committed sin in their error', and, in one's own case, not to abandon it (33, 15-21): 'Do not return to what you have vomited to eat it. Do not be moths, do not be worms, for you have already cast it off. Do not become a (dwelling) place for the devil, for you have already destroyed him'.

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JENS HOLZHAUSEN

**Vaughan, Thomas** (Eugenius Philalethes), \* 1621 Newton-by-Usk, Breconshire (Wales), † 27.2.1666 Albury, Oxfordshire

Younger twin brother of the poet Henry Vaughan (1621-1695). Vaughan was educated privately by Matthew Herbert (ca. 1600-1660), admitted to Jesus College, Oxford in May 1638, proceeded to the BA degree in 1642, and continued his studies there for some years thereafter. He fought in the Civil War on the Royalist side, and was taken prisoner at Rowton Heath in 1645. He became rector of his home parish of Llansantffraed ca. 1645, and was evicted in 1650 under the provisions of the Act for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales. The charges against him were more serious than for any other Breconshire incumbent, describing him as 'a common drunkard, a common swearer, no preacher, a whoremaster and in arms personally against the Parliament'. The first charge was apparently accurate; an entry in Vaughan's MS notebook refers to his having 'revell'd away many yeares in drinking'. By the time he

was evicted from his living in 1650, Vaughan was already living in London. In May of that year Samuel Hartlib (ca. 1600-1662) noted the publication of Vaughan's *Anthroposophia Theomagica*, described its author as having for some years 'tried Chymicall or Physical Conclusions', and as living with Thomas Henshaw at Kensington 'where they lay their heads and hands together to see what they can produce'. Kensington is the first of five of Vaughan's known London residences. Henshaw was one of the founding fellows of the Royal Society, like Vaughan an ardent Royalist, who, after being taken prisoner and given the gentleman's option of pledging not to fight again or being confined, travelled on the Continent (from 1644-1645 with Evelyn in Italy). Hartlib said of Henshaw that both his parents were 'great chymists', and that he had a substantial library of alchemical works, printed and in manuscript. We also learn from Hartlib that in 1650 Dr. Robert Child (ca. 1612-1654) was endeavouring to form a 'chymical club' of which Henshaw and Vaughan were to be members; its purposes included the collection of alchemical [→ alchemy] books and manuscripts with a view to publishing them in one volume. Later in that year Child told Hartlib that Henshaw was about to put in to practice 'a model of [a] Christian Learned Society', referring to the *Christianae Societatis Imago* of → J.V. Andreae, translated in 1647 by John Hall as *A Model of a Christian Society*. Its members were to have all things in common, dedicating themselves to devotion and studies, separating themselves from the world by leading a severe life as to diet and apparel; they were to have a laboratory and 'strive to do all the good they can to their neighbourhood'. It is likely that this club was actually formed, but Vaughan is unlikely to have lived monastically for very long. He was married (28.9.1651) to Rebecca († 17.4.1658), probably the daughter of Dr. Timothy Archer (1597-1672) and his wife Rebekah Beedles of Cambridgeshire. Archer, the rector of Mappersall in Bedfordshire, was an ardent royalist. It seems apparent from the MS notebook that the marriage was happy, and that Rebecca participated in Vaughan's study of alchemy.

In 1661 Vaughan was embroiled in a legal battle, arising from his practice of alchemy, of which the outcome is unknown. He did not return to his ecclesiastical living after the Restoration, but continued to work as an alchemist, most probably as an assistant to Sir Robert Moray (1608/1609-1673), first President of the Royal Society. Henry Vaughan wrote that Vaughan 'gave all his bookes & manuscripts' to Moray; Aubrey reported



Moray as saying that he had buried Vaughan 'at Albury'. Vaughan's pseudonym, Eugenius Philalethes, appears on all his title pages, except that of *Aula Lucis*, where he appears as S.N. a Modern speculator. He had some posthumous reputation; substantial passages were transcribed into commonplace books; and he was read in German translations through the 18th century.

Vaughan dedicated his first published work to the Brothers of the Rosy Cross [→ Rosicrucianism], and he republished two Rosicrucian tracts with a substantial preface. His title *Magia Adamica* is a clear allusion to → Robert Fludd's *Philosophia Moysaica*. He praised → Cornelius Agrippa in *Anthroposophia Theomagica*, *Anima Magica Abscondita* and *Magia Adamica*; in the last-mentioned work he also praises Libanius Gallus, → Johannes Trithemius, → Francesco Giordano da Veneto, Michael Sendivogius and the kabbalistic scholar → Johann Reuchlin, who was a major source. The first doctrine he announces is that of the pre-existence, and the royalty, of the soul: a clear attack on Calvinist views. He followed → Paracelsus in substituting the three "elements" of sulphur, salt and mercury for Aristotle's four. Like his brother Henry, he praised the state of childhood, but stressed the child's desire for knowledge rather than his innocence. Again as in Henry's work, the historical figure of Jesus is less important to Vaughan than was Christ conceived cosmically, as in St. John's Prologue and in Colossians 1:17. Christ's redemption is for the whole Creation, – again, in mid-17th century England, an anti-Calvinist position (*Anthroposophia Theomagica*, 56). See also, in this respect, *Euphrates*, 517–518: 'I fear not to say, that *Nature* is so much the business of *Scripture*, that to me, the *Spirit of God*, in those sacred Oracles, seems not only to mind the *Restitution of Man* in particular, but even the *Redemption of Nature* in generall. We must not therefore confine this *Restitution* to our own *Species*'. Like others of his time, Vaughan thought of the Bible, and the oral tradition of its commentators, as a source of scientific wisdom; on the other hand he sought out scientific truth by "chymical" experiments. He was an animist, opposed to the peripatetics, who 'look on God, as they do on Carpenters, who build with Stone and Timber, without any infusion of life' (*The Man-Mouse*, 249). His view of chemistry is in line with his Arminian, anti-Calvinist theology, salvation being 'nothing else but transmutation' (*Lumen de Lumine*, 357). Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Vaughans, from a modern perspective, is their opposition to the view, commonly expressed

by neo-Calvinists of the period, that the non-human creation is of value only insofar as it is useful to human beings. The question of how we should consider and treat the non-human world is a contested area in our time, in, for example, the confrontations between environmentalists and logging companies. It is clear from their work where Vaughan and his brother would have stood on this issue; the non-human for them was not merely instrumental, but an object of admiration, reverence and love. 'God is not absent from his creatures', Vaughan wrote, after considering the wisdom of the spider and the hare (*Anima Magica Abscondita*, 112).

*Anthroposophia Theomagica and Anima Magica Abscondita*, London: Humphrey Blunden, 1650 ♦ *Magia Adamica and The Man-Mouse Taken in a Trap, and tortur'd to death for gnawing the Margins of Eugenius Philalethes*, London: Humphrey Blunden, 1650 ♦ *Lumen de Lumine and The Second Wash: or The Moore Scour'd once more*, London: Humphrey Blunden, 1651 ♦ *Aula Lucis*, London: William Leake, 1652 ♦ *The Fame & Confession of the Fraternity of R:C., Commonly, of the Rosy Cross*, London: Giles Calvert, 1652 ♦ *Euphrates*, London: Humphrey Moseley, 1655 ♦ *Thalia Rediviva*, London: Roger L'Estrange, 1678 (F7r – G7r poems by Vaughan) ♦ *Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis* (British Library MS Sloane 1741; mostly written between Rebecca's death and April 1659, this notebook contains a record of the alchemical work in which they had collaborated, and accounts of dreams in the year following her death) ♦ A.E. Waite (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1919 ♦ Alan Rudrum (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

*Lit.*: Noel L. Brann, "The Conflict between Reason and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England: A Case Study of the Vaughan-More Debate", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 43 (1980), 103–126 ♦ O.E. Crawshaw, "That Sliding Science, Alchemy", *Anglo-Welsh Review* 18 (1970), 146–155 ♦ O.E. Crawshaw, "The Relationship Between the Works of Thomas and Henry Vaughan", *Poetry Wales* 11:2 (1975), 73–97 ♦ Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan (Donald R. Dickson [ed.]), *Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis: Or, The radical Humiditie of Nature: Mechanically, and Magically dissected By the Conduct of Fire, and Ferment* Sloane: (British Library MS, 1741), Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 2001 ♦ Donald R. Dickson, "Thomas Vaughan and the Iatrochemical Revolution", *The Seventeenth Century* 15 (2000), 18–31 ♦ Donald R. Dickson, "The Alchemical Wife: The Identity of Thomas Vaughan's 'Rebecca'", *The Seventeenth Century* 13 (1998), 34–46 ♦ Donald R. Dickson, *The Tessera of Antilia, Utopian Brotherhoods & Secret Societies in the Early Seventeenth Century*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, etc. 1998 ♦ Gertrude Kelly Hamilton, *Three Worlds of Light: The Philosophy of Light in Marsilio Ficino, Thomas Vaughan and Henry Vaughan*, University of

Rochester Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1974 ♦ F.E. Hutchinson, *Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947 ♦ Lotte Mulligan, "Reason", "Right Reason", and "Revelation" in Mid-Seventeenth Century England", in: Brian Vickers (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1984 ♦ Alan Rudrum, "Thomas Vaughan's *Lumen de Lumine*: An Interpretation of Thalia", in: Luanne Frank (ed.), *Literature and the Occult*, Arlington: University of Texas, 1977, 234-243 ♦ Thomas Willard, "The Rosicrucian manifestos in Britain", *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 77:4 (1983), 489-495.

ALAN RUDRUM

**Venise, Jean-Marie de** → Ragon de Bettignies, Jean-Marie

**Vilanova, Arnau de** → Arnau de Vilanova

## Villard de Honnecourt and the Medieval Craft

Villard de Honnecourt, who, in his manuscript written in the French of Picardy (Bibliothèque Nationale de France Ms fr 19093), spelled his name "Wilars", is known only by this collection of small parchment leaves (14 × 22,5 cm. on average), bound in a leather portfolio. Many folios have disappeared since the 13th century, when the author assembled the drawings and texts executed in various places to form, as he called it, a book. Remaining are thirty-three folios (66 pages) out of about fifty that it must have included originally. It was discovered in 1825, in a collection from the abbey of St. Germain des Prés. The first facsimile, annotated by J.B. Lassus, published in 1858, was reproduced, soon afterward, with commentaries in English, by Robert Willis.

Religious scenes, traditional figures, machines and various engines, automata, formulas for geometry and surveying, procedures for stonecutting, models of building construction, church furniture, partial plans of religious structures, devices for vaulting, surveys of existing buildings, templates for stone elements, figures of people and animals, drawings having both esoteric meanings and mnemonic purposes [→ Mnemonics] are the subjects treated in this manuscript. It is a mine of information as much on technical knowledge as on life in the 13th century and on initiatory crafts associations, whose rituals have been transmitted until the contemporary period.

A great many scholars, historians, and architects

have taken an interest in this outstanding manuscript. Some of its drawings have been reproduced many times, sometimes with errors, and many articles concerning it have appeared. Viollet-le-Duc, notably, cited the drawings of Villard, and works on the history of technology allude to some of the machines represented in this manuscript, whose reduced format and subsequent binding in folios suggest the description of "sketchbook". Some facsimiles have appeared after that of Lassus. A facsimile (annotated by Alain Erlande Brandenburg, Jean Gimpel, Régine Pernoud and Roland Bechmann), accessible to the public, was published in France in 1986 and reproduced in Italy and Spain. The only study of all the drawings that appeared before the 1980s is that of Hans Hahnloser published in 1935 in German. The present author's most important contribution, more specifically focused on the technical and mnemotechnical drawings, was published in 1991.

The social position, the functions, and the life of Villard are unknown. The period of his activity, the first third of the 13th century, can be determined to within a few decades by what he represented in his manuscript. In this era, the most beautiful cathedrals rose in Western Europe, later known as "Gothic". Also unknown is whether Villard was a native of Honnecourt, an inhabitant of that small town, or a member of the Benedictine community of the abbey, the heart of that urban area. He appears as an expert in matters of building and machinery, having traveled in France and other countries, such as Switzerland and Hungary, sketching whatever seemed interesting to him, or could be useful for the projects for which he was providing advice or assistance.

An artist with a gift for drawing, Villard was attracted to all that seemed unusual or new to him in every area of construction and mechanics. His lively sketches evoke characters of daily life, but also scenes or traditional figures that we find again in the sculpture of that period. Some drawings concern churches in construction in his time, such as a tower of the cathedral of Laon, or the apsidal chapels of Reims, with technical details concerning pillars, mullions, and ribs. His manuscript, in which we find the first example of the word "ogive", contains plans of church apses, of which some correspond exactly to finished buildings, as well as a model plan for a Cistercian church. He drew a curious rose for the cathedral of Lausanne and another recalling that of Chartres. He indicates that he had been 'sent' to Hungary, where indeed at that period the Cistercians, come from France, had founded several abbeys.

In the literature, Villard has been designated, without any proof, as the architect, or at least a participant in the construction, in the case of seventeen churches. He gave instructions – but we do not know in what capacity – for the construction of the cathedral of Cambrai, and he may have taken part in that of the church of Vaucelles. He may have worked on the collegiate church of Saint Quentin, whose interior layout resembles the survey that Villard made in Reims. Moreover, researchers have found on a wall of this collegiate church an engraving very analogous to a rose drawn by Villard and, more recently, a spiral similar to that sketched in the manuscript. In 1996, the present author discovered in the same church an engraving of arch stones applying a method of stonecutting described in the manuscript. Several plans by Villard correspond to those of finished churches, without thereby providing any indication on his possible contribution to these buildings.

From the viewpoint of the history of technical subjects, his drawings reveal the knowledge of the builders of this period in the areas of geometry, stereotomy, and engineering, as well as their widely diverse centers of interest and the scope of their competence. We perceive traces in them of the teachings of Euclid, Vitruvius, and the Roman agrimensors. The deciphering of the technical drawings in Villard de Honnecourt's manuscript, which had been neglected, despised, or misunderstood, show that the builders of this era possessed, in matters of geometry and stereotomy, knowledge and methods that could explain how they had been able to erect such impressive buildings. In the dedication meant for the professional people to whom he bequeathed his work, Villard stated that it contained many indications in matters of masonry and construction. He also mentioned the method of drawing, called *le Trait*, which prefigured descriptive geometry and stereotomy, and made possible the conception, the exact drawing, and the preliminary cutting of works in wood and stone. In this manuscript, we find the first mentions and examples of the application of this art that, transmitted between initiates, was divulged only from the 16th and 17th centuries, by Philibert de l'Orme, and then by Mathurin Jousse, in a work with the revealing title: *Le Secret d'Architecture* (The Secret of Architecture). This method is still used today by the "Compagnons du Devoir".

We must wonder whether Villard was already part of a workers' association, of an initiatory nature, from which the "Compagnons du Devoir" would have issued in France. These were "operative", that is, working manually, and their often-

prohibited groupings had to remain underground. In the historical context, this hypothesis would be plausible and, in the manuscript, some indications tend to confirm it. At the beginning of the 12th century, crafts guilds officially existed in England, including journeymen and apprentices, who met periodically and owed one another assistance. In 1276, Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg granted a chart of freedoms to the stonemasons of Strasbourg. However, the Authorities controlled these organizations, whose essential goals were not the interests of the workers, and dreaded the initiatives and pressures that the workers could exercise to improve their condition. In France, on several occasions, from the 12th century, the authorities and the Church made a stand against the associations, confraternities, and organizations of solidarity requiring secrecy from their members, and declared them prohibited, notably, in 1189, at the Council of Rouen, and in 1326, at the Council of Avignon. According to Martin Saint Léon, historian of *compagnonnage*, the municipal magistrates of Amiens, at the end of the 13th century, forbade the city workers to meet in groups of more than four and to have a common treasury. In 1506, a ruling by the Châtelet, in Paris, reiterated the prohibition against clandestine meetings of workers. Only the Corporations, instituted and organized under the control of the Authorities, were allowed.

The building workers, who moved frequently because of the unpredictability in the progress of construction sites, must have felt the need for organizations of mutual aid and information, indicating places where work was available and lodgings. Moreover, by belonging to such a society, the workers guaranteed their professional competence to the supervisors. For France, no documents survive on this subject. However, in the countries of Germanic language and in England, the existence of professional organizations uniting stonemasons is attested, starting in the last third of the 14th century. The written documents record the customs of these organizations, which seem to have been tolerated in some countries, where the traditions were less centralizing than were those of France. Speculative → Freemasonry, which has united, since the 17th century, adherents from every profession and often influential personalities, considers itself to have originated from such organizations of manual workers.

The engineer Franz Rziha, who surveyed, in Central Europe, some twelve hundred engraved monument markings, has found that they were placed in geometric patterns specific to the stonecutters of each of the regional "lodges" affiliated with the

Germanic *Bauhütte*. He thinks that the lodges must have existed as early as the 12th century. On the last of the four pages of Villard's manuscript concerning the Art of Geometry, a face is drawn in a grid of squares. Over this is superimposed a graphic, which resembles the marks drawn on the pattern corresponding to the Grand Lodge of Strasbourg, which Rizha surveyed. Could this have been the personal mark of Villard? What indications, in the sketchbook of Villard, would make it possible to suppose that he had been affiliated with such a society, or, at least, been part of a profession practicing certain rites of recognition and using certain symbols that reappear, centuries later, among the Compagnons and the Freemasons, whose traditions are sometimes similar?

Two drawings from folio 19r very exactly illustrate two rituals of recognition, which historians of Compagnonnage describe in detail, notably Raoul Vergez, J. P. Bayard, and François Icher. Representations of the same scenes appear on medieval buildings in Poitiers. Various figures of both folios 18 and 19 refer to designs that are still known and used by certain Compagnons du Devoir. A collective work on the cathedral of Lausanne, of which several of the authors were Compagnons, compares the designs employed with the drawings in Villard's sketchbook.

The composition appearing in folio 6r of the manuscript is presented as 'the sepulcher of a Sarrazin', that is, of a pagan. No tomb corresponds to this composition. On the contrary, it recalls the frontispieces of some books by architects from the Renaissance period, and certain compositions appearing in medieval works, as well as the "tracing boards" of the Freemasons, of which Marc-Reymond Larose has explained the symbolism. For the Compagnons, the word Sarrazin referred to Hiram, a foreign architect called by King Solomon to build the Temple of Jerusalem. This page contains symbols that reappear in the traditions of the Masons and the Compagnons: hence, the two columns recalling those of the Temple, steps, ewers, lilies, mallets, draperies, and pomegranates. The two figures, on either side of what seems to be a drawing board, appear to be holding, the one a plumb line, and the other a set square. However, these two basic tools are not shown, as though to recall that the technique of *le Trait* is a secret. The central character, which is carrying a scepter resting on his left shoulder, is making the sign of the master with his right hand, the index and the little finger extended, and the thumb folded back on the other fingers. The proportion of the fronton at the bottom of the drawing, in the shape of an isosceles

triangle, whose superior angle measures 108 degrees, a number of which François Rabelais, in the 16th century, evoked the symbolic value, reappears notably on the frontons of the "apprentices' board" and the "fellows' board" of the Freemasons. Moreover, the present author has shown that this mysterious composition is constructed on a perfectly regular pentagonal star.

With regard to the four pages representing people and animals with geometrical designs, Villard specified that these are figures of the art of geometry, useful for working. Some have believed these figures to be a method to facilitate drawing, but they were in fact a memento of geometrical layouts. The same aim of memorization accounts for the attribution to the celestial constellations of names that recall the arrangement of the component stars, and in the medieval Arabian and Western treatises on geometry, the attribution of imaginative names to figures of Euclid.

These folios show two characteristic images of a recognition ritual between compagnons, of which the drawings recall various procedures for useful designs, and are replete with symbols, only a few of which we still understand today. Other pages are also noteworthy. Thus, the "dice players" of folio 9r in fact represent a master and an apprentice, as the dice indicate – a five-pointed star and a cross framed by four dots, in the hand of the master, while the dice in the hand of the other person have only dots. In folio 8, we see the inscription AGLA (corresponding to the Hebrew invocation, "*Atha Gibor Leholam Adonai*", meaning, "You are eternally great, Lord"), which reappears in the works of some printers of the 14th and 15th centuries and would be that of a secret society of book artisans.

All these indications form a body of evidence sufficiently great for us to consider it probable that, at the time of Villard of Honnecourt, there already existed an initiatory association of builders, possessing rituals of recognition and a tradition, expressed in symbols, to which different meanings may subsequently have been given, but which were maintained.

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(*Pour la Science*, special issue, Paris 1996, 36-45) ♦ idem, "A New Interpretation of Folio 9r. in Villard's Manuscript", *35th International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo* (4-7 May 2000) ♦ Georges Duby, Daniel Anet, Pierre Margot, Raoul Vergez, Henri Stierlin, Alfred Herman, Jean-Pierre Laubscher & Henri Cevey, *Merveilleuse Cathédrale de Lausanne*, Lausanne: Ed. du Grand Pont, 1975 ♦ François Icher, *Sur le chemin des compagnons*, Ferrières: Poliphile, 1984 ♦ Mathurin Jousse, *Le secret d'architecture*, La Flèche, 1642 ♦ Marc-Reymond Larose, *Le plan secret d'Hiram: Fondements opératifs et perspectives spéculatives du tableau de loge*, Dieulefit: La Nef de Salomon, 1998 ♦ E. Martin Saint-Léon, *Le compagnonnage*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1901 ♦ Jean-Michel Mathonière, "Remarques à propos du quatre de chiffre et du symbolisme géométrique dans les marques de métiers", in: idem, *Études sur les marques au quatre de chiffre*, Dieulefit: La Nef de Salomon, 1994 ♦ idem, *Le serpent compatissant*, Dieulefit: La Nef de Salomon, 2002 ♦ François Rabelais, *Oeuvres complètes: Pantagruel*, Paris: N.R.F. La Pléiade, 1941, L. 5, chap. 36 ♦ R. Recht, *Le dessin d'architecture*, Paris: Adam Biro, 1995 ♦ Franz Rziha, *Studien über Steinmetz-Zeichen*, Vienna, 1883 (Leipzig: Zentral-Antiquariat der DDR, 21989; French trans. *Études sur les marques de tailleurs de pierre*, Paris/Dieulefit: G. Trédaniel/La Nef de Salomon, 1993) ♦ Jean-Louis van Belle, *Quatuor Coronati: Les Saints Patrons des métiers de la pierre*, Braine-le-Château: Editions de la Taille d'Aulme, 2000 ♦ Raoul Vergez, *Le pendule à Salomon*, Paris: Julliard, 1957, 103.

ROLAND BECHMANN

**Viterbo, Egidio da (Egidio Antonini),**  
\*1469 Viterbo, † 12.11.1532 Rome

Having entered the Order of Augustine Hermits (1488), where he rapidly became the secretary of Fra Mariano da Genazzano, Lorenzo de' Medici's favourite preacher and a well-known early opponent of Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), Egidio Antonini acquired the elements of a complete humanistic education, including the study of several oriental languages: aramaic, hebrew and arabic. Gifted and hard-working, he achieved an enviable reputation as a poet, an orator and a remarkable connoisseur of Greek literature and philosophy. Honors came swiftly to crown such promising beginnings: he was appointed successively a Papal Nuncio, the Prior General – and reformer – of his Order (1507-1518) and a Cardinal (1517), apart from being singled out for delivering the inaugural address to the 5th Lateran Council (1512). In → Reuchlin's wake, he remained a staunch upholder of Jewish literature, and of its relevance for reform and a deeper understanding of Christian Scripture

and religion. Thus, during his lifetime, he collected a rich hebrew and kabbalistic library, part of which is today deposited in the Paris National Library. He was also in close and lasting contact with the most famous Jewish and Christian representatives of Renaissance humanism, from A. Giustiniani (1470-1536), → P. Galatino (1460-1540) or J.A. Widmanstetter (1506-1557) to E. Levita (1468-1549), to whom he gave shelter for almost fifteen years at his house in Rome. He constantly maintained a whole retinue of servants and *amanuenses*, both Jewish and converts, occupied with writing and translating texts and treatises for him, kabbalistic and otherwise.

Two among the main intellectual interests of Egidio's life concern us most here: Christian kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences III] and, secondarily, Joachimism. In following these trends, he merely reflected the atmosphere and spiritual proclivities of his time, which affected so many prominent minds, like Galatino or → Guillaume Postel (1510-81), to name but two. That the General of Augustine Hermits should have been aware of the Joachimist expectations fermenting in certain circles within his own Order was surely inevitable; but there is little doubt that he condoned such speculations himself, even if in a milder measure than some, as shown by his receiving the dedication of the *Expositio abbatis Joachim in Apocalypsim* (1527) published in Venice by S. Meucci, in which the editor recalls meeting (in 1519) and being encouraged by the Cardinal in person (a fact pointed out long ago by M. Reeves). An Augustine Hermit himself, S. Meucci directed in Venice, from 1516 to 1527, the publication of a whole range of prophetic writings and biblical commentaries, some spurious and some authentic, ascribed to the abbot of Fiore. Furthermore, traces remain to our day of this aspect of Egidio's orientations, in the form of manuscript copies of tracts of the same persuasion still extant in his *Nachlass*.

Despite our author's strong personal commitment to the perspectives of Christian kabbalah, it is a noted fact – and one difficult to explain, even considering his demanding position – that almost never in his lifetime did he send anything to the press, in this field as well as in others. Among the translations he commissioned or did himself, versions (mostly partial) survive of the books *Bahir*, *Raziel*, *Sefer Yetzirah*, *Temunah*, *Sha'are Orab* and *Ginnat 'Egoz* by Rabbi J. Gikatilla, and excerpts from the *Zohar* and many other documents of kabbalistic, midrashic or even talmudic origin. Among his original works, most conspicuous are the treatises entitled *Scechina* and *Libellus de litteris*



*hebraicis*, along with the earlier *Historia viginti sæculorum*. Unfinished, yet datable from 1530, the first of these texts (but the last one written by the Cardinal) consists of a lengthy (ca 400 pages) exposition of the mysteries of the Shekinah, that is of the divine Presence residing among men. Through Egidio's agency, writing at Pope Clement VII's request, the Shekinah supposedly reveals the secrets of the kabbalah to the emperor Charles V, via the mystical meanings of numbers [→ Number Symbolism], (hebrew) letters and divine names. It is really an esoteric interpretation of the history of the Church, understood in the light of God's continued revelation, the complete grasp of which has hitherto eluded Christians because of their ignorance of the kabbalah. Here, the Shekinah is assimilated with the Holy Spirit, which progressively confers the plenary intelligence of the divine mysteries to the prophets.

New trials are about to manifest themselves for mankind, soon to be followed by impending messianic events which require cogent preparation. Egidio thus attempts to present the emperor with illuminating developments based on the ten *sefirot* – the last of which being the world of the Shekhinah proper – linked to ten different periods, up to the pontificate of Leo X (Clement VII's predecessor) who, along with Charles V (these numbers, as also III and VII, are of course considered significant), inaugurates the incoming era of spiritual fulfillment. Accordingly, the teachings of the Shekhinah aim at elevating the emperor above earthly matters and passions, beyond the celestial spheres, to the contemplation of the divine realm, in order to transform him – in obvious neoplatonic fashion, reminiscent of → Pico della Mirandola or → Ficino, whom Egidio both met – into a faithful minister, below, of the heavenly decrees above, in other words to train him as a political and spiritual reformer.

The *Libellus* (1517), which the *Scechina* expands on, is a brief but remarkable tract dealing with the symbolism of the shape of hebrew letters and based (as is well-known) on the kabbalistic *Sefer ha Temunah*.

As the elements outlined above clearly reveal, Egidio's works blend moderate messianic expectations (applied essentially to his own time) with a wealth of Jewish erudition, combined with extensive Greek learning. One might well wish that, by remaining unpublished, the writings of this complex figure – a high prelate, indefatigable preacher, religious reformer, major Humanist and Christian kabbalist, once famous for his rare blending of eloquence, erudition and piety – had not been, for the

most part, denied the fame and influence they thoroughly deserved.

Egidio da Viterbo, *Scechina e Libellus de litteris hebraicis* (F. Secret ed.), Rome: Centro Internazionale di Studi Umanistici, 1959 (2 vol.).

*Lit.*: C. Astruc & J. Monfrin, "Livres latins et hébreux du cardinal Gilles de Viterbe", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 23 (1961), 551-554 ♦ Egidio da Viterbo O.S.A. e il suo tempo, Rome: Analecta Augustiniana, 1983 ♦ G. Ernst & S. Foa, "Egidio da Viterbo", in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 42 (1993), 341-353 ♦ F. Giaccone & G. Bédouelle, "Une lettre de Gilles de Viterbe (1469-1532) à Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (ca. 1460-1536) au sujet de l'affaire Reuchlin", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 26 (1974), 335-345 ♦ M. Idel, "Giles of Viterbo and the writings of Abraham Abulafia" [hebrew], *Italia* 2 (1980), 48-51 ♦ G. Javary, *Recherches sur l'utilisation du thème de la Sekina dans l'apologétique chrétienne du XV<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: H. Champion, 1978 ♦ F.X. Martin & J.E. Rotelle, O.S.A., *Friar, Reformer and Renaissance Scholar: Life and Work of Giles of Viterbo, 1469-1532*, Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1992 ♦ J.B. Monfasani, "Hermes Trismegistus, Rome, and the Myth of Europa: An Unknown Text of Giles of Viterbo", *Viator* 22 (1991), 311-342 ♦ J.W. O'Malley, S.J., *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform: A Study in Renaissance Thought*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968 ♦ D.J. Nides, "Salvation by Abduction in Giles of Viterbo's Commentary *ad mentem Platonis*", *Studi Umanistici Piceni* 13 (1993), 189-196 ♦ idem, "Humanism in the Commentary *ad mentem Platonis* of Giles of Viterbo", *Augustiniana* 45 (1995), 285-298 ♦ idem, "Homeric Allegory in Egidio of Viterbo's Reflections on the Human Soul", *Recherches de Théologie et de Philosophie Médiévales* 65 (1998), 320-332 ♦ idem, "The Ordering and Origin of the Soul's Faculties According to Giles of Viterbo", *Augustiniana* 49 (1999), 57-71 ♦ idem, "Scholasticism and New Philology: Egidio da Viterbo (1469-1532) on Divine Generation", *Traditio* 57 (2002), 317-340 ♦ F. Secret, "Ægidiana hebraica", *Revue des Études juives* 121 (1962), 409-416 ♦ idem, "Un éloge oublié d'Egidio da Viterbo par Antonio Telesio", *Augustiniana* 13 (1963), 511-514 ♦ idem, "Notes sur Egidio da Viterbo", *Augustiniana* 15 (1965), 68-72 et 414-418; 16 (1966), 371-385; 18 (1968), 134-150; 27 (1977) 205-237; 29 (1979), 194-196 ♦ idem, *Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance*, Milano-Paris: Archè, 1985<sup>2</sup>, 106-126 ♦ idem, "Néoplatonisme et kabbale dans la *Scechina* d'Egidio da Viterbo", in: P. Prini (ed.), *Il Neoplatonismo nel Rinascimento*, Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1993, 29-44 ♦ N. Séd, "La Shekhinta et ses amis 'araméens'", in: *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont: Contribution à l'étude des christianismes orientaux*, Genève: P. Cramer, 1988, 233-242 ♦ G. Séd-Rajna, "Un diagramme kabbalistique de la bibliothèque de Gilles de Viterbe", in: *Hommage à Georges Vajda*, Louvain: Peeters, 1980, 365-376 ♦ A.M. Voci, "Marsilio Ficino ed Egidio da Viterbo", in: G.C. Garfagnini (ed.), *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone*, Florence: Olschki, 1988 (2 vols.), 477-508

♦ G. Weil, *Elie Lévi: Humaniste et Massorète*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963.

JEAN-PIERRE BRACH

**Waite, Arthur Edward**, \* 2.10.1857  
Brooklyn, N.Y., † 19.5.1942 Bridge,  
Canterbury (England)

Writing as an apologist and critical historian of his subject matter, Waite was the author, editor or translator of more than eighty works on → alchemy, → Freemasonry, kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences], → magic, → mysticism, → Rosicrucianism and other aspects of western esotericism. Through a series of translations of → Eliphas Lévi's major works on magic he effectively introduced Lévi to the English-speaking world, while the tarot pack that he designed in 1909, in conjunction with Pamela Colman Smith, has been more widely distributed than any other of the 20th century. He saw himself, however, not as a magician but as 'the exponent in poetical and prose writings of sacramental religion and the higher mysticism, understood in its absolute separation from psychic and occult phenomena'.

Waite's parents – Emma Lovell, an English woman, and an American sea captain, Charles F. Waite – seem not to have been married and after the death of his father Waite was brought to England in 1859 with his infant sister. Rejected by her family, Waite's mother raised her children in the northern suburbs of London, and sought spiritual solace by conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. After the death of his sister in 1874 Waite suffered a loss of faith and turned, successively, to → spiritualism and Theosophy [→ Theosophical Society] in an attempt to restore it. He rejected both creeds and gradually developed his own brand of sacramental Christianity infused with such elements of esotericism as proved acceptable to his temperament. His spiritual progress can be discerned in his early poetry, but he also discovered the works of Eliphas Lévi, whose ambivalence to the Church of Rome mirrored Waite's own feelings, and in 1886 he published an anthology of Lévi's writings, *The Mysteries of Magic*.

This was soon followed by other editorial work (*Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers*, and *The Magical Writings of Thomas Vaughan*, both 1888), and by Waite's own studies, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*, 1887, and *The Occult Sciences*, 1891. With these and other works Waite's reputation as an objective but sympathetic critic was

established and he was accepted into more *recherché* esoteric circles: in January 1891 he was admitted to the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. His initial stay in the Order, however, was brief: he demitted early in 1893, leaving in order to concentrate on his writing. Waite also needed to earn a living – he was now married and had a small child to support – and re-invented himself as a publisher.

Between 1893 and 1896 Waite edited and published a series of English translations of classic alchemical texts, thus providing source material for English-speaking students of alchemy for the next hundred years. In addition Waite also edited *The Unknown World*, 1894-1895, the first journal to be devoted solely to Western esotericism, but while it was a critical success it was also a financial failure and Waite left publishing to take up paid employment as the commercial manager for Horlicks, the manufacturers of malted milk. Freed from financial anxiety Waite was now able to indulge his own taste in writing and to continue his progress in esoteric Orders.

In 1896 he published *Transcendental Magic*, his translation of Lévi's *Dogme et Rituel de l'Haute Magie*, and in the same year he rejoined the Golden Dawn, entering its Second Order, the Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis, three years later. At this time Waite did not play a significant part in the Order's affairs, preferring to increase his initiatic experience. In 1901 he was made a freemason and rapidly explored → Freemasonry's many facets, entering every masonic and quasi-masonic rite and order that was open to him. When the Golden Dawn broke apart in 1903 Waite did not stand upon the sidelines: he seized control of the Isis-Urania Temple, re-named the Order the Independent and Rectified Rite, and took his branch of the Golden Dawn firmly away from magic and in the direction of an idiosyncratic Christian → mysticism. His Rite flourished for ten years, but in 1914 Waite closed down the Isis-Urania Temple, partly for reasons of personal quarrels – which led also to his withdrawing from the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia – but principally because of internal dissension over Waite's increasing emphasis on a mystical interpretation of the rituals.

This shift away from traditional esotericism is apparent in Waite's writing from 1900 onwards. He was drawn increasingly towards the idea of the "Secret" or "Interior Church"; not an instituted body but 'the withdrawn spirit of the outward Holy assembly', made up of 'the integration of believers in the higher consciousness'. Coupled with this notion was Waite's concept of "The Secret

Tradition”, which he developed from his interpretation of the doctrine of the Fall, defining it as ‘the immemorial knowledge concerning man’s way of return whence he came by a method of the inward life’. This tradition, Waite argued, has been maintained down the ages in secret by means of ‘Instituted Mysteries and cryptic literature’.

For the world at large Waite propagated his doctrines in a series of major works on significant themes within Western esoteric traditions. He began with *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal*, 1909, in writing which he was aided by the essayist and fantasy writer, Arthur Machen who was among Waite’s closest friends and who provided him with a leaven of Christian orthodoxy. From the Grail [→ Grail Traditions] he progressed to Freemasonry and the kabbalah, with *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*, 1911, and *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*, 1913, following these with *The Way of Divine Union*, 1915, an original and perceptive study of Christian mysticism. He completed the series with *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, 1924, and *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy*, 1926. But for those he saw as initiates he provided something else.

In 1915, following the collapse of the Independent and Rectified Rite, Waite created a new Order, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, among whose members was Charles Williams – novelist of the supernatural and unorthodox theologian. This Order was, like its parent Golden Dawn, initiatic and offered a series of progressive grades based on a spiritual ascent of the kabbalistic Tree of Life. It differed from the earlier Order in that it was wholly and avowedly Christian, with neither magical nor occultist practices, but utilising traditional esoteric symbolism as a means of presenting the spiritual practices of Western Christianity.

Throughout his later life Waite continued to develop his ideas. After his wife’s death in 1924 he married Mary Schofield who had been his disciple and amanuensis for many years. With her support he revised his studies of the kabbalah, the Holy Grail, and esoteric Freemasonry, and completed his memoirs, *Shadows of Life and Thought*, 1938. This was Waite’s last work and, fittingly – for Waite was, above all, a mystic – it incorporates a comprehensive but succinct analysis of the ground of mystical experience.

By contemporary standards of scholarship much of Waite’s critical work may be found wanting, but he was a pioneer of the academic study of esoteric traditions, an innovative exponent of the philosophy of mysticism, and a creative genius in the field of practical spirituality.

In addition to the major works listed above, see: *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, London, 1910 ♦ *Collected Poems*, London, 1914 ♦ *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, London, 1921 ♦ *Lamps of Western Mysticism*, London, 1923 ♦ *Hermetic Papers of A.E. Waite: The Unknown Writings of a Modern Mystic* Wellingborough: (ed. R.A. Gilbert), 1987

Lit.: R.A. Gilbert, *A.E. Waite: A Bibliography*, Wellingborough, 1983 ♦ idem, *A.E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts*, Wellingborough, 1987.

ROBERT A. GILBERT

**Weigel, Valentin**, \* 1533 Grossenhain (Saxony), † 12.6.1588 Zschopau (Saxony)

Lutheran pastor and author of writings of a critical, theoretical, theological, and devotional character. The son of commoner parents, Weigel depended upon princely patronage to attend an elite Latin school and subsequently studied theology at the Universities of Leipzig and Wittenberg, possibly also teaching briefly at the latter. In 1567 Weigel was ordained as a pastor, a position he held in the Saxon city of Zschopau from that year until his death. His was a career outwardly disturbed only by the tensions and disputes of the Gnesio-Lutheran controversies between rival Lutheran theological factions. Chapter 23 of his *Der güldene Griff* (1578) recounts the seminal impact of these disputes on his thought. In despair over the failure to attain free concord and over the role of intolerance and secular power in religion, Weigel turned to the inner word, following the path of Meister Eckhart, Tauler, the *Theologia Germanica*, and Sebastian Franck, whose writings he studied and incorporated into his own. Weigel’s thought is distinguished from theirs by his incorporation of elements of nature speculation and → mysticism drawn from → Nicholas of Cusa and → Paracelsus, as well as conventional cosmological sources of his time. Though he published almost nothing during his life, he exchanged views and collaborated with pastoral colleagues.

His earliest independent writings dating from 1570 reveal an eclectic tendency that attains originality in his *Gnothi seauton* (1571). Under suspicion of heterodoxy, Weigel penned a successful defense and turned to pastoral writing, composing sermons and a posthumously influential tract on prayer. The years that saw the preparation and enactment of the Lutheran Formula of Concord of 1577 stimulated a renewal of his more critical and

theoretical work, most notably *Vom Ort der Welt* (On the Place of the World) of 1576 and *Der güldene Griff* (The Golden Grasp) of 1578. Other writings critical of the orthodox church establishment and its officially enforced doctrines followed, one of the finest of which is the *Dialogus de Christianismo* (1584). Authorship of the Weigelian works is sometimes unclear due to his collaboration, the lapse prior to posthumous publication, and his adherents' unfortunate habit of composing and printing similar writings in his name.

Since in Weigel's thought the inner overshadows the outer, inner truth or spirit outweighs external nature, → alchemy, or associated spirits or forces. Cosmological interests, the contemplation of the macrocosm, or a belief in the Paracelsian elemental spirits serve to warrant the primacy of the inner or spiritual over the outer or material. Weigel's contemplation of infinitude, reminiscent of Pascal's, shows that the path to ultimate truth and salvation lies within. Weigel's thought is perhaps most forward looking in its idealist epistemology and its emphasis on religious tolerance.

Beginning in 1609 the posthumous publication influenced the Lutheran orthodoxy, the precursors of → Pietism, especially Johann Arndt, and around the time of the Thirty Years' War, dissenters and non-conformists during the 17th century. His name was associated with radical dissent. Partially translated into Dutch and English, Weigel became known to the Quakers. Scholarly interest in his work was revived in the 19th century. The complete works are only now being definitively edited.

*Sämtliche Schriften* (ed. W.E. Peuckert/W. Zeller), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962-1978 (7 Installments); new edition (ed. Horst Pfefferl), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996ff. (4 of 15 planned volumes have appeared) ♦ Translation: *Valentin Weigel: Selected Spiritual Writings* (includes *On the Place of the World* and *The Golden Grasp*), New York: Paulist Press, 2003.

*Lit.*: Horst Pfefferl, *Die Überlieferung der Schriften Valentin Weigels* (Condensed Diss.), Marburg, 1991 ♦ Steven Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973 ♦ Siegfried Wollgast, "Valentin Weigel und seine Stellung in der deutschen Philosophie- und Geistesgeschichte", in: Wollgast, *Vergessene und Verkannte*, Berlin, 1993, 229-253 ♦ Andrew Weeks, *Valentin Weigel (1533-1588): Lutheran Dissenter, Speculative Theorist and Advocate of Tolerance*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000 ♦ Bernard Gorceix, *La mystique de Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) et les origines de la théosophie allemande*, Lille: diss. published at the Université de Lille III, Service de reproduction des thèses, 1972.

**Welling, Georg von, \* Summer 1655  
Kassel, † 28.2.1727 Bockenheim**

Before the publication of Petra Jungmayr's dissertation on von Welling in 1990, almost nothing was known about his life. He occasionally presented himself as Baron von Welling, but whether he was actually granted this title cannot be confirmed. He served as captain in the army (1683-1685) and participated in the defense of Vienna against the Turks. The following years he seems to have spent as a riding master (Hofjunker). From 1705 until ca. 1710 he was an estate lessee (Pächter) in the mining district of Wenigerode. Then he moved to Berlin where King Frederick I made him councillor of legation (Legationsrat), a position that he held only briefly. From 1717 to 1720, von Welling was appointed director of the mines of the Duchy of Württemberg, then settled in Pforzheim. There he entered the service of marquis Karl Wilhelm at the Court of Karlsruhe in 1721, and until 1723 served as director of the marquis's private chemical/alchemical laboratory. In 1722, von Welling also worked for a short period in Anspach as an expert in the salt mines of marquis Wilhelm Friedrich, himself also a person with alchemical interests. Von Welling spent his remaining years in Bockenheim near Frankfurt. He was unable to find a professional post there, and thus found himself in dire financial straits.

Besides the work which made him famous (*Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum*, written in German), von Welling authored other texts. First, in the *Opus* he mentions three (possibly short) published pieces, but these have not yet been recovered (see Jungmayr, 75). They apparently dealt with St. John's Revelation and with certain astrological calculations. Second, a few technical, unpublished pieces have survived, bearing on matters concerning von Welling's profession as a mineralogist and/or his laboratory work at the Court of Karlsruhe. Third, there are editorial comments given to the *Curiose Erwegung* (see further below).

The *Opus* seems to have remained von Welling's only true book. Originally intended to be only about the → alchemy of salt, it ended up covering much more. Published in 1719, and edited by "S.R." (see below), the author signed it as Gregorius Anglus Sallwigt. A note in it informs us that it was finished as early as 1708. This first edition contains only what was to be the first of the three parts of the subsequent versions. The second edition, published in 1729 (after von Welling's death and signed G.A.S), was the first to contain all three parts. Its first part had been edited by S.R. in 1719. The third edition (1735) was later re-edited in 1760 and



1784, and is considered the definitive and complete edition. It is signed Georg von Welling and edited by C.S.; this stands for Christoph Schütz, a theosopher likewise interested in alchemy. Schütz also wrote the preface and inserted a text of his own on the “Eternal Wisdom”. All three versions bear slightly different titles (see Bibliography). The editor, “S.R.”, of the first edition, is in all likelihood Samuel Richter, also known as → Sincerus Renatus. He seems to have gotten hold of the first edition without von Welling’s permission, since von Welling writes in his preface of 1735: ‘the first part of this work came to the light without our consent’.

As far as the third version (1735) is concerned, the words “mago-cab[b]alisticum”, found in the titles of all three editions, are misleading. Nothing is said in the book about either kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences] or → magic. For von Welling, these words are just synonyms for knowledge of Nature and Christian faith, understood in the “gnostic” sense von Welling intends them to have. They serve to designate his purpose of bringing together the “mysteria naturae” and the “mysteria scripturae”. For him, Jewish Kabbalah employs ‘throughout a misuse of the Divine Names’; but, the other hand, he occasionally praises the Christian Kabbalists. Actually, the *Opus* is a book of → Christian theosophy, and for all practical purposes, the terms “kabbala” and “magic” are to be understood here as synonyms of it. This explains the choice of the word “theosophicu[m]s”, which in the titles of 1721 and 1735 felicitously replaces the “theologicum” of 1719. The *Opus* contains graphic geometrical drawings that have something of a “magical” flavor to them – not surprisingly, since they are meant to convey theosophical notions. Some of these drawings were later reproduced by numerous other authors and added significantly to the fame of the work.

The three parts of the *Opus* correspond to → Paracelsus’ “Tria prima”, namely salt, sulphur and mercury. The central topics treated are the alchemy of salt, cosmogony, the Lucifer myth, an exegesis of Genesis, and chiliastic/eschatological speculations. Many of the themes of *Opus* are also borrowed from → Jacob Boehme. First there is the “Urgrund”, understood as the ontologically primary reality in and of God, and His creation of the seven Spirits. Furthermore, one finds Boehme’s exegesis of the first words of Genesis, the androgyny of Adam, and the myth of the Fall of Lucifer who becomes Satan. Last, but not least, von Welling borrows from Boehme the belief in an “apokatastasis panton”: the belief that after the consummation of all things at the end of time, all beings, be they good or evil, will return to God. But unlike

Boehme, von Welling does not deal with the theme of the Divine Sophia.

Von Welling offers numerous theosophical interpretations of biblical verses in the light of alchemical concepts. For instance, salt, which is the main term around which most of his speculations revolve, corresponds to Christ; and the process of purification in alchemy is compared to that of Lucifer on the Last Day. This is not a new line of interpretation, since for already over one hundred years, theoalchemy – theosophy blended with alchemy – had offered speculations about salt. It was variously and even simultaneously regarded as a substance, a metaphysical principle and a religious metaphor. Von Welling assigns to the three Paracelsian principles (salt, sulphur, mercury) a role that is both celestial and terrestrial. In the wake of → Knorr von Rosenroth, → Heinrich Khunrath, → Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont *et alii*, he deals with the “Schamajim”, or the original balance between Fire and Water (in Hebrew “Aesch” and “Majim”, used here as a symbolic oxymoron). Their separation is due to the Fall. It is more specifically in terms of both cosmology and metallurgy that von Welling is much indebted to F.M. van Helmont’s *Paradoxal Discourses, concerning the Macrocosm and Microcosm . . .* (London 1685; German ed. 1691). Both share the same complex vision of the four elements as related to the planets, and similar cosmosophical views as well. The spirits of the four elements, or “elementals”, are the object of a strong interest for von Welling, who deals with them in connection with his exegesis of the creation of the world, and edited a separate text on them (see Bibliography). The two earlier relevant and important works on this matter had been Paracelsus’ *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris* (written in the 1530s), and Nicolas P.H. Montfaucon de Villars’ *Le Comte de Gabalis* (1670).

Of the theosophical writings of the first half of the century, along with the works of Sincerus Renatus and → Hermann Fictuld, the *Opus* ranks among the more influential. Its reception reached its height in the second half of the 18th century, during which two more editions appeared, in 1760 and 1784. Among the patients to whom the physician Johann Friedrich Metz recommended readings of these kinds was the young → Goethe. Metz urged Goethe to immerse himself in von Welling’s writings; and in his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811, Book VIII), Goethe even devoted a few pages to the readings that he had made of the alchemical books, and in particular to his personal exegesis of von Welling’s Lucifer narrative. In 1786 Lorenz Schubert gave an extensive commentary



(*Welling im Auszug mit Anmerkungen . . .*, Frankfurt/Leipzig) on the *Opus*.

Within German → Freemasonry, some Systems with Higher Grades, mainly the Order of the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer [→ Rosicrucianism II] and that of the → Asiatic Brethren, made wide use of von Welling's book. The Gold- und Rosenkreuz's rituals and "instructions" both borrowed heavily from the *Opus*. Furthermore, a flurry of widely disseminated publications by members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz or by authors close to the latter referred to it as one of the supreme authorities (for instance, AdaMah Booz [A.M. Birkholz], *Die sieben heiligen Säulen*, 1783; Ketmia Vere [C.E. von Jäger], *Compass der Weisen*, 1779; *Der Signatstern*, 1803; *Annulus platonis*, 1781). Johann Gottfried Jugel's numerous books on chemistry and alchemy, which began to appear as early as 1744, are also strongly inspired by the *Opus*. They were widely read by the members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, to which Jugel also seems to have belonged. The Order of the Asiatic Brethren came into existence in 1780-1781. Considering the many common characteristics shared with the former Order, it is hardly surprising that its founders praised the *Opus* quite as much as those of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz did. Both the *Opus* and → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin's *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (1775) were part of the Asiatic Brethren's main referential corpus. During the same period the Gold- und Rosenkreuz proper and its publications spread in Russia, notably within the esoteric circle of → Nicolai Ivanovich Novikov. In that country no less than eight translations (made from 1791 to ca. 1840, unpublished) of the *Opus* are recorded. In the Habsburg Monarchy, as well, it was recommended within the masonic Draskovitch System, which owned near Budapest a laboratory for alchemical experiences.

Preface and Postscript to the anonymous *Curiose Erwegung der Worte Moysis Gen. VI, 2*, of which von Welling was also the editor [Amsterdam? i.e. Korte in Altona?], 1699. New editions: 1700: Amsterdam [Korte in Altona?], 1701; Amsterdam [Korte in Altona?], 1727. Possibly the author was either F.M. van Helmont, or Andreas Wolfgang von Runckel. Text reproduced in von Welling's *Opus* (1735), 473-485 without von Welling's Preface nor Postscript ♦ Gregorius Anglus Sallwigt [= Georg von Welling], *Opus mago-cabalisticum et theologicum: Vom Ursprung und Erzeugung Des Saltzes, Dessen Natur und Eigenschaft . . .*, Anton Heinscheidt (printer): Franckfurt am Mayn, 1719 ♦ G.A.S. [= Georg von Welling], *Tractatus mago-cabalistico-Chymicus et theosophicus: Von des Saltzes Ursprung und Erzeugung, Natur und Nutzen . . .*, Saltzburg: [no ed.'s name] [?], 1729 ♦ Georg von

Welling, *Opus mago-cabalisticum et theosophicum: Darinnen der Ursprung Natur-eigenschaften und Gebrauch Des Saltze, Schwefels und Mercurii, In drey Theilen beschrieben. Und nebst sehr vielen sonderbaren Mathematischen Theosophischen Magischen und mystischen Materien, Auch die Erzeugung der Metallen und Mineralien aus dem Grunde der Natur erwiesen wird . . .*, Homburg von der Höhe: Joh. Philipp Helwig, 1735; Two new ed. under that same title (and with the same content): Leipzig: Fleischer, 1760 and 1784. Reprint of this latter ed.: Stockholm: G. Wendelholm, 1971.

*Lit.*: Antoine Faivre, "Les lectures théosophiques du jeune Goethe d'après *Poésie et Vérité*", in: Jean-Marie Valentin (ed.), Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *L'un, l'Autre et le Tout*, Paris: Klincksieck, 2000, 491-505 ♦ Karl R.H. Frick, *Die Erleuchteten: Gnostisch-theosophische und alchemistisch-rosenkreuzerische Geheimgesellschaften bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Graz (Austria): Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1973, 426-437 ♦ Petra Jungmayr, *Georg von Welling (1655-1727), Leben und Werk* (Heidelberger Studien zur Naturkunde der frühen Neuzeit, vol. 2), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990 ♦ Will-Erich Peuckert, *Gabalialia, ein Versuch zur Geschichte der magia naturalis im 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1967, 504-527 ♦ Gershom Scholem, "Alchemie und Kabbala: Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte der Mystik", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 69 (1925), 13-30, 95-110 ♦ Joachim Telle, "Zum *Opus mago-cabalisticum et theosophicum* von Georg von Welling", *Euphorion* 77 (1983), 359-379.

ANTOINE FAIVRE

Westcott, William Wynn, \* 17.12.1848  
Leamington, † 30.7.1925 Durban

One of the most prominent British occultists of his time, Westcott wrote many essays on a wide range of esoteric topics such as arithmology [→ Number Symbolism] (*Numbers: Their Occult Powers and Mystic Virtues*, 1890), → alchemy (*The Science of Alchymy*, 1893), → astrology (*The Origin and History of Astrology*, 1902), Jewish Kabbalah [→ Jewish Influences V] (*An Introduction to the Study of the Kabbalah*, 1910); and edited English versions of ancient and modern esoteric texts (such as the *Sepher Yetzirah*, 1887, or → Eliphas Lévi's *Magical Ritual of the Sanctum Regnum*, 1896). Particularly important and influential was his edition of the nine-volume series of *Collectanea Hermetica*, including new English editions of alchemical, hermetic, or kabbalistic texts, as well as original contemporary essays (such as Florence Farr's *Egyptian Magic*, 1896). Today he is best remembered for his fundamental role in the creation and early development of the → Hermetic

Order of the Golden Dawn. He was an active and dedicated Freemason for most of his life (attaining, for example, the position of Master of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge), as well as a member of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (of which he became the Supreme Magus in 1892) and of various fringe-masonic Orders (such as the Rite of Swedenborg and the Sat B'hai).

Westcott was born in a family of surgeons and he followed the same professional career, first at Mar- tock, Somerset, and then, after 1881, in London, eventually becoming Coroner for North-East London. It is unclear when his interest in Western esoteric traditions arose, but it must have been early in his life, since as early as 1875 he was applying for membership of the S.R.I.A., which he joined in 1880. This interest became so important to him that he decided to spend a two year period of retirement, between 1879 and 1881, studying in depth 'the Kabbalah, the Hermetic writings, and the works of Alchymists and Rosicrucians'. In 1882, soon after having moved to London, he became acquainted with → Samuel Liddell "MacGregor" Mathers, also a recent member of the S.R.I.A. and an enthusiastic occultist. It seems evident that neither of them, like many other English occultists of the time, could content himself with what the Rosicrucian Society had to offer. The S.R.I.A. had in fact no practical esoteric teaching to deliver: it focused largely (albeit not exclusively) on erudite research rather than spiritual enlightenment. The → Theosophical Society, whose influence was then rapidly spreading in Europe and whose "secret doctrine" had much that appealed to them, could not provide a valid alternative, since it seemed to lack the very practical dimension they were looking for, and was too Eastern-oriented for their tastes. Some of their hopes were focused on the Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies] of → Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, founded in 1884 as a Western-oriented counterpart to the Theosophical Society, but these were soon to be dis-appointed due to Kingsford's premature death in 1887. The possibility of creating a new group which could add a practical dimension to the theoretical study of Western esoteric traditions first arose when, around 1886, Westcott came into possession of a cipher manuscript, containing the text of some rituals of initiation and of lectures on various esoteric topics. This was the first step towards the creation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Over the last thirty years scholarly research has cast doubt on the official version of the history of the Order that was taught to its members, which linked its origins

to a warrant granted by a Continental adept. It is today safe to assume that the cipher manuscript had been produced in the 1870s or in the early 1880s by another English occultists, Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie (1833-1886), and that the correspondence with the supposed German adept Anna Sprengel was fabricated by Westcott in order to provide the Order with a convincing initiatic pedigree. When Westcott, after Mackenzie's death, came into possession of the cipher manuscript, he appealed to Mathers in order to give a more elaborate, definite shape to the rituals contained in it. The Order came actually to life in 1888, and was nominally led by a triumvirate composed of Westcott, Mathers and William Robert Woodman (1828-1891), the latter being at the time Supreme Magus of the S.R.I.A. It has sometimes been assumed that Mathers was the leading personality behind the early development of the Order, but it is now clear that Westcott contributed to it on an equal level with him, and that he was particularly instrumental in the creation of a consistent body of teachings. In 1897, rumours about his involvement with the Order somehow reached his superiors in office, putting his professional position at risk. Consequently, in order to avoid difficulties, he had to loosen his ties with the Order. He was never again to recover a prominent role in its affairs, although for many years afterwards he continued, as an outsider, to closely follow its activities. However, his moral authority among the members of the Order was shaken in 1900 when, during the clash between Mathers and the majority of the members of the Second Order in London (which led to the first and most important schism in the history of the Order), Mathers stated that Westcott had never been in contact with any Continental adept and had actually forged the correspondence with A. Sprengel. Westcott decided not to take sides in the controversy or to defend himself against Mathers's charges. In the following years he continued pursuing his esoteric studies, contributing regularly to the transactions (i.e., the official proceedings) of the S.R.I.A. In 1910 he was again indirectly involved in a controversy concerning the Order, this time between Mathers and → Aleister Crowley, over the publication of the Order rituals in the latter's occultist journal, *The Equinox*. By way of a third party, Mathers asked Westcott for financial help with the legal costs, and in return Westcott tried to make Mathers retract his charges of forgery. Mathers did not accept his terms and the two were never to be in contact again. In 1918 Westcott retired from his profession and moved to Durban, South Africa, where he spent the rest of his life. He

continued to cultivate his studies and occult interests until his death in 1925.

Westcott's writings have been widely read in the circles of the early Theosophical Society, the S.R.I.A., and the Golden Dawn, and were particularly instrumental in the definition of a Western esoteric tradition as distinct from, albeit complementary to, the "secret doctrine" of the East as presented by → Madame Blavatsky. As is typical for this generation of English occultists, Westcott presents his works more as the result of erudite research than as the fruit of mystical revelation or esoteric speculation.

William Wynn Westcott, *Tabula Bembina sive Mensa Isiaca: The Isiac Tablet of Cardinal Bembo - Its History and Occult Significance*, Bath: R.H. Fryar, 1887 ♦ idem (ed.), *Sepher Yetzirah: Translated from the Hebrew by William Wynn Westcott*, R.H. Fryar: Bath 1887 ♦ idem, (ed.), *Collectanea Hermetica*, 9 vols., London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893-1902; The series has been reprinted in one volume with a note on Westcott and an introduction, both by R.A. Gilbert: William Wynn Westcott (ed.), *Collectanea Hermetica*, York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1998 ♦ idem, *An Introduction to the Study of the Kabalah*, London: John M. Watkins, 1910 ♦ R.A. Gilbert (ed.), *The Magical Mason: Forgotten Hermetic Writings of William Wynn Westcott, Physician and Magus*, Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1983.

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MARCO PASI

**Willermoz, Jean-Baptiste**, \* 10.7.1730  
Lyons, † 29.5.1824 Lyons

Willermoz stemmed from an old bourgeois family of Saint-Claude (the name was originally written Vuillermoz) which, according to family documents, was of distantly Spanish origin. His father had settled in Lyon as a haberdashery merchant. The family included several priests, and young Willermoz was educated by the Jesuits. The eldest of twelve children, he was very soon sent out

into the world, being apprenticed at the age of fourteen to a retailer of silk goods. By twenty-four he had risen to be a manufacturer in his own right. Shortly before the masonic Convent of Wilhelmsbad (1782, see below), a notice described him as 'manufacturer of materials in silk and silver thread, and broker in silk goods'. He sold his business in 1782, still keeping a financial interest in the wholesale haberdashery of his brother Antoine and his brother-in-law Pierre Provensal, husband of his eldest sister Claudine. Willermoz devoted the greater part of his long life to → Freemasonry, but he also took part in urban life by placing his abilities as organiser and administrator in the service of religion and charity. He was successively or simultaneously the administrator of the Hôtel-Dieu (notably during the Terror, in 1793), then of the civic hospices of Lyon, a member of the parish council of Saint Polycarpe, and Councillor General of the Department of the Rhône. He was involved in primary education, and was also a keen farmer.

It was nevertheless through his masonic work that Willermoz has remained known to posterity. Initiated in 1750 at the age of twenty, in a lodge whose name is unknown, he very quickly rose through all the ranks. Elected as Venerable Master of his lodge scarcely two years later, in 1752, he felt the need to put order into a situation marked, as he once wrote, 'by abuses that were gaining ever-increasing currency' in Freemasonry. To this end, he contributed to the formation, in 1760, of the Grande Loge des Maîtres Réguliers de Lyons, which was recognized in 1761 by the Grand Lodge of France. After having been President of this G.L.M.R. in 1762-1763, he succeeded in becoming its "Keeper of Seals and Archives". He preferred this type of function in practically all the bodies to which he belonged. By taking advantage of the commercial correspondence that he maintained throughout Europe, Willermoz could thus indulge one of his favorite activities: collecting, studying, and comparing the rituals of all possible masonic degrees. He was a collector by nature; but he had another motivation as well, which he revealed in a letter of November 1772 to Baron Karl von Hund, the founder of the masonic system known as "Strict Observance": 'Since my first admission to the Order, I have always been persuaded that it contained the knowledge of a goal that could and would satisfy the honest man. Following this idea, I have worked tirelessly to discover it. Studies pursued for over twenty years, a very extensive private correspondence with informed brethren in France and abroad, and the deposit of the archives of the Order of Lyons, entrusted to my care, have fur-

nished me with many means . . .'. That is why, in order to study all the "high degrees" of which he had obtained information, Willermoz formed during these years what he called a "laboratory", namely a Chapter reserved for a "small society", the Chapter of the "Chevaliers de l'Aigle noir", whose presidency he entrusted to his brother Pierre-Jacques.

The object of this research concerned the question of knowing what the true goal of Freemasonry might be. The answer was revealed to Willermoz when he was admitted in March 1767, by → Martines de Pasqually in person, to the latter's *Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus Coëns de l'Univers* [→ *Elus Coëns*]. In a letter addressed in 1772 to a dignitary of the Strict Observance (Baron von Landsperg), Willermoz explained himself with discretion, but clearly: 'Certain fortunate circumstances brought me the opportunity, during my travels, of being admitted to a society, highly organized but small in membership, whose goal, revealed to me outside the ordinary rules, won me over. After that, all the other systems I knew (for I cannot judge those I do not know) seemed to me futile and unpalatable. This is the only one where I have found that inner peace of soul, the most precious possession of humanity in relation to its being and its principle'. In point of fact, Willermoz, once convinced of having discovered the truth of Freemasonry, never departed from this conviction, and remained faithful to his initiator Martines, his doctrine, and his Order.

Shortly after Willermoz's reception into the Order in 1767, Martines named him "Inspecteur général de l'Orient de Lyon et Grand Maître du Grand Temple de France". In May 1768, the Substitut Universel of the *Ordre des Elus Coëns*, Bacon de la Chevalerie, ordained Willermoz to the highest degree of this Order, called Réau-Croix. Although the ordination had taken place with Martines' authorization, Martines felt some doubt as to its perfect regularity, and decided two years later to confirm it. This "confirmation" took place in May 1780, by the "sympathetic way", i.e., at a distance: a method frequently used by the *Elus Coëns* in their operations, notably in those workings known as "equinoctial". Willermoz took very seriously the functions that had been conferred on him. Meticulous by nature, he was the most eager of Martines' disciples in pressing the master to give rituals, instructions, and other documents that the *Coëns* needed for their work. In this regard, his correspondence with → Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, after the latter had become Martines' secretary, is extremely valuable to the historian. Of value, too,

are Willermoz's notes pertaining to the *Coëns'* rituals. By dispensation from the rule which he had imposed on himself for other masonic systems, including his own – the *Régime Ecossais Rectifié* – he insisted on continuing to supervise the Temple de Lyon. In fact, he kept this temple active long after the dissolution of the *Ordre des Elus Coëns*, right up to the first troubles of the Revolution. During that time, Willermoz caused not the slightest change in this Order. He left it completely outside his great enterprise of the reform – or "rectification," as it was then called – of Freemasonry. Despite the differences of character between the two men, Willermoz always held Martines in great respect. As late as 1821, he wrote about him as 'This extraordinary man, of whom I have never known the like'.

The fact is that Willermoz had subscribed from the start, and definitively, to the doctrine of "reintegration". He believed that this doctrine had been, and must always be, at the basis of what he considered to be primitive and authentic masonry. If this doctrine was lacking in one or another masonic system, that was for Willermoz the sign that the system was 'futile or unpalatable', or even 'apocryphal' (terms that he borrowed from Martines). Nonetheless, these convictions in no way prevented Willermoz from pursuing his inquest into all the masonic systems that came to his attention. He tirelessly solicited his numerous correspondents (often princely ones, like Karl von Hessen-Kassel) to "exchange illuminations" with them. Some interpreters have seen in these investigations the symptom of an incessant and ever-unassuaged need for knowledge of the "truth". But in fact, Willermoz was convinced that he had already received this truth, which fully satisfied him. While he never stopped seeking its presence otherwise than in Martines' Order, it was purely with the goal of gathering into one body all the "authentic" masonic systems, that is, all the systems capable of acting as vehicles for the doctrine he had made his own. It was also in order to 'reunite the branches grown from the same trunk', to use his own words. This idea – the wish to unite all the masonic rites and systems – obsessed him for many years. He expounded it publicly in 1782 at the Convent of Wilhelmsbad. One can detect its echoes in the official title of the Lodges of the *Régime Ecossais Rectifié*, namely "Loges réunies et rectifiées de France".

There is no other way to interpret his membership (and that of the two groups of which he was the principal inspiration, at Strasbourg and Lyons) of the Strict Observance, also called "Maçonnerie



réformé ou rectifiée de Dresde". This membership rested on a misunderstanding. When Baron Georg A. von Weiler, an emissary of Karl von Hund (founder of the Strict Observance) spoke of 're-establishing the Order in its first state', he implied by that the re-establishment of the Order of the Temple, abolished in 1313. But Willermoz took this expression to mean the return to the "primitive masonry" whose foundations Martines taught. This is why Willermoz later wrote to Charles of Hesse that he had been stupefied to find in the Strict Observance 'nothing but a baseless and proofless system', and a 'profound ignorance of the essential things'. The importance that Willermoz attached to Martines' doctrine is also attested to by his efforts after the latter's departure for San Domingo to organize at home, in Lyons, from January 1774 to October 1776, "instructions" or "lessons" in which Saint-Martin, Du Roy d'Hauterive, and he himself participated, sometimes as instructors, sometimes by taking minutes.

Willermoz's deep knowledge of the French and European masonic panorama had soon persuaded him that Martines' system was really too different from the masonry of that time to be lastingly implanted, and even less to supplant the other systems. The Ordre des Elus Coëns was in fact a sort of crypto-masonry, or, as it was also called, a "masonry beyond masonry". It was then that Willermoz had the idea of setting up his own system, so as to transmit both by teaching and by initiation the "truth" as he believed it to the Régime Ecosais Rectifié. The latter was officially constituted on a national scale by the Convent des Gaules, held in Lyons in November-December 1778, then internationally by the Convent of Wilhelmsbad in Germany, in August-September 1782.

This "Régime" had a concentric structure, with three successive circles: (1) The symbolic class or Ordre maçonnique with its four degrees of Apprenti, Compagnon, Maître, and Maître Ecosais. (2) The Inner Order, which was chivalric, with its degrees, or rather stages, of Ecuyer Novice (a probationary period) and Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte. This two first circles constituted what Willermoz called the "ostensible classes" of the Régime. They borrowed their essential outer forms from the masonic and chivalric degrees that were current in France and Germany. (3) The "secret class", called the class of "Profession" and of "Grande Profession". This is where Willermoz's major innovation was to be found. These three circles or classes constituted the Régime Ecosais Rectifié, properly so-called. But there was an additional, fourth circle, protected under a veil of mys-

tery, which was none other than the Ordre des Elus Coëns. Although situated as though at the very heart of the Régime Rectifié, the Ordre Coën was of a another nature. In fact, on passing from the former to the latter, one entered something entirely different. In the classes of the Régime Rectifié, Willermoz forbade anything that might pertain to theurgical practices, as well as to kabbalah or → alchemy: domains that were the exclusive preserve of the Ordre Coën.

On the other hand, what the Ordre Coën and the Régime Rectifié had in common was the doctrine of reintegration: the "science of man" (as → Joseph de Maistre called it). The function of Freemasonry was to teach this science, and to set it in motion on the initiatic plane. This is why both the Ordre Coën and the Régime Ecosais Rectifiée rested basically on two doctrinal elements: on the one hand, the belief in an original glorious state and an original fall of man; on the other, the return of man and his "reintegration" into his primitive state, thanks to initiation. In order for this to be effective, it required the intercession and the action of the "Grand Réparateur" who is Christ.

If these are indeed the teachings of Martines, there are also traces left by Willermoz's readings of certain Fathers of the Church. Willermoz possessed a solid religious culture; the masonic collection of the Bibliothèque Municipale in Lyon has preserved some of his reading notes, especially of the Greek Fathers (whom he certainly read in translation). It was this very theme of the fall and reintegration that the Fathers, from Irenaeus of Lyons onwards, expounded in their interpretation of the biblical theme of "image and likeness" – man having been created in the image of God and after his likeness; the fall having caused him to lose that likeness, whilst the divine imprint of the image remained unaltered; thus it was a question of regaining this likeness. That, for Willermoz, was the very object of initiation.

In addition, convinced that intelligence is a talent received from God which it is man's duty to cultivate, Willermoz added a pedagogical program to the initiatic process, writing a series of "instructions". These proceeded from one degree to another with the object of progressively clarifying and completing this doctrine of reintegration in all its aspects: anthropological, cosmological, theosophic. All the essentials of these instructions, and their final achievement, are to be found in the *Instruction secrète des Grands Profès* (Secret instructions of the Grands Profès), of which Willermoz was the author, as well as in the "Leçons de Lyon" (Lessons of Lyons) which are partly of his



devising. The same pedagogical concern is found in the *Préavis* (Notice), a virtually programmatic discourse delivered by Willermoz at the Convent of Wilhelmsbad on July 29, 1782, which was intended to present both the structure and the spirit of the Régime Ecossais Rectifié. Two things should be emphasized, however: first, that Willermoz always denied being the true “author” of these instructions, of which he was nevertheless the writer; and second, that he believed the assurance of Martines when the latter also affirmed that he had done nothing but transmit a very ancient, quasi-immemorial tradition. This means that for Willermoz, as for Martines, this tradition (being simultaneously a science of man, a science of reintegration, and the initiation that accompanies them) derived from a unique “High and Holy Order”, as Willermoz called it, whose origin was as old as the world, and of which both the Ordre des Elus Coëns and the Régime Ecossais Rectifié were temporal manifestations. Hence also came his belief in a kind of pre-established harmony between this tradition and these institutions.

When he died in 1824 at the age of 94, Willermoz may have felt that his work was dying with him, or even that it had predeceased him. But it was nothing of the sort. After various ups and downs, the Régime Ecossais Rectifié with all its classes took on new vigor, as did the Ordre des Elus Coëns. In the course of the 20th century, it ended by occupying an important place in a number of masonic obediences. A fair and objective approach to Willermoz and his work began to be adopted in 1973, when in his book *L'Esotérisme au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Antoine Faivre wrote: ‘One may say that he attained a high spirituality and an uncommon breadth of vision. Willermoz showed himself as gifted in meditation and inner illumination as in organization and administration. The Revolution was nearly fatal to his work; but he is always considered one of the greatest figures of masonic history’ (176). Since these words were written, and thanks especially to the many archival documents that have come to light, the importance of this figure has become more and more evident.

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JEAN-FRANÇOIS VAR

### William of Auvergne, \* 1191 Aurillac, † 1249 Paris

Born in Aurillac, William became a canon before 1223, a master of theology in 1225, and bishop of Paris in 1228. He enjoyed the confidence of Louis IX and also that of the popes, despite a certain "Gallicanism". His pastoral activity concerned the development of religious orders, the reorganization of parishes and monasteries, and the defense of Christian doctrine. Under his episcopate occurred the university strike of 1229-1231, the conflict between the chapter and the royal officers (1238), and finally the "burning of the Talmud" (1240). His responsibility as bishop led him to write numerous exegetical, philosophical, and theological works. He showed himself a faithful follower of → Augustine, while also feeling the influence of Aristotle and → Avicenna. His sources were very widespread: the *Timaeus*, Aristotle, the Church Fathers, the → Hermetic literature, Arab and Jewish astrological books [→ Astrology]. His theme was the exaltation of truth and the destruction of error. In the *De universo creaturarum* (On the universe of creatures), one of the seven treatises making up the *Magisterium divinale et sapientiale* (Divine and sapiential magistry) written between 1228 and 1240, he treated at length the question of demons, which gave him cause to denounce a number of superstitions. These demons, he says, already appeared to the Ancients under the guises of Priapus and Venus, and their vanity had been fortified by the worship paid to them. They have power, but their faculties are degraded by the passions, especially envy. Nevertheless, God sometimes allows them to afflict men, as we see from the examples of the plagues of Egypt and the sufferings of Job. William does not deny the existence of divination [→ Divinatory Arts], but he condemns it because it is an unseasonable imitation of divine

power. In this regard, the Old Testament prophets can in no way be confused with diviners. William admits the material influence of the stars, but denies that they can alter free will. He does not discount the possibility that the wizard Merlin was the son of a demon. On the other hand, he rejects popular superstitions: → magic, curses, phantoms, werewolves, abductions. All that is the work of illusionists who deceive the ignorant by resorting to conjuring and sleight of hand. Nor does he believe in incubi and succubi, the expression of all-too-human lust, as the work of demons. On the other hand, how could one admit that the prince of demons consents to obey men, as the necromancers maintain, and lend himself to all the tricks attributed to him? Charlatans, however, do not dare to try this sort of phantasmagoria on "rational and learned" minds. William himself was accused of practicing magic, but this is a misperception paradoxically caused by his attacks against it.

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*Lit:* P. Glorieux, *Répertoire des maîtres en théologie de Paris au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1933, 315-320 ♦ P. Viard, "Guillaume d'Auvergne", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 6, Paris: Beauchesne, 1967, cols. 1183-1184 ♦ S. Marrone, *William of Auvergne and Robert Grosseteste: New Ideas of Truth in the Early Thirteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983 ♦ David Porreca, "Hermes Trismegistus: William of Auvergne's Mythical Authority", *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 2000, 143-158 ♦ J. Longère, "Guillaume d'Auvergne", in: G. Hasenohr & M. Zink (eds.), *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: Le moyen âge*, Paris: Fayard, 1992.

MICHEL LEMOINE

### Witchcraft (15th-17th centuries)

Witchcraft is the human exercise of supernatural powers for antisocial, evil purposes. The term also refers to the whole of beliefs in the existence of power by means of which someone can change nature or harm people. Over time, the idea of witchcraft has started to include the idea of a diabolical pact or at least an appeal to the intervention of the demons: supernatural aid is usually invoked to kill someone, to awaken the passion of love in

others, to invoke the dead, to bring calamity upon enemies, and so on. These are some of the principal purposes that witchcraft has been made to serve in nearly all periods of history. Witches are considered to worship Satan and to be associated either with the occult [→ occult /occultism] and → magic or with attempts to establish a kind of evil religion.

According to traditional belief, the witches or wizards entered into a pact with Satan, cursed Christ and the Church, observed “the witches’ sabbath”, and in return received preternatural powers to torment their chosen victims. A “familiar spirit” was sometimes at their disposal, able and willing to perform any service. The witch was not simply an innocent victim of the devil (as in the case of demonic possession) but, rather, his willing instrument; witches could therefore be legally prosecuted because they had free will. The belief in witchcraft and its practice seems to have existed among all primitive peoples: in the ancient world it played a conspicuous part, as existing records plainly show. In the Holy Scriptures references to witchcraft are frequent, and their strong condemnation of such practices is based upon a total rejection of magic as such (Deut. 18:11-12; Exod. 22:18). The debate on witchcraft and on its reality is ancient: the *Canon Episcopi*, a 9th-century canon, was the first official document that expressed scepticism with respect to the reality of witchcraft and the “Decretum” of Burchard (about 1020) evinced the same attitude. Witchcraft became a major religious concern, however, when the Inquisition started to treat charges of witchcraft (around 1230). In 1258, Alexander IV tried to restrict the inquisitors’ powers to those cases in which there was some clear presumption of heretical belief. Slowly the process of demonization acquired specific elements, – such as the pact and the Sabbath –, in which stereotypes of persecution and folkloric traditions came to be mingled, and high culture met and permeated low culture.

Basic to the witch persecutions of the 15th-17th centuries was the notion of *maleficium*, considered punishable by law already in antiquity; but it was only over the course of a long and complex development that *maleficium* turned into witchcraft. Moreover, the idea of a formal pact between man and the devil was developed gradually during the Middle Ages; and thus from an idea of magic that could be correlated with natural philosophy without any dangerous effect, we pass to a condemned notion of witchcraft which now encompassed all the magical arts, natural as well as demonic. The demonization of heretics was the first step leading towards the witch hunts: after pope Gregory IX’s bull *Vox in Rama* (1233), the idea started to spread

that heretics were promiscuous and stood in some kind of relationship with Satan. The really intense period of witch persecutions occurred in the period from the 15th to the 17th centuries. The psychological basis for the persecution consisted in the belief that witches were trying to create an anti-Church led by Satan, with the witches’ Sabbath as a ritual mockery of the Mass. The popular imagination pictured these witches as old, poor women, who lived as drop-outs in their village communities.

In Early Modern Europe fierce denunciation and persecution of supposed witches characterized the cruel witch hunts, as is well known. In this context it is worth noting the role of confessions, which demonstrate how witchcraft beliefs consist of various folkloric elements. In earlier centuries only a few prosecutions took place, on an individual basis; some suspected witches were tortured according to Roman law, and many were subjected to the ordeal of cold water (i.e., it was believed that if they were guilty, they would float; if they were innocent, they would sink. . .). In the early Modern period, however, many persecutions occurred. Many scholars have debated the origins of the witch hunt, but no agreement has been reached: among the various explanations that have been adduced are shifts in the interactions between high and popular culture (Trevor Roper 1969), the emergence of the modern state (Levack 1987), the tradition break of the Reformation, the war of the sexes (Keith Thomas 1971), and conflicts among people and neighbours according to the functionalist approach (MacFarlane). Anthropologists, psychologists, historians, and so on, have attempted to explain witchcraft according to their own approaches and methods. It is hard to say whether the witch-hunt is the outcome of a long-term trend of marginalizing the poor and the drop-outs, or the survival of ancient beliefs, or yet something else. Highly innovative were the studies of Carlo Ginzburg, who in his first book, *I benandanti* (1966) revealed the existence of a group of people who practiced fertility rites; in so doing he echoed, to a certain extent, the discredited thesis of Margaret Murray about an actually existing “witch cult” in European culture. More recently, in *Ecstasies* (1989), Ginzburg explored the cultural backgrounds to the image of the Sabbath.

The witch-hunt should be seen as a central event in the formation of early modern Europe, which illuminates larger social and cultural issues. In this respect Muchembled (1987) has emphasized that witch-hunting is fundamentally a political phenomenon and not a religious one; and Robert Mandrou,

with his portrait of French magistrates (1968), has analysed a traditional mentality highly influenced by the demonologists.

We can follow the evolution of demonological thoughts through some of the most important treatises. During the Council of Basel in the mid-1430s, where some fundamental questions about papal and ecclesiastical power were discussed, Johann Nider wrote his *Formicarius*, a dialogue between a theologian and a sceptic, in which he showed a deep knowledge of the supposed phenomena of sorcery. One of the first authors to identify witchcraft as heresy was the Inquisitor Jean Vineti, in his *Tractatus contra Demonum Invocatores* (1450); still in the same century, Ulrich Molitor, wrote a *Tractatus de Pythonicis Mulieribus* (1489), in which he argued against Archduke Sigismund of Austria that even though witchcraft may be illusion, it should be punished as if it were real. But the witch craze really began when Pope Innocent VIII, with his Bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* (1484), appointed the Dominicans Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer as inquisitors to intensify witchcraft trials, with the use of torture. Two years later Sprenger and Kramer wrote their *Malleus Maleficarum*. Using a thomistic concept of the devil, they laid the basis for the witch craze and defined the heresy of witchcraft in terms of a rigid code, which would set the pattern for 300 years. The *Malleus* was influenced by Nicolaus Eymeric's *Directorium Inquisitorum* (1369) and made extensive use of ancient misogynist arguments. Kramer and Sprenger spread the belief that witches were members of a heretical sect, whose aim was mankind's damnation. The invention of printing meant that the *Malleus* could be widely reproduced and exercise great influence.

One of the first spokesperson against Luther, Prierias, in his *De Strigimagarum Dæmonumque Mirandis* (1521) accepted the reality of witchcraft and developed a theory about it, including a set of rules for trials. Popular belief in the power of the Devil as exercised by means of witchcraft and other magic practices became more and more important, but one must also take note of the attitude of the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, towards witchcraft. Luther, taking literally the Biblical command (Exodus 22), advocated the extermination of witches; and Calvin was interested in fighting every kind of superstition, witchcraft included. Nevertheless in the context of Protestant Demonology, the moral implications of witchcraft having been marked, doubts about the reality of witchcraft gradually gained prominence. There were no substantial differences between Catholic and Protestant

demonology, however: both shared the same evangelising aims and sources (Saint Augustine and Thomas, for instance), and therefore both were in favour of persecuting witches.

An important document was the *Carolina* (1532), an Empire law which decreed that sorcery should be treated as a criminal offence, and that if it had allegedly inflicted injury upon any person, the witch was to be burnt. The first author who attacked the identification of witchcraft as heresy was the Franciscan Samuel de Cassini, who wrote against Savonarola, while Andreas Alciatus, in his *Parergon Juris* (written around 1514, but published in 1558) revealed himself as a sceptic who thought that the witches' delusions about the Sabbath could be cured. The same opinion can be found in Pietro Pomponazzi's *De Naturalium Effectuum Causis* (written in 1520, but published in 1556), which was likewise leaning to scepticism; his views caused him some troubles, and he escaped punishment by arguing that as a philosopher he was permitted to doubt, while as a Catholic he truly believed everything the Church taught. The lawyer Gianfrancesco Ponzinibio, in his *Tractatus de Lamiis* (1520) opposed the witchcraft delusion and the conduct of trials by the Inquisition, referring to the humanistic legal tradition. Another lawyer, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, nephew of the more famous → Giovanni Pico, wrote his *Strix*, the first witchcraft treaty written in Italian; and the famous → Agrippa of Nettesheim defended a woman supposed to be a witch. Commonly regarded as the first systematic opponent of the witchcraft trials, Johann Wier (1515-1588) believed that witch-hunts were reprehensible attempts to punish crazy old women. In his work, *De praestigiis daemonum ac incantationibus* (1563), he tried to show that witches could not actually do anything, but that Satan deluded them. According to his biblical exegesis, he believed in the devil's existence and activity; but he distinguished between magicians, who are aware of the nature of their actions, and witches, who are not. The same theme was repeated by the Lutheran Johann George Godelmann in his *Tractatus de magis, veneficis et lamiis* (1591). He did not manage to stop the hunt, but he was the first one to express doubts about its legitimacy and legality, on the basis of natural, theological, philosophical and legal arguments. So after him, jurists had to consider melancholy, for instance, as a malady conducive to witchcraft. Jean Bodin (1530-1596), a French lawyer, wrote his *De la Démonomanie des sorciers*, (1580) in response to Johann Wier's *De Lamiis*, a synthesis of his main work. Bodin wanted



to develop and improve the witch-hunt, claiming that witches should be put to death because, according to his political and demonological theories, they were disloyal to the monarchy and to God. Putting emphasis on the idea of witchcraft as a *crimen exceptum*, Bodin focuses his attention on the fact that witches are aware of their relationship with Satan, thus rejecting the theory of Wier, whom he accused of being a sorcerer.

Another opponent of witch-hunt was Reginald Scot, who in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) denied the reality of witchcraft. James VI Stuart, king of Scotland and later king of England, answered him with his *Daemonologie* which allowed local courts to examine witches; other responses to Scot included the Catholic Bishop Binsfeld, *De confessionibus* (1589) and *Disquisitiones Magicae* (1603) by the Jesuit Martin Delrio, who wished to mitigate the severity of the witch trials and denounced the excessive use of torture.

With respect to the 16th century, most of the trials at which witches were condemned and burned by lay tribunals suggest that in the Mediterranean countries, such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, the witch craze did not reach the level of violence and fierceness found in northern Europe. This interpretation is confirmed by an Inquisitorial Instruction discovered by John Tedeschi; written by Deodato Scaglia in 1657, it provides new procedural safeguards. In his interesting contribution to witchcraft studies, Tedeschi has used this document to show how the Roman Inquisition adopted legal safeguards and proper procedures with respect to witch trials, and how it became inclined to scepticism in regard to witchcraft.

The German Jesuit Friedrich von Spee disapproved of credulity with respect to witches in his *Cautio Criminalis* (1631), a real and violent *j'accuse* against the methods used by inquisitors and lawyers in the witch trials, stressing the unreliability of accusations and confessions extracted under torture. He rejected the death penalty as cruel and too severe for those mad women, and began a stream of criticisms directed at the juridical feature of the witch-hunt. But the great change came with Balthasar Bekker and his *De betoverde weereld* (1691): applying the new Cartesian approach to witchcraft, he argued against this belief and the practice of persecution, denying the existence of the Devil, so that he was himself accused of Atheism. But the seeds of his thought began to blossom.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the witch trials gradually came to an end in Europe; it is important, however, to remember that it was as late

as 1692 at Salem that the greatest American witch-hunt started. The advent of the Enlightenment in the late 17th century contributed to an intellectual climate that favoured naturalistic explanations such as mental illness; and in the wake of the Scientific Revolution, the belief in witchcraft gradually lost its appeal.

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MICHAELA VALENTE

Wronski, Jozef Maria Hoëné-,  
\* 23.8.1776 Wolsztyn (near Posnan,  
Poland), † 8.8.1853 Neuilly (France)

The mathematician-philosopher-messianist Wronski was the son of an architect who came to Poland from Bohemia and a Polish mother. He participated in the Kosciuszko uprising in 1794, then joined the Russian army, from which he retired in



1797 in order to study philosophy in Germany. In 1800 he went to France to recommence his military career with a Polish unit, but soon gave himself over to the philosophical and scientific studies that would last the rest of his life, first in Marseille and then in Paris. In August 1803, he experienced a flash of illumination which changed the course of his thought. Having discovered the Absolute and grasped the mystery of the beginning and end, he henceforth devoted himself to the development of his Absolute philosophy as the vehicle for the universal regeneration of humanity (which is why he called it a “Messianism”).

Wronski’s Absolute philosophy begins, as do the contemporary German Idealist philosophies, with Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy while rejecting Kant’s identification of the *a priori* forms of knowledge with the subjective forms of the human mind. The *a priori* principles, he asserts, are objective, because the laws of reason are identical with the laws of the universe. An *a priori* knowledge of the noumenal reality is therefore possible. Wronski acknowledges that his system originated in a flash of *intuition*, in an act of illumination, but insists on the necessity of a total rationalization of knowledge and identifies the Absolute with creative *reason*. This claim depends on his distinction between the “chrematic” reason (from the Greek word *chrema*, “thing”) and the “achrematic” reason. The former is limited to the phenomenal realm of finite things; the latter attains to the Infinite. Despite its intuitive nature, Wronski insists that the achrematic reason is a rational faculty, having nothing to do with → mysticism (which in his usage includes contemporary Illuminisms). The active, creative spontaneity of reason, as he sees it, is the opposite of mysticism, which is a passive, thoughtless striving for an irrational union with the Absolute (Wronski claimed to be persecuted by gangs of Illuminists, whose infernal goal was to hinder present-day humanity from attaining its destiny). Since the Absolute, or Being itself, is rational, there is no heterogeneity between Being and knowledge, and Absolute Knowledge is capable of systematization and expressible in mathematical formulae. Wronski was one of the pioneers of the idea, very much in the air in the Romantic period, of a new Encyclopedia that would be synthetic where Diderot’s had been analytic. He proposed an organic system of sciences, deduced from one principle, governed by one universal law, and integrating different branches of science in an “absolute system of the world”.

Wronski’s philosophy of history, which he began to work out around 1814, divides history into three

great ages. The first age (itself subdivided into four periods) was that of direct rule by providence in which humanity did not know its destiny. Human aims in this period, which lasted from the ancient East to the Enlightenment, were relative: successively striving for physical well-being, justice, holiness, and knowledge. The second age is an era of transition; providence has ceased to act directly, but humanity has not yet grasped its destiny and is therefore ignorant of the correct course of action. We are now well advanced in the second age; the intellectual confusion of the age of transition has produced the contemporary state of “social antinomy” characterized by individualism and revolution. This crisis is manifested in the political realm by the struggle between the Right – the party of feeling, of the Good, of revelation and divine right – and the Left – the party of cognition, of the True, of empiricism and liberty. Wronski’s Messianism resolves the antinomies and inaugurates the third age by demonstrating that true liberty can only be achieved by bringing human reason into accord with the divine laws. Correspondingly, the third age, the Age of Absolute, will be theocratic but not repressive. It will be an era of harmony in which human reason reconciles itself with the divine laws, liberates itself from the conditions of physical existence, and returns to the Absolute. Wronski’s is a metaphysical philosophy of history: history is a progressive return to God through the reorientation of human will and knowledge.

In the sphere of religion, Wronski’s discovery of the Absolute inaugurates a great reform in which Christianity, a religion based, like all revealed religions, on sentiment of the Absolute, is to be succeeded and completed by scientific religion, or “séhélianism” (from a Hebrew word meaning “reason”). The new religion, a rationalized synthesis of existing world religions, will be founded on knowledge and rational demonstration. Séhélianism is reminiscent of Deist natural religion, but with Wronski’s Absolute philosophy substituting for Enlightenment rationalism.

Wronski was a notoriously prickly individual who claimed absolute originality for his thought. Nevertheless, he unquestionably absorbed influences, and read Fichte and → Schelling carefully. Wronski considered Schelling’s philosophy the highest achievement of German Idealism, but not even Schelling had raised himself to the “achremic” reason and therefore had not been able to penetrate the inner essence of the Absolute. Nevertheless, Wronski’s Absolute philosophy is an alternative all-embracing system to those of the German Idealists. Wronski’s philosophy of history is also

comparable to Idealist philosophies of history, although its concern for contemporary social and political events indicates the further influence of French thought, particularly that of → Pierre-Simon Ballanche. Wronski was more familiar with theosophy than he cared to admit. He read the kabbalists [→ Jewish Influences] and → Boehme and his disciples, who influenced him as much as Fichte and Schelling. While Wronski is to be distinguished from his theosophical predecessors inasmuch as religion has become the object of knowledge, his Absolute philosophy is an early-19th-century version of a phenomenon that appears at various times in the history of Western esotericism: the presentation of abstract universalist structures as keys of unification of all fields of knowledge (e.g. → Ramon Llull). Wronski's Absolute philosophy is a synthesis of post-Kantian Idealism and Illuminist reintegration [→ Illuminism].

While Wronski had a series of disciples in his lifetime (P.J. Arson, E. Thayer, C. Durutte), all of whom assisted him financially, his principal influence was on Polish poets and philosophers in the 1840s: A. Mickiewicz, Z. Krasinski, B.F. Trenowski, and K. Libelt.

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ARTHUR MCCALLA

**Yeats, William Butler**, \* 13.6.1865  
Sandymount (Ireland), † 28.1.1939  
Roquebrune (France)

Modern Irish poet noted for his eclectic theories on the human personality, spiritual development, human history, and cosmology. Though known chiefly as one of the primary architects of the Irish Renaissance and as a tireless proponent for Irish independence, Yeats's posthumous appeal to a global readership concerns the poet's interactions with Western and Eastern esoteric traditions,

which formed the foundation of his literary work in the domains of poetry, drama, fiction, the essay, and memoir. In the essay "If I Were Four-and-Twenty", the 54-year old Yeats reflected that his youthful impulse to 'hammer [his] thoughts into unity' resulted in a fusion of his three primary interests: 'a form of literature, a form of philosophy, and a belief in nationality'. Most significant to Yeats's reputation as a student of esoteric thought is his treatise *A Vision* (1925, revised 1937), a volume synthesizing a lifetime of research, experimentation, and meditation. Yeats's theories resulted from a combination of personal studies, collaborative efforts with close associates (most especially his wife, George Hyde-Lees, 1891-1968) and his participation in several esoteric societies.

In 1885, Yeats chaired the first meeting of the Dublin Hermetic Society [→ Hermeticism and Hermetic Societies] (which would change its name a year later, becoming the Dublin Lodge of the → Theosophical Society). At this time his main aspiration, under the influence of his father John Butler Yeats (1839-1922), was to become a painter. Yeats attended Dublin's Metropolitan School of Art, where he met the mystic poet and artist George Russell (1867-1935), who dubbed himself → AE. In 1887, the Yeats family moved to London, where the young poet met → Madame Blavatsky, and joined the Theosophical Society. In his *Autobiography*, Yeats records his admiration for Blavatsky's genius and powerful presence, balanced by the constant suggestion of potential fraud. True to his individualism, his main objection to the Theosophical Society was its tendency to breed dogmatism in its adherents. In 1889 Yeats was asked to leave the Society, as he insisted, against Blavatsky's wishes, on conducting occult experiments. The purpose of the experiments was to verify the truth of the theosophical knowledge, and to counterbalance the danger of a one-sided emphasis on the abstract intellect. Concurrently, he met → Samuel Liddell Macgregor Mathers (1854-1918), author of *The Kabbala Unveiled* and one of the founders of the → Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Mathers tutored Yeats in his symbolic system, encouraged experimentation with the inducement of visions, and initiated him into ritual → magic. Yeats joined the Golden Dawn in 1890, but subsequently distanced himself from the powerful influence of Mathers. Echoes of Golden Dawn thought and ritual, and of Yeats's complicated attitude toward Mathers, may be found in the 1896 short fiction "Rosa Alchemica". One of the principal characters, a charismatic leader of an occult society, Michael Robartes, is modeled on Mathers. In 1901,

after Mathers' expulsion as leader of the Golden Dawn, Yeats played a pivotal role in maintaining stability within the Order. Of great importance in this respect is his speech entitled "Is the Order of R. R. & A. C. to Remain a Magical Order?" (reprinted in Harper 1974), which argues for the maintenance of Unity within the society. In his opinion the ranking of adepts, and the passage from one degree of attainment to the next, reflected the very structure of the macrocosm: 'The passing by their means [the grades of initiation] from one Degree to another is an evocation of the Supreme Life, a treading of a symbolic path . . . a climbing towards the light which it is the essence of our system to believe, flows continually from the lowest of the invisible degrees to the highest'.

In 1893 Yeats edited, with Edwin Ellis, *The Works of William Blake*. This edition reveals Yeats's wide-ranging familiarity with Western esotericism, including → Cornelius Agrippa, → Paracelsus, → Swedenborg, and a number of hermetic [→ Hermetic Literature], Neoplatonic [→ Neoplatonism], and Rosicrucian [→ Rosicrucianism] writers. The project provides early evidence of Yeats's agenda of carving a place for himself in a tradition of the "poet-philosopher".

Another close association that had rich resonance in Yeats's spiritual, literary and political activities was his long-standing friend and lover Maud Gonne (1865-1953). The two met in 1889, and maintained close acquaintance through their mutual concern with Ireland's political future, and Yeats and Maud declared their love for each other in a "spiritual marriage" in 1897. Yeats's idea of spiritual marriage as an alliance between mystic soror and frater was modeled upon the legendary alchemist → Nicolas Flamel and his wife Pernelle. Again in 1908-1909, the two re-experienced their mystical bond, as may be noted in their letters as well as in Yeats's *Memoirs* (1972). Their spiritual partnership would never take the form of a legal marriage.

In 1917 Yeats married George Hyde-Lees, a 26 year old woman who was also a Golden Dawn member. Four days after they were married, George attempted automatic writing and was able to transmit a text attributed to "Instructors" in the spirit world. To Yeats's questions about the purpose of their instruction, they announced 'we have come to give you metaphors for poetry'. The first fruit of this are evident in the poems "The Phases of the Moon", "Ego Dominus Tuus", and "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes", as well as an extended prose meditation "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" (1918). In the latter Yeats rearticulated his

ideas on the connections between the human mind, memory, and history, such as he had presented earlier in the essay "Magic" (1901): 'I came to believe in a Great Memory passing on from generation to generation. But that was not enough, for these images showed intention and choice . . . If no mind was there [i.e., a greater mind], why should I suddenly come upon salt and antimony, upon the liquefaction of the gold, as they were understood by the alchemists? This study had created a contact or mingling with minds who had followed a like study in some other age, and that these minds still saw and thought and chose. Our daily thought was certainly but the line of foam at the shallow edge of a vast luminous sea'.

After seven years of working with automatic writing, Yeats produced *A Vision*, which outlines the soul's circular journey through the 28 phases of the moon, coming to completion in Unity of Being. Through a geometrical representation of two interlocking spirals – or gyres – Yeats maps out the history of civilization, and further suggests the fate of the soul after it leaves the body. In the chapter "Dove or Swan" Yeats uses the same paradigm to discuss the evolution of art in the East and West, suggesting that Byzantine art represents a climax in that history, a Unity of Culture. In one form or another, this framework of interlocking spirals is at the base of all of Yeats's writings, poetic or dramatic, from 1920 to his death in 1939. Given his tremendous labors to elucidate what he called 'the spiritual intellect', it may seem ironic that Yeats wrote in the last month of his life that 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it'.

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*Lit.*: Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1955 ♦ Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, New York: Norton, 1979 ♦ R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life*, vol. I: *The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997 ♦ idem, *W.B. Yeats: A Life*, vol. II: *The Arch-Poet, 1915-1939*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003 ♦ William Gorski, *Yeats and Alchemy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996 ♦ George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*, London: Macmillan, 1974 ♦ George Mills Harper (ed.), *Yeats's "Vision" Papers*, London: Macmillan, 1992 ♦ idem, *The Mak-*

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WILLIAM GORSKI

Ziegler, Leopold, \* 30.4.1881 Karlsruhe (Germany), † 25.10.1958 Überlingen (Germany)

Ziegler is an important 20th-century figure in the theosophic current [→ Christian Theosophy], not least because he sought to understand Asian religious traditions, particularly Buddhism, while developing a theosophically influenced Christian mystical perspective in a world context.

Ziegler was born to a reasonably well-off family; his father was a merchant. Relatively early in life he became friends with a number of artists, including the painter Karl Hofer, and the sculptor Karl Albiker, who would remain a lifelong friend. It is thus not surprising that particularly his early works deal with artistic topics: see e.g. *Die Tyrannis des Gesamtkunstwerks* (The Tyranny of the Gesamtkunstwerk, 1910), an attack on Wagner's work, or *Florentinische Introduction zu einer Philosophie der Architektur und der bildenden Künste* (Florentine Introduction to a Philosophy of Architecture and the Visual Arts, 1911). Ziegler's writings were to range over a vast array of topics, from the arts to economics, from politics and Platonism to comparative religion and theosophy. In this broad range of subjects, he was rather similar to one of his great influences, → Franz von Baader.

Ziegler studied in Heidelberg, and his dissertation, *Der abendländische Rationalismus und der Eros* (Occidental Rationalism and Eros), under the direction of Ernst Haeckel at Jena, was approved in 1905. During this period, Ziegler studied the works of Schopenhauer, Eckhart, → Schelling, Baader, and Hegel. He lived at Überlingen until his death in 1958, carrying on an extensive correspondence, writing occasional intellectual columns for newspapers, and publishing books.

A prolific if somewhat difficult author, Ziegler's

main works were published during the period from 1920 to his death, beginning with *Gestaltwandel der Götter* (Transformation of the Gods, 1920), and including *Zwischen Mensch und Wirtschaft* (Between Man and Economy, 1927). But Ziegler's most important works were to come later, and include *Überlieferung* (Transmission, 1936) and *Menschwerdung* (Becoming Human, 1948), as well as a selection of his writings entitled *Spätlese eigener Hand* (1953). Ziegler won a number of prestigious prizes, including a *Nietzsche-preis* in 1920, and a *Goethepreis* in 1929.

Ziegler most explicitly developed his view of Asian religions in his book *Der ewige Buddha* (1922), which is in four sections, discussing Buddha as a Protestant; Buddha as witness; Buddha as knower; and Buddha as an East-West figure. Along with his friend and correspondent Hermann Keyserling, Ziegler was an early and often overlooked major figure in what is now called inter-religious dialogue, perhaps most notable for his early recognition of the impact that Asian religious traditions could have in the West, even if he himself did not have access to much in the way of original texts or extensive translations from Asian religions, and even if – as he himself later wrote – his earlier presentation of Buddhism was not without error.

That Ziegler saw himself in the theosophic tradition is evident even from the dedication of his massive work *Menschwerdung*, a word meaning "Becoming Human" and a pivotal concept for → Jacob Boehme. Ziegler dedicated the book to 'Jakob Boehme, Sören Kierkegaard, and Franz Baader', and offers a genuine contribution to the theosophic tradition while discussing the revelation of Christ in relation to Lao Tzu and Buddha, Shankaracarya and Ramanuja. In other words, he began to develop a uniquely theosophic approach to the emerging concept of comparative religion.

In an article published late in life, entitled 'Von der Muttergottheit' (On the Mother Deity, 1953), Ziegler sketched an overview of the Sophianic traditions of the West. He refers to such figures as Schelling and Solovoyov, alluding as well to his own view that only under the sign of Sophia the split between Europe and Eurasia could be healed – a healing that he saw as of paramount importance in a world so given to conflict and conflagration. In brief, one could say that Ziegler represents a 20th-century continuation of the ecumenical intellectual theosophic current represented in the 19th century by Franz von Baader. Ziegler is a significant figure in the history of theosophy, and his work still awaits full scholarly analysis.



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*Lit.*: Sophie Latour, "L'archétype de l'Androgyne chez L. Ziegler", in: *L'Androgyne*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1986, 197-211 ♦ Erwin Stein (ed.), *Leopold Ziegler: Denker des erinnernden Urwissens, Deuter des Wilt-sinnes, Weg-Weiser in die Zukunft*, Freiburg: Aurum, 1981 ♦ Martha Schneider-Faßbaender, *Leopold Ziegler, Leben und Werk*, Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1978.

ARTHUR VERSLUIS

## Zoroaster

Zoroaster is the Graeco-Latin name of the Iranian prophet Zarathustra (Avestan *zaraθuštra*), who is thought to have lived around 1000 B.C. in southern Central Asia. He is regarded as the founder of Zoroastrianism by all Zoroastrians and by most modern scholars, although credible information about his life and teachings is very sparse. In classical (i.e. pre-modern) Zoroastrianism, the whole of the Avesta, the revealed literature of Zoroastrianism, which comprises the texts of the Avesta in Avestan and their commentaries in a vernacular (chiefly Middle Persian or Pahlavi), is attributed to Zoroaster. In modern scholarship, he is considered the author of a tiny portion of the Avesta, written in a more archaic variety of Avestan and consisting of the five Gāthās ("songs") and a short prose ritual text known as the *Yasna haptaŋhāiti* ("worship of seven chapters"). Although the Gāthās are exceptionally difficult to understand, they seem to be ritual texts extolling the goodness and greatness of the god Ahura Mazdā ("the wise lord") and outlining ways for humans to please him by performing the proper rituals and by embodying certain divine notions, such as truth and righteousness. The Gāthās are partly strongly opposed to a group of outsiders, who are characterised mainly by their

lack of regard for the proper rituals and for the notions to be embodied. The central ideas of later Zoroastrianism were developed mainly on the basis of the Gāthās and the other Old Avestan texts. In later Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster has become the central figure in the history of the world, for whose chief responsibility, bringing the revelation to the world, preparations were made already before the creation of the world and whose posthumous sons will ensure the victory of good over evil and the renovation of the world at the end of time.

Zoroaster became known to the Greeks in a comparatively early period, chiefly as the founder of the (Persian) priesthood of the Magi and, consequently, as the founder of → "magic", → astrology and many of the arcane sciences. The Western image of Zoroaster owes little to Zoroastrian traditions and seems to have developed independently. In the intellectual history of Europe, Zoroaster was reinvented several times and his name often served to establish authority. He was seen as a very ancient philosopher or king who had attained the highest imaginable level of knowledge of divine matters. Although the high regard for Zoroaster did not go uncontested, he was the subject of intense interest among Pythagorean and Platonic philosophers. Although his name does not occur in the *corpus Platonicum* as it is usually defined, he is present in the *Greater Alcibiades*, the authorship of which is currently disputed. In antiquity, however, it was firmly believed to have been written by Plato himself and, indeed, to offer the best introduction to his ideas. In the development of Platonism in antiquity, there is a certain move towards an "Iranian" style of dualism (opposing good and evil in addition to the opposition between spirit and matter). In this connection, Zoroaster is regularly discussed, both in his own right and in relation to Plato. In late antiquity, Zoroaster was seen as one of the fountainheads of ancient wisdom, on a par with → Hermes Trismegistus.

In the European Middle Ages, Zoroaster is scarcely ever mentioned, but in the Renaissance, his reputation became firmly established among Western thinkers in a double development. First, → Georgius Gemistus Plethon (± 1355-1454) attributed the *Chaldaean Oracles*, a collection of oracular sayings from (late) antiquity, to him and thereby sparked renewed interest in his supposed ancient knowledge. In his fight against Aristotelianism, or his defence of Platonism, Plethon even went so far as to surmise that Plato himself taught nothing but the lore of Zoroaster's followers, the Magi. The attribution of the *Chaldaean Oracles* to Zoroaster



went largely uncontested in the pre-modern period. Therefore, wherever the authority of the *Oracles* was invoked, Zoroaster's name was bound to surface.

A second development began with → Marsilio Ficino, who often refers to Zoroaster and the Magi, especially in his elaboration of the notion of a *prisca philosophia* [→ Tradition]. In fact, Zoroaster figures not only as the author of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, whose influence on Ficino has been considerable, but also as the first of the “lawgivers”, earlier even than → Moses. Ficino attributed the fundamental notion of the triad of God, Ghost and Soul (and its many permutations) to Zoroaster, whom Plato merely interpreted.

These two elements, the triadic structure of Zoroaster's thought (based on Platonic materials and on the *Chaldaean Oracles*) and the belief that Zoroaster was the chief authority behind Plato have ensured a lasting popularity of Zoroaster's name among an astonishing line of (chiefly esoteric) European philosophers, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries. With the decline of interest in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, one would expect the image of Zoroaster to have become less influential as well, but this does not seem to have been the case. On the contrary, his reputation as an early philosopher was so firmly entrenched that few authors thought it possible to omit him from their works. As Stausberg interestingly observes, however, from the 17th century onwards, a new, historical, interpretation gradually overshadows Zoroaster's fame as the inventor of magic or the first of the philosophers.

In the 18th century, Zoroaster came to be enlisted as the chief spokesman of the Enlightenment, especially in his capacity of bearer of a profound, non-Biblical, ethical religion. The evidence used for this interpretation was, on the whole, slim, but the importance of the thesis, according to which “history shows” that it was possible for an ethical religion to appear without any connection to the Bible, was considerable. The high expectations of this (largely imagined) religion of Zoroaster among the Encyclopaedists suffered a well-known blow with the publication of a translation of the Avesta by A.H. Anquetil du Perron. This led to a long-drawn battle over the authenticity of that text. Since that battle, there have been two separate lines of development: scholarly research of Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism on the basis of Iranian materials and the living tradition; and the remarkably strong continuation of the “European” tradition of using Zoroaster's name to invoke authority for entirely non-Zoroastrian religious or philosophical systems. The 19th and 20th centuries

have, for instance, yielded “Zoroasters” as spokesmen of esoteric philosophy in connection with the natural sciences (G.Th. Fechner; S.D. Laing), as the embodiment of a non-moral philosophy (F. Nietzsche) and as the precursor or founder of various religious movements that are more or less connected with the teachings of the → Theosophical Society (such as the “Grail Message” of Abd Ru-Shin and Mazdaznan). Interestingly, this tradition has found its way back into Zoroastrianism, with the development of a theosophical interpretation of that religion among some of its adherents.

*Lit.:* M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism I: The Early Period*, Leiden, 1996<sup>3</sup> ♦ J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Western Response to Zoroaster*, Oxford, 1958 ♦ A.V.W. Jackson, *Zoroaster: The Prophet of Ancient Iran*, New York, 1965<sup>2</sup> ♦ A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, Leiden, 1997 ♦ J. Rose, *The Image of Zoroaster: The Persian Mage through European Eyes*, New York, 2000 ♦ M. Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathushtra: Zoroaster und die europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, 2 vols., Berlin, 1998.

ALBERT DE JONG

**Zorzi, Francesco** → Giorgio, Francesco

**Zosimus of Panopolis**, fl. late 3rd/early 4th century Panopolis

The first alchemist from antiquity whose works can be studied somewhat more firmly in historical context is Zosimus of Panopolis, who lived in Egypt around the beginning of the 4th century C.E. Despite his own constant protestations that he is merely relying on earlier authorities and bringing nothing new, Zosimus is generally seen as a pivotal figure in the development of ancient → alchemy. In particular, the development of alchemy from a practical metallurgical and technical craft to a fully developed mystical religion, involving practical experiments in conjunction with a full-blown theological system, is attributed to Zosimus both by his successors and in modern scholarship. Zosimus seems to have been the last alchemist from antiquity to constantly explore and expand the practical experiments, of gilding, dyeing and transforming. He was also the first to systematize a theosophical system underlying those experiments.

Almost everything we know of Zosimus' life and works must be culled from his own texts. His successors frequently quote him and refer to him, but offer very little biographical information. For them,

Zosimus had already acquired an unassailable position of sanctity. The “very holy” Zosimus, “crown of the philosophers”, is chiefly invoked in later literature to add prestige and authority to ideas and practices. As is the case with the majority of alchemical texts from antiquity, Zosimus’ works have chiefly come down to us in Byzantine miscellanies, containing fragments of texts and whole texts of a large variety of authors. Among these authors, Zosimus is often represented, but it is frequently difficult to single out texts that can be properly ascribed to him. Alongside these original texts, there are two further important collections of sources. The first of these are translations of Zosimus’ texts in Syriac, Arabic, and Latin. The second are fragments from Zosimus’ texts that are quoted (often with titles of the texts) by later authorities.

Much less is known of Zosimus’ life than could be considered desirable, but a few aspects emerge from the texts. Zosimus was an Egyptian, who must have grown up in a *milieu* where local Egyptian culture was in constant contact with Greek traditions. Most sources agree that he was born in Panopolis (present-day Akhmīm) in the Thebaid. Panopolis was a prominent place in Upper Egypt that had grown around the temple of the god Min. Textual finds from Panopolis show that the Egyptian religion was a thriving affair in late antiquity, even though the city also acquired fame as a centre of early Christianity. The presence of Gnostic [→ Gnosticism], Hermetic [→ Hermetism], Greek, and Christian traditions in the area is evidenced profusely by the codices that were discovered in Nag Hammadi, halfway between Panopolis and Thebes. Zosimus records a visit to Memphis and may have seen the Serapeum in Alexandria. Many scholars, in fact, believe that Zosimus must have spent at least part of his life in Alexandria, mainly because of the large number of texts and ideas from many different sources and communities that can be found in his works. Prominent among these are Jewish sources, as well as Christian and Greek texts and traditions. In his works, Zosimus quotes Homer and Pindar, Plato and → Zoroaster, the Septuagint, texts from the *Corpus Hermeticum* [→ Hermetic Literature] and many (mostly unnamed) Egyptian, Jewish and Christian texts. These quotes and the evidence of a sound knowledge of the chief intellectual traditions of his time, would seem to be most at home in Alexandria, but it is by no means excluded that knowledge of all these authorities and ideas could have been gained in Upper Egypt.

As to the most likely dates of Zosimus’ life, we

are entirely in the dark. From the fact that he mentions the Serapeum in Alexandria as a functional organisation, one may infer that he lived before the destruction of that temple in 391. The fact that he quotes Julius Africanus (who died in 240) and refers to the threat of → Manichaeism, would suggest a date somewhere in the late 3rd or early 4th century. Especially the reference to → Mani has been connected with the anti-Manichaean edict of Diocletian of 302, but since Zosimus’ reference to Mani appears to derive from a Christian source, a direct connection with Diocletian (who persecuted Christians even more than Manichaeans) seems unlikely. Nevertheless, Zosimus must have lived in a time when the Manichaean presence in Egypt was sufficiently gaining in strength to provoke strong reactions from Christians as well as from the imperial administration, which fits the early 4th century very well. J. Letrouit has recently suggested a slightly earlier date for Zosimus on the assumption that Zosimus refers to Mani as still being alive, which would place him before the year 278, but the wording of the text does not really allow of such a confident interpretation. Zosimus may be quoting an earlier text or may have been unaware of the fact of Mani’s death.

Zosimus’ works were catalogued or published in antiquity in a number of different systems. The strongest tradition claims that he wrote a series of texts that were divided according to the letters of the Greek alphabet. Of these, only the book *On the sacred letter omega* has been preserved, but references are also found to the book *kappa* in Zosimus’ own writings, and to the book *sigma* in a later commentator. The Syriac fragments of Zosimus frequently refer to the books of various letters of the Aramaic alphabet. A second division is chiefly found in the manuscripts: it is the collection of texts under the heading *Authentic Commentaries* or *Authentic Memorials* (*gnēsia hypomnēmata*), which may have subsumed the “alphabetical” ordering, although this is not certain. In addition to texts headed under these rubrics, many other texts are known by name (the *Final Count*, the *Book of Sophe*, *Imouth*, etc.).

The addressee of a number of texts is a woman named Theosebeia, who is sometimes referred to as Zosimus’ “sister”. The authentic texts of Zosimus offer little information on her, other than the fact that she must have been a practising alchemist herself and looked upon Zosimus as her teacher. Syriac fragments (largely unpublished) fill in some blanks. These fragments show that Theosebeia and Zosimus had different opinions about the public character of alchemy. Zosimus blames Theosebeia

for containing within a small circle knowledge that could and should be shared with everyone who is interested.

The majority of Zosimus' writings seem to have been practical alchemical texts, discussing furnaces and the shape of the vessels used, the substances involved and the conditions to be observed. In addition, however, a number of texts reveal the theological system underlying those experiments. These texts have been studied with much greater attention than the technical texts and it is to these that we shall confine ourselves here. Both in the *Letter Omega* and in the *Final Count*, Zosimus reacts sharply against the tendency, prevalent among his contemporaries, to combine the work of alchemy with → astrology or → magic. The argument concerns a type of tincture known as "propitious", which suggests that success in obtaining these tinctures depends on the observance of the proper times or periods to engage in the experiments. This procedure is described both in astrological terms and in terms of working with one's personal demon and is flatly rejected by Zosimus. His chief objections go to the heart of the nature of alchemy and its practitioners. Alchemy, for Zosimus, is an art that can only work if two conditions are met: the technical requirements must be perfect and perfectly understood and the alchemist must have gone through a process of mental preparation or purification to gain knowledge of his real self and his ultimate origin. This origin lies outside the seven spheres of the created world, which constitute Fate. The guardians of the seven spheres, whom Zosimus calls "watchers" or "pretenders" and who are obviously planetary beings, distract man from the knowledge of his origins. Any alchemist who uses → astrology, therefore, by definition cannot escape the works of Fate and is led astray. In order to explain this, Zosimus describes the origin of the first man, Thoth-Adam, who has a double progeny. His material being is the product of Fate, but his inner, spiritual self, is a being known mainly as *phōs* (a Greek word that can mean both "light" and "man"). This spiritual man was seduced twice: once by Fate, to unite itself with the material Adam and thus constitute the first man, and a second time by the creation of woman, which further bound him to the material world. In *The Letter Omega*, Zosimus chiefly uses Greek, Jewish and Christian "proof-texts" to make his point, up to the point of introducing Jesus Christ as the person who will guide mankind back to its ultimate origins, but he invokes these texts mainly to establish connections with local Egyptian ideas, including Hermetic texts. In the *Final Count*, a very

similar mythical pattern can be found, which is related in more alchemical symbolic language, with strong Hermetic overtones.

The Hermetic legacy in Zosimus is, therefore, considerable. It is also to be found in the most bizarre texts of Zosimus to have been preserved, the so-called *Visions*. These relate dream-like visions, in which the "I" of the text describes series of purifications in the language of ritual. These descriptions, containing images of death and mutilation, autophagy and despair, have been interpreted both as symbolic descriptions of the alchemical processes and, famously by → C.G. Jung, as actual descriptions of inner experiences. If the choice is between these two, the alchemical interpretation is certainly to be preferred and the bodies being mutilated are in all likelihood references to the metals under treatment, but the imagery itself, of steps leading up to an altar, of mixing-bowls and white-clad priests, has most convincingly been interpreted as deriving from Hermetic literature and, possibly, ritual.

Scholars have claimed that for Zosimus, the 'procedures of conventional alchemy are strictly preparatory to the purification and perfection of the soul' (Fowden 1986, 123). Many texts, by contrast, suggest that purification of the soul was, for Zosimus, a *conditio sine qua non* for the alchemical work, which could lead to the knowledge allowing a person to escape the bonds of Fate.

M. Berthelot & C. Ruelle, *Collections des anciens alchimistes grecs*, Paris, 1888 (1967<sup>2</sup>; 3 vols.) ♦ M. Mertens, *Les alchimistes grecs IV.1. Zosime de Panopolis. Mémoires authentiques*, Paris, 1995 ♦ H.M. Jackson, *Zosimos of Panopolis, On the Letter Omega*, Missoula, 1978 ♦ R. Duval, *L'alchimie syriaque* (= M. Berthelot (ed.), *La chimie au moyen âge II*), Paris, 1893 (Syriac fragments) ♦ Jean Letrouit, 'Hermetism and Alchemy: Contribution to the Study of Marcianus Graecus 299 (= M)', in: Carlos Gilly & Cis van Heertum (eds.), *Magia, alchimia, scienza dal '400 al '700 / Magic, Alchemy and Science 15th-18th Centuries*, Centro Di, 2002, 85-104 (extr. of *On the Letter Omega*, Greek with French translation).

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J. Letrouit, "Chronologie des alchimistes grecs", in: Didier Kahn & Sylvain Matton (eds.), *Alchimie: Art, histoire et mythes* (Textes et Travaux de Chrysopœia 1), Paris/Milan, 1995, 11-93 ♦ D. Stolzenberg, "Unpropitious Tinctures: Alchemy, Astrology & Gnosis According to Zosimos of Panopolis", *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences* 49 (1999), 3-31.

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