

ESSWE7

*7th International Conference of the
European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism*

WESTERN ESOTERICISM *and* CONSCIOUSNESS:
Visions, Voices, Altered States

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



University of Amsterdam, 2-4 July 2019

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Beth Abbate
**Colors of the Celestial City: Esoteric and Cognitive Aspects
of Messiaen's Synesthetic Consciousness**

Sound-color synesthesia, associated with the attainment of a higher spiritual state by Blavatsky and Steiner and embraced by symbolist poets and Second Viennese School composers, was initially not given much credence by academic researchers. More recently, cognitive science research on synesthesia has blossomed, with particular emphasis on its relevance for “better understanding of consciousness.” Composer Olivier Messiaen’s synesthetic mind and music provide a particularly fruitful focal point for considering intersections of esoteric and academically defined concepts of altered states of consciousness. His sound-color synesthesia, sometimes experienced in dream states as “a gyrating fusion of superhuman sound and color,” was integral to the often deeply esoteric visions that he conveyed through his music, yet he himself sought a scientific explanation for his experiences. This paper will, first, explore a phenomenology of Messiaen’s synesthesia by placing some of his observations on his experiences into contrasting interpretive frameworks. Thus sound-color correspondences experienced at the point of sleep could be attributable to the suppression of neocortical areas of the brain together with activation of the more image- and symbol-oriented limbic areas, but they also have similarities to “hypnagogia”—visual, auditory, and other hallucinations at the onset of sleep that have been linked to Leadbeater and Besant’s “thought-forms.” It will then focus on Messiaen’s 1963 *Couleurs de la Cité Celeste*, a depiction of the “celestial visions” in the book of Revelation that so fascinated Messiaen, who linked St. John’s visions of rainbows and walls set with gems of every color with the lifelong “dazzlement” that he experienced gazing at medieval stained glass. Conceived entirely synesthetically, with “complexes of sounds and timbres evol[ing] in the manner of colours ...[and] turn[ing] on itself like a rose window,” and with color associations indicated throughout, *Couleurs* both illuminates the composer’s consciousness and demonstrates how, through harmonic-timbral complexes and unusual overtones, the composer conveys his experience to his listeners.

Eyad Abuali
**Diagnostic Oneirology in Kubrawi Sufism:
The Development of Sufi Dream Theory in the 12th and 13th Centuries**

Medieval Islamic dream science has not received much attention in studies concerning Islamic thought and society. The significance of dreams has often been diminished as phenomena which are irrelevant to historic events. In addition, Sufis who devoted much of their attention to dream theory were often considered ascetics and recluses who were uninterested in questions pertaining to society. By contrast, this presentation will argue that understanding the development of dream sciences in the medieval period offers important insights into the development of Islamic thought and society.

This presentation will attempt to account for the development of dream theory into a coherent and systematic oneirology in the 12th and 13th centuries. It will argue that the adoption of important philosophical concepts into Sufi thought in this period enabled a more systematic

shift from divinatory to diagnostic oneirology within Kubrawī Sufism. These developments accompanied the increasing importance of Sufism in the 12th and 13th centuries which witnessed the transition of Sufi communities into orders. Hence, the emergence of systematic diagnostic Sufi oneirologies in this period are directly related to significant developments in Islamic thought, as well as important societal changes in the history of the Islamic world.

Riikka Ala-Hakula

Austin Osman Spare's Contribution to the Tradition of Magical Monograms

English artist Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956) was an influential but an unsung figure of early twentieth century occultism. He developed a novel technique of magical monograms, which was influenced by Medieval Magic, which in turn has roots extending to the use of magical signs in Antiquity. The term “monogram” is part of Benoît Grévin's and Julien Véronèse's classification that divided medieval characters into six families: a) conventional signs b) simple geometric signs c) pseudo-ideograms d) caractères à lunettes e) monograms and (f) complex geometric compositions. They define the term monogram: “signs composed of identifiable elements such as letters.” In Spare's system a person's desire is the starting point for the creation of a monogram. It should be written on paper by formulating it in a short sentence. Then, the visual elements of letters of the sentence are reformulated by creating a new magical sign from the parts of the letters. The magnum opus of the Renaissance Magic Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (1486–1535) gives an instruction for creating magical monograms that have similarities with Spare's system. Moreover, the manual of ceremonial magic *Lemegeton* (compiled in the 17th century) contains magical monograms that have a visual likeness with Spare's signs. These monograms were used to contact the good or evil spirits which gave the exorcist favorable services. Yet, Spare's monograms were private symbols with which he communicated with the subconscious. In the paper I will compare Spare's use of magical monograms to their traditional use in the magic manuals *Lemegeton* and *De occulta philosophia*.

Kurosh Amoui

Reading the Aleph in Isfahan: the Esoteric and the Islamicate in Works of Jorge Luis Borges

In line with the recent developments in the academic study of esotericism, and the formulation of esotericism as a category of “rejected knowledge,” this paper investigates the extent of esoteric themes and characteristics in works of the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986). I first examine Borges' general approach to esotericism as reflected in his short stories, essays, and poems—e.g. their references to Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism, and Kabbalah. I will then situate Borges' interest in and inspiration from the Islamicate culture, above all *The 1001 Nights* (or *The Arabian Nights*), within his broader understanding of esotericism. My work also looks at the history of translating Borges' works into Farsi, and the ways in which his writings have inspired a generation of authors in Iran known as the Isfahan School, and works of fiction like Bahram Sadeghi's *Malkuth* (1961) and Hushang Golshiri's *The Book of Jinn* (1997) that possess strong esoteric motifs. In the final analysis, I will discuss how this transmission of esoteric themes—from *The 1001 Nights* to Borges to the Isfahan School—challenges the common premises of the discourse of Orientalism, as framed in the works of Edward Said, by approaching “the orient” as a playful and diverse *construct* instead of a fixed and unchanging *essence*.

Julia Andreeva
Energy, Information and Spiritual Messages
in Russian Intentional Communities

New Age religion, oriented to this-worldly achievements and values, seeks to deal with the otherworldly experience as a part of everyday life. The altered state of consciousness is one of the goals, sought by religion in general (Bourguignon 1973) and New Age in particular (Hanegraaff 1996: 51). To make contact with a spiritual reality, people use different mind-expanding techniques or they need to be in a special place and time. In my paper, I will focus on some groups of Russian New Agers who are involved in the construction of intentional communities (ecovillages) where they want to escape from the urban and human miseries. For them, the whole environment is full of energy, which is distributed in different proportions and, of course, in nature a person can obtain more knowledge and health. The purer and the more mindful the individual, the more spiritual information one can receive from the universe. The ecovillagers interpret many everyday practices as influenced by supernatural agents, nature, and earth. New Agers make decisions guided not only by rationality, reason and knowledge but also by intuition, and some messages they receive through dreams, special physical or spiritual techniques, and contacts with nature, by help of sacred objects or places. These sensations reflect reality even more accurately than science and rational arguments; moreover, this extraordinary experience is available for every person who is ready to receive it.

Tiziano Anzuini
Mystical experiences and kabbalistic wisdom in Jacques Gaffarel's works

The Orientalist Jacques Gaffarel (1601–1681) was often mentioned, mostly as a literary forger, but rarely studied. As a matter of fact, all we know about his life deals with his youth, when he was Richelieu's librarian, interested in the Christian Kabbalah. The aim of this paper is to analyse how Gaffarel merges together referred supernatural experiences, kabbalistic literature and Christian tradition, thus creating an original patchwork and seeking to ensure a deeper knowledge of the world as well as of the human being. Our study will particularly focus on *Abdita divinae cabalae mysteria* (1625) and *Curiositez inouïes* (1629), connected with some Hebrew sources that we can rebuild from his (not entirely) lost library.

Jafe Arnold
Marazm:
Alterations of Consciousness and Radical Metaphysics
in the Soviet Yuzhinsky Circle

The late Soviet underground is increasingly recognized by scholars to have been a hotbed of esoteric and occult currents, the details of the practices of which have only recently begun to surface. One of the most radical and successful of the Soviet underground's esoteric milieus, the so-called Yuzhinsky Circle, has recently been spotlighted in scholarship for its synthesis of radical politics and esoteric philosophies, most famously exemplified by its former member, the now immensely influential and highly controversial Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin (1962-). Besides the latecomer Dugin, the Yuzhinsky Circle was home to such seminal figures as

the “Soviet Kafka” or “Russian William Burroughs”, Yuri Mamleev (1931-2015), the pioneer of “Russian Islamic radicalism”, Geydar Dzhemal (1947-2016), and the famous occultist author Yevgeniy Golovin (1938-2010). However, while much attention has been paid to the later doctrines and politics of this radical occultist gathering, little study has hitherto been devoted to the Yuzhinsky Circle’s alleged practices of inducing alterations of consciousness as part of their occult activities. This paper will present the evidence for the Yuzhinsky radicals’ experimentations with inducing states of marazm, or “mad gnosis”, identify relevant ritual practices, and discuss the relationship of these experimentations with consciousness to the major esoteric sources and doctrines present in the Soviet-era Yuzhinsky Circle.

Karl Baier
The Return of Hippie Advaita?
Martin W. Ball’s concept of radical non-duality

Martin W. Ball earned his Ph.D in Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2000. Today he works as a writer, artist, energy worker and musician. He is one of the leading theoreticians and activists of the contemporary psychedelic revival within the USA. An advocate of 5-MeO-DMT as the “God-molecule” that resolves the subject-object distinction and triggers “genuine enlightenment”, he developed a theory of “radical non-duality” which resembles the Hippie-mysticism of the 1960s articulated by Timothy Leary and others. This paper explores Ball’s thought with respect to South Asian religion and his ardent criticism of Terence McKenna, another leading figure within the psychedelic revival.

Ionuț-Daniel Băncilă,
The Esoteric Reception of the *Philokalia*’s Mysticism:
Altered States of Consciousness in a different Key

Eastern Christianity (here limited to the “national” Christianities of Eastern Europe, Greece and Russia, as well as their dissemination worldwide) has produced a vast amount of mystical literature, and developed various practices to attend it, generally known as, but not limited to “Hesychasm”. A move to revigorate this mystical dimension, largely conceived in terms of a “mystical tradition”, was the answer of various local Eastern Christianities to Modernity. This move is aptly illustrated by the publishing of the Greek *Philokalia* in Venice (1782) and its various Slavonic and Romanian adaptations in the decades to follow. The paper’s aim is to discuss the reception of the *Philokalia* in Western Esotericism (especially in the wake of G. Gurdjieff’s work: P. D. Ouspenski, B. Mouravieff, Robin Amis), as well as the esoteric interests in the project of translating this work in English, featuring a former adept of Ouspenski (G. E. H. Palmer), an atypical Traditionalist (Philip Sherrard) and an Orthodox Bishop (Kallistos Ware). Special attention is given to the role various conceptions on Mysticism played in these processes.

Nicholas Banner
Interpreting Platonist Narratives of Cosmic Ascent

The theme of the cosmic/hypercosmic ascent is central to many western religious currents from the Hellenistic period onward, with central importance for both the Abrahamic traditions and their more esoteric cousins. Indeed, it has been called ‘... the fundamental pattern of hellenistic

Mediterranean religions. (Smith 1993, 61-2)'. This theme presents itself in a rich variety of narrative formats: in myths of the ascent and descent of redeemer-figures, in apocalyptic, Merkavah and Hekhalot texts, in Gnostic tractates, in the Hermetic *Poemandres*, in ancient magical texts, in the New Testament, and in the sura-literature of Islam. Each of these literary forms present its own proper hermeneutic problems, but a type of account survives from antiquity which is particularly difficult to interpret: the first-person narrative of cosmic ascent. This paper will survey the evidence for four writers of such narratives working within the tradition of philosophic Platonism – Philo of Alexandria, Plutarch, Plotinus, and Macrobius – and discuss possible means of approach. It will firstly consider the degree to which these four authors can be said to be writing about the same thing, and whether a useful typology can be drawn to illuminate a 'Platonist ascent topos' in antiquity. How these philosophic accounts should be contextualised vis à vis their religious analogues will also be considered. The discussion will then move on to the light that cognitive science can cast on what might have been going on when ancient Platonists ascended through the astral spheres and beyond. Cognitive methods raise the possibility of a comparative approach which is more than merely descriptive, and this paper will conclude with some tentative comparative points across the ancient religious and philosophical spectra, in the hope of sparking further research in this field.

Jonatan M. Benarroch
The Mystery of Lilies:
Visionary Mystical Ascent in the Zohar

The symbol of the lily (or rose) served a central component in the mystical visionary inventory of the Castilian thirteenth-century book of Zohar (the most significant medieval work of Jewish theosophy). Probably influenced by Christian mystical traditions, the lily became one of the central symbols of the *Shekhinah* (God's Kabbalistic consort).

The rose was considered a symbol of mystery from antiquity onwards. For early Christians, the rose served as a visual expression of paradise, but also of martyrdom. However, the most central symbolism of the rose in the Christian tradition is its identification with the Virgin Mary, which dates back to the fifth-century theologian Sedulius Caelius.

In this paper, I will focus on a unique Zoharic text (Zohar III, *Pikudin*, 263a) which is rich in its mythic imagery. The text deals with a mystical ecstatic meditation of the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4) prayer (a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services). In this unique mystical meditation performed during the recitation of the *Shema*, each human limb becomes a lily that is "picked" by the arch-angel Metatron who collects the lilies and unites them with the "upper lilies." Then all the lilies of the lower and upper worlds—representing the limbs of the mystic and of God—unite and become one. It appears that during the ecstatic meditative visualization process, the mystic who recites the *Shema* goes through a symbolic-mythical transformation and is symbolically incarnated in a lily/rose. He then ascends above and unites with the symbolic-mythical "upper lily." By uniting both lilies, they become identified with the unified name of God.

This paper will contribute to our understanding of a unique medieval Jewish mystical tradition of an ecstatic visionary experience and its Christian context.

Léo Bernard
Jacques Demarquette (1888-1969):
Mysticism within the academy

Jacques Demarquette (1888-1969) was an active promoter of scouting, vegetarianism, naturopathy, pacifism and ecumenism within France. This sustained activity throughout his life should be considered in accordance with his personal spiritual beliefs, deeply influenced by Theosophy, Rosicrucianism and a fascination toward Oriental religions. Interestingly, regarding the scope of this conference, he described with great acuity the many mystical states he claimed to have experienced in his autobiography *Confessions d'un mystique contemporain* (1965). In the introduction, he asserted that his work may help psychologists studying the problems of mystical experience as he himself possessed an academic education which allowed him to analyse his experienced states at a remove. Demarquette indeed had a foot in the academy as he defended his thesis in the arts in 1928 and lectured notably on comparative mysticism at the Lowell Institute in 1944. Academic scholars, for example Paul Masson-Oursel (1882-1956), participated in his movement which followed a typical modern esoteric agenda, aiming to reconcile Science and Religion and to solve what was perceived of as a spiritual crisis. Mystical experiences were understood by Demarquette as a good key to unlock such an agenda, especially because they tended to prove the reality of the religious assertions concerning a different dimension of existence. The way Demarquette undertook his study on mysticism and his reception within academic circles then constitute the main focus of this presentation.

Henrik Bogdan
Alterations of Consciousness and Aleister Crowley's Concept of Initiation

The concept of "initiation" is central to Aleister Crowley's (1875-1947) particular form of occultism, Thelema. Not only were the two organizations he used to promulgate his system - the O.T.O. and the A.:A.: -- initiatory societies whose rituals of initiation were influenced (directly or indirectly) by 18th century Freemasonry, but Crowley's process of spiritual enlightenment was explained as a series of initiations. These initiations can best be described as particular experiences that have a transformative effect on the initiate's understanding of existence. While scholars of Western esotericism often label such transformative experiences as gnosis or absolute knowledge, anthropologists and historians of religion tend to approach the transformative effects of undergoing a ritual of initiation from a sociological perspective (usually as a rite of passage, leading from one state to another). In this paper, I will focus on Crowley's diaries and examine how he described his major initiations in terms of transformative experience. Some of these initiations spanned over several years: e.g., his initiation leading to Magus took him two and a half years to complete, from November 3, 1914, to June 9, 1917, while his final initiation, leading to Ipsissimus lasted three years, starting on May 23, 1921. Following the lead of Hanegraaff, I will be using Imants Barušs's concept of "alterations of consciousness" as a starting point for analyzing Crowley's descriptions of his initiations, and then explore the theoretical implications the findings might have for the broader study of initiation in the field of religious studies

Ahmad Bostani
Henry Corbin's Esotericism and the Political:
A Critical Assessment

My paper aims to discuss the political implications of Corbin's esotericism, with focus on his conception of imaginal world. Thus, I will argue that this conception would lead to at least four main political consequences: (A) The focus on the correspondence between human soul and the Cosmos may result in the negation of the "society" as an inter-subjective realm, and imaginal world as an ontological level would lead to overlooking the "social imaginary" which also is inter-subjective. This ontological and cosmic view may lead to totalitarian politics. (B) Corbin's esotericism insists on the cosmic unity as a pre-condition for consciousness. But this unity is absolute, rather than dialectical. Consequently, there would be no room for social and political dynamism. (C) Corbin's cosmic conception is basically anti-civic and non-political. That is why it is not capable to understand and explain complicated and at the same time detrimental phenomena such as "ideologization of tradition" and "the return of myth". This conception, through the process of "interiorization of city" by imaginal world, excludes the political and paves the way for pathological forms of politics. (D) Some metaphysical concepts in Corbin's esotericism (e.g. dualism of East/west, hierarchy, cyclic temporality, verticality, and monism) may pave the way for anti-liberal and non-democratic political concepts.

This paper aims to discuss these abovementioned points. Hence, I will firstly give an account of Corbin's idea of consciousness and its connection to imaginal world. Then, I will debate the political implication of his esoteric thought, and finally, drawing on the theories of political philosophy (especially political theology), I will examine and criticize Corbin's doctrine of "cosmic consciousness" which is based on imaginal world.

Jean-Pierre Brach
Christian kabbalah as divine and human knowledge

The highly syncretic development of Christian kabbalah, as it was manifested during the early Renaissance, implies some important changes in the apprehension and definition of what is regarded as "knowledge" by certain representatives of Humanistic culture. If Jewish elements had long ago been incorporated in Christian speculations, the performative power attributed to the Hebrew language helped sustain the age-old ambiguity between religion and magic, as well as the ever-present preoccupation with religious orthodoxy.

Given the involvement of different worldviews and philosophical frames in the growth and evolution of Christian kabbalah, "knowledge" finds its contents redefined along new doctrinal, cosmological and anthropological lines, with an explicit view to Theosis or the actual divinization of man as representing the ultimate intellectual (even scholarly) goal. This implied reorganizing disciplines such as theology, science, magic, philosophy (and kabbalah) on a new scale of learning, according to their different objects, perceived as linked to hierarchical planes of reality and to the corresponding levels of human mental and spiritual perception. Illustrations of this general process will be selected from the works of different exponents of this particular esoteric current.

Thomas Van Breda
“Don’t Believe Me!”:
Re-evaluating the Importance of Altered States
in the Life and Works of Aleister Crowley

This paper argues for an original scholarly approach to the life and works of English occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), prioritizing the impact of powerful altered states of consciousness (ASCs) on his views and teachings. It responds mainly to the research of Egil Asprem and Marco Pasi, whose separate works have presented convincing evidence that Crowley’s work contains degrees of “naturalization” and “psychologization” in its interpretation of the supernatural. This paper departs from their conclusions, showing that these two models only work for a limited selection of writings, and do not offer a satisfying explanation for Crowley’s general lack of theoretical consistency. A third, alternative model is suggested which embraces Crowley’s inconsistency as an *expression* of his worldview rather than as a defect of it. This original model is carefully tested against primary material, bringing to the surface a consistent dimension of intellectual pragmatism, according to which all rational ideas are necessarily false, whether scientific or “occult,” convenience being the sole measure for their construction and communication. Crucially, such intellectual pragmatism is found to apply in various passages even to ideas typically assumed by scholars to be cornerstones of Crowley’s beliefs, such as the Holy Guardian Angel, and his identity as the divinely chosen prophet of Thelema, complicating many standard scholarly narratives. The origins of Crowley’s pragmatism are suggested to be several life-changing ASCs during his lifetime that have failed to generate sufficient academic attention, causing their impact and the resulting pragmatic character of Crowley’s writings to go unappreciated. Concluding, this paper argues for the gains to be made in centralizing ASCs and their corresponding claims of incommunicability in the study of Western esoteric figures, and warns against the possible losses in leaving them at the margin.

Bryan Brown
Tracing esoteric connections in the Theatre Laboratory

The history of the theatre laboratory is, like the history of the laboratory itself, a complex web of practices and practitioners within a rationalist experimentalism and an esoteric search for new knowledge and understandings of the place and power of human beings in a more than human world. Famous practitioners Konstantin Stanislavsky (Russia 1863-1938), Nikolai Demidov (Russia 1884-1953), Yevgeny Vakhtangov (Russia 1883-1922), Michael Chekhov (Russia 1891-1955) and Jerzy Grotowski (Poland 1933-1999) all drew heavily upon psychology and Indian esoteric practice as contained in Western understandings of yoga. Many of them also drew upon more secretive and directly Western esoteric practices such as those found in the Kabbalah and the teachings of Madame Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner and G.I. Gurdjieff. Focusing primarily on the work of Michael Chekhov, this paper will give a broad overview of the practices of the theatre laboratory tradition, specifics of Chekhov's practical instantiations of Steiner's philosophy, and conclude with provocations for the role of performance studies and practice research as a methodology with capabilities to expand and extend the study of Western Esotericism.

Christian Bull
Teaching and Extraordinary Experiences in Hermetism

Synesius of Cyrene preserves for us a statement of Aristotle that those about to be initiated were “not to learn something, but to experience something and be put in a certain state.” (ou mathein ti dein, alla pathein kai diatethenai) Such initiatory experiences and states are often described as extraordinary: the initiates would come face to face with their divinities, and sometimes even be united with them. Yet Synesius emphasizes that the super-rational experience should be preceded by rational instruction, preparing the soul to be fit for the ineffable encounter with the divine. One of the few souls so great that it was able to receive the epiphany without prior teaching is, according to Synesius, Hermes Trismegistus.

In the narrative universe of the Hermetic treatises, Hermes Trismegistus conducts dialogues with his disciple and son Tat, most of which are didactic but others in which the interlocutors report extraordinary experiences, namely the feeling of profound unity between themselves and the cosmos and even obtaining visions of the invisible, transcendent godhead itself. The teachings in fact prepare the candidate for initiation: The preparation forms certain expectations of what will happen during the initiation, and these expectations are conducive to extraordinary experiences, at the same time patterning how the experience is felt and how it is subsequently interpreted. The initiate’s interpretation of his or her experience can then be made into a literary or oral narrative, which in turn may feed into the expectations of future potential candidates. There is thus a dynamic dialectic between mathein and pathein in Hermetic teachings and rites of initiation.

Konstantin Burmistrov
Mystical Visions and Its Evaluation in the
Russian Freemasonry of the late 18th - early 19th centuries

In the richest manuscript heritage of Russian Masons, who lived two centuries ago, there are numerous descriptions of various mystical experiences. These could be visions and mystical dreams in which beings from the other world appeared, as well as deliberately evoked mystical states by which an adept attempts to penetrate into the other world. For censorship reasons, this aspect of the activities of Russian brothers practically did not go beyond the narrow circle of initiates. The report will attempt to present the main types of mystical experience reflected in the manuscripts of Russian Freemasons - mostly diaries and correspondence. The most valuable information of this kind is contained in so-called "Masonic dreams". These stories constitute a special genre of Masonic literature and preserved in a significant number of manuscripts. They were based on the idea of a special inner, spiritual vision, which has an adept and which allows him to achieve clairvoyance. Russian Masons paid considerable attention to the problem of evaluating such experience - is it a gift from the divine essences or a temptation sent by demonic forces? The question of the significance of such an experience was also important: is it an accidental consequence of Masonic work, a hindrance on the way, or, on the contrary, a kind of confirmation of progress in following the Masonic path? The Orthodox Church, to which the Russian Masons belonged, is extremely negative about such forms of mysticism. Therefore, they were forced to seek explanations for such phenomena in Catholic and Protestant mysticism, as well as in the European esoteric tradition. The report is entirely

based on the study of the original manuscripts of the 18th and early 19th centuries, preserved in the Moscow archives.

Jenny Butler
“Away with the Fairies”:
Intersections of Contemporary Paganism and
Traditional Irish Culture

Various means are used by solitary practitioners and groups of contemporary Pagans to shift to different states of consciousness, whether through ritual actions or deliberate meditative alteration of thought processes. Many rituals are designed with the objective of creating a space—usually the magic circle—in which to communicate with the spiritual world—deities, the human dead, fairies—or involve such beings in the ritual’s ultimate purpose. Drawing from longitudinal ethnographic research on the Pagan community (primarily Druids, Wiccans and other Pagan Witches) in Ireland, this paper explores Pagans’ conceptualizations of magic, sacred space, and the relationship of these phenomena to consciousness. The examination focuses on the significance of fairies in Pagan discourse and practices and documents some of the techniques employed to engage with fairies by way of altering one’s state of consciousness. This is examined in the context of Irish traditional cultural understandings of “an slua sídhe” (fairy beings) and the Celtic otherworld, which forms a backdrop to contemporary Pagan culture in the Irish milieu. This paper provides an overview of traditional Irish cultural conceptualizations of spiritual beings such as fairies and the otherworld in which they dwell, along with perceptions of the consequences of otherworldly contact in terms of those with the gift of “Second Sight” and those who have inadvertently been “fairy touched” resulting in a change to their consciousness, often madness. Traditional understandings inform Pagan discourses but there is simultaneously a process of reinterpretation whereby spiritual beings as well as otherworldly realms are given particular significance and are embedded in an esoteric framework of meaning. This analysis aims to highlight the points of intersection as well as diversion of cultural understandings as regards fairies in traditional culture and contemporary Paganism in the Irish context and in turn what this reveals about changing understandings of consciousness.

Flavia Buzzetta
Vision of God and Kabbalistic Practical Knowledge
in Jean Thenaud (1480-1542)

The lecture will examine the mystical goals of Practical Kabbalah in the writings of Jean Thenaud, a Franciscan who contributed to the birth of a Christian Kabbalah in French. Thenaud's elaboration can be considered as a magic lent to the Kabbalah, in which ritual elements are inserted into a strongly syncretic vision. His *Traicté de la Cabale or La Cabale et l'estat du monde angélic ou spirituel* (1520-1521) is in fact a “magical” introduction to Jewish mysticism that François I’s treasurer had composed to illuminate the spirit of the king “très chrétien” and reveal to him the secrets of a science that makes it possible to reach l’omniforme et informe forme de toutes choses. This function is attributed to the name that Thenaud considered a notamen that helps memory receive angelic enlightenment and allows encliner les glorieux espritz towards wisdom. The techniques described in this treatise are focused mainly on the use of the divine and angelic names in a sort of Kabbalistic ritual, the aim of which is to achieve

prophecy, knowledge and vision of God, which represent the highest dimension of contact with the divinity. This enlightenment is considered as the apex of a path of asceticism and purification, which, through an intense exercise of intellectual concentration, allows man to regenerate himself. It allows us to consider the Kabbalah as a means of redemption or as a metamorphosis in which man reaches the divinity and his true nature.

Keith Edward Cantú
The Role of Herbal Intoxication in Bengali Fakiri Sādhana

This paper analyzes the important role that cannabis intoxication plays in the practices of Bengali Fakirs (male) and Fakirānis (female), specifically their yogic sādhana “effort” and Persian Sufi-inspired techniques of meditation. Since the Fakiri path is often erroneously considered to be identical to Bāuls, Sufis, or other exemplars of Bengali tantric “obscure religious cults” on account of surface similarities, the paper first demonstrates some of its clear distinguishing aspects as revealed both in ethnographic interviews and literary sources such as lyric poetry. It then proceeds to focus on the typical Fakiri preoccupation with the ritualized smoking of a unique blend of cannabis and another herb (“white leaf”) known as tāmāk sebā or siddhi. Often consumed before playing songs so as to heighten musical awareness as well as mystical receptivity to the songs’ lyrics and attitude (bhāb), the blend is also prepared and smoked at other times for the purposes of relaxation, socializing, or even to mark periods of time. Throughout the paper I supply data from a recent interview in Bengali with a Fakiri couple I have known for seven years, both of whom were born to Muslim parents yet themselves reject any distinctions of jāt “birth-religion.” In the interview they clarify their positions on several key terms related to this cultivation of an altered sense of self, brought about through herbal intoxication as well as prayer and meditation. These key terms and their associated practices derive from the unique sādhana formulated by Lālan Fakir (d. 1890), but are also informed by other fakirs, dervishes, and Sāis, many of whom also included Islamic esoteric material in their literature. As a result, this paper enables comparison between these Fakiri methods and other methods prevalent in fields of esoteric religious practice, both Islamic and Western.

Keith Edward Cantú
The Buddhist skandhas and Ceremonial Intoxication in the Works of Aleister Crowley

In this paper I examine an oft-overlooked feature of the writings of Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), namely his unique integration of the five Buddhist skandhas or “aggregates” (rūpa “form,” vedanā “feeling,” saṃj.ā “discernment,” saṃskāra “mental formations,” and vij.āna “consciousness”) into teachings on modern ceremonial magic, or “magick” as he termed it. One essay that clearly outlines Crowley’s interpretation of these concepts is his philosophical essay “Science and Buddhism” (1903), in which he quotes Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) in connection with what he calls the “Ego-Idea” and astutely rejects the Vedānta of Śaṅkara. However, Crowley also penned another colorful essay that treats on the skandhas entitled “The Herb Dangerous,” published serially in *The Equinox*. In Part Two of this series, “The Psychology of Hashish” (1909), he — under the pseudonym of Oliver Haddo — describes the skandhas as a means to more properly classify states of “intoxication” or “ceremonial drunkenness.” To clarify this innovative ritual usage I first briefly analyze the historical function of the skandhas in the frameworks of Sanskrit and Pali manuals of Buddhist meditation such as the *Visuddhimagga* and

later Tantras, including the eleventh-century Indian Buddhist text Kālacakratāntra (KCT), “Tantra of the Wheel of Time” that introduces a sixth skandha, the j.āna-skandha “aggregate of gnosis.” I then transition to describe the historical context of Crowley’s own reception of teachings on the skandhas, especially his interactions with his friend Allan Bennett / Bhikku Ananda Metteya (1872-1923) both prior and following their sojourn in Sri Lanka between 1900 and 1901, during which they studied yoga and other South Asian forms of meditation. In the final part of the paper I analyze the specific way in which Crowley then utilized the skandhas in “The Psychology of Hashish” to describe various mental obscurations of the anātman or “not-self” that can be realized through intoxication.

Olivia Cejvan
Pedagogics of Transformation:
The Initiatory Enskillment of Charles Stansfield Jones

This paper explores the question of how a magician is made, with specific attention to the particular skills pertaining to initiatory grades in the A.:A.: system of attainment, as designed by Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). For several years, Charles Stansfeld Jones (1886–1950) underwent training in the A.:A.: under the guidance of first J. F. C. Fuller (1876-1966) and then Crowley. Jones’ initiatory process is described in published texts as well as in diaries and correspondence, often in minute detail, which imparts an ethnographic richness to the data that makes it suitable for a practice-oriented analysis. This paper explores how, as Crowley’s apprentice, Jones worked to accomplish the necessary initiatory requirements on a day-to-day basis, encompassing practices such as meditation, rituals and astral travel. Following intervals of initiatory training regimens with both setbacks and successes, problems and solutions, Jones underwent examinations and tests to confirm his level of attainment. He also reflexively interrogated his transformative experiences, which led to new understandings of himself and others as initiatory agents. Analysing the case of Jones’ initiatory training through the lens of anthropological theories of learning – in particular Jean Lave’s theory of apprenticeship and Tim Ingold’s theory of enskillment – this paper sketches out a pedagogical theory of initiation where gnosis and attainment is conceptualised as skill.

Sasha Chaitow
Tales of Transformation:
Platonic Idealism, Intellect, and Initiation in Péladan

Notorious French Symbolist author Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918) is best known for his organization of the fabled Salons de Rose-Croix and his chaotic impact on the Parisian Occult Revival. His prolific literary efforts and the motivation behind his multivalent activities are less well-understood. At the heart of his activities – literary and curatorial – lay the outrageous concept that art and literature functioning as covert vehicles for esoteric Ideas in the Platonic sense could effect the mass initiation of society.

Unlike esoterically themed literature, allegories, or didactic parables, Péladan’s novels, styled as *éthopées*, were intended to cause an ontologically transformative experience in the reader who would be unwittingly led into an initiatory revelation through the simple process of reading for pleasure. His works were intentionally designed as objects of contemplation and *praxis*: a subtle process that incorporates both the intellectual and spiritual faculties to ignite a form of gnosis.

Significantly, the human intellect took primacy over all other faculties. He called upon artists exhibiting at his Salons to further the same agenda, eschewing all forms of secrecy traditionally framing esoteric thought to ensure the widest unsuspecting audience possible.

Péladan drew heavily on Platonic thought in the development of this self-appointed mission to effect a metamorphosis in mass society that would derive from the realisation of humanity's divine origins, and revelation – through constant exposure to symbolic art and literature – of humanity's mission to redeem Lucifer himself.

Following an exploration of the layered realities coalescing in Péladan's worldview based on his interpretation of the Platonic theory of forms, this paper discusses the implications of the mechanisms of function and ontological shapes of the mass esoteric metamorphosis that he and his followers envisioned.

Julie Chajes
Blavatsky's Vedanta:
A Case Study in Cultural Entanglement

In Advaita Vedanta, *moksha* (liberation) is said to be achieved through *vidyā* (knowledge), specifically, the knowledge that *atman* (the self) is identical with *Brahman* (the highest metaphysical reality). Exploring the discussions of Advaita Vedanta provided by Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) and acknowledging her Idealist, neo-Platonist, and Orientalist influences, this paper will show that an over-emphasis on Western and colonialist distortions runs the risk of misrepresenting the history of early Theosophy. Such an over-emphasis might obscure, for example, the signal influence on Blavatsky's Vedanta of early Indian members of the Society such as Mohini Mohun Chatterjee (1858-1936) and Tallapragada Subba Row (1856-1890). Additionally, in an archaeology of Blavatsky's thought that reaches back through the translations she used, it is important to acknowledge the place of medieval Sanskrit texts and their unique perspectives on Vedanta. I will speak in particular about the 1875 edition of the fifteenth-century *Vedantasara* (attributed to Sadananda Yogenda Saraswati) that was published by the Bengali scholar Jivananda Vidyasagara and then translated into English by G. A. Jacob as *A Manual of Hindu Pantheism* (1881). Exploring the interconnections between individuals, ideas, and texts, I argue that early Theosophical Orientalism is best understood as involving transnational collaborations and as arising from an entanglement of Indian and European individuals and ideas in the context of modernity.

Nell Champoux
4-E Cognition and the New Motor:
Thinking Through a 19th-Century Spiritualist God-Machine

This paper centers on a seemingly counter-intuitive argument; that following the lessons of cognitive science should lead towards a material turn in the study of esotericism. This argument is predicated on understandings of cognitive science that veer from focus on the brain as mechanism of inputs and outputs and into a focus on cognition as thoroughly tangled with the world. This radically porous model of cognition is termed 4-E Cognition; “embodied, embedded, enactive, and extended cognition.” 4-E Cognition includes the body, environments, human-made 1 objects, and varieties of media. Adding 4-E research to the existing paradigm highlights

the insistent material context of any subject of study and ultimately reorients us to existing humanities-based models for analyzing material culture.

One delightfully bizarre example from nineteenth-century American Spiritualism, the New Motor of John Murray Spear (1804-1887), will illustrate how an object, rather than the brain, can provide a clearer point of entry into an esoteric thought world. Instructions for the construction of the New Motor were received from spirits (including the ubiquitous Ben Franklin) in a trance state by Spear and resulted in an object Spear and his collaborators saw it as a new Christ and an eventual source of perpetual motion. Though the machine itself no longer exists, extensive description of the machine is extant, along with discussions by Spear's collaborators on its function and meaning. Through this focus on the machine as point of entry into Spear's trances and cognition, this paper will argue, in alignment with the 4-E model of cognition, that Spear's cognitive processes were spread into and through the machine, and are best understood in conversation with the machine itself.

Tanya Cheadle

**'Like sexual intercourse, only infinitely more so':
Conjugal Marriage, Divine Transcendence and the Glasgow Disciples
of the Brotherhood of the New Life**

The Brotherhood of the New Life was an organisation of Christian mysticism, responsible for utopian settlements in New York State and California in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Its founder was Thomas Lake Harris, a charismatic preacher who believed religion needed to be 'resexed' and who advocated the practice of 'conjugal marriage', in which divine transcendence was achieved through sexual union with a spiritual counterpart. One 'Sister in the New Life' described the experience as 'like sexual intercourse, only infinitely more so', while Harris referred to the 'unspoken thought and ecstasies divine' shared with his counterpart 'Queen Lily'. This practice was believed to be greatly facilitated by 'internal respiration', an altered state in which God's breath literally flowed through the body.

This paper provides the first recent scholarly account of 'conjugal marriage', determining precisely what distinguishes it from earlier, Swedenborgian iterations of the practice as well as more conventional contemporary notions of 'conjugal' love. It also reveals new evidence for belief in Brotherhood sexual mysticism in Scotland. Harris visited the city of Glasgow first in 1860 and again in 1903, his evangelism resulting in the formation of a dedicated band of disciples, part of the 'Department of Great Britain of the Brotherhood of the New Life'. Foremost within this group were Bella and Charles Pearce, prominent local socialists, feminists and spiritualists who published several volumes of Harris's poetry, imported the sanctified wine produced on his Californian settlement, and defended him from accusations of sexual licentiousness in the radical and national press. The paper ultimately argues that in the transnational transmission of 'conjugal marriage', from the 'burnedover' districts of rural America to the progressive subcultures of fin de siècle urban Scotland, the practice became lost in translation, subsumed within feminist understandings of sexual purity and critiques of the sexual double-standard.

Aurélie Choné

**Western esotericism and the phenomenology of consciousness:
Rudolf Steiner's practical contributions to the development of higher levels of consciousness**

Rudolf Steiner minutely described the states of consciousness experienced by human beings in the course of human evolution, from the direct vision of “spiritual worlds” to the acquisition of “spiritual organs of perception” leading to the knowledge of “higher worlds”. This paper first studies Steiner's historical approach to the evolution of human consciousness from pre-Christian times (especially in the ancient Orient) to the contemporary period, by focusing on his philosophical anthropology, in particular his conception of man as composed of a physical body, an “etheric body”, an “astral body” and an Ego or “I”. It then explores his phenomenological investigation of the individual consciousness. Steiner distinguishes between different states of consciousness: the state of sleep, the dream state, and higher states of consciousness that can be reached through concentration, imagination, inspiration, intuition and conscious sleep. He suggests different practical methods of spiritual training in order to develop higher faculties of knowledge (*Seelenübungen*), which I will here study in relation to what he called the “soul forces” of man, feeling, thinking and willing. This paper finally focuses on the main exercises (*Hauptübungen*) and, more particularly, on the six complementary exercises (*Nebenübungen*) which constitute the core of the Christian Rosicrucian initiation, a path to self-awareness which Steiner viewed as the best suited to the conditions of the modern age, since it “lies between the essentially Christian path and the path of Yoga”. In this paper, I look at Steiner's investigation of different states of consciousness and of their transformation in relation to the influence of Indian practices (mantra, pranayama, chakra...) and Western occultism (occult symbols, the doctrine of correspondences, the spiritual hierarchies, astrosophy...).

Matthew Clark

The use of ayahuasca analogues in ancient Vedic and Zoroastrian rituals

In my book, *The Tawny One: Soma, Haoma and Ayahuasca* (Muswell Hill Press, 2017), I suggest that the ancient ritual drink, known as soma in the Vedas, and as haoma in the Zoroastrian tradition, was most probably made from a variety of plants that produced an effect similar to that of ayahuasca. I have gone some way in identifying some of the plants that may have been used. I argue against soma/haoma being either Syrian rue, ephedra or fly-agaric, the three botanical candidates that currently enjoy some scholarly endorsement. It seems possible that sustained use of ayahuasca analogues may have led to the development of yoga practices to attain altered states without the use of plants.

Nicholas Collins

Albion's Return:

The Blakean Visions of Allen Ginsberg and Kenneth Patchen

The poetic mysticism of William Blake is well known, with its universalist religious themes, championing of imagination, and anti-industrialist romantic humanism. Blake was further a significant influence on the American beat poetry movement of the mid-twentieth century. The poet Allen Ginsberg has confessed that, as a youth, he experienced visions of Blake, with the deceased poet reading some of his works to the young Ginsberg. These visions would inspire his

own poetic career, modeled after Blake's figure of the poet as prophet and mystic. Kenneth Patchen, an elder of the beats by several years, though often grouped together with them, had also taken Blake as his model, completing his masterpiece – *The Journal of Albion Moonlight* – in 1941, during the global turmoil of WWII. Patchen was a lifelong ardent pacifist and suffered from a debilitating back injury in 1937 that would plague him throughout his life, so his perspective was that of an onlooker. The work is a firsthand spiritual account in response to the war and its meaning for humanity, nominally presented in the form of a journal depicting a small group's treacherous voyage to meet a savoir figure. Patchen is represented through the figure of Albion, an allusion to Blake's universal man. In Patchen's work, visionary experience is embodied and evoked in the poetry and prose itself. He aims at "creating a separate "reality" in which the transcendental implications of historical reality are clearly seen." These two Blake-inspired visions – one an impetus toward the poetic vocation, the other a concrete rendering through poetic language- hint at a resurgence of the kind of subjectivity and imagination-centric religious universalism exemplified by Blake in wartime and postwar America. They also demonstrate the role of poetic, symbolic language to act as a medium for both the expression and production of visionary states of experience.

Clara Contreras Ameduri

"Voice on Voice, Power on Power":

Trance Poets and the Paradox of Female Authorship in American Spiritualist Literature

In 1860, the celebrated medium and advocate of women's rights Lizzie Doten made the following declaration in the spiritualist periodical *Banner of Light*: "Woman does not need to cultivate her intellect in order to perceive spiritual truths. Let her live, only, true to her Divine nature and her spiritual perceptions" (qtd. in Braude 85). Such a statement summarizes the main reason behind the essential function of female leadership in American Spiritualism. Due to the associations between the passive and sensitive feminine ideal and women's supposedly innate moral and spiritual superiority, spiritualist culture granted its female followers a central role in the emerging movement while remaining compliant with the values of the period. Spiritualist women found a considerable amount of advantages in this ambivalent source of power. Occupations such as mediumship and trance speaking offered them the opportunity to take active participation in the male-dominated spheres of religion and politics. "Trance poets" Lizzie Doten and Acsha W. Sprague constituted valuable examples of prolific women writers who claimed to employ their mediumship to invoke the creative energies of deceased authors through automatic writing.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the paradoxical function of spiritualist culture as an empowering tool for women writers and mediums in nineteenth-century American culture. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider the reasons behind the success of "ghostwritten" poems dictated by the spirits of male predecessors. Taking into account the concept of the anxiety of authorship proposed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, it is plausible to observe how Doten's *Poems from the Inner Life* (1863) and Sprague's *The Poet and Other Poems* (1865) present a sharp contrast between the remarkable influence exerted by these women and the need to validate their creative process by external agents.

Allegra Baggio Corradi
Visions of Hell:
The Life of the Imagination after Death in Niccolò Leonico Tomeo

This paper explores the visual life of the imagination after the death of the body as conceived by the humanist philosopher Niccolò Leonico Tomeo (1456-1531). The focus will be on the idea that hell is not a geographical reality, but an altered state of consciousness caused by the detachment of the soul from the material seat it occupied during its life on earth, and immediately following corporeal death. As a necessary consequence of the severing of the soul from the body, continuous projections of infernal images and frenzied apparitions persecute the pneumatic vehicle attempting to free itself from the earthly fetters hampering with the attainment of its deification.

Pushing Ficino's and Porphyry's notion of an interiorised hell to its extreme, Tomeo outlines a highly original "pneumophantasmology", that is, a medico-philosophical theory of vision with physiological, cosmological and soteriological implications. Vastly described in its sublunary and supralunary manifestations in his *Dialogues*, Tomeo's theory of the imagination contracts the divine presence pervading the cosmos within the luminous pneuma of human consciousness. In so doing, he accrues the Janus-like nature of his philosophy, turning simultaneously to metaphysics and natural science to explain the central role of the imagination in its tension towards theosis.

In order to investigate the development of Tomeo's multidimensional approach, the paper will consider passages from Tomeo's commentary on Aristotle's *On Sleep and Sleeplessness*, his translation of Galen's *Letter to the Epileptic Child* and his transformation of ideas drawn from Ficino's *On Paul's Rapture* in his dialogue *Trophonius or On Divination*.

Ultimately, the paper aims at reassessing Tomeo's much underrated role in the development of early modern Western esotericism.

Allison P. Coudert
The Power of Positive Thinking:
From "New Thought" to "Alternative Facts"

Visions of an eternal life in a celestial setting free from pain and suffering have been a mainstay of religious teaching and meditation. Magical practices brought these visions down to earth by promising to provide humans with tools to actualize their longings. But it was only in the nineteenth and early twentieth century that certain strands of science, especially in the fields of psychology and parapsychology, came together with religious currents to convince a growing number of people—among whom were Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James—that they could use their visionary and imaginative powers to create and experience alternate worlds. As god created the universe through pure thought, so, to a lesser degree, could humans, created in god's image. This conviction has become so commonplace in contemporary self-help literature that we forget its origin in the New Thought movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. This talk investigates the techniques of visualization and the creative use of imagination employed by adherents of New Thought to alter their consciousness and re-envision negative thoughts and experiences as positive steps to improve their personal power and well-being. New Thought attracted individuals from all classes and ethnicities. Marcus Garvey and Father Divine created black versions of New Thought, which, in Father Divine's case, integrated Whites and African

Americans. In 1952 Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* sold more copies in the US than any nonfiction book except the Bible. Most people are not aware that Donald Trump's family attended Norman Vincent Peale's Church in New York City or realize how Trump's speech patterns and thinking reflect New Thought practices.

Tommy Cowan

Archontic States of Consciousness in 20th Century Neuroshamanism

William Burroughs, one of the founding fathers of neuroshamanism, thought "intent" was integral to the creation of the fabric of reality, and this philosophically allows for the personification existential pain, thus providing ground for conceiving of an 'archontic' universe. ("Archon" is a term from the Gnosticisms of Late Antiquity referring to a planetary intelligence imprisoning humanity in matter, blocking it from transcendent godhood.) The archontic cosmology of Burroughs was highly influential to New Age religions, including Terence McKenna's '2012 mythology' and the 'Starseed' movement, both still active ideological presences in New Age beliefs; however, this paper argues that philosophical precepts themselves were not the sole factor responsible for Burroughs' cosmology: he gives reports of powerful entities encountered within altered states of consciousness achieved through his methodologically innovative practices utilizing neurological understandings of the brain. For example, in 1961 Burroughs had a DMT vision of "souls" being torn apart in the "Iron Claws of chess masters." The corpus of John Lilly, another methodologically innovative pioneer of altered states experience, also contains encounters with the archontic universe. Lilly, via ketamine, encountered entities called "Coincidence Control," responsible for order and chaos in the universe. These experiences are not isolated: Graham St. John's "bestiarum" of DMT-entities includes "archons." The phenomenon of 'archontic gnosis' as a phenomenological category influencing New Age "negative epistemology" is deserving of further investigation in order to most accurately determine the textual meanings of Burroughs' and Lilly's works, as well as reveal how altered states experiences influence the production of texts. This paper therefore intends to use philological comparisons of William Burroughs, John Lilly, and Joseph Marti, in order to develop a taxonomy of archontic experience within 20th century esotericism, and refine the understanding of its influence on neuroshamanism.

Susannah Crockford

"It's All Something We Made Up":

Communication with Channelled Entities in the Goddess Game

At the end of a four day neo-shamanic retreat, participants played the Goddess Game. Playing the game resulted in the selection of one out of thirteen goddess archetypes. Participants then channelled their goddess archetype, with a "game master" acting as interlocutor. When I played the Goddess Game as part of my participant observation research in Sedona, Arizona, I did not expect to be able to channel my goddess archetype, Shining Woman. The fact that I did was surprising. This paper begins with an ethnographic thick description of the Goddess Game: how it was played, who were the players, what was the social context of the game. The specific communications with channelled entities are then provided. I focus on my own seemingly anomalous ability to channel, defying my own expectations and predictions, as a case study of consciousness in channelling. I will attempt a number of provisional explanations for this

anomalous event, using theoretical insights from the anthropology of spirit possession, psychological studies of suggestion and hypnosis, and cognitive studies of sensory experiences of non-human agents. Explanations are provided not to “explain away” the anomalous phenomenon, but to provide an entree into a discussion of consciousness. In particular, whether consciousness can be altered without anticipating or believing it will be, and in the absence of any external stimulus such as psychoactive substances or sensory deprivation. Or, to put it in more simple terms, did I make something up without thinking that that was what I was doing?

Carole M. Cusack
Everyday Enlightenment?
Physical Labour, Food and Drink as Teaching Methods

From his emergence as an esoteric spiritual teacher in St Petersburg and Moscow in 1912 G. I. Gurdjieff (c. 1866-1949) insisted that an individual could do nothing to advance spiritually. What was needed was a group with an initiated teacher; “A man can only attain knowledge with the help of those who possess it ... One must learn from him who knows” (Ouspensky 2001 [1949], 39-40). To this end Gurdjieff twice founded the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (in 1919 in Tiflis [Tbilisi] and in 1922 in Paris), a communal domicile in which the Work could be pursued. Unlike his chief early pupil P. D. Ouspensky, whose exposition of the Fourth Way was cerebral, Gurdjieff’s methods were embodied. Music and the sacred dances (Movements), food preparation and alcoholic drinks (the ‘Toasts to the Idiots’) and manual labour were integral to life at the Prieuré des Basses Loges in Fontainebleau-Avon. Gurdjieff made pupils rethink their everyday habits (so literary man A. R. Orage, a heavy smoker, was not allowed tobacco and made to dig ditches, and Jungian psychologist Maurice Nicoll was banned from reading). His pupils’ memoirs testify to both the energy and creativity of the community. This paper addresses the cultivation of self-remembering in ordinary life, offering insights into Gurdjieff’s ideas about nutrition and healing, eating and bathing, making art and growing vegetables, as part of the ‘conscious labour’ and ‘intentional suffering’ necessary to grow a keshjan body, the Work term for a soul or element that would survive the death of the physical body.

Giuliano D’Amico
Shamanism, magic and altered states in Håkan Sandell’s poetry

The contemporary Swedish poet Håkan Sandell (1962) is the major representative of Scandinavian retrogardism, a literary and artistic current that opposes modernist and postmodernist aesthetics and proposes a return to pre-modernist forms and themes, and a reuse of practices of oral poetry.

In my paper I will focus on the complex system of references to Shamanism, magic and Western esoteric currents that characterize Sandell’s poetry, and how these lead him to reflect upon poetry as a means of reaching altered states of consciousness. As early as in 1995, when Sandell wrote his poetical manifesto *Om retrogardism* (On retrogardism), he advocated for a rhythmic poetry that would foster “that creative privilege which rhythm always bears within: those metrical forms linked to pulse and breathing that can put aside the everyday experience of the poet and give access to sources that are still waiting for us” (Sandell, 1995, 45). From that point on, Sandell developed a kind of neoclassical poetry that, with a clear identification between the

poet and the shaman, put an emphasis on a regular number of rhythmic pulses. These pulses often turn his poems into litanies, capable—at least in theory—of bringing the listener and the poet into other states of mind. Drawing upon this auditive aspect, Sandell’s “shamanic” poetry is often charged by references to Western esoteric currents and especially to poetry as a form of magic, capable of changing reality through the poetic word. Sandell develops this idea in poems such as “The Evil One”, where he wonders whether his poetry has ended up by conjuring evil forces, and especially in “To A Child Two Weeks Overdue”, which was written with the explicit intent of helping an unborn baby to come into the world.

Antonio Dall’Igna
Intellectual Vision and Altered States in Giordano Bruno

The mystical elements of the work of Giordano Bruno refer to the concept of divine vision, which entails an altered state of human being. In his maximum and culminating moment, the divine man (the “*eroico furioso*”) reaches a new status, a superior knowledge and a conscious existence renewed by the contact with the divine. Truth, which enables a frenzied state in man, can be considered as the highest point of the intersection between the line of the intellect and the line of the will, the two faculties of the human soul involved in the mystical inner deed. Bruno states the difference between a *furore* marked by an unconscious submission to the divinity and a *furore* placed under the accomplished control of the intellect. The best kind of *furore*, which identifies the conscious and divine man, allows human being to see and touch the divine cause, to accomplish a self-knowing process and to rule the earth by means of the control over nature. The capacity to govern the eternal changing of all things (the *vicissitudine*) permits to trace a link between the *eroico furioso* (the divine man) and the magician (“*magus significat hominem sapientem cum virtute agendi*”). The actual and effective contact with the superior region, and the conscious realization of an altered state, give the possibility to cast bondings, i.e. to rule other beings for the purpose of domination, which concerns both the domain of human beings (i.e. politics) and the natural environment. The aim of this paper is to present the thought of Giordano Bruno concerning superior vision and mystical altered states, and their connections with natural magic and political action.

Erik Davis
The Wizard of High Weirdness:
Robert Anton Wilson’s Psychedelic Theurgy

During the occult revival of the 1970s, the Discordian spokesman and anarcho-libertarian Robert Anton Wilson (1932-2007) devised a novel strain of esotericism in America. Across novels and nonfiction, Wilson laid out an approach to occult work that was skeptical and pragmatic, humorous and hedonic, anarchist and, in a literary sense, weird. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate the three major influences on his new vision of esotericism, and in so doing introduce what I term “psychedelic theurgy.” As I will explain, his encounter with psychedelics – and specifically the openended approach to “meta-programming” described by Timothy Leary and John Lilly—was the initial source of inspiration. His thinking took a decidedly more “magickal” turn after his friend, the Beat impresario Alan Watts, turned him on to Aleister Crowley, the second major influence over Wilson’s occultism. Wilson’s admittedly slanted interpretation of Crowley’s “skeptical theurgy” subsequently inspired generations of chaos magicians,

transhumanists, and psychedelic libertarians. Equally important to Wilson's esoteric worldview, however, were the pulp fictions and literary hoaxes of H.P. Lovecraft. Though rarely acknowledged as such, Wilson recognized Lovecraft's potential for occult appropriation around the same time as Anton LaVey, Michael Aquino, and Kenneth Grant. But Wilson did not shroud his model of magickal theory and practice in eldritch jargon. Instead, in *Cosmic Trigger* (1977) and other works, he presented it autobiographically, in terms of his own disturbing descent into paranoid pathology and the travails of high weirdness.

April D. DeConick
Sociology of Gnosis

While this paper owes a debt to the study of the sociology of knowledge which exposes the social location of groups and their constructions of everyday knowledge and reality, this paper is not about ordinary knowledge. My project is about how gnosis, the direct knowledge of a transcendent God, becomes the foundation of a new form of spirituality in antiquity that impacted traditional religious communities and fostered new religious movements. The dynamics of the gnostic experience with its revelation of a transcendent God who is personally immanent spurred on the emergence of gnostic spirituality in antiquity and the rise of new religious movements based on this revelation. This gnostic experience is associated with the social and religious dislocation of the founders and collaborators of new Gnostic movements, religious seekership, and the revelatory milieu in which these people find themselves. They come to rely on revelatory authority to legitimate their flip-and-reveal and do-it-yourself constructions of new knowledge and the countercultures that arise in terms of constructions of the counter-self, calls for counterconduct, the establishment of counter-cult, and the deployment of counter-media. While this paper is about antiquity, these same processes are active throughout history because they rely on the interaction of group dynamics, embodied human experience, and our fascination with altering human states of consciousness through rituals and pharmacology. When it comes to gnostic religiosity in modernity, however, another factor is in play, a factor which I call artifact migration. Because gnostic texts from antiquity have migrated into modernity, they are like Trojan horses which transport gnostic spirituality into new cultural locations so that what was once esoteric is now occultured and reconfigured to fit modern tastes and religious etiquette.

Korshi Dosoo
Anubis at the Table:
The Construction of Encounters with the Divine in Roman Egypt

Dating largely from the third and fourth centuries of our era, the Greek and Demotic magical papyri represent our earliest evidence for the long tradition of ceremonial magic, yet two hundred years after their discovery many basic problems about the context of their creation and use remain to be answered. This paper will situate itself within ongoing debates about their status – either as literary exercises for mystically-inclined intellectuals or as practical handbooks of “ritual power” which can be illuminated by reference to modern (para-)psychology or cross-cultural comparanda. Focusing on a group of instructions for bowl-divination rituals – practices in which practitioners summon deities to appear within the liquid held in bowls in order to ask questions of varying import – I will use accounts of similar rituals

from Elizabethan England and 19th-century Egypt in an attempt to reconcile these conflicting views of the ancient papyri. I will argue that the features identified by proponents of the literary view may often represent a conceptual scaffolding within which ritual processes, interactions, and even failures, can be integrated into a culturally meaningful whole, and that without this blurring of the line between the literary and the experiential psychologising explanations can be, at best, partial.

Lindsey Drury
A Cosmic Dance of Miraculous Forgery:
The St Vitus dance, imagination, and the sidereal body

When Paracelsus wrote of the St Vitus dance in *De Causis Morborum Invisibilium* (1531), he proposed that the dancers ceaseless dancing disease was a trick – an act of divinely-enforced penance and saintly intercession – of which the actors eventually became themselves convinced. Paracelsus thought a performer of the St Vitus dance could be knowingly deceitful, but through her deep imaginative experience and convincing theatricalization of a ‘dancing mania,’ the disease actually manifested. In other words, an imagined disease could become a real one. As part of Paracelsus’s larger work on ‘invisible diseases,’ his writing on the St Vitus dance linked the forgery of miracles with emergence of disease through imaginative enactment. Building upon these ideas, Paracelsus gave the only analysis of dance to grace the pages of his works. If considered in relation to Paracelsus’s wider corpus, his work on St Vitus dance critiques and pathologizes the altered state on its way toward proposing a fundamentally alternative status of human embodiment. With terms like ‘der gestirnt leib,’ ‘inner himmels,’ and ‘das Astrum des Menschen,’ and in writings on syphilis, pregnancy, and plague, Paracelsus argued that human imagination had its own astral schema of influence that extended to and infected the bodies of others. The depth of non-metaphorical seriousness that Paracelsus ascribed to the idea of the human body as microcosm for the macrocosmic universe is eloquently exposed through his notion of the material influence of imagination, through which a microcosmic version of astral influence could be body-based, and enacted through intra-body forces generated in human thought and emotion. In that way, Paracelsus re-conceived the trope of cosmic dance from antiquity, reinventing it within a vision of human bodies whose power over the bodies of others is – like that of the stars – partially (yet inexorably) derived of motion.

Madeline Duntley
Ascensionist “Transmissionaries”:
The Spiritual Encounter and Entity Revelations of Esoteric Cascadia

“Ascensionists” are an American, West Coast (Cascadia) offshoot of Theosophy who actively receive “vibrational entity-communication” and “encounter-narrative” revelations. The publication of an Ascended-Master channeled book called *A Dweller on Two Planets* (1905) and the encounter-narrative *Unveiled Mysteries* (1934) proclaimed California’s Mount Shasta to be a cosmic sacred mountain: a “spiritual frequency” receiver and acoustical transmitter of spiritual vibrational communication. Dozens of religious movements and internet mystery schools are traceable to this region’s Ascensionist tradition which uses Edgar Cayce, Rosicrucianism, the Christic-Theosophical spiritual lineages of Rudolf Steiner, Alice Bailey, and Geoffrey Hodson in conjunction with the intellectual spectrum of optics, sound, color-science, (Plato, Vitruvius,

Boethius, Galileo, Mersenne, Newton, Boyle Goethe, Hooke, Palmer, Young, Helmholtz, and Edison) and esoteric music theory. Ascensionists trust in “continual revelation.” Revelation takes form as channeled texts, direct optic encounters, and auditory and mental transmissions from Ascended Masters, nature spirits, Lemurians, and intergalactic entities from Venus and the Pleiades. Spiritual devotion typically centers around cosmic sound-color-music vibrational waves and frequencies (The Seven Rays; Violet Consuming Flame; Music of the Spheres) and in producing textual transmissions emitted from a pantheon of Ascended Master and Intergalactic Entities. Ascensionists teach esoteric Angelology, and seek deva-centered nature-spirits. Their reincarnational philosophy is progressive-evolutionist. They experience successive lifetimes of “lessons” which refines their recoverable soul-identity until it “ascends” to an otherworldly dimension. They utter decrees, follow spiritual diets, use crystal vibrations, practice hydropony, chromopathy, spiritual cymatics. Nature spirits and Ascended Masters reach out to Ascensionists at key transition moments in earthly history in order to help humans avert disaster (including our current ecological crisis). Such revelations are given only to those Ascensionists who are spiritually advanced enough to perceive these communications. These revelations are used by Ascensionists to guide humankind in its quantum leap paradigm shift from the Piscean to the Aquarian Age.

Michiel van Elk
The Power of Suggestibility:
Experimental Research on Extraordinary Experiences

Why is it that so many people across different times and cultures report extraordinary experiences? Some people vividly hear the voice of God, or can feel the Holy Spirit rush through their body; others report life-changing encounters with spiritual entities, out-of-body experiences, or the continued presence of a guardian angel. According to the Interactive Religious Experience Model (IREM; van Leeuwen & van Elk, 2018), people have a motivated tendency to actively seek situations that trigger these experiences. Extraordinary experiences enable believers to transform general religious beliefs (such as *God exists*) to personal religious beliefs that directly refer to the agent holding the belief or to her peripersonal time and space (such as *God appeared to me last night*). The IREM is substantiated by recent experimental research, indicating that experiences of the supernatural require a certain proclivity (i.e., ‘set’) and the right context (i.e., ‘setting’). The Tellegen absorption scale seems to capture this proclivity. Absorption is characterized by an experiential mindset that enhances inner and outer sensory experience, both in ways that reflect prior expectation and express novel sensory engagement. It seems to enable that which must be imagined feel more real. A highly suggestive context that triggers specific expectations and that reduces the bottom-up sensory input further facilitates the emergence of extraordinary experiences. For instance, across several studies we used a placebo ‘God-helmet’, allegedly capable of inducing mystical-like experiences through brain stimulation. This expectancy manipulation in combination with an environment that was sensory deprived, induced a variety of extraordinary experiences – and even more so among high-absorption participants. Extraordinary experiences thus offer a promising example, for examining how individual differences in proclivity for absorption, interact with expectation and context to shape fundamental processes of perception and human experience.

Marwa Elshakry
Seancing the Self and the Communal Conscious:
Science and Spiritism in Early 20th Century Egypt

The paper will focus largely on a series of essays published in *Majallat al-Azhar* by Muhammad Farid Wajdi and Tantawi Jawhari. It will also consider other (sometimes anonymous) authors writing in allied or competing journals on the “new sciences” of human consciousness, metaphysics and parapsychology from the 1910s to the 1940s. Detailing new theories of consciousness, novel notions of the unconscious and classical and contemporary ideas of interbeing, it will consider the wide array of sources they drew upon, from classical Muslim theorists of the self as simultaneously a "macrocosm" and a "microcosm" and contemporary European Theosophists to the works and research of Sigmund Freud and Jagadish Chandra Bose. As I will try to show, interlacing these references allowed them to reconsider not only the nature of human and other forms of consciousness, but also ideas of individual being when set against the tide of communal forms of knowing, thinking and feeling. As I will argue further, this also allowed them to offer an alternative paradigm that was essential to their implicit critique of the liberal, colonial order then dominant in Egypt as well as of contemporary visions of individualism that they hoped to counter. A brief discussion of Jawhari's seance society in Egypt and their spiritual communion with the deceased Native American "Silver Birch" will also be included.

Mariano Errichiello
Ilm-e-Khshnoom:
Unlocking the Occult knowledge of Zoroastrianism

Ilm-e-Khshnoom is an occult Zoroastrian movement that was started among the Parsis in India by Behramshah Shroff in 1907. After being initiated into Zoroastrian Occultism while living with a hidden Zoroastrian community in Iran, Shroff eventually acquired deep knowledge of his religion together with specific abilities such as telepathy and divination, among others. 30 years after this experience, Shroff began to preach an esoteric interpretation of the Avesta, the religion's sacred text, and the Zoroastrian rituals, starting the Khshnoomist movement, which is still popular in Mumbai and Gujarat nowadays. Highly impacted by the presence of the Theosophical Society in India at the end of the 19th century, Khshnoomist practitioners adopt a revivalist approach towards the Zoroastrian liturgy, emphasising the importance of a conscious and disciplined practice.

By engaging with primary sources in English and Gujarati, this paper will: explore the Khshnoomist interpretation of the *navjote* ritual, which is the initiation ceremony into Zoroastrianism; highlight the *Mithra-Manthra-Yasna* principles introduced by Ilm-e-Khshnoom, critical to favour eventual mystical experiences during the performance of Zoroastrian rituals; build a theoretical framework about the impact of ritual performance on the practitioner, according to the correspondence between macrocosm (universe) and microcosm (human body) introduced by Ilm-e-Khshnoom.

Patrick Everitt
Magick, Strange Drugs, and Draughts of Wizard Wine:
Examining Aleister Crowley's ceremonial use of peyote
to produce spiritual vision, ecstasy, and insight

In 1898, Aleister Crowley began searching for the 'Elixir Vitæ of the physical Alchemists', which transforms the base metal (i.e. 'normal perception' of life) to silver (i.e. 'poetic conception' of life). During a trip to Mexico in 1900, Crowley discovered peyote, the mescaline-containing psychedelic 'divine cactus'. Like many of the classical psychedelics, peyote has been used for millenia as a psychoactive sacrament in native tribal ceremonies of healing and religious worship, and has also been traditionally used to attain visionary contact with guiding spirits. Crowley, who once wrote that 'ceremonial intoxication constitutes the supreme ritual of all religions', went on to use peyote in several magical operations which he considered central to his occult career and developed a highly personalized entheogenic ritual practice combining traditional tribal, eastern meditative, and western hermetic techniques of arousing ecstasy. This presentation will examine the mystical practices Crowley combined with peyote to produce the alterations of consciousness he felt gave access to a secret source of energy responsible for creative genius, with particular emphasis upon the visionary experiences recorded in *The Vision and the Voice*, and the magical operations known as the *Abuldiz Working* and the *Amalantrah Working*. It will explore his personal ceremonial blending of tradition and innovation, and compare the reports of his experiences with classical phenomenological accounts of psychedelic experiences and the recent findings of scientific studies into the effects of psychedelic substances.

Kahn Faassen
Lifting the Veil:
Weird Fiction and Ecstatic Encounters

Belief in mysticism and the occult was anything but a marginal phenomenon in late 19th and early 20th century England, and accordingly often found its way into the speculative literature of the time. Examples such as Arthur Conan Doyle's belief in spiritualism, H.G. Wells's conjectures surrounding the fourth dimension, or W.B. Yeats's involvement in the theosophical movement and in hermeticism, are well known – less so are the explorations of altered states of consciousness and the limits of the knowable that can be found in the oeuvre of early Weird fiction writers Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood. Like the authors previously mentioned, Machen and Blackwood developed their deeply mystical belief systems in a cultural context marked by the upheaval caused by the numerous scientific discoveries made at the time, discoveries which firmly ruled out the existence of forces external to the material world. As was the case for many of their contemporaries, the resulting crisis of faith made them turn to the occult (both of them, for example, joining the Order of the Golden Dawn), which hugely impacted their work. While many of their stories use occultist frameworks in reactionary ways – their contempt for reductionist science often approaching anti-intellectualism – their literary attempts at reenchanted the world sometimes have odd and rather less consolatory side-effects. Rather than revealing the underlying divine order of existence, sometimes piercing the veil that closes off the spirit world bordering on reality may mean an encounter with the radically alien, and consequently an estrangement effect may bleed back into our world in ways

unforeseen and unwelcome. The tension between the recuperative ambitions of the Weird in staging the expansion of consciousness and its more recalcitrant offshoots will be the focus of this paper.

Per Faxneld

Faeries, occultism, and artistic visionary states of consciousness

The presentation will deal with how the so-called crisis of authorship in early modernism became intertwined with occultist discourses on fairies, as well as older notions concerning these entities. An author like William Butler Yeats could thus strike a bridge between such artistic preoccupations, occultism and fairy lore. The fairy of British Folklore was a trope already long-since entangled with questions of altered states of consciousness and artistic inspiration—and could therefore potentially serve as a prototype of gifts of creativity from preternatural intelligences in occultist and modernist circles. I will show how theosophical interpretations of fairies, for example by Annie Besant, linked them to artistic vision and visionary states, an idea with deep roots in British culture. This genealogy will be traced via artists and authors such as William Blake and Robert Louis Stevenson, who claimed they had texts dictated to them by fairies. In conjunction with this, I will also consider artists working in the genre of fairy painting (which coalesced in the 1850s) who claimed some sort of direct communication with fairies as part of their creative process. This leads up to the modernists' preoccupation with intentionally splintering the authorial self and ascribing artistic innovation to external entities. William Butler Yeats will function as the most detailed case study, with particular attention being paid to the role fairies played for him in this context - and to how Yeats drew on the triple sources of modernism, occultism and folklore in relation to visionary states of consciousness.

Tom Fischer

Notre-Dame de Paris :

A place of visions and revelations for alchemists

When not working in their laboratory, alchemists sometimes found answers to their questions in dreams and in visions. Already in the IVth century A.D., Zosimos of Panopolis, one of the oldest alchemists known today, offered to posterity his famous (but misleadingly called) Visions. However, what will interest us most precisely here will be the few texts linking Notre-Dame de Paris with the revealing of alchemical secrets, essentially written in the first half of the XVIIth century, and in particular the Discours des visions sur l'oeuvre (anonymous, written between 1612-1627) and the Explication très-curieuse des Enigmes & Figures hyéroglyphiques [...] (of Esprit Gobineau de Montluisant, maybe composed between 1640 and 1658).

Testimonies of the XVth century already showed that alchemists used to gather at the famous Parisian cathedral, but a gap seems to be crossed with the pre-mentioned texts : Notre-Dame de Paris becomes the ideal place to get visions and illuminations regarding the opus majus, thanks to prayers and supplications. The aim of this paper will be to present this theme, inextricably linked with the alchemical interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, and at the basis of the alchemical readings of architecture and sculpture.

Malin Fitger

**The concept of subtle anatomy in western esotericism
and its influence on contemporary yoga and meditation:
Examples of experiences and theoretical approaches**

The notion that man besides his physical body also possesses a subtle anatomy is central to western esotericism as well as to contemporary New Age-spirituality, alternative medicine and modern yoga. Concepts related to a subtle anatomy can historically be found in religious traditions worldwide. However, the contemporary "western" subtle anatomy has a relatively standardized structure, typically linked to seven chakras or subtle energy centers in the human body. This model was to a large extent developed one century ago by the Theosophical Society and the influential works of the English orientalist John Woodroffe. The paper will center on the experiential dimension of contemporary yoga and meditation practices in Sweden. Records of personal experiences in qualitative and quantitative data from an ongoing dissertation project will be discussed. The informants' cognitive schemas for the subtle anatomy and their use of terminology will be analysed in connection to its background in eastern concepts and western esotericism. Theories regarding the role of pre-cognitive as well as cognitive frameworks in religious experiences will be examined and approached from 1) a historical, 2) a cognitive, 3) a phenomenological and 4) an embodiment-perspective. How can contemporary conceptions of the subtle anatomy be understood in the light of its historical western reception, that is how eastern terminology was popularized, interpreted and appropriated by significant key figures in the late 19th and early 20th-century western esotericism? Is it possible to find an interdisciplinary terminology for the study of spiritual experiences and altered states of consciousness so that researchers will be better equipped to compare data and theories from a broader field of disciplines? Further, the questions of which function the concept of the subtle anatomy occupies in the secular West and how we can analyze it in relation to personal meaning-making and psychological health will be highlighted.

Michelle Foot

Psychical Engagements with Scotland's Romantic Landscape in the Nineteenth Century

Central to Modern Spiritualism, a widespread movement in the nineteenth century, was the belief that the spirits of the dead continued to be in contact with the living. Reports from séance gatherings regularly claimed that the spirits of the past had visited the sitters. Historical personalities were often evoked, such as Mary Queen of Scots, during a time when Scotland's past was romanticised. In the early nineteenth century Sir Walter Scott's novels augmented a romantic vision of Scotland which continued beyond the fin de siècle, providing Scotland with a lasting reputation for deep historic associations and powerful, sublime landscapes. This paper proposes to investigate how Modern Spiritualism appropriated the romantic vision of Scotland to present a deeply spiritual landscape which Spiritualist discourse asserted as being especially conducive to spirit visitation, mediumistic development and psychical engagements.

This paper will look at two key points of such a discourse. Firstly and briefly, the importance of tradition as Scotland being the home to second sight and therefore an optimum place for the natural development of clairvoyant mediumship. Secondly, the significance of place as a site of spirit visitation and visions, such as at historic locations, in a similar concept to that of 'hauntings'. In order to examine this concept more closely, the work of two painting mediums

will be examined. Both Jane Stewart Smith and David Duguid drew on these ideas in their work after claiming to experience psychological phenomena when visiting historic locations, such as Edinburgh's old town or the romanticised rural landscape complete with a ruined castle.

Peter J. Forshaw
Meditation and Alchemy in the Works of Gérard Dorn (c.1530-1584)

In his *Clavis totius philosophiae chymisticae* (Key of the whole Chymistical Philosophy, 1567), Gérard Dorn (c.1530-1584), editor and commentator of Paracelsus and an early protagonist of mystically and theosophically-oriented alchemy, ranges from the construction of alchemical furnaces to a speculative philosophy that leads to union with God. While many followers of the revolutionary iatrochemist Paracelsus advocate the use of spagyric medicines for the treatment of diseases of the body, spirit and soul, Dorn has his own idiosyncratic slant, writing, for example, of the utility of such medication for perfecting the body, so that it suffers no discomforts and causes no distractions while the mind is involved in divine meditation. In this paper I shall explore this theme of meditation developed by Dorn in several works (*Philosophia meditativa*, *Philosophia speculativa*, *De artificio supernaturali*), where he compares various processes of laboratory alchemy (putrefaction, dissolution, and so forth) to levels of meditation, and where he argues that the highest level of consciousness, the *Mens* (Mind) is accessible by very few, only acquired through a rare '*Conjunctio Metaphysica*' of the spirit and soul.

Andrea Franchetto
The physical concreteness of visionary experiences in the Greek Magical Papyri

The Greek Magical Papyri (PGM) offers a broad spectrum of accounts of visionary states and altered states of consciousness interconnected with ritual-technical procedures. Most of the ritual operations in the PGM are employed to receive visions and divine epiphanies, either in dreams or awake, in which intermediary beings play a significant role. In this paper, the attention will focus on the physical concreteness of such visions. More specifically, the paper addresses the evidence that the practitioners have physical contacts with intermediary beings and gods who perform human bodily functions. This evidence introduces methodological and theoretical questions. How can this be approached historically? What are the interconnections between the theological frameworks of Greek-Egyptian religion, magical techniques and the specificities of these accounts? Starting from the research conducted by Kim Knott and Veikko Anttonen, who introduced the category of the body in religious studies, the validity of the body as an interpretative category will be tested and implemented to evaluate its application to historical case studies. In order to do so, it is crucial to historically investigate the awareness of the idea of the body in late antiquity in order to reframe it for the specific case study. Secondly, I will analyze the philosophical/theological context in which intermediary beings are sensorial entities in order to interpret how both elements interrelate with visionary states. Thirdly, the analysis will take into account how the materiality of PGM's rituals shapes these kinds of altered experiences. In conclusion, it will be possible to analyze what are the cultural-historical specificities of these visions and at the same time what are the "patterns of continuities" with other case studies in Western Esotericism.

Aaron French
Conceptual Parallels in Theosophy and Transhumanism

In *The Singularity Is Near* (2005), pioneering transhumanist Raymond Kurzweil described the end goal of a six-epoch evolutionary cosmogony, claiming that “once non-biological intelligence gets a foothold in the human brain ... the machine intelligence in our brains will grow exponentially... Ultimately, the entire universe will become saturated with our intelligence. This is the destiny of the universe.” A hundred years earlier, Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, rolled out her own evolutionary cosmogony in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), in which the “spiritual nature” of human beings, along with the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, as well as the chemical elements, are all developed through a complex cyclic progression of seven planetary stages, linked together via “rounds” and “chains,” culminating in the spiritualization of all matter in the universe. At a glance, it may seem these two conceptual models, separated by years of history, have little to do with one another. Yet as I argue in this presentation, the contemporary ideas of transhumanists share the logics of turn-of-the-century theosophists and theosophically informed esoteric groups, albeit in a reductive, materialistic, and technologically deterministic mode. Both intellectual expressions are anchored in a historical context awash in new forms of technology and scientific advancement and therefore share in the utopic hopes and apocalyptic nightmares about the transformation of human bodies and human consciousness. To highlight these similarities, I use two case studies: the Temple of the People in Halcyon, California, and the prognostications of Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophical Society. As will be shown, these case studies point to a link between the logics of esotericism and transhumanism—the one religious, the other scientific—and the application of evolutionary principles to the developing stages of human consciousnesses and the world.

Aaron French
Max Weber and Monte Verità:
Experiments with Alternate States

This presentation explores Max Weber’s time at Monte Verità, his motives for going there, and apparent benefits he received from his stay. I suggest that one key benefit was an alternate state of being and shift in consciousness, which Weber used to ameliorate certain physical and mental health problems. Monte Verità was home to an intentional community of nonconforming artists and writers in the beginning of the 20th century. The site served as a preeminent countercultural space for experiments in consciousness, different states of being, and new cultural practices. It was a crucial node in the network of esotericism, which included Theosophists, OTO founders, and Rudolf Steiner’s eurythmy dancers. The qualities of spiritual vitality, resistance to social restrictions, mental wellbeing, and natural living were baked into communities and gatherings calling Monte Verità home. The abundance of cultural creations (homegrown and appropriated) permeating Monte Verità stimulated a desire to connect, organize, and restructure social life. Weber pejoratively referred to this generative environment as “Warenhaus der Weltanschauungen,” or a “department store of worldviews.” However, he engaged many of these new impulses with the support of his own experience, visiting the “Mountain of Truth” on multiple occasions. Following severe illness, Weber frequented natural-healing clinics and took up a vegetarian diet, recognizing the association of asceticism, vegetarianism, and sexual abstinence for spiritual development. At Monte Verità, he discovered this sacred diet not within

cold monastic walls but among nature nudists engaging in free love. He adopted nude sunbathing, and as Joachim Radkau points out in his comprehensive biography on Weber, “The mark that such movements left on Max Weber is clearly visible.” Monte Verità’s “esoteric” lifestyle choices, suited for the modern department store, offered alternate states of consciousness and being for bourgeois Europeans who, like Weber, were suffering the reality of industrialization, capitalism, and scientific materialism.

Corinna Gannon
The Hand Bell of Emperor Rudolf II:
A Magical Object to Summon Angels and Demons in Prague Castle?!

The “alchemical hand bell” of Emperor Rudolf II, today in the collection of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna, made generations of (art) historians speculate about its possible application. From the 1607/11 inventory and a letter by the artist, the goldsmith Hans de Bull, we know that it was made out of the seven arch-metals. Also, it is decorated with allegories of the corresponding seven planets, signs of the zodiac, planetary symbols and a variety of supposedly undecipherable symbols. Until now, one has considered it a “Kunstkammer”-object representing the emperor’s eclectic interests and as a symbol of his pansophic aspirations. However, the bell is far more than a Mannerist manifestation of Rudolf’s sometimes derided occupation with the arts and sciences. In fact, it is part of a long tradition of objects, particularly bells, which were created out of an amalgamation of the seven planetary metals as described by a variety of books on magic. Such bells were used for the conjuration of spirits – angels and demons alike. Malicious contemporary tongues criticizing the emperor’s neglect of his political duties assumed that he had been engaging with the devil which led to his asserted mental aberration. The revised interpretation of the hand bell, though, will shed new light on the experience with the supernatural in Prague Castle.

Yang Gao
The ἄνοδος of *Corpus Hermeticum*

Since the beginning of 20th century, researches on the *Corpus Hermeticum* usually adopted a mode of “horizontal reading” which asserted a conflict of monistic-dualistic thinking within the texts. However, this approach cannot really do justice to the doctrines of *Corpus Hermeticum*, neither does it make the influence of the *Hermetica* more comprehensible. Nevertheless, in light of the researches done by Garth Fowden and Wouter Hanegraff, we could try to read these *logos* by a mode of “vertical reading”, which regard them as conforming to a certain hierarchy. Under such a working hypothesis, this article attempts to show that the Greek *Hermetica* as we see it may be regarded as having an ordered arrangement which implies an “ascending teaching” (ἄνοδος) when we read through the whole text in a linear way. The mystical teaching and vision in the thirteenth treatise may be seen as the culmination of gnosis insofar as it is reached by gradually studying the 12 treatises which explicate the teaching of Poimandres step by step, thus preparing students for the final revelation. This may help us to understand more clearly the possible way in which *Corpus Hermeticum* was edited and read. Moreover, utilizing this mode of reading, the traditional monistic-dualistic conflict may be dissolved, and the whole text would appear to have an intelligible structural characteristic.

Pia van Gelder
Odylic Scintillations, Sensitives and Instrumental Women

The German chemist, Baron Karl Ludwig von Reichenbach's 'od' attempted to explain the imponderables and vital force with a unifying theory for all energetic phenomena including heat, electricity, magnetism, chemical reactions, light, sound, vitalism and animal magnetism. In 1844 Maria Nowotny was the first person recorded to have sensitivities to od. While being treated for headaches, fits and hypersensitivity to light, she revealed a peculiar ability to see in total darkness. As though in twilight, she could distinguish the colours in her surroundings and when presented with a magnet, she reported colourful flames protruding from its poles. As Nowotny's health regained her sensitivities were lost, motivating Reichenbach to search for additional subjects who shared these abilities. Reichenbach's first reports on od detailed the sensations of what he called "sensitives" who were predominantly "sedentary" females (Reichenbach, 1850). While Reichenbach discusses animal magnetism, his position differed from a mesmerist's in that he did not seek to cure sensitives but rather to study their abilities. Neither do his studies present the sender receiver roles informed by telegraphy in psychical research. Instead, as in the occult sciences, the extra-sensory perception of sensitives aided in his scientific observation of the energetic material world resembling images from contemporaneous scientific experiments with electric discharge. For this paper the role of these sensitives are brought to the forefront, studying their agential role and how it is informed by contemporaneous understandings of neurology, vitalism, magnetism and gender.

Uriel Gellman
Speaking to the Dead in Hasidism

Among the ritualistic innovations of the Hasidic movement were many that dealt with death and afterlife. Such rituals included: rites of passage, mass pilgrimages to holy tombs, prayers and rituals performed in cemeteries, and commemorative festivals. The Hasidic preoccupation with these beliefs and rituals led, over the past two centuries, to important changes in the attitude towards these subjects across many Jewish communities around the world.

In my paper I will focus on a variety of Hasidic texts that present techniques for conversing with the souls of the dead, especially with the souls of departed masters (*tsaddikim*) and the altered states of consciousness that accompany them. The techniques described involved complex Kabbalistic meditations (*yihudim*) and a systematic merging of the various parts of one's own soul with those of the departed saint. In the altered states induced by these techniques the individual experiences the revelation of divine mysteries and converses directly with the dead, an exchange that might subsequently be recounted to others.

Such texts, like the Chabad *Tractate of Prostrating at the Graves of Tsaddikim* (1813), influenced the formation and social structures of Hasidic groups and even shaped forms of leadership, as in the case of the last Chabad leader Menahem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994) who would pay frequent visits to his predecessor's grave, and attributed his own authority to that of his late father-in-law.

I will argue that these techniques, which appear in various Hasidic homiletic works starting in the late 18th century, actually originated among pre-Hasidic mystics (especially the 16th century Lurianic kabbalists) but were developed and expanded by Hasidic masters. I will show how Hasidic ideas of communicating with the dead were sometimes employed to legitimize

forms of leadership or to provide a mystical setting around which the identity of a specific Hasidic group might solidify.

Christian Giudice
“The Struggle of the Magicians”:
Gurdjieff’s Sacred Dances and Higher States of Consciousness

During his purported travels in the East, in his Meetings with Remarkable Men (1963), George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866-1949) informs readers of his liaison with an alleged Sufi tariqa: the Sarmoung Brotherhood. According to the author, the Brotherhood was centuries old, and transmitted teachings, which could be traced back to Babylon and Ancient Sumer. The existence of such Brotherhood has been doubted by many scholars of Gurdjieff and of Sufism; suffice to say it provided Gurdjieff the opportunity to introduce the concept of sacred esoteric dances as a legitimate and ancient way of teaching esoteric truths. Throughout his life, Gurdjieff always held the dance movements he had allegedly learned among the Sarmoung as one of the most effective forms of esoteric realization. This paper analyses the ways which Gurdjieff considered these sacred movements to be indispensable tools in man’s realisation and his awakening from the permanent state of sleep, which plagues ordinary consciousness. After comparing Gurdjieff’s movements to those of the ‘Tourneur’ Dervishes, highlighting the undeniable debt Gurdjieff’s sacred dances owe to more popular Sufic manifestations, the presentation will focus on a specific ballet, The Struggle of the Magicians, which Gurdjieff wrote in 1914 for the benefit of P.D. Ouspensky (1878-1947) and his very first pupils in St. Petersburg. Through the use of choreographies allegedly reproducing those learned during his stay with the Sarmoung Brotherhood, Gurdjieff sought to elevate the consciousness of the dancers and spark curiosity among the spectators of the ballet, rendering his Fourth Way teachings embodied for newcomers to his system of occult thought.

Samuel Glauber-Zimra
Hasidism, Psychical Research, and the Occult:
The Case of Hillel Zeitlin

Much has been written about the Warsaw journalist, mystic, and religious writer Hillel Zeitlin, who in numerous Hebrew and Yiddish writings published during the interwar period articulated a vision of Jewish spiritual and physical revival in the spirit of the early Hasidic movement. Less attention has been devoted, however, to the place of occultism in his worldview.

Zeitlin enjoyed visionary experiences, at times of a prophetic nature, for much of his life; these were extensively documented in a dream-journal which, aside from a small selection published in 1919, was lost in the destruction of the Holocaust. Seeking to understand his visions and altered states of consciousness, Zeitlin turned not only to the Hasidic texts of his Jewish faith but also to the writings of non-Jewish occultists such as Justinus Kerner, Carl du Prel, and Bô Yin Râ. Zeitlin’s exploration of his inner life and the occult was not a private endeavor—his widely-read publications interweaved the teachings of Hasidism together with the tenets of the New Thought movement, the theosophical speculations of the Zohar together with Indian metaphysics, while his Warsaw home served as a meeting place for Kabbalists, theosophists, and spiritualists. Towards the end of his life, Zeitlin believed his visionary model of Judaism to have found its fullest expression in the writings of Shmuel Tzvi Cohen, an obscure Latvian rabbi

whose Hebrew treatise on prophecy, derived largely from the works of German occultists and psychical researchers, was published posthumously in Jerusalem in 1935. By exploring Hillel Zeitlin and the intellectual underpinnings of his inner world, this paper seeks to tell the hitherto-untold story of Eastern European Jewish engagement with occultism and Western esotericism.

Joscelyn Godwin
Beyond the Cosmic Ladder, According to Julius Evola and Paul Brunton

Julius Evola and Paul Brunton, both born in 1898, had early experiences that caused them to gravitate to esosophical circles, respectively in Rome and London. Neither remained there long, and in their autobiographical writings they explain why. Yet both aspired to synthesize the esoteric currents of East and West into a path of self-realization suited to their times. To their admirers, this was the necessary reaction to a esophy which had failed to give practical instructions, and lost itself in cosmological and occultist fantasies.

Evola's early "Theory and Phenomenology of the Absolute Individual" describes extraordinary states of consciousness, both historical and contemporary, and relates them to mysticism, occultism, and yoga. Philosophy for him was a path to a transcendent goal, not only of contemplation but of action. The concept of the Absolute Individual holds the key to all his subsequent activity, including the Gruppo di Ur which he co-founded in 1927 and its practice of "Magic as Science of the Self."

Brunton, after visiting India in 1930, described a spiritual method based on meditation and the philosophic life. Its goal is a state of consciousness free from the ego but maintaining the individuality, resulting not in retreat from the world but in inspired action. Like Evola, Brunton distinguishes this state from those of the mystic and occultist, and describes "long" and "short" paths to its accomplishment. His clear language and terminology, applied retrospectively to Evola's youthful efforts, help one to understand the latter. But the very different courses of their lives and actions, especially their attitudes towards World War II, raise questions about the consequences of such realization.

Andrea Gondos
Mirrors of the Self:
The Monstrous and the Divine in Maria Szepes's *The Red Lion*

Altered states of consciousness form a central pivot in Maria Szepes's occult novel, *The Red Lion*. Born Maria Scherbach to Jewish theatre actors in Budapest, Szepes's life, like her novel, presents a colorful synthesis of esoteric doctrines. The concept of a monotheistic God is nearly absent in her novel. Instead she emphasizes the unlimited potential of the human being whose release from suffering and the constant cycles of reincarnation is assured by the acquisition of salvific gnosis. Rather than locating the attainment of occult wisdom in one particular school or religious tradition, she preferred to define it as an universal philosophy comprised of an amalgam of teachings culled from ancient (Zoroastrianism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah) and more modern representations (Rosicrucian, Masonic) of a primeval secret principle that underlies all aspects of being.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff has already noted that especially in the *Hermetic Corpus* the transmission of esoteric knowledge or gnosis frequently occurs in an ecstatic or altered state of consciousness

likened to sleep (2008, p. 143). In Szepes's novel two main characters a male and a female receive gnosis by undergoing ecstatic experiences in which they encounter a mirror of the self in the form of a divinity and a monster respectively. In my paper I will focus on analyzing these narratives with reference to Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the "mirror stage" in human development in order to show that occult and mystical phenomena constitute a valid psychological language in future academic scholarship of esoteric texts and phenomena.

Emma Graveson
Enacting Cruelty:
Audience Reception as Collective Transformation

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) in his collection of essays, *The Theatre And Its Double*, published in 1938, calls for a reconceptualization of theatre as a reflection of Life, or the great underlying reality, against mundane everyday life, which is the subject of traditional theatre. He attempts to do this through a 'magical' non-linguistic language, which includes all elements of the *mise en scène*, as well as vocal utterances that are used beyond their dictionary meanings. This nonlinguistic language is magical insofar as it is inherently connected to reality, and thus can effect actual change as performative rather than descriptive. This magical language is used in the Theatre of Cruelty to bring the spectators into an altered state of consciousness, in which they are confronted with Life, which is the purpose of true theatre.

Artaud's disruptive intention of magical language in performance aligns more closely with ritual than theatre on Richard Schechner's efficacy-entertainment dyad, as expounded most recently in his 2013 book *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd edition. Every performance falls on the efficacy-entertainment continuum, but when the primary purpose of the performance is to effect change, it is labeled ritual, while when that purpose is to entertain, it is labeled theatre. In the Theatre of Cruelty as ritual performance the role of the performer is not representative, but transformative, a process through which the self-other distinction of actor-character disappears. The audience too is transformed. The performance is a mirror through which the spectators view Life, and through this reflection the spectators become the Double of the performance. No point is left vacant in the performance space, and the ritual becomes all encompassing, as performers and spectators alike collectively surpass their conscious selves, and the societal norms that form them.

Sarah Green
The visionary experiences of John Pordage

John Pordage (1607-1681), Anglican priest and Christian mystic, expounded a Behmenist inspired cosmological system developed through direct mystical experience and profound visions. His systematic metaphysical cartography and ascent pathways he established through the *mundi ideales* is strikingly beautiful and attracted a circle of followers to gather around him. Esoteric trends such as Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, pansophy, universalism, astrology, millenarianism and spiritual alchemy are all evident within his work, seemingly directly inspired by his theological visions.

Pordage's visionary experience enabled him to make connections between the nature and the heavens and facilitated direct communication with the angelical world. His alchemical writings are highly spiritual, with emphasis on theosophical transmutation. These visions came at a price

and he was ousted from his affluent Church living for espousing the secret knowledge that these visions afforded him.

Despite the influence that Pordage had on the development of English theosophy in the seventeenth century, and the circulation that his writings received, the majority of his works were not published in English. In the field of Western Esotericism, a gap exists in our understanding of the part Pordage played in the development of Esotericism, partly due to the inaccessibility of his works but also due to the esoteric content and complexity of his ideas.

This paper seeks to: (1) Illustrate the importance of visionary experience to Pordage and the development of his cosmological system. (2) Present the revealed and secret knowledge imparted to Pordage on the metaphysical realms and the beings that inhabit these. (3) Places Pordage amongst contemporaries who were active figures in religious radicalism and dissenting activities during the early seventeenth century and amongst whom a visionary culture was commonplace. (4) Examine the divisive reaction that his visions caused. (5) Highlight the psychological impact that the visions had and the consequences for his career trajectory.

J. Christian Greer
“Don’t Forget New Age Rhymes with Sewage”:
The Lunatic Fringe of 1980s Esotericism

Psychedelic culture in the 1980s was led by a vanguard of chaos-worshipping, anarcho-occultists that styled itself the “lunatic fringe.” Throughout the decade, this subterranean avant-garde waged an on-going battle against the entrepreneurial prophets of the New Age. The Discordian Society was foremost among the chaos denominations, but there were dozens of others, such as the Association of Ontological Anarchism led by Hakim Bey, Rev. Crowbar’s ShiMo underground, the Church of the SubGenius, and a constellation of rival British chaos magicians. Much could be said of these fellowships, some of which had hundreds of members; yet, this paper will focus on the counter-demonstrations they staged against the “Aquarian fascists,” “holistic hustlers,” and “awareness entrepreneurs” that popularized New Age philosophies among the upper-middle classes of America and Britain. The lunatic fringe mocked the doctrines of Shirley MacLaine, for example, as “gnostic fascism,” and parodied such monumental New Age events as the Harmonic Convergence with their own farcical pageants. With the focus of the conference in mind, this paper examines the battle over the true nature of expanded consciousness, which erupted between militant psychedelicists and the commercially successful proponents of New Age religion. At the heart of this conflict was chaos, an emblem for gnosis that both sides claimed as their own. Broken into three parts, this paper opens by profiling some of the more humorous japes which these militants perpetrated against New Age masters, then analyzes the omission of these counter-demonstrations in scholarly literature on esotericism, and concludes with a tentative historiographic thesis concerning what I call the “yuppification of esotericism.”

Fredrik Gregorius
Witch blood and myth of the European Pagan Mind:
Concepts of Race in Early Wiccan Literature

The following paper will investigate how ideas of racial consciousness were expressed in the early forms of Wicca and the function these ideas played for the development of the religion and why these ideas later seem to have become extinct. A primary focus will be on the role concepts

of race played in the early works of Doreen Valiente and Gerald Gardner. While there have been several studies on the role ethnic identity and notions of racial consciousness played for different Germanic Folkish movements, that could be both Esoteric and Pagan, less emphasis has been placed on how racial ideas were expressed in the British milieu and how these ideas were both related to and different from their German counterparts. Focusing here on a movement that was developed after the Second World War it seeks to address how racialism were expressed in Britain. While less pronounced than in Germany, these ideas also had political consequences like engagement with far-right movements, for example Doreen Valientes short involvement with the National Front, while at the same time developing a religion that would become primarily associated with progressive and anti-racist ideals. Because of the development of Wicca, the paper also will address why these ideas became less integrated in the development of Wicca than in comparable Germanic esoteric movements.

Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir
Divine Madness:
Reality and Consciousness in Günter Brus's *Zerreiβprobe*

Reality and consciousness are key concepts in Viennese Actionism, an often-overlooked avant-garde movement in Austria that was active in the 1960s and 70s. The Actionists claim to be dealing directly with reality since they work with “real” objects and materials, which include the body. In their taboo breaking performance art the body becomes a medium through which the artist seeks to alter the consciousness of both himself and the audiences and thereby bring about a new, utopian reality.

These notions are evident in the Actionists Günter Brus performance *Zerreiβprobe* (Breaking Test, 1970). Through the erratic movements of Brus's body, the performance brings to mind both the image of the mentally ill and esoteric states as his frenzied behavior can be understood as a show of religious ecstasy or a shamanic trance. Through sadomasochist self-harm Brus aims to transcend his reality and achieve an altered state of consciousness.

The performance will be analyzed in light of the socio-cultural context of post-war Austria. Brus wants to escape the official reality of the hegemonic Austrian state, an exalted image that the Actionists seek to shatter. For them this is a fictitious reality, at the centre of which the victim myth stands (declaring Austria as the first victim of Nazism).

Brus's action contains various discourses within, among them psychoanalysis, esotericism, dissidence, gender and fascism. These discourses shape the different dimensions of reality and consciousness reflected in his work. The analysis will examine the discursive aspects of these themes and the complicated relationships between them, as well as the role they play in Brus's artistic project.

Júlia Gyimesi
Altered States of Consciousness in the Light of Hungarian Metapsychical Research

The aim of the paper is to outline the various interpretations of altered states of consciousness and visions in Hungarian metapsychical research. The Hungarian Metapsychical Scientific Society was founded in 1932 for the purpose of investigating spiritualistic phenomena, altered states of consciousness, animal magnetism, visions and other debatable phenomena in a rational, scientific framework. Further objectives of the Society were to conduct experiments

and publish theoretical studies, to collect data in the field, to publish journals and books on metapsychical research and to establish a library. Although the latter goals were only partially reached, some Hungarian metapsychical researchers (such as János Toronyi, Vilmos Tordai, Elemér Chengery Pap, Jenő Hillebrand) won remarkable fame in and beyond Hungary. Furthermore, the works of metapsychical researchers influenced several representatives of early psychology and medicine, such as Pál Ranschburg, Sándor Ferenczi or Károly Décsi. In Hungary it was metapsychical research that primarily represented early parapsychology. Although metapsychical researchers shared many different, and often debatable methodological and theoretical viewpoints, in general, they considered the framework of metapsychical research eligible to conduct controlled scientific experiments on mediumism, altered states of consciousness and other controversial phenomena. However, the emergence of early parapsychology and psychical research was hindered in Hungary for several reasons. On the one hand, the strong tradition of Hungarian evangelistic spiritism established by Adolf Grünhut and Adelmá Vay narrowed the scope of scientific research. On the other hand, the political events in Hungary in the 20th century set the development of parapsychological investigations back. Under such circumstances, the efforts of some prominent representatives of metapsychical research.

Olav Hammer
Altered States of Consciousness and Charismatic Authority:
The Case of Judith von Halle

Charismatic authority based on claims of having attained extraordinary states of consciousness is an unstable and contested social status. Anthroposophy has as a central tenet the suggestion presented by its founder, Rudolf Steiner, that a disciplined regimen of spiritual exercises will ultimately lead the adept to such mental states as clairvoyance (in Anthroposophic parlance, 'reading the akashic records'). In practice, however, Steiner is treated as the only person to have achieved such an exalted state. Judith von Halle (b. 1972), a member of the Anthroposophical Society and author of numerous books, has challenged this status quo and presents herself as an individual with outstanding spiritual gifts. Autobiographic accounts tell of recurrent episodes of altered consciousness since childhood, visions of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection, of receiving stigmata, and of being physically transformed to a state where she no longer can eat or drink. This paper examines the claim to higher knowledge made by von Halle, and focuses on how she interprets her own states in concepts indebted to Steiner's work, and adds to and innovates on anthroposophical themes based on her claim to authority.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff
Gnosis after Babel:
Direct Noetic Experience in the Hermetica

There is much confusion among scholars about the meaning(s) and scholarly applicability of the term "gnosis." Inspired by George Steiner's classic *After Babel*, I will approach the topic from a focus on the general problematics of translation, translatability, interpretation, and communication. At the heart of our problems with terms such as "gnosis" lies the basic translator's dilemma: should one always stay as close as possible to the original terms regardless of what these have come to mean for us (and what meanings they may have lost) in our own

common discourse, or should one seek to interpret their meaning for modern readers in terminology that makes sense to us, even if this leads us to depart considerably from the original terminology and textual formulations? In the case of the *Hermetica*, central attention must be given in this regard to the relation between *gnosis* and *nous*, as both have been understood as referring to cognitive processes that provide supreme salvational “knowledge” by means of direct unmediated experience. In these cases, the general problem of translation goes even deeper than usual: in addition to the problem of intercultural translation from one language to another, we are faced with the paradoxical requirement of translation across the threshold of language itself. I will be arguing that the nature and meaning of *gnosis* and *nous*, and their function in the *Hermetica*, is best understood in terms of subtle or more radical alterations of consciousness induced by meditational and ritual practices.

Yuval Harari

Ritual Practices of Dream Divination in Zacuto's Book of Secrets

Moses Zacuto, the renowned and most influential Italian Rabbi (1610-1697), was a curious, learned, creative and highly productive person, who contributed to various genres of Jewish writing. Zacuto was engaged in halakhic discourses, composed homilies, poems, plays, dirges, riddles and liturgical *piyutim* and was highly dedicated to the study and dissemination of Kabbalistic knowledge, both theoretical and practical. Two of his compilations in practical Kabbalah stand out. One is his encyclopedic book on divine names *Sefer Shorshei ha-Shemot* (Book of the roots of the [divine] names), which has become a substantial and highly popular source of knowledge regarding divine names, their origin and meaning, and their potential implementations. The other is Zacuto's unexplored autograph, manuscript Moscow, Guenzburg 1448, a compilation of spells and recipes called *Sefer ha-Sodot* (Book of Secrets). Like many others before and after him also Zacuto amassed in his book magic recipes of all kinds. Many of them, however, are instructions for "dream inquiry" (*she'elat halom*), a divinatory practice whose roots go back to late antiquity. Dream inquiry is a ritual technique for gaining an answer in a dream to a question posed before going to sleep. It is the major strand among Jewish practices of dream divination, which also include options such as summoning a ghost or a demon to one's dream or seeing a certain vision, a legitimate means of Do-It-Yourself prophecy. My paper will focus on the practice of dream inquiry and on its place in Zacuto's *Book of Secret*.

Manon Hedenborg-White

The Beast in the Wilderness:

The Erotic Destruction of Individual Consciousness in Aleister Crowley's Crossing of the Abyss

In 1909, Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) undertook one of his life's most important initiatory ordeals, aided by his disciple and lover Victor B. Neuburg. As part of his exploration of the Enochian Aethyrs, recorded in *The Vision and the Voice*, Crowley endeavoured to cross the so-called Abyss, a desolate void separating the manifest from the numinous. In order to cross and be reborn as a Master of the Temple, Crowley believed, one must utterly annihilate one's ego, relinquishing consciousness of oneself as an autonomous “I” and confronting the demonic entity Choronzon, representing the struggle of the ego to remain intact. Central to the experience, in Crowley's view, is the goddess Babalon, representing the magical formula of passionate union

with all of existence. Crowley described the Abyss ordeal as an initiatory death, wherein one drains one's blood into Babalon's cup, also likening the experience to the loss of self in erotic union with a lover. Babalon thus represents the goal of the ego sacrifice, but also the enlightened attitude of eroticised openness, constructed as a feminine propensity, that the seeker must emulate. Importantly, Crowley's successful crossing of the Abyss appears – in his own mind – to have been enabled by an act of anal intercourse between Crowley and Neuburg, in which Crowley took the receptive role. Crowley later described the initiated viewpoint of the reborn Master of the Temple as feminine, constructing the transformation from Adept to Master as a gendered reorientation of consciousness. Applying the concept of “erotic destruction” developed by the sociologist Catherine Waldby, this paper will suggest historical influences for Crowley's feminisation of the mystically reborn Master of the Temple, analysing his descriptions of the Abyss ordeal as a narrative of a radical, gendered restructuring of consciousness and suggesting why Crowley proposed a connection between ego annihilation and the erotic.

Georgiana Hedesan
Visions and Supreme Knowledge in the Writings of
Jan Baptist Van Helmont (1579-1644)

Flemish physician and alchemist Jan Baptist Van Helmont (1579-1644) is well-known for his vehement rejection of reason as an instrument of knowledge. Instead, he argued that one must strive to achieve a higher intellectual state, that of the ‘mind’ (*mens*), in order to have direct access to truth. Van Helmont believed that the mind, which is the true image of God, is hidden from the ordinary human experience, having been obscured by the Original Sin. However, the mind is still hidden within us, and can be reached through special techniques and processes. Van Helmont constructed a highly articulate but little-known philosophy that emphasised the role of what we today call alternative states of consciousness in the acquisition of true knowledge. Throughout his works, he described many instances of visions, dreams and reveries that guided him in his attempt at achieving knowledge. His visionary epistemology was particularly directed to the goals of discovering the true principles of nature, and acquiring the greatest medicines available to mankind. This presentation will show how Van Helmont justified the truth-value of visions, how he actively sought to acquire them and how they varied widely in their typology. Furthermore, it will explain how Van Helmont attempted to transpose his visions into concrete language, and how he interpreted their often ambiguous imagery to reach a clear and ‘scientific’ understanding of the natural world.

Romina Heim
Mystical Anarchism and Transformations of Consciousness in 20th-Century Russia

There is little awareness that in the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20th century, anarchist ideas not only invigorated a radical political movement, but also found particular appeal among certain religious circles. The encounter of fin-de-siècle sentiment and the desire for political liberation led to the emergence of a spiritual teaching called mystical anarchism (initiated by Apollon A. Karelin (1863–1926) and Aleksei A. Solonovich (1887–1937)), which was inspired by ancient Eastern teachings and early Christian Gnosticism, but also influenced by contemporary esoteric currents, such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy. Although from a historical perspective mystical anarchism in Russia represents a barely researched and underappreciated

chapter of Western Esotericism, the practical aspects of its doctrine are, in a broader sense, linked to the history of transpersonal psychology in Russia.

The Russian mathematician and philosopher Vasily V. Nalimov (1910–1997), both a former mystical anarchist and major representative of the Russian New Age movement, adopted and continued spiritual practices of consciousness transformation, such as were common among mystical anarchists, thus contributing to introducing transpersonal psychology in Russia. This paper compares the practices of mystical anarchism concerning the transformation of consciousness via meditation and the telling of ancient legends in a “magical” setting with Nalimov’s experiments on deep meditation under the impact of certain readings and music.

Karolina Maria Hess & Małgorzata Alicja Dulcka
Nightmares, lethargy, and wandering in the afterlife:
Visions of the mysteries of life and death in Agnieszka Pilchowa's novel *Zmora*

Agnieszka Pilchowa was a renowned healer, and believed to have uncommon clairvoyant abilities. She was born in Polish family in Czech Republic in 1888, died in 1945 in a German Nazi camp. The “Clairvoyant from Wisła” wrote many occult novels, many of which were very popular in her time. Among others, in 1932–1933 she published a book in two volumes – *Zmora: Occult Novel Based on Real Occurrences* and *The dead speak*.

Zmora can be translated as phantom or night terror in English, but it has a very specific meaning in Slavic culture that connects it with a personalized hallucination that occurs during an episode of sleep paralysis. *Zmora* is the one responsible for suffocating and other unpleasant feelings, and is traditionally believed to be a spiritual being sent by someone else, e.g. neighbor.

The plot of the book by Pilchowa focuses on a young boy, Antoni, who is constantly attacked by *zmora* which makes it impossible for him to sleep, and leads the boy to complete exhaustion. In tragic circumstances Antoni falls into lethargy and travels the afterlife accompanied by his guardian. Besides learning about the circle of multiple births and deaths, he gains knowledge about the various mysteries, like the Purgatory and Hell or what phantoms, larvae and vampires are. The guardian describes the consequences of inappropriate sexual life and other issues related to spiritual dimension of life.

One cannot but notice the similarities between the plot and the biography of Pilchowa, who suffered a two-day episode of lethargy in early youth, which she describes in the *Memoirs of a Clairvoyant* (1930). The present paper analyses motives of uncommon states of consciousness in Pilchowa’s work from the perspective of the doctrines of esoteric milieu in Cieszyn Silesia.

Christoph Hueck
Of Causes and Idols:
Aristotelian and Baconian Readings of Rudolf Steiner’s Theory of Higher Knowledge

Rudolf Steiner’s esoteric epistemology, as outlined in his book “How to know higher worlds” and other texts, has traditionally been examined in critical literature within the context of either his earlier studies on the natural scientific works on Goethe in the 1880s, in their relation to his early philosophical work in the 1990s, or in view of the theosophical concepts which he adapted in developing his anthroposophical views after 1902.

The paper at hand takes a fresh look at these texts by reading them in yet another historical context. As Steiner’s method of training the mind in clairvoyance can be understood as following

an intrinsic fourfold structure, namely the systematic training of (1) active thinking, (2) increased receptivity, (3) precise observation, and (4) exposure to inspired literature, the case is made that Steiner's theory of higher knowledge is an indirect response to the four possibilities of error or prejudices (*idols*) as described by the early modern empiricists Francis and Roger Bacon. Furthermore, as these four types of prejudice are negatively related to the Aristotelian concept of four causes, it is argued that Rudolf Steiner's method of esoteric training can be viewed as a late reflection of Aristotelian ontology.

Boaz Huss
The Great Initiate and the Royal Sensitive:
Visions, Automatic Writing and Altered States in the Cosmic Movement of
Max Theon and Mary Ware

Claire Themanlys, one of followers of the Cosmic Movement in Paris in the early 20th century, described in her book, *Un Séjour chez les Grands Initiés* her visit to the leaders of the Movement, Max Theon and his wife Mary Ware (called in the book Aia and Alma), in Algeria, in 1907. In the book, Claire describes how Alma, the royal sensitive, guided by her husband, the great initiate, traveled beyond the veil of materiality, and wrote down, automatically, what she heard and saw beyond the veil. These automatic writings were later published and studied by the followers of the Cosmic Movement. The lecture will examine the descriptions of Mary Ware's altered states of consciousness, the methods used by Theon to induce his wife's trance experiences, and the writing which were produced by them. It will also examine the meditation practices and altered states of the followers of the Cosmic Movement and in its later offshoots.

Sally-Anne Huxtable
'The Drama of the Soul':
Neoplatonism and Art as Henosis in the Work of Phoebe Anna Traquair

The perception of artistic creation as a set of spiritual, and frequently mystical, acts was at the core of numerous ideas and discourses circulating in Britain, Europe and America during the second half of the nineteenth, and the early twentieth centuries. For example, in 1885 the influential Aesthetic artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler described the process of artmaking as something akin to godlike creation, characterising it in alchemical terms: 'Through his brain, as through the last alembic, is distilled the refined essence of that thought which began with the Gods, and which they left him to carry out.'

This paper will explore the art and design of Scotland's first professional woman artist of the modern age, the Edinburgh based artist-designer Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852-1936), who today is best known for the murals she created in various public buildings in Edinburgh, but whose output was vast and which encompassed many forms of artistic media. Using examples of Traquair's work, I will examine some of the myths and themes which informed her artistic output, particularly those which inspired her ongoing preoccupation with the depiction of the journey of the human Soul, something which her friend W.B. Yeats characterised in her work as 'The Drama of the Soul'. I will use Traquair's output to explore her work as an expression of Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas regarding the process of perfecting and refining the Soul in order to achieve henosis (union with the One, or the Divine). Ultimately, this paper will contend that

Traquair regarded her artistic practice not only as a means of depicting the journey that the Soul undertakes in its striving for oneness, but as a means of achieving henosis itself.

Massimo Introvigne
The Spirits as Artists:
Three Categories of “Spirit Art”

The question of the influence of Spiritualism on modern art, which is now generally recognized, maintains a certain ambiguity. A significant number of artists were inspired by Spiritualism, but only a few produced what Spiritualists define as “spirit art.” In turn, what “spirit art” exactly is, is not obvious. We can distinguish at least three different cases: “precipitated” works of arts; portraits of spirits painted by the hands of mediums during seances; and works produced by medium-artists who claim their hands are guided by spirits. Outside these three categories are works produced by artists under the influence of Spiritualist theories. These may be relevant for art history, but are not generally considered as “spirit art” by the Spiritualists themselves.

The first case of “spirit art” is “precipitation” of works of art that appear on canvas (or on paper, or on a slate), ostensibly without the use of human hands, during a Spiritualist seance. In this case, the mediums claim that the spirits produced the paintings directly, rather than by guiding the hands of a human artist.

A second category includes spirit portraits. In the heydays of Spiritualism, it became very common for mediums to sketch portraits of spirits they claimed were present during the seances, thus creating a second category of “spirit art.” These spirit portraits emerging during seances rarely became part of mainline art. However, the practice continues to this day.

The third category of “spirit art” includes works of painting, sculpture, and architecture created, according to Spiritualists, by spirits guiding the hands of the artist. Spirits often reportedly guide the medium’s hands in the second category (spirit portraits) as well, but the difference with our third category is that in the latter, rather than portraits of the spirits themselves, different works of art are produced.

Coming back to paintings and (more rarely) sculptures, some distinguish between works of spirit art created in a trance (normally very rapidly), a semi-trance (as in the case of Sister Gertrude Morgan, whose religious references went, however, beyond Spiritualism), or in full consciousness. It is in this third category that we find artists regarded by art historians as parts of the mainline history of art, such as Georgiana Houghton or Hilma af Klint.

Paul Ivey
Revelation as Discovery:
“The Fall” and the Rise of Mary Baker Eddy

In February 1866, on her way to a temperance meeting, Mary Baker Patterson fell on the ice in Lynn, Massachusetts. Taken unconscious into a nearby home, and severely hurt, in three days she was miraculously healed of her injuries through reading biblical accounts of Jesus’ healings. Later she claimed this event was the “falling apple” that led to her “discovery” of the decisive curative power of a spiritual understanding of the scriptures. She described her healing as a powerful vision in which she glimpsed the sole reality of the allness of God as Life, Truth, and Love. She devoted the next decade to study in order to clarify her new conviction that she had

been divinely led to discover the scientific laws of God, revealing Jesus' miracles as demonstrations of the healing power of Divine Mind. In 1875 she published a complete statement of her methodology in her book *Science and Health*.

By the early 1900s, a far-flung religious movement, the Church of Christ, Scientist, consolidated her place in fulfilling Bible prophecy as the revelator to this age, the "second witness," and viewed her symbolically as the God-crowned woman in the Apocalypse, chosen to bring the promised Comforter, Divine Science, and the revelation of God as Mother as well as Father.

As she matured into a founder of a fast growing religion, Eddy, in line with others who felt chosen by God, remembered childhood experiences when she felt literally called by God, in a woman's voice that repeated her name on several occasions. Her mother instructed her to say, after the prophet Samuel, "Speak, Lord: for Thy servant heareth."

My paper will explore the visionary experiences of Eddy, the instantaneous moments of spiritual recognition and the gradual evolution of her "revelation," and the development of her spiritual autobiography.

Naomi Janowitz
The Semiotics Ideologies of Late Antique Ascent:
Arguments about Efficacy

The concept of semiotic ideologies which Webb Keane defines as "people's assumptions, either tacit or explicit, that guide how they do or do not perceive or seek out signs in the world and respond to them," offers a more robust theory of signs than is often used in the study of ascent texts (Keane, 2014, p. S314). Ascent texts, from the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice to the Hekhalot texts, include complex and often bewildering combinations of ideas about how words, symbols and material objects contribute to ritual ends. At the same time the authors and editors share basic assumptions about the efficacy of language as well as a "basic phenomenology of material things, and at least the possibility of imputing or denying intentionality and agency on the basis of or in response to that phenomenology" (Keane, 2014, p. S315). The possibility of over-valuing an object or a verbal statement (fetishism, idolatry) means that ritual experts must hone their claims about efficacy carefully. This paper will investigate 1) the implicit ideologies of signs found in a selection of ascent texts and 2) the utility of a Peircean analysis of signs to better understand the efficacy of ascent texts, including both the ritual importance of indexical icons (formal signs that also link the sign with a location) and the process of "dicentization" of signs, when a likeness is understood to also point to a physical connection, because "Dicentization contributes to definitions of rapturous human experience of a religious and artistic nature" (Ball, 2014, p. 168).

Anne Jeanson
Magnetic somnambulism :
The Baron Dupotet de Sennevoy (1796-1881)

One main feature of animal magnetism is the altering of one's state of consciousness : Franz Mesmer's cure laid in inducing a trance state, often ending in convulsions ; with Marquis de Puységur, in 1784, this "agitated" trance gave way to a strange sleep followed by a kind of somnambulism, in which the patient is able to talk, but seems different that he is in his waking state. In the 1820s, Baron Dupotet de Sennevoy, who claims to be a student of Puysegur, Deleuze

and Faria, induces somnambulism in patients, conducting experiments for the Commission of the French Medicine Academy, in charge of assessing the reality of animal magnetism. Dupotet will soon become one of the most famous magnetizers in France, until his death in 1881 ; he was later praised and quoted by late 19th century occultists as Eliphas Levi and Helena Blavatsky. During decades, Dupotet will explore somnambulism, trying to build a theoretical model for it. He claims to establish a new “magnetic relation” (rapport magnétique”); he believes animal magnetism is a vital force, emanating from the magnetizer and oriented by his will, capable of influencing matter, as for example, the patient’s body. He is deeply interested in manifestations of “magnetic ludicity”, exceptional abilities the patients are endowed with when in state of somnambulism (prediction of the future, vision with closed eyelids, “clairvoyance” ...). As he unfolds his sixty-year career, he gradually shifts from purely therapeutic mesmerism to using somnambulist state of consciousness as a tool to explore paranormal abilities. Considering it a “magical power of the soul”, he relates it to ancient witchcraft and trance-like traditions.

Eva Johach
Altered States and Schizophrenia:
R.D. Laing’s psychedelic psychiatry

In the late 1960s some psychiatrists began to find new interpretations of mental illness, mystical experiences, but also of para-psychological phenomena. In the course of the “existentialist” turn in psychiatry that lead to new forms of therapy the notions of mental illness were put into question. As a consequence, new interpretations of madness were suggested, based on the broad “variety of human experience” and a multi-layered concept of “states of consciousness”. To address these developments my talk will turn to the British psychiatrist R.D. Laing who also is a key figure in the anti-psychiatry movement. For the talk, his book *The Politics of Experience* (1967) will be crucial. What his colleagues (for example Humphrey Osmond) called his “mystical turn” and “psychedelic method” was based on a general criticism in the seemingly objectivist way of treating a patient but in fact neglecting his inner experience or even showing interest in it. For Laing, this ignorance becomes particularly apparent in the handling and treatment of schizophrenia. The schizophrenic is therefore a symptom of the incapability of Western psychiatry to deal with “inner realms” and with experiences beyond the Ego. Laing’s own interpretation leads to a different and clearly non-pathological conclusion: the schizophrenic is a person leaving for a “journey” that should be accompanied by persons who have “been there”. Like shamans in non-Western cultures, ex-patients are seen as experts in confronting themselves with Altered States of Consciousness and therefore capable of guiding and healing others. In my talk I would like to analyze Laing’s model, the metaphors of „journey“, initiation and rites de passage as well as his talking of realms of consciousness referring to the discourses of anthropology, psychedelism, and transpersonal psychology from a history of science perspective.

Daniel Joslyn
The Many Lives of Alice Bunker Stockham’s Sexual Mysticism

Alice Bunker Stockham’s Tokology’s runaway success allowed her to open a publishing house, where she published occult materials, works of fiction and literature on reforming every aspect of life. In 1896, Stockham published *Karezza*, a sex manual for married couples, in which she

repackaged the teachings of John Humphrey Noyes. Karezza taught people to seek to attain to the highest forms of divine ecstatic union through rightly-practiced sex. Stockham had significant influence in both mainstream and esoteric circles, though she has been largely forgotten. In this talk, I will offer an overview of the contemporary social reformers and scientists, who sought to practice and implement Stockham's teachings about how ecstatic sex could permanently alter people's consciousnesses and make them better people. Particularly, I will survey at her work's influence in social reform movements (liberal and radical circles) of the early twentieth century. In particular, freethinkers, socialists and individualist anarchists responded the call of Stockham's teachings. Karezza was translated almost immediately into six European languages, including three times into German and its Russian edition was introduced by none other than Leo Tolstoi, whom Stockham's works on sex reform had deeply influenced in his writing his most well-known work during his lifetime, *Kreutzer Sonata*. Those whom Stockham's work influenced also included the occultist and freethinker Ida Craddock, the influential marriage reformer E.B. Foote, renowned socialist and crusader for the rights of homosexuals, Edward Carpenter, and the individualist anarchist J. William Lloyd. It is through these followers and friends that Stockham's teachings came to significantly influence mainstream liberal and leftist understandings of the nature and practice of sex.

Damien Karbovnik
How to rationalize the esoteric?
Jacques Bergier and the "telepathy with the infinity"

Jacques Bergier is a very well known figure from the 60s and 70s french occulture. With Louis Pauwels, Bergier founded an original school of thought : the *realisme fantastique*. At the crossroads of esoteric, science and science fiction, the *realisme fantastique* starts with a book published in 1960, *Morning of magicians*, goes on from 1961 up to 1971 with a revue, *Planète*, and ends with an unfinished pentalogy. All along, the *realisme fantastique* does not develop any constant ideology or theory excepting the ancient astronaut one. But, even in this theory, Bergier and Pauwels conceived a lot of variants. But, in the typescript of the second volume of the unfinished pentalogy, wroted by Bergier but which was never published, we find a very original theory under the name of "telepathy with the infinity". Considering that a lot of esoteric theories can be confirmed by the development of sciences, Bergier try to explain this by the existence of an alien radio show which broadcast advanced knowledge through the whole universe. According to Bergier, this show is only available under specific conditions. If altered states of consciousness could be a good way, he proposed some guidelines to replace dangerous and uncertain methods by "scientific" ones.

After a short presentation of Bergier's theory, this paper will show how Bergier used a very particular form of science in order to explain almost everything in the esoteric. This will allow us to see how and under which conditions it manages to "rationalize" the esoteric and reconcile science and the esoteric. Finally, we will ask ourselves if we can see in this theory a form of disenchantment of the esoteric.

Anna van den Kerchove
Gnosis and revelation in the Hermetica

From time to time, Hermetica are compared to some of the 'Gnostic' texts because of some similar topics and ways of thinking. The same could be said for Hermetica and some philosophical texts. However, it is very difficult to classify and situate the Hermetica within the context of the second to fourth centuries CE, a time when the status of 'truth' and 'knowledge' are modified in various religious and philosophical groups or communities. We propose to investigate how the word "gnōsis" is used in the Hermetica, in relation to the lexicon of knowledge. The aim is to better understand the various kinds of knowledge and the interactions between them within different Hermetica. In this study, some 'Gnostic' texts and some Platonist texts will be taken in account, so as to compare and better situate the Hermetica in their philosophical and religious context.

Andreas Kilcher
Electro-Psychology and Phreno-Magnetism:
The Scientification of Animal Magnetism in the 19th century

Animal Magnetism, even though developed by Franz Anton Mesmer as a physical explanation of forces in organic bodies, was understood in the context of enlightenment critically as a modern version of magic more apt to religion than to science. It was taken seriously however by romantic psychology in its less empirical conceptualization of the unconscious, following Marquis de Puységurs magnétisme animal, especially by German psychologists like Carl August von Eschenmayer, Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert or Carl Gustav Carus in the first half of the 19th century. While this romantic paradigm of psychology is well known, the subsequent scholarly approach to Animal Magnetism in the second half of the 19th century is much more surprising and less known: The attempt to approach it anew in a decidedly scientific way. This rational and naturalistic interpretation of Animal Magnetism was conducted by scientists like the German chemist and industrial Karl Ludwig Reichenbach or the Scottish chemist and physician William Gregory, who around 1850 claimed to understand phenomena of Animal Magnetism like magnetic sleep or clairvoyance in light of organic chemistry, following the general aim and claim to refer all "magic" implications of magnetism back to "natural causes". In the course of this scientification, creative crossdisciplinary hybrids emerged such as "Electro-Psychology" and "Phreno-Magnetism". The paper analyzes these remarkable hybridizations and transformations of Animal Magnetism also in the broader context of the changing concepts and methods of science in the age of positivism. Thus, on a more general level of the history of knowledge, the striking example of the scientification of Animal Magnetism demonstrates the merging of esotericism and science (especially in occultism) and brings to light the larger epistemic shifts and transformations of the 19th century.

Rebecca Lesses
Visionary Religious Experience in the Hekhalot Literature

The Jewish Hekhalot literature, dated from the 4th to the 7th centuries CE (Palestine and Babylonia), has two main focuses: instructions for and descriptions of ascents (also called descents) to the Merkabah (the heavenly chariot-throne of God), and detailed instructions to

invoke high angels (e.g., Metatron) to descend to earth and obey the one who adjures them. The term hekhal originally referred to an inner chamber of the Jerusalem Temple, but in this literature the hekhalot are the heavenly temples/palaces of God and the angels closest to him. The ascent/descent is accomplished by several means, including the recital of hymns in praise of God and adjurations of angels. Adjurations of angels to descend to earth are accomplished by pronouncing the names of God and the angels. The principal goal of the ascent/descent to the Merkabah is for the human being to enter the divine throne-room and participate in the praise of God together with the angels. The goal of the invocation of angels is to gain revelatory wisdom and power over them. The Hekhalot literature as whole, therefore, defies the conventional distinction between magic and mysticism, as mystical goals can be attained through magical means. This literature, at the time of its composition, was largely esoteric in audience (limited to a small number of learned men), although there is evidence that aspects of it were more widely known (as shown by the use of passages from the Hekhalot literature in the Babylonian incantation bowl texts). This paper will discuss the visionary experiences of God and the angels in this literature and how they might be understood as “extraordinary religious experiences,” in particular addressing the question of whether and how it is possible to gain knowledge of the nature of these experiences through the examination of instructional and literary texts.

Caroline Levander

What cannot be expressed in words:

Conveying visions in altered states of consciousness through art

Visions has a long and important history in esotericism, both as a magical tool being used to visit other dimension and as a way of receiving spiritual messages. The communication of these messages has always been problematic since their very nature makes them difficult to express in words. For trained artists, though, there is a more direct opportunity, that of transmitting the visions through art. Examples will be shown of these expressions of visions in altered states by Georgiana Houghton, Hilma af Klint, Austin Osman Spare, Rosaleen Norton and Ithell Colquhoun, among other artists engaged in esoteric practices.

This paper will suggest that the artists engagement with altered states fundamentally falls into three categories: (1) Automatic drawing, where the drawing is created in a state of trance and the hand is thought to be guided by a spirit. (2) Trance painting, where the artists paints in a state of trance, and are painting what they see or receive in that state, but are themselves in control of the painting. (3) Inspired painting, where the artists get visions in an altered state which are then used to create paintings in a normal state of mind and thus not interfering at all with their artistic processing.

All three categories may be used by the same artist for different purposes and the choice of technique also means that the painting might differ more or less from their normal artistic expression, given the interference of the altered state with their more conscious technique. Through an understanding of the closeness of the painting to the vision, by looking at the technique used as well as comparing it to non-visionary paintings, we might get a glimpse of the actual vision of the artist.

Denise Lombardi
Communication with Totemic Animals During Neo-Shamanic Rituals

This paper relates the ritual practices during neo-shamanic seminars in Europe that allow the participants to establish contact with totemic animals. The attributes acquired during these sessions can be regarded as operators in the complex treatment of social ties and as a form of healing ritual. From a methodological standpoint the investigation adopts the native point of view, the European participants, rather than the shamans' point of view. It is aimed at understanding how the audience connects with different entities presented as animals belonging to the shamanic cosmology. As a result of years of intensive fieldwork with practitioners, we observe how the group learns how to approach the animal entities belonging to the upper/lower world. In order to reach the totemic animal, the participants follow the drumbeat that favours an altered state of consciousness and allows the embodiment of the entities. It is worth noting that neither the participants nor the shaman take psychotropic substances. Shamanic animals turn out to be more complex entities than those belonging to a religious system such as a divinity. They are generated both by means of the shaman's suggestion and through the intentionality of the practitioner. During the shared verbal elaboration of the experience following the shamanic journey, the participants describe the totemic animal with rich details that define a vivid kinesthetic experience, perceived and lived through both the imaginary and the senses. During the neo-shamanic sessions, participants achieve their personal objectives solely through the contact with the animal entities that do not belong to any preconceived cultural statement. This paper represents an opportunity to reflect upon the reasons that move a person to create a link with an imaginative (but real) non-human animal in order to reach his own ontological humanity.

Elizabeth Lowry
Guided by Voices:
Trance Texts, Visions of Summerland, and the Rhetorical Legacy of
Cora L.V. Richmond and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

In the 1840s, Cora L.V. Richmond, a trance lecturer entered the public sphere and became wildly popular. Later, Richmond and other female trance speakers such as Ascha Sprague gained further notoriety by allegedly transcribing lectures and sometimes even novels and poetry while apparently in a trance state. I argue that the trope of a female author who is present by virtue of her *lack* of presence proved to be as useful to women writers as it had been to trance speakers. As such, this article draws on the work of Marlene Tromp, Cathy Gutierrez, Tatiana Kontou, Claudie Masicotte and others to offer a historical context for the practice of trance-writing along with a rhetorical analysis of what I call "trance texts"—particularly in the realm of world-building. I argue that Richmond, Sprague, and other Spiritualist women such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps built their ethos as writers and spiritual authorities by providing their audiences not only with messages from the Summerland—a Spiritualist version of heaven—but also with strong visual representations of the world to which their deceased loved ones had gone. In the nineteenth-century Spiritualist imaginary, the Summerland was constructed as a mythologized version of America—a fantastical reconceptualization of a familiar landscape and a place where there was no such thing as death, violence, or illness. However, many Spiritualists had difficulty reconciling beliefs in an egalitarian afterworld with the acceptance of the racial and social

hierarchies upon which American capitalism seemed to depend.

Magdalena Luszczynska
Dreams, Visions, and Alchemical Knowledge in Michael Sendivogius's writings

The New Science that emerged in the 17th century disparaged alchemists and their art as not scientific enough. From the secretive character of the 'Royal art' practiced in private laboratories, to the esoteric language of alchemical books that abounded with riddles, allegories, and metaphors, and the reliance on inspiration, imagination, visions, and dreams in their arrival at scientific theories – the characteristics of alchemical pursuit became synonymic with charlatanry, fraud, and unreliability.

Recently, historians of science have begun to read early-modern accounts of investigations in astronomy, optics, and indeed alchemy focusing on the processes of creation of knowledge, wherein the metaphorical language and pictorial imagination are not a mere form of expression, but a record of a type of thinking that did not discriminate between art and science, between the use of emblems and geometrical diagrams. In their search for a universal language which could convey the truth about unchanging reality and go beyond ever uncertain individual observations, early-modern scientists, and alchemists in their midst, complemented laboratory experiments with 'experiments of imagination,' where a dreamy story could become a stage for developing and trying out scientific hypotheses.

Following this line of thought, the current paper will examine alchemical texts of one of the most influential seventeenth-century alchemists Michael Sendivogius. Sendivogius's works invariably feature dramatized stories of alchemists experiencing visions. Some of these visions are sources of inspiration and insight, others – deceptive phantasmagoria. Given the consistency with which Sendivogius incorporated these narratives into his scientific works, and the urgency with which they were deciphered by his readers, we should not dismiss them as mere jests. This paper will explore the meanings of Sendivogian accounts of dreams and visions and discuss their importance for the enterprise of establishing and asserting alchemical knowledge.

John MacMurphy
Theurgy, Purification, Magic and Exorcism:
The Kabbalistic *Yichudim* Meditations

In the 16th century we see the emergence of one of the most influential kabbalistic schools known as Lurianic Kabbalah, founded by Isaac Luria (1534-1572), who during his short tenure managed to revolutionize kabbalistic thought and practice. In the Lurianic oeuvre, there are two primary classes of meditation that Chayim Vital (1542-1620), one of Luria's most prominent disciples, recounts. The first are the kavanot, or intentions, where the practitioner infuses specific activities such as prayer with contemplation of the divine realm. The second type of operations are known as the *yichudim* (unifications) meditations which, despite their prominence, not much has been written about in the academy. These practices can be quite complex, encompassing different semantic, non-semantic and even Pythagorean computations – all integrated within the efforts of the meditator. While common applications of this praxis include theurgical effects (where the practitioner affects the metaphysical structure of the cosmos) or tikkun (where the adept repairs the damage to the soul and cleanses it from karmic residue of previous reincarnation cycles), this paper explores some more unconventional usages

of this method. Evidence from the enigmatic *Pidyon Nephesh* (Redemption of the Soul) ritual of Nachman of Breslev (1772-1810), the founder of the Breslev Chasidim movement, is examined, as well as accounts of exorcism in Yehudah Fatiyah's (1859-1942) morbid *Ruchot Mesaprot* (narrating spirits) work where Fatiyah not only exorcises entities from individuals but also helps to heal said specters - elevating them spiritually in the afterlife. Finally, emphasis is placed on Vital's magical-alchemical work *Sefer ha-Peilot* (The Book of Actions), where he expounds on a unique magical operation utilizing yichudim and kavanot procedures for the purpose of protection. This text lends further support to the argument that Vital continued to engage in such activities despite his interactions with Luria.

Margherita Mantovani:
Water of Life and Biblical Hermeneutics in Paulus Riccius (d. 1541)

In 1509 the first edition of the *In cabalistarum seu allegorizantium eruditionem isagoge* appeared in Pavia. The work was intended as an introduction on Kabbalah in sixty-six aphorisms (fifty in the last edition) conceived for a Christian audience. It is generally agreed that the author, Paolo Ricci (d. 1541), was a Jewish convert who was very close to the Aristotelian tradition of the University of Padua. However, it is perhaps less known that the Isagoge contained some fundamental premises, which allowed Ricci to build his own theory of practical Kabbalah. The aim of this paper, then, is to discuss the notion of *adhaesio divinae naturae*, in light of Paolo Ricci's writings. With this purpose, the analysis will take in consideration, together with the Isagoge, other Ricci's significant works (i.e. the dialogue *In Apostolorum Symbolum*, the compendium *De investigandis statuendisque scientiarum subjectis*, and the *Responsio ad interrogationem de nomine Tetragrammaton*). Finally, the paper will devote particular attention to a number of iconographical aspects contained in the frontespiece of the editio princeps of Ricci's Latin translation of Gikatilla's *Sefer sha'are orah* (*Porta Lucis*: Augustae, 1516).

Tancredi Marrone
Alien visions in Kathmandu:
Grant Morrison on Drugs, Magic and South Asian Spirituality

The Chaos Magician and celebrated comic book author Grant Morrison's reported visionary experience of a chrome liquid shaped alien species in Kathmandu.. The report of his vision carries many resemblances to reports of psychedelic experiences within the context of diverse religious and counter cultural movements. Moreover, it became foundational for the creation of one of his widely renown comic book series *The Invisibles*, in which themes like the relativity of time and the combination of magic and psychedelics function as cornerstones.

The circumstances of his vision involved Morrison's desire to have a mystical experience by reproducing the journey of the Buddha through India, Nepal and Tibet. Secondly, the use of hashish on a rooftop prior to when the mystical experience happened has to be mentioned, which reportedly was not sufficient to induce such an effect. Thirdly, Morrison maintained interest in the counter cultural occult Chaos Magic milieu, and was influenced by the writings of Aleister Crowley.

On the basis of Grant Morrison's descriptions of his mystical visions and reports of academic literature, I will explore the degree by which this vision could be influenced by the consumption of hashish, by environmental factors combined with proficiency in mind altering meditative

techniques, or all of the three factors. The objective will be to provide insight into a mystical experience by a pursuer of eclectic and syncretic counter cultural expressions of contemporary magical practice which resulted in influential pop cultural publications.

Hedvig Martin-Ahlén
Hilma af Klint and the Visionary Experience

The occult painter Hilma af Klint has been widely acknowledged in recent years as an early abstract painter, deeply influenced by Western esotericism. In communication with "higher spirits" and by means of visions, af Klint received a mission to produce "Paintings for the Temple". But even though af Klint left behind over 26 000 pages of notebooks following this work, research on the material has been almost non-existent, resulting in a blank spot regarding how the exploration of visionary states influenced af Klint's artistry. From a study of the first 2 200 pages of af Klint's notes, this presentation will start filling the gap by outlining the ideas that appeared to the artist in altered states of consciousness. It will also elaborate, on a level of detail never undertaken before, how the contact with "higher spirits" and "higher planes" affected the artist. Hereby, some of the previously accepted "truths" in earlier studies regarding this matter will be refuted. Taking its starting point in the practice of the spiritualistic female group called "The Five", in which Hilma af Klint was a member, the presentation will show how the group, through contact with "higher spirits", formed their practice around a Christian spiritualism and the idea of initiation with gnosis as its ultimate aim. As Hilma af Klint received her mission to paint, spirit possession and channelling became central aspects, the later through which the Akasha Chronic was mediated. Thus, this presentation will give an important contribution to research on Hilma af Klint, while also exploring how altered states of consciousness could function as means for artistic freedom and self-exploration.

Jelena Martinovic
Creativity and the Occult

The origins of scientific studies on creativity have generally been depicted as a modern development – the belief that an individual's own capacity generates traits of 'genius' – which eventually evolved into mass and industrial psychological studies examining intelligence and 'creative processes'. Parallel to this, a second narrative has focused from an etiological, philosophical, psychological, or brain scientific perspective on the close relationship between creativity and insanity, or mental illness and health. This paper examines an alternative strand of the history of creativity and consciousness. It suggests, based on an analysis of selected creativity studies conducted in the 1930-60s, that these research scenarios shared a close relationship with the occult, even though they were approached within a rational and scientific setting. (This paper understands the 'occult' in its broad sense, which includes aspects of philosophy of mysticism, psychopathology of art, and ethnopharmacology). By examining neglected sources in the history of creativity and consciousness research (the work of American psychoanalyst Lawrence Kubie, 1896-1973, and American-Hungarian pharmacologist Roland Fischer, 1915-1997), the paper shows how 'occult knowledges' were exposed within their own scientific framework (psychoanalysis examines ESP; pharmacology the non-euclidian space of a near-psychotic episode). More generally, the paper aims to contextualise how and why

psychopharmacological researchers claim that psychotropic substances give a privileged access to mysticism and universal symbolism (considered to be fundamental for personal growth).

Cavan McLaughlin

Tulpamancy:

**Psychospiritual technology, "self-willed therapeutic schizophrenia"
or a "community of imaginary-friend hobbyists"?**

Tulpa is a term to first appear the volume, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1929) by Alexandra David-Néel (1868–1969) and is still regarded as a Tibetan concept by many. However, Mikles and Laycock argue that the idea of the tulpa is perhaps more indebted to Theosophy than to Tibetan Buddhism (2015). Since around 2012, a heavily active online subculture of "tulpamancers" have engaged in the creation of self-invented companion entities conjured through active imagination and 'thought-form' meditative practice. 'A tulpa is an entity created in the mind, acting independently of, and parallel to your own consciousness. They are able to think, and have their own free will, emotions, and memories. In short, a tulpa is like a sentient person living in your head, separate from you.' (tulpa.info) This apparent autonomy of the tulpa is of great importance, because the most commonly cited reason for creating a tulpa is companionship. In a study by Veissière, loneliness is overwhelmingly reported as a common factor for creating tulpas, who are described as 'most loyal' and 'perfect' kinds of companions. The majority of tulpomancers scored higher than average on shyness scales and lower than average on sociability scales; most respondents reported some degrees of social anxiety (Veissière, 2015). This paper seeks to further investigate the possible therapeutic value of tulpa "hosting" and what the entirely invented and narrative-based nature of tulpa might tell us about entity phenomena more broadly.

Fabio Mencia

The Transcendental Unity Experience in Fernando Pessoa's Poems

Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), according to his correspondence, had anomalous psychic experiences since he was young and developed a strong interest in western esotericism that he expressed in high level poetry. In 1913, for instance, he described an impressive transcendental experience, in his poem *Além Deus* (Beyond God), and many of his works are impregnated with esoteric thinking and references to reincarnation, carma, angels, masters and magic, among other subjects. According to some of the researchers who study Pessoa's esoteric poems, from around 1930 on he became more disenchanted, as if the capacity of living these experiences was abandoning him. However, some poems produced after 1933, show a considerable increase of a more mystical approach. Specifically two unfinished poems refer to the transformation that occurred in his consciousness, with a shift from the ceremonial magic path to the "way of the heart," a transformation that seems not to be uncommon throughout history, giving an interesting insight on the process he went through.

The objective of the present paper is to highlight the sense of this transmutation experience, from magic to mystic, as described by Pessoa with a vivid insight that only true art can produce, complementing the rational academic work of present day scholars.

Birgit Menzel
Cultic Milieus and ASC in late Soviet and post-Soviet New Age

The New Age as a ‘revolution of consciousness’ in Russia remains largely unknown both in Eastern and Western academia. But as material about this late Soviet period has surfaced from archives and personal recollections during the past decades, we can now begin to describe and conceptualize this phenomenon as a new religious movement in its own right, parallel to the West, yet, part of global New Age. In my paper, I will analyze some selected “cultic milieus” in late and post-Soviet Russia which specifically focus on altered states of consciousness (ASC), in order to illustrate specific features of Russian New Age. I will also present some cultural-historical contexts for ASC in Russia and, thirdly, discuss these cultic milieus in comparison with features of Western New Age: (1) Originally, New Age in Russia was not a mass-popular movement but mainly a phenomenon of the intellectual elite (the cultic milieu of Tibetan Buddhism in Leningrad); (2) The role of religion and spirituality was different in Russia from Western New Age, in that religious syncretism, including cultic milieu of Hippies); (3) Some essential features of Western New Age (universalism, ecological worry of preserving nature on the planet and visions of the future as a female) were absent in late Soviet New Age but entered in the 1990s. After the opening of borders enabled massive transfer of ideas and teachings as well as personal connections and exchange with the West, post-Soviet New Age has diverted into different directions. While a minority has adopted features of global New Age, the most influential feature has become Russian nationalism and visions of a closed society in which manipulation of consciousness (apocalyptic conspiracy theories and political occult) prevails expansion of consciousness in an open society (the cultic milieu of Neopaganism).

Laurent Mignon
Spiritism and Literature:
The Case of Enis Behi. Koryürek (1891-1949)

A surprisingly high number of Turkish writers with a quasi-canonical status have been shown interest for esotericism during the first half of the twentieth century. However, the relationship between literature and esotericism has largely been ignored in a Turkish context, despite growing scholarly interest for esotericism. Over the last years, there has been a significant rise in interest for the study of the development of Spiritism in the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. Yet little attention has been paid to one of the more eccentric figures in Spiritist circles in Republican Turkey: the poet Enis Behi. Koryürek. Originally a member of the Five Syllabists (Beş Hececiler), a group of poets advocating the use of the syllabic metre of the folk tradition and of a simple language, Koryürek published a collection of mystical poems written in the elaborate language and prosody of the classical Ottoman tradition in 1949. Koryürek, who had started attending Spiritist sessions in 1946 in the circle of Dr. Bedri Ruhselman, a central figure in the history of Spiritism in Turkey, claimed that the book entitled *Vâridât-ı Süleyman* had been revealed to him by an eighteenth-century Mevlevi shaykh, .edik.i Süleyman .elebi. The phenomenon was not ignored by literary and religious circles and led to various publications such as .mer Fevzi Mardin’s three-volume commentary of the *Vâridât* published in 1950. Not everyone was convinced by the poet’s claims. Not denying the validity of Koryürek’s own perception of the creative process, some, such as Fethi Tevetoğlu, have argued that the interpretation of the event required a psychoanalytical study of the poet. Looking at

Koryürek's own writings on his experiences and the ongoing reception of his work, this paper will aim at situating the poet's place within the history of Turkish Spiritism and esotericism.

Maximilian de Molière

Ask the Rabbi:

Altered states of mind in the correspondence of R. Moses Zacuto

A recurring theme in the correspondence of R. Moses Zacuto are altered states of mind. Due to his prominence as an authority on Kabbala in seventeenth century Italy, Zacuto was often consulted in matters that called for his advice as a kabbalistic consultant in a diverse range of situations. One need only cite the example of the letters he wrote to those of his students who were about to get married. In these letters, he advised them on how to found the sexual relationship with their wives on kabbalistic principles. Zacuto's instructions to the husband-to-be range from the correct position of the wedding bed to ritual purity. One central aspect of his advice are exercises that were designed to elevate the husband's spiritual intentions (*kavvanah*) of thinking, speaking, and acting during sexual intercourse. The underlying idea was that the physical unification of husband and wife would mirror the unification of the male and the female principles of the Godhead on a macrocosmic level, provided the right kind of altered state of mind was reached. The proposed paper will analyze cases like the one above that are centered around Zacuto's concern with altered states of minds. The goal is to demonstrate how Zacuto envisioned the practical application of Kabbala vis-à-vis the questions he was facing from his correspondents. On a fundamental level, the sources consulted by Zacuto in his letters will be identified whenever possible. One of the central questions that the letters may be able to answer is whether Zacuto was as a dogmatic a follower of kabbalistic authorities as he presents himself in his works, or whether there were situations where he preferred other traditions. This paper will shed new light onto R. Moses Zacuto while at the same time harnessing his correspondence in a systematic fashion.

Lila Moore & Marianna Ruah-Midbar

**The Emergent Contemporary Movement of Spiritual Cinema and Media:
Explorations in Mind/Body Alternations**

Since the release of films such as *What the Bleep Do We Know* and the launch of *The Spiritual Cinema Circle* (a monthly DVD subscription service that distributes spiritually-themed films) in 2004, numerous spiritually motivated films and media products have become available. Both the *Bleep* and the *Circle* are milestones representing the beginning of what could be defined as a global cultural movement of spiritual cinema and media, a phenomenon unique to the 21st century that coincides with, and is sustained by, developments in digital technologies, the Internet and social media.

A major characteristic of the contemporary landscape of spiritual film and media is the considerable amount of independent productions that engage with aspects of alternative spiritualities. These films can be divided into typical genres, i.e., documentary, fiction, etc. However, a typological analysis demonstrates sub-categories dedicated to descriptions of unique spiritual practices such as: channeling, reincarnation, visionary altered-states, alchemy, self-hypnosis, and more. Typological study of films and media on such topics exemplifies the

different viewpoints, aesthetics, and methods through which phenomena involving mind/body alternations are explored both by the filmmakers and the viewers/users.

Unlike mainstream cinema that often must appeal to traditional religious values and restricted by conservative ideologies, these independent and often low budget productions are niched towards their audiences that seek alternative modes of spirituality, e.g., contemporary Esotericism, which can be incorporated into Western lifestyle. Consequently, the spiritual teachings depicted mirror the social and cultural context of the contemporary spiritual movement. Furthermore, each sub-category presents aspects of religious/spiritual consciousness from a visual/audial/artistic viewpoint. Thus, we shall demonstrate via a review of selected films, notably new perceptions and comprehensions that may arise in the viewers, whether they are laypersons or scholars. The motivation of enlightening the public and altering minds is actually the major purpose of the spiritual films.

Elke Morlok
Wine fueled Revelry?
On the Function of Alcohol in Hasidism

This paper explores the specific function of wine and alcohol in Hasidic ritual and prayer. Based on a long tradition of wine as a central metaphor in kabbalistic literature (*Zohar*, Cordovero and Abulafia), the various Hasidic schools developed a complex “performative” understanding of alcohol and its preparatory value for achieving communion with God (*devekut*). The intrinsic connection between ritualistic behavior, alcoholic intoxication or physical exercises like dancing or singing and altered states of consciousness, shall be analyzed. What are the factors that induce an alteration of the Hasid’s mental, and sometimes also corporeal, state and how is the interplay between the various means described in Hasidic literature? In what way do these elements have to be harmonized and what are the results of such complex physio-psychological dynamics? The innovative development of earlier kabbalistic traditions with regard to alcohol and the mental, emotional and carnal alterations it induces will also be examined with regard to sociological indicators and practices as described in the relevant passages in homiletical and hagiographical texts: What are the settings for its use? Who are the participants? What is the role of women in these descriptions?

Exploring the particular contexts for the ritualistic consumption of alcohol will give us valuable insights into the diversification of the Hasidic groups: What are the differences in the way the rituals develop and are there regional variations to be found between earlier and later periods or between different schools such as Kotzk or Lubavitch? How are well-established rituals modified for the sake of inducing a mystical experience and what kinds of mental states are described in the reports? Another aspect to be examined are the reactions of other Jewish and non-Jewish observers (including other Hasidic groups) to the use of alcohol among various Hasidic groups and how these reactions effected social and political relations among them.

Elly Moseson
Fantasy, Reality and the Cultivation of Lucid Dreaming in Early Hasidism

This paper will focus on a unique technique of lucid dream cultivation practiced within the early Hasidic movement. The technique is preserved in the form of a homily on Psalms 17:14-15 and the fact that several versions of this homily circulated in the late eighteenth-century testifies to

its popularity in this period. The homily presents a worldview in which fantasy and reality merge and thoughts, both positive and negative, have real cosmic and personal consequences. Thus, forbidden sexual fantasy, viewed as copulation with the demoness Lilith, leads to an increase in her spawn and the death of one's own children. As an antidote to the pull of self-gratifying fantasy, the homily recommends employing a form of Neoplatonic contemplation that was widely taught in Hasidic circles. An encounter with a particular object of desire is to be taken as an opportunity to recognize the true nature of reality by redirecting one's attention to its *ideal* form, that is, to god as the ultimate object of all desire. While this contemplative technique is ubiquitous in early Hasidic literature, this homily is unique in that it describes its practice as eventually leading to a dream-state in which one actually experiences the reality that had previously only been imagined in contemplation. What was only fantasy in the waking state becomes reality in the dream. Furthermore, this technique bears striking similarities to both the practice of Tibetan dream yoga and the methods for inducing lucid dream states developed by modern clinical researchers. In addition to comparing the Tibetan, clinical and Hasidic techniques and the phenomenological characteristics of the respective dream-states they are meant to induce, this paper will reflect upon the general coincidence of fantasy and reality in the Hasidic worldview and the particular role played by dreams in bridging the two.

Yves Mühlematter

“Some will be ready to expand ere long into the consciousness of God”

The Purpose of Human Evolution as presented in Annie Besant's writings

Tracing Besant's ideas about human evolution in her early theosophical writings, using *The Ancient Wisdom*, 1897 as main source and the *General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament*, 1893 as starting point, it will be shown that Besant formulated her principle ideas about evolution and the purpose of evolution in these early years. Following these concepts through Besant's writings will show how she developed these ideas into a social and political initiative which was meant “for India's Uplift” (book title, 1917) and eventually for the world's uplift. It is further argued that “the uplift” is connected to an idea of influencing human evolution through means of physical and mental training and education. The main goal of human evolution as presented in Besant's writings is to “expand” one's consciousness “into the consciousness of God (Dharma, 1899).” This expansion is understood as an evolutionary process of becoming conscious on higher planes of being. These planes are understood as altered states of consciousness (*The Path of Discipleship*, 1896). Hence it is argued that the objective of Besant's social, political, and educational engagement was to train and eventually initiate people in order to expand their consciousness.

Mriganka Mukhopadhyay

Can Drugs Bring Wisdom?

Indian Theosophists' perceptions about Human Consciousness and use of Psychedelics

In the discussion about the Theosophical Society's viewpoint on human consciousness and the use of psychoactive substances, not much attention is given to the opinions and ideas of the Indian members of the Society. It is worth noting that the several Sanskrit terms related to human cognition, which came to be used in modern Western Occultism and New Age traditions, were mostly introduced by the Indian Theosophists. Therefore, in order to understand the roots

of the concepts such as Manas, Buddhi, Samadhi among others, it is important to discuss the role of the Indians in the development and promotion of such ideas. This paper will not only discuss the Indian Theosophists' ideas about human consciousness but will also investigate their viewpoint about the use of psychoactive substances. I wish to examine that did the Indian Theosophists historically contribute towards the formulation of the concept of Entheogenic Esotericism? Or did they develop a general aversion and apathy towards the use of any form of drugs? This paper wishes to assert that in the transcultural study of modern Western Esotericism and consciousness, the importance of the Indian Theosophists needs to be discussed in greater detail from a historical trajectory.

Alexandra Nagel
Chiromancy and its visionary basics

Chiromancy, or the art of reading hands, entered Europe in the second half of the twelfth century. Since then, many books have offered long lists describing a multitude of hand features and their indications. A chiromancer is supposed to recognize such features, and to give a client insight regarding his personal state of health, talents, and what in life awaits him.

However, my investigations into the German 'psychochirologist' Julius Spier (1887-1942) has brought to the fore that hand-readers, at least in Spier's time, not necessarily meticulously analyzed a pair of hands: some claimed to have inner visions or intuitions about a client. Apparently, these hand-readers were able to somehow tune in at the person whose hands they were 'reading'. The hand, then, was merely a device to get access to another level of consciousness where information would reveal itself.

This implies that some (or many?) chiromancers were visionaries, a conclusion that contradicts the hand-reading literature, in which the focus always has always been on the description/interpretation of hand features. On the other hand, this doesn't erase the 'normal' reading of hands. It is obvious, for instance, that particular characteristics of a pair of hands reveal genuine information, like whether a person suffers of rheumatoid arthritis, or has a nervous nature.

In order to get a grip on what chiromancy is about, it is important to distinguish the aspects that come into play while reading hands. These vary from simple prejudices against hand-reading to the complex way as to how a hand-reader obtains data about a client. By describing the different aspects, it will become clear that chiromancy highlights intricate connections between western esotericism and consciousness.

Rasoul Namazi
Heretic Demons and Muslim Drunks:
Esoteric Devices in Leo Strauss' Reading of the Arabian Nights

For several generations, scholars of the Arabian Nights have directed their attention mainly toward questions regarding the sources and origins of its stories, as well as the study of their strictly formal characteristics. Unlike these studies, the German-American political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973) offered a remarkable esoteric interpretation of this famous Arabic text. In recently discovered and unpublished notes, Strauss concentrates exclusively on the teachings of the stories included in the Arabian Nights, and reads the text as a coherent, carefully-crafted whole rather than as an anthology of unconnected tales. According to Strauss, in these stories

the anonymous writer depicts the effects of revealed religions on human life and consciousness, instructs readers in how to humanize their societies within the limits of the possible, and shows the way toward liberation from the power of religion. In his esoteric reading of the Arabian Nights, Strauss interprets the bewildering stories contained in this classic work as literary devices and metaphorical tropes used by the writer to convey esoteric teachings about religion and politics. Among the most important examples of these literary devices and metaphors which play the central role in the Arabian Nights and Strauss' esoteric reading of this work are wine drinking and demons. For Strauss, the Muslim characters of the Arabian Nights ignore the Islamic prohibition on wine and through liberating themselves from the chains of the Sharia learn to live as wise men who are real followers of eros in an Islamic society. In the same vein, according to Strauss, the heretic demons who are in fact the real teachers of liberation must be considered heroes and allies of freethinking men in religious societies, the beings who can be trustworthy companions in the fight against and liberation from religious dogma.

Gerold Necker
Streaming Magic:
Aspects of the Soul in Moshe Zacuto's Kabbalah

In early modern times, the immortality of the soul was an issue of paramount importance and questioned in quite a series of heated debates. Jewish controversies included in particular arguments about the eternality of punishment in hell and the kabbalistic idea of metempsychosis. Moshe Zacuto's reaction can be traced in several of his writings, including his popular plays and poems. His well-known involvement in exorcism practices also reveals an affinity to magic in this respect. In principal, however, Zacuto's attitude was based on the complex doctrine of the soul and its mediating role as fleshed out in the kabbalistic system of Isaac Luria (1534-1572). My paper will analyze to what extent elements of magic are linked to Zacuto's concept of the soul and how it was applied to the public areas of homily, ritual and learning. Of particular interest are the different modes and addresses of communication referring to oral teaching for the synagogue audience, the performance of tiqqunim ("mending") by so-called confraternities, and the study of books and manuscripts by scholars and students in class, in short, the ways of public access to theoretical and practical kabbalistic knowledge. By this means, essential aspects of Zacuto's perception of the soul will be presented in the context of historical discussions on the one hand, and as part of his engagement in procedures connoted with magic on the other.

Guido Nerger
Structures of Social Alteration:
Magic, Media, and (Mass-)Manipulation

In his work *Éros et Magie à la Renaissance. 1484* (Paris 1984) the historian Ioan Petru Culianu (1950-1991) considered magic as a science of "the imaginary, which it explores through its own methods and seeks to manipulate at will" (ibid., engl. Chicago 1987, p. xviii). For Culianu, this specific form of magic reached "its greatest degree of development" in the work of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) – especially in his writings *De magia* (1590) and *De vinculis in genere* (1591). Bruno's concept of magia is based on the operating principle of 'binding' (vincire) forces that are described as 'chains' (*vincula*) in order to take "control over the individual and the masses

based on deep knowledge of personal and collective erotic impulses” (ibid.). As an operation to alter and manipulate the human imagination, Culianu considered Bruno’s magic as “disconcertingly modern” (ibid., p. 88). Determinated by a radical resoluteness to “exploit the concept of magic to its ultimate conclusions [...] as an infallible psychological instrument for manipulating the masses as well as the individual being” (ibid.) Culianu read Bruno’s ‘binding’ forces not only as a historically distant impulse of modern psychology (and psychoanalysis) but, first and foremost, as the ground of inspiration from which applied psychosociology and masspsychology arose (ibid., p. xviii). In the social-psychological implementations of Bruno’s concept of magic Culianu recognized not only a structurally related echo of Platonic and Machiavellian state philosophies, but also undisguised connections to mass-psychologies that were established in the 19th century e.g. by Gustav Le Bon (1841-1931). As a “disconcertingly modern” science of manipulation Bruno’s magic also anticipates ‘modern’ professions like: psychoanalyst, propagandist, (secret service) agent, politician, censor, media director, advertising expert or public relations consultant (ibid.). According to this reading, magic becomes a form of public relations that Edward Bernays (1891-1995) called “the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses [...] Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of [a; GN] country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of” (idem, Propaganda, New York 1928, p. 9).

The paper shall track Culianu’s interpretation of Bruno’s magic – how are the terms “magic”, “media” and “manipulation” developed by Bruno, and how are they read by Culianu? – against the background of social developments of the early 20th century: Can Bruno’s magic be applied to ‘modern’ concepts such as public relations and propaganda, or (the other way round) can contemporary diagnostically concepts such as the “manufacturing [of] consent” (see: Herman/Chomsky 1988) be read as a complex bricolage, an adaptive deconstruction, of Bruno’s principle of ‘binding’ the imagination?

Andreas Neider

**Thought-Free Perception and Bare Awareness as a “Path to Higher Knowledge”:
Rudolf Steiner’s Conception of “Inspiration” in Relation to Buddhist Non-Thought**

Buddhist traditions frequently discuss the idea of extinguishing everyday consciousness in order to attain a state of pure, thought-free awareness. In a similar way, the Austrian philosopher and spiritualist Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who was familiar with eastern spiritual traditions, emphasized the ability of man to perceive in a thought-free way. In the context of his esoteric epistemology, particularly in two lectures from October 2nd and 3rd of 1920, he outlined the idea of a form of awareness coined as »bare« or »thought-free« perception, claiming that by proper training in such perception one could evolve towards an advanced form of cognition which he called “inspired thinking”.

Steiner’s descriptions of these altered states of mind, which he believed can be realized through certain meditative techniques, seem to closely resemble Buddhist concepts such as »bare awareness« and »non-thought«. Furthermore, both traditions claim that, by attaining such altered states through meditation, a more advanced form of consciousness can emerge. A careful examination of the various forms of Buddhist and Anthroposophical meditation hence poses the question, what both schools of thought mean exactly when they speak of »thought-free«

awareness. This paper outlines a comparative methodological approach which may answer this question and open perspectives towards a better understanding of both these traditions.

Johan Nilsson

Fill me the Cup of the Poppy Circean!

Opium Literature and the Sacralization of Intoxicants in Turn of the Century Occultism

In 1906, Aleister Crowley travelled through the southern Chinese province of Yunnan and French Indochina. Crowley's journey took him through the very area that would become known as the Golden Triangle, the world's number one source of opium during parts of the 20th century. Crowley was fascinated by the drug and his diaries show that he made attempts to experiment with it as a tool to induce spiritual experiences. Even though Opium never became an important part of Crowley spiritual practice, this paper will argue that his flirtation with opium as an entheogen suggests some broader tendencies in the ways intoxicants were understood within the occult milieu. Crowley and others who experimented with opium as a spiritual drug presented this practice as part of a Chinese exotic; even so the concept of opium as an entheogen is absent in Chinese 19th century drug culture. Instead, I will argue, the sacralization of opium constituted a reception of a western literary tradition having its roots in early 19th century English romanticism, especially Thomas De Quincey's *Diary of an English Opium Eater*. Although De Quincey's book is still well known, the massive amount of texts which he inspired in the mid- to late 19th century is not. From autobiographies to novels and short stories this tradition developed De Quincey's concept of the opium experience as a journey into fantastic worlds, sometimes seen as internal, sometimes as external to the opium consumer. The paper suggests that the literary concept of opium as a bringer of fantastic visions represents a relevant context for Aleister Crowley's treatment of opium as a source of spiritual experiences. In fact, it is possible that it also constitutes an important model and source for the very concept of the entheogen as it developed in the occult milieu at the turn of the 20th century.

Pavel Nosachev

Possession in Modern Russian Orthodoxy:

Between Cultural Performance and Mental Disorder

The practice of exorcism came to Russia in the XVII century, when the Catholic rite was included in orthodox prayer books by metropolitan Peter Mogila. In the XVIII and XIX centuries cases of exorcism were rare, for a time it was even banned by the state. Before the revolution the fashion on exorcism began, at the same time enlightened society held the view that possessed were ill with a nervous disease (hysteria). In the new Russia the practice of exorcism was revived, it began with the simple priests; later influential elders-exorcists appeared they attract thousands of people to the so-called *otchitka* (rituals of exorcism). Modern practice of *otchitka* has very little in common with pre-revolutionary Russian practices and even less in common with the classical cases of possession described in early Christian literature (Levack:2013). The *otchitka* today is a kind of performance contained a number of patterns similar to modern exorcist practices of Catholicism and Protestantism (Jordan, Possamai: 2018; McCloud: 2015), which are rooted in the occulture. In this regard, a number of research questions arise: if the phenomenon of possession is mental disorder, why is it so strongly dependent on the conditions of cultural fashion? How patterns of behavior are formed at the time of the rite of exorcism? If these patterns are

transferred through media culture channels, how have they been assimilated in ultra-conservative Orthodox circles, which usually do not use modern media? To what extent does the behavior of the possessed during Orthodox exorcism fit into psychiatric (see DSM V) and psychological models (e.g. role model, Wikström: 1982) of interpretations of the phenomenon of possession? To answer these questions, I will consider a number of examples of leading Orthodox exorcists (hierom. Herman Chesnokov, abbot Sergius Romanov, hier. Igor Sukhanov), using both psychological and sociological models of interpretation.

Lauri Ockenström

Vis imaginativa

Are there altered states in medieval image magic?

Altered states in medieval learned magic are usually associated with ritual magic and divination. Image magic has usually been examined through the lens of natural sciences so factors such as proper materials, correspondences and astronomical timing have been emphasised, while issues concerning invocation and mental states have gained lesser attention.

Nevertheless, in the medieval manuals of astrological image magic, such as *Liber planetarum* attributed to Hermes, the rites of consecrating images included various mental states and visions, along with songs, prayers, suffumigations and sacrifices. The very purpose of some experiments was to reach a vision or an altered state, or to summon and consult a spiritual being. On the other hand, certain spiritual states were regarded as basic requirements for completing an image successfully. The manuals underline the importance of the state of mind and offer instruction for shaping the temperament or even altering the self. Sources emphasize psychological factors like faith and appropriate intention, and in medical approaches the temperament of the ritualist, or his *spiritus*, as described in pneumatological theories, had to accord with the celestial body in question.

In spite of the rich body of source material available, the mental states themselves (and their character) have been discussed only rarely by modern scholars. This paper explores the different types and roles of mental states and encounters with spiritual beings in the textual sources of image magic from the 13th to the 16th centuries. It asks what types of altered states were required in rituals and what their theoretical context was. It also examines what the sources state regarding the making and use of images as a mental or spiritual experience, and if there were indeed highly altered states like ecstatic experiences or divine frenzy in image magic.

Brian Ogren

Kabbalah and Film:

Cinematic Visions, Narrative Voices, and Altered States

My paper will address the use of film in portraying, conveying, and even affecting supra-rational experiences, which are often difficult or even impossible to express through normal discursive language. Specifically, I will focus on cinematic representations of Jewish mysticism. This is an interesting area for study, as Jewish mysticism is traditionally a text based form of esotericism; and film not only adds to otherwise textually transmitted concepts with the aural and the visual elements of sense, but as Gilles Deleuze and other theorists have noted, it is also unique in that it plays on our senses of time and space. As such, artists from Alejandro Jodorowsky to Darren Aronofsky are able to convey certain kabbalistic ideas, such as divine hypostases, in unique ways

and for contemporary audiences. In the process, they attempt to convey higher, deeper, or even absolute knowledge about the nature of truth, and to take the viewer along on the journey. My paper will focus on the cinematic usages of fiction and reality in gaining that ever elusive mystical truth. It will also examine the textual traditions that stand behind such cinematic representations, and it will consider how the medium of film both stands in continuity with those traditions and transforms them. This is the case from contemporary documentary, such as the History Channel's *Secrets of Kabbalah*, to Hollywood blockbusters, such as the 2005 20th Century Fox *Bee Season*. My paper will seek to give us a better understanding of how the medium of cinema has altered the reception of Jewish esotericism and conversely, how the Jewish experiential tradition known as kabbalah has been able to affect cinematic portrayals of ultimate Truth.

Dimitry Okropiridze
A New Esotericist With a Global Following:
Jordan B. Peterson's Conservative Spirituality and its Ties to Western Esotericism

This paper aims to describe and explain the contemporary emergence of a modern esotericist in the guise of a therapeutic virtuoso. Professor Jordan B. Peterson (*1962) has risen to recent prominence by proclaiming psychological virtues through public talks, resembling religious sermons, and via published texts, resembling religious scriptures. Much of Peterson's self-ascribed insight into the nature of being, between the archetypal forces of order and chaos, appears in form of dreams and visions of sometimes apocalyptic proportions, which Peterson lays down in his writings and explains in his public appearances in order to bring about altered states on individual as well as collective levels.

Peterson utilizes elements of Western Esotericism in order to forge a religio-scientific therapy against the malaise of postmodern arbitrariness. With his fusion of scientific and religious discourses and his constant reference to Carl Jung's Analytic Psychology, Peterson has caused irritation among the politically left-leaning establishment in Canada and the US, while conservative and libertarian individuals have praised him as the prophetic voice of a new individualist enlightenment. Moreover, a growing number of grateful recipients (mostly male) hail him as a semi-mystical teacher, helping them to face the adversities of the postmodern world and become rooted in a permanently altered state of consciousness. This paper will elaborate on the historical ties between Peterson and Western Esotericism with a particular focus on Carl Jung and will attempt to explain how Peterson's conservative spirituality is directly linked to the esoteric elements of visions, voices, and altered states, affecting religious discourses around the world as a new esotericist with a global following emerges and continues to gain momentum.

Peter Olsson
A Paradisian State of Mind:
Theosophical Visions in fin de siècle Sweden

In 1889 a small group of people –inspired by the teachings of Mme. Blavatsky– gathered in an apartment in Stockholm, resulting in the formation of a Swedish section of the Theosophical Society. One of the initial members was publisher, editor, and photographer Thorsten Hedlund (1855-1935). While some contemporary scholars have briefly mentioned Hedlund as supporting

renowned Swedish author August Strindberg's (1849-1912) occult period (i.e. the Inferno crisis), they have paid little attention to Hedlund's own theosophical works.

Archival material preserved in the University of Gothenburg's special collection demonstrates Hedlund's far-reaching involvement in the theosophical movement documenting his close acquaintance with theosophists like Katherine Tingley and his repeated travels to the Raja Yoga School at Point Loma, California. This unpublished and largely untranslated material includes Hedlund's national and international correspondence as well as a number of his own manuscripts such as "Thoughts on Existence: founded in the study of theoretical occultism" and "A Paradisian State of Mind". His writings reveal a profound interest in ideas regarding altered states of the mind and the notion of an inner transformation. Drawing on Blavatsky, Hedlund thought that redemption of consciousness from a fallen state could be achieved through the contemplation of the Mazdean gods Ormuzd and Ahriman. This interest is also mirrored in his writings on Raja Yoga; Hedlund's vision of Raja Yoga involved the pursuit of a spiritual refinement and the achievement of the supreme self, requiring the alteration—and the elevation—of consciousness.

This paper will contextualize Hedlund's theosophical ideas, especially as they relate to his emphasis on these higher states of consciousness, and by extension it will shed light on the presence of theosophy in Sweden at the turn of the 19th Century.

Michele Olzi

Altered States and Telepathy:

The Strange Experiences and Life of Emilio Servadio (1904-1995)

Emilio Servadio (1904-1995) was an Italian psychoanalyst who pioneered in several fields, including Freudian psychoanalysis, sexology, and parapsychology. In the early sixties, along with biochemist Roberto Cavanna, he explored the use of psychedelics (in a controlled, laboratory setting) to enhance PSI. More specifically, both Servadio and Cavanna focused their efforts in showing how telepathy and altered states were reciprocally and both connected to the use of LSD-25 and psilocybin. Servadio was not only personally involved in parapsychological experiences, but also in initiatory ones, namely those of the Italian masonic lodge 'Montesion' and (even though he was not member of its inner circle) the occult group run by Arturo Reghini (1878-1946) and Julius Evola (1898-1974), 'gruppo di UR'. This paper will offer a general overview of Servadio's experiments under LSD-25 in the sixties and his literary production on telepathic communication, in order to show how altered states, telepathy, and initiatory dimension are all interconnected in Italian psychoanalyst life and thought.

Süleyman Mertcan Orhan

Bedri Ruhselman and his "Neo-Spiritism":

The Formation of Spiritism in the Early Years of Modern Turkey

Bedri Ruhselman (1898-1960) was a doctor, spiritualist, medium and the founder of "Metapsychic Investigations and Scientific Research Society" in Turkey. He named his movement "Neo-spiritualism" (Yeni Ruhçuluk) and wrote *Principles of Neo-Spiritualism* in 1946. His prominent works and books are the result of his interaction with different entities, he also defined those entities as planes of existence. His movement is considered to be the first occult movement in the history of modern Turkey. His visions started when he was a child. Allegedly,

at that time, he predicted the First World War. According to the journal *Ruh ve Madde* (Soul and Matter) published by his organization, Ruhselman's first interaction was with an entity called "Üstat" (Master). Over the course of time, by sessions and various states of trance with his follower mediums, he wrote different books based on the knowledge of different planes of existence. According to his followers, his unique technique for these interactions is named "Psychic Dissociation". This would trigger a state of "Semi-consciousness" which is differentiated from complete states of trance. Ruhselman considered his last work *Divine Order and the Universe* as his most important message for humanity, for which he claimed to have interacted with the highest entity of the spirit world named "Önder" (Pioneer). The book was kept secret in a vault for 54 years, in accordance to his testament, and was eventually published in 2013. Ruhselman's ideas were mostly influenced by French Spiritism, particularly through the works of Allan Kardec, Léon Denis and Gabriel Delanne. This paper aims at providing information about the earliest "Western style" spiritualist movement in Turkey as a product of secularization and some reactions from Turkish Sufis against that. It is also one of the first studies of Ruhselman's Neo-Spiritualism in academia, outside Turkey.

Sarah Ortega

Bonam Efficiens Animam:

Reevaluating the Supernatural Encounters in the *Liber Vaccae/Kitāb al-Nawāmīs*

The *Liber vaccae* is the twelfth-century Latin translation of the ninth-century Arabic *Kitāb al-nawāmīs*, an eclectic collection of procedures for artificial generation; summoning supernatural beings; manipulating the heavenly bodies; controlling the weather; causing injury, seizures, or death; and constructing magic lanterns. While scholarship has focused primarily on artificial generation, the encounters with supernatural beings have earned no small amount of scholarly attention. That some manuscript copies were kept in monastic libraries suggests that the text did not necessarily pose moral problems for the medieval reader. However, most of the surviving medieval references to it condemn it outright, making it clear that the *Liber vaccae*'s engagement with the supernatural pushes the boundaries towards the engagement with the demonic. My paper will bring to the forefront a set of five suffumigations that have not yet been studied in depth. In addition to enabling the operator to hear spirits (*spirituales* and *demones*) speak of future events, the procedures explain that they will also lead the operator towards a state of joy (*vincet gaudium et letitiam*) and may produce a good soul (*bonam efficiens animam*). While on the surface these procedures bear resemblance to suffumigations found in works like the *Ghāyat al-Hakīm* (in Latin, the *Picatrix*) and *al-Ṭabarī's Liber de locutione cum spiritibus planetarum*, they differ in that they do not require spoken prayers. The lack of invocations means, first, that the identity of the summoned spiritual entities is left ambiguous and, second, that the act of inducing a specific mental state is chiefly owed to the operator's physical interaction with the sensible world. I will examine a mixture of Greek and Arabic theurgical, philosophical, and medical sources in order to shed light on how these five suffumigations may lend more nuance to the *Liber vaccae*'s concept of spirits and demons.

Bernd-Christian Otto
Experiences deemed 'magic' in modern 'magick'

A recurring pattern in the history of 'Western learned magic' are claims of extraordinary experiences that practitioners will eventually or inevitably have when performing certain ritual procedures. In premodern sources, we might consider claims of invisibility, flying, or direct encounters with spirits to be mere tropes which ought to heighten the perceived value or efficacy of the ritual script. In experience reports authored by contemporary practitioners of 'magick', however, we continue to encounter similar claims of such extraordinary events. This might be surprising given the extended need to both justify (to oneself and others) the contemporary belief in the miraculous effects of 'magick' as well as to make such effects plausible in the light of contemporary understandings of science and physical causation. The paper assembles select cases of extraordinary experiences addressed in contemporary literature on 'magick' and adds insights gathered from interviews with contemporary practitioners. At the same time, the paper tackles a more basic methodological issue by asking whether 'Western learned magic' – or contemporary 'magick', respectively – evokes experiences of a very specific or even unique kind, or whether these experiences deemed 'magic' rather resemble or build upon extraordinary experiences that are typical for religious traditions.

Mauricio Oviedo
How to have a spiritual rebirth?
The visual motif of the heart at the centre of practicing Jakob Böhme's teachings

The experiential dimension of Western Esotericism is a topic that should not be detached from its material culture. Diverse visions, altered states of consciousness or divine communications are known to us thanks to the materials produced for, by or since such events occurred. Therefore, if the objects linked to a given experience are analysed, a wide range of insights can be acquired on the study of consciousness in Western Esotericism. In this paper, the focus is on the material culture, specially images, behind the transmission and teaching of the access to such realms. As case of study, the engravings accompanying the 1682 edition of two works by Jakob Böhme will be analysed. The texts are *Der Weg zu Christo*, and *Von Christi Testamenten*. Their respective images are connected to the contents of both works through a central visual motif: the heart, representing that which cannot be seen but is the basis of our existence: the soul (Fig. 1. & Fig. 2.). The motive behind selecting these two images and their corresponding texts is both their content and apparent function: the notion of spiritual rebirth and the inclusion of devotional practices directed to afford the mystical transformation of the individual.

A number of questions arise: What role could the images have played in teaching and experiencing transcendental processes related to spiritual rebirth? And how did the use of the visual motif of the heart influence the practice of what the texts propose? The starting point is that divine manifestations, as cause of their religious practices, have mediators such as the reading of texts, the spaces for devotion, or the meditation/contemplation on/of images. In this sense, the paper contributes in answering how experience (in this case mystical) throughout Western Esotericism is transferred, received, and in turn experienced. In other words: how the transcendental happens in material terms, and what are its social, cultural, psychological and historical implications.

Alexander Panchenko
Invisible Partners:
Channeling in Soviet and Post-Soviet New Age

Channeling is often discussed as especially important “in the genesis of New Age religion. Many of the fundamental New Age beliefs [...] have first been formulated in channeled messages” (Hanegraaff 1996: 27). On the other hand, channeling, as a particular mode of communication with non-human actors, can be compared to many other religious forms of trance, possession, revelation, and divination. As Matthew Wood has put it, channeling is “a form of spirit possession in which the spirit is held to be a religious master of some sort (rather than an ordinary deceased human, as in spiritualism, or a deity, as in paganism or Pentecostalism), whose primary purpose is to deliver messages of general interest to humans regarding the current state of, and future changes to, the world and our place within it” (Wood 2007: 101). In terms of present-day cognitive science, non-human actors a channeler interacts with can be regarded as “full access agents”, i. e. agents that “have access to whatever information is strategic in a particular situation” (Boyer 2001: 159). Yet, the information a channeler receives and shares with his or her audience, does not seem to be always “strategic” or even relevant to a particular situation. It seems then, that ethnographic study of channeling as religious or social practice must pay particular attention to the nature of the information received as well as how it is used and applied by a given community. Proceeding from this approach, the presentation deals with a number of empirical examples of channeling practices in late Soviet and post-Soviet New Age culture.

Anne Parker
Erotic Psychologies of Magical Operation in Dion Fortune’s Novels and Other Works

Dion Fortune was a British occultist who wrote and practiced in the first half of the twentieth century. In this paper, I examine the way Fortune relates her esoteric theories of love, marriage, and sex to the psychology and methods of magical operation. I argue that erotic energy and its sublimation are an important part of the way Fortune understands processes of personal psychological and energetic transformation—and the altered states which accompany such transformation—in ritual. I also consider the extent to which she sees the management and manipulation of these forces as a vehicle for the release of larger, more impersonal occult forces for change. In my argument I draw upon materials from several different texts by Fortune, including both theoretical and instructional works as well as her novels, particularly *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, *The Problem of Purity*, *The Mystical Qabalah*, *Moon Magic*, and *The Goat-Foot God*. I conclude with a reflection upon Fortune’s theories of sexual polarity, and argue that they are usefully read as engagements with the erotic phenomenologies of her own and other’s incarnate, yet etheric embodiment.

Christopher Partridge
UFOs and the Psychedelic Experience

It seems to me that with the tryptamine hallucinogens in general and with psilocybin in particular we actually experience a state of mind that is very similar to the state of mind reported to accompany the UFO contact. Shamanic states of mind and UFO contact can,

somehow, be mapped onto each other. At active levels, psilocybin induces visionary ideation of spacecraft, alien creatures, and alien information. There is a general futuristic, science fiction quality to the psilocybin experience that seems to originate from the same place as the modern myth of the UFO.” This comment by Terenc McKenna highlights a neglected area of the psychedelic experience, namely the relationship between, broadly speaking, “inner space” and “outer space”—between shamanic consciousness and UFO contact. While there will not be time to discuss all the ramifications of the psychedelic experience of UFOs, the aim of the paper is to introduce this experience as a significant subject for scholarly enquiry. As is generally well known, the first wave of UFO sightings fascinated Carl Jung in the 1950s. However, he was less concerned with whether UFOs were real or not and more concerned with their significance as “psychic products”—although he did not address the psychedelic experience of UFOs. With reference to aspects of Jung’s thought and also to the writings of McKenna and other work in the area of “psychonautics”, this paper is likewise less concerned with UFOs as external objects and more concerned with their significance as “psychedelic products.” In particular, with the focus of this conference in mind, there will be discussion of UFOs as vehicles of gnosis (“alien information”) within inner space.

Paul Pasquesi
The Experience and Practice of Altered States of Consciousness
in Late Antique Syro-Mesopotamia

From the modern neuroscience of experience it is now possible to make connections between practices that stimulate autonomic nervous system responses and the descriptions of those heightened states from subjects. While there has been ongoing debate about how to proceed methodologically from this modern observable research to ancient experience, this paper proposes a way forward. Since structures of the brain have not radically changed in the last several thousand years, scholars can mine ancient texts for both a) practices which might have similar effects to those studied under clinical protocols and to b) descriptions of experiences that cohere with similar first hand accounts in research.

Two data sets will be explored here from Syro-Mesopotamia: the earlier being texts about the practices of others recorded as an ancient ethnography of Syriac speaking Asceticism in Theodoret of Cyrrihus, and the later, primary texts written by practitioners to guide other monastics in these ascetic practices. This later data coheres with the earlier in describing types of practices, while also describing both what the writer has experienced and what the hearer or reader should expect to experience.

Luca Patrizi
‘And the Cupbearer is nowhere to be seen!’:
The Nature of the Intoxicating Beverage in Sufi Medieval Literature

In Sufi literature, and especially in poetry, one of the most recurrent theme is the state of intoxication caused by wine. This literature deploys a complex imagery, usually constituted by three elements: the intoxicating beverage, the cupbearer which pours it, and the cup into which it is poured. Each of these elements has been interpreted from the anagogical and cosmological point of view in the exegetical literature. This imagery does not appear as a simple literary artifice used to convey a doctrinal discourse, but attempts to express, through a metaphorical

language, states of consciousness altered by the spiritual and ritual practice of Sufism, and the incorporation of divine wisdom. Focused on a particular genre of Sufi poetry called *khamriyya* (poetry on wine) in Arabic and *saqīnamāh* (poetry on the cupbearer) in Persian, this paper will aim to explain why certain Sufi authors chose this imagery despite the blame that it incurs on it in Islamic societies, and to investigate the significance of this complex symbolism in the medieval Sufi literature.

Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

**“There is no more mystery and glamour in examining the after-death state
with the astral vision, than in examining the Tyrol with the physical”:**

Annie Besant and Clairvoyance.

In his recent article on “Theosophical Imagination” (2017), Wouter J. Hanegraaff argues that “[imagination] was clearly central to both the practice and the theory of [theosophical] clairvoyance”. Although Hanegraaff lists Annie Besant among the Theosophists who claimed to be clairvoyant in his abstract, and devotes a subpart to “The Clairvoyant Virtuoso: Charles Webster Leadbeater,” he does not quote in his paper nor list in his bibliography any of Besant’s texts on the topic. Yet, Besant and Leadbeater penned two clairvoyant studies together: *Thought-Forms* (1905), and *Occult Chemistry* (1908), and Besant conducted research with Leadbeater on remembrance of past lives.

Sorting out Besant’s specific contribution to Leadbeater’s clairvoyant research can be challenging, but there is a considerable number of texts by Besant alone that touch on the subject – sometimes directly, like “Clairvoyance and Clairaudience” (1904). Furthermore, in *Investigations Into the Super-Physical* (1912), Besant underlined that her clairvoyant methods and results differed from Leadbeater’s: “I may be permitted to take, as contrasting examples, Mr. C. W. Leadbeater and myself. [...] It is obvious that where training is so different, results will be different”. So this paper intends to start from Hanegraaff’s conclusions on imagination and theosophical clairvoyance, not to challenge them, but to see if they apply to Besant’s specific definition, use and method of clairvoyance. To do so, this paper will explore a representative selection of Besant’s copious writings on the topic. It will not dwell on Besant’s clairvoyant visions, however, but focus instead on the part she allowed imagination to play in her method of clairvoyance. To sum it up, this paper will not be on what Besant saw clairvoyantly, but on how she achieved what she believed to be clairvoyance.

Jesper Aagaard Petersen

“I believe in as much as possible”:

Visions of Crowley in early 1970s Danish counterculture

In the early 1970s, respectable Danish author, college lecturer and candidate for parliament Ebbe Reich published a book length “imaginative biography” on British occultist Aleister Crowley. Entitled “Eventyret om Alexander 666” (the fairy tale of Alexander 666), it combined fiction and non-fiction in a feverish trip driven by the author’s immersion in Crowley’s life and magical system (as well as a copious use of hallucinogenic drugs). On the one hand, the book was a mess: the pages were bright yellow and filled with hand-written notes; the page notes were alle backwards and made little sense; and the book itself used tarot cards and astrological correspondences to organize multiple chronologies and narratives framed by the double

journey of author and occultist through death, life and beyond. On the other, Reich considered occultism, and especially Crowley, the perfect companion to consciousness expansion and a way to heal the drug casualties in the youth culture of the time. Through the story of Ebbe Reich's deep fascination with Crowley and the occult arts – considered black magic by most and later dismissed by the author as insane ramblings – I want to discuss the tension between altered states and occultism in Danish hippie culture. Deeply split between political radicalism, artistic ventures and trips to outer and inner space, this case shines a light on the controversial nature of drug visions and the flawed assemblage of occultism, role reversals and sexual liberation brewing in the deep.

Joyce Pijnenburg
From Lyre to Lamp:
Marsilio Ficino's continued influence on Giordano Bruno

“Nothing prevents [the soul] from acting as does the lyre of Apollo to rise to the heights step by step, from the depths, to the middle areas and into the heights.” (*On the Shadows of Ideas*). During his residence in France (1579 – April 1583), Giordano Bruno still largely adhered to Marsilio Ficino's vision of a harmonically layered, cosmic hierarchy embedding the ascent of the soul. While Ficino's descriptions of dialectic with its soul-transforming potential would continue to be an important influence throughout Bruno's oeuvre, Bruno's infinite cosmology would dramatically impact his metaphysics in the years to come, resulting in a worldview which radically opposed that of his respected source.

According to Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Philebus*, the *prisci theologi* had mastered the art of dialectic, enabling them to reach “God's ray, releasing their souls”. This “divine craft” carried the promise of a new, Platonic, means of acquiring knowledge and reaching a higher state of being. Far beyond the scopes of Aristotelian logic, it offered a crucial step on the way to becoming divine. From *On the Shadows of Ideas* (1582) to *The Lamp of the Thirty Statues* (1587-91), Bruno's descriptions of the divine aims of his *artes* and of metaphysical principles contain significant traces of Ficino's exposition of dialectic in the *Philebus Commentary*. Bruno's portrayals, however, of the transformed, “heroic”, soul in the Italian dialogues (1584-1585) as well as the late works *On Bonds in General* (ca. 1588) and *The Lampsi of the Thirty Statues* differ essentially from the inspired soul as detailed in the earlier work *On the Shadows*. This change in psychology marks the beginning of Bruno's perhaps gradual, but certainly radical distantiation from Ficino's metaphysics, involving a dualist thesis which Ficino had indignantly called “Manichaeism”.

Alan Piper
Hidden in Plain Sight:
Psychoactive Drug States in Two Novels of the 1920s

References to altered states induced by the consumption of psychoactive substances are clear in both David Lindsay's 'A Voyage to Arcturus' (1920) and Hope Mirrlees' 'Lud-in-the-Mist' (1926). However, the critical literature on these novels ignores their drug references and concentrates only on their place in the history of fantasy literature. David Lindsay's novel 'A Voyage to Arcturus' is often characterised as Gnostic in character, while Hope Mirrlees' novel plainly owes much to a fascination with folkloric pagan survivals and the ecstatic mystery cults of ancient

Greece. Both authors associate drug derived altered states with transformative experiences and esoteric traditions. As case studies of drug inflected novels of the inter-war period they are early examples of 'entheogenic esotericism', a term coined by Wouter J. Hanegraaff in his essay of the same title (2012). Biographical information on both authors is extremely scant, so whether their novels' conceptions are derived from personal experience of drug induced altered states can only be inferred from their novels, their other texts and the drug cultures of the inter-war period. The same strategy is employed in Hanegraaff's paper in connection with the post war period. The paper will look at textual evidence that the altered states described by the author are derived from personal experience and from contact with a contemporary drug using milieu. Research reveals a more widespread experimentation with mind-altering drugs in the inter-war period than has been heretofore explored. Experimentation with drug induced altered states through peyote or its extract anhalonium within literary circles is poorly documented and deserves further research. Contextualising these novels in the drug culture of their era illuminates the texts themselves and fills a gap in the history of entheogenic esotericism.

Francesco Piraino
Understanding Dreams:
Sufism and Psychoanalysis in Milan

This paper describes the work of Shaykh Gabriele Mandel Khan (1924-2010), artist, intellectual, writer, musician, professor, and psychoanalyst. Mandel funded the Italian branch of the Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya, a Sufi order, in the 1990s, after having met his Turkish master Muzzafer Ozak. With his charisma and erudition, Mandel strongly influenced the development of Italian Sufism and Islam. He played an important role in the Islamic cultural sphere, translating fundamental books (including the Quran and Rumi's poetry), and participating in numerous cultural events. Mandel is a complex and eclectic figure who attracted both spiritual seekers in the path of Ren. Gu.non, Frithjof Schuon, Georges Ivanovič Gurdjieff and Carl Gustav Jung, and lifelong Muslims looking for a traditional Sufi Shaykh—he was Imam in the Milan mosque of the Via Padova, attended mostly by first generation Muslim migrants. The specificity of Mandel's spiritual guidance was the merging of Jungian psychoanalysis with Sufi teachings; many of his disciples were also his patients. One of Mandel's principal spiritual instrument was the interpretation of dreams, a practice which can be found both in the psychoanalytic method and in the Sufi tradition of the Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya. Drawing from a six-month ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with his disciples, the paper discusses how psychoanalysis and Sufism merged, and what role the interpretation of dreams played in the path of purification of the soul.

Rafał T. Prinke
Dee and Kelley's Angelic Conversations Revisited:
A View from the East Window

The extensive record of crystalomantic visions of Edward Kelley and his conversations with angels, supervised and written down by Dr. John Dee, remain one of the most intriguing esoteric sources. It has been studied extensively by both scholars and occultists, but so far mostly as a closed text, as no testimonies of other witnesses had been known, and from the perspective of England. The most interesting part of Dee's spiritual diaries -- dealing with the construction of

what is known as "Enochian magic" -- is the record of the scrying séances which took place in Cracow, Poland. Recent research undertaken by the author not only made it possible to identify the house, in which the angelic conversations occurred, but also to discover local sources, shedding new light on what local people knew about Dee and Kelley's angelic experiments. Moreover, their links with the religious sect of Polish Brethren (Arians) will be discussed, as well as their influence on Kelley's attitude towards the angels. A number of Poles and inhabitants of Cracow mentioned in the diaries will now be identified for the first time in Dee-related scholarly literature. The second part of the paper's title is an allusion to the novel "The Angel of the West Window" by Gustav Meyrink, but it will not be discussed.

Tommaso Priviero
Dante's Visionary Realism:
For a History of the Esoteric Reading of Dante's Commedia

First of its kind, this paper aims to position a short history of the esoteric reading of Dante's Divine Comedy. Despite the popular association of Dante with the field of esoteric studies, a serious attempt to critically examine the intellectual development of the esoteric reading of his work has lagged until now. In response to this, this paper focuses on a period stretching from the late nineteenth to the early decades of the twentieth century, in which the tradition of the esoteric, or symbolist, reading of Dante appears especially flourishing.

Throughout my inquiry, I will introduce the original ideas of those intellectuals who shared the view of Dante Alighieri as a master of visions and states of cosmic consciousness. Among others, I will mention the work of Luigi Valli, René Guénon, Julius Evola, Arturo Reghini, but also of C.G.Jung, and Henry Corbin. Despite the remarkable intellectual difference of these authors, the tradition of the esoteric reading of Dante coincides with at least one fundamental principle: Dante's visions as expressed in the Divine Comedy are not to be understood in a literary or theological sense; they are rather the result of a visionary practice, of "things heard and seen". I intend to explore this view by combining comparative elements of analysis with a sharp historical focus and critical look. My paper will take Dante as a springboard from which to navigate the audience into a map of some of the most significant connections of the European esoteric research of that time in relation to the topic of consciousness research.

Georgia van Raalte
Dion Fortune's Initiatory Fiction

In "The Novels of Dion Fortune," an article published by Dion Fortune in *The Inner Light Magazine* in 1936, Fortune states, "because I have a purpose in my life, which is the work of initiation organised as The Fraternity of the Inner Light, my novels have a purpose, which is the purpose of initiation." [1] This paper will analyse the novels of Dion Fortune as initiatory texts. Drawing on the work of Arthur Versluis and Elaine Scarry I will consider the process by which fictional texts can alter consciousness and catalyse initiation. I will explore the combination of erotic tension, occult ritual and bathic realism that can be found across Fortune's novels, and show how Fortune believed this combination would lend itself to producing potent initiatory fantasies in her readers.

This paper will also consider the extravagant use of kabbalistic symbolism and correspondence within Fortune's novels, in which Fortune combined her understanding of the subconscious

influence of kabbalistic symbolism with St Ignatius of Loyola's mystical process of Composition of Place to create a unique initiatory technique. This paper will explore the way this technique manipulated the empathy and eroticism of the reader of a romance novel in order to catalyse an initiatory process. This paper will then consider the gendering of early 20th century initiation practices, and the extent to which Fortune's textual initiation was something specifically designed to reach and effect women, before asking what significance this form textual initiation has for the study of 20th century occult texts more generally. Ultimately, this paper seeks to offer a new framework through which to approach the interactions between sexual magic, altered states of consciousness, initiation, imagination, and fiction.

Matti Rautaniemi

Visions, Spirit Guides and Channeling in the History of Yoga in Finland

This paper discusses the theosophical roots yoga in Finland, focusing especially on the role of visions, spirit guides and channeling in the work of three teachers, Pekka Ervast, Tyyne Matilainen and Ture Ara. As elsewhere in Europe, yoga entered Finland through Theosophy. The pioneer of Finnish Theosophy, Pekka Ervast (1875–1934), was a mystic whose life was guided by personal visions and revelations. In his work, yoga was redefined using concepts derived from the Western esoteric tradition. In the early 1950's, Tyyne Matilainen (1911–1989), the founder of the first public yoga school in Finland, claimed to have experienced spontaneous "Buddha enlightenment". Following this experience, Matilainen produced a series of channeled teachings, which formed the curriculum of her school. Still active today, Correspondence School Via represents a unique blend of yoga philosophy, theosophical teachings and its founder's personal visions. Ture Ara (1928–1979), a renowned singer, actor and the first teacher of postural yoga in Finland, also defined yoga in theosophical terms. He also claimed to be in contact with a spirit guide and in his writings described his interactions with various kinds of nature spirits. Through these three cases, the paper demonstrates how the early history of yoga in Finland is intertwined with Western esotericism and personal visionary experiences – even more so than with any Indian yoga tradition.

Elsa Richardson

'They have not our thoughts of weight and measure': Second Sight, History and Subjectivity

Examining the traditions associated with second sight in nineteenth-century Scotland, this paper excavates the relations between prophetic vision, subjectivity and the writing of history. Described in Gaelic as the An-da-shealladh or the 'two sights', this intuitive, enhanced form of vision was said to thrive in the Highlands and in the Western Isles. Arriving unsought, predictions typically detailed everyday events in the lives of people living in isolated communities: the death of a neighbour, the unexpected arrival of a distant relative, the wrecking of a fishing boat, a coming marriage and so on.

From the late seventeenth century onwards, these mundane prophecies attracted the attention of scientists, antiquarians, travel writers, folklorists and psychical researchers, who wrote them into a growing body of literature on the history of supernatural belief. But the second-sighted vision was not only an object of history, it was also a participant in the historiographical process. The prediction of a seer, whether reproduced by oral or textual formations, was itself a form of

historical narrative, which refused linear formations of time to conflate the present with the future, so that the effects were ascertained before their cause came into existence. Following Hayden White's description of the work of the historian as a 'poetic process' a 'fusing of events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of representation', my interest lies with not only the disruptive narrative structures that premonitory tales helped to create, but also the different understandings of selfhood that they might allow for. Building on William Butler Yeats's description of the 'natural' Celtic temperament, 'Men who lived in a world where anything might flow and change, and become any other thing, had not our thoughts of weight and measure', this paper considers how prophetic visions troubled the connection between history and subjectivity in nineteenth-century culture.

Friedemann Rimbach-Sator
Esoteric Fairy Faith:

The Theosophical Background of Walter Y. Evans-Wentz's *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*

'Fairyland exists as a supernormal state of consciousness into which men and women may enter temporarily in dreams, trances, or in various ecstatic conditions; or for an indefinite period after death.' With this sentence, the anthropologist Walter Evans-Wentz (1878 – 1965) concludes four years of research for his dissertation, which was published under the title *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (1911).

Since the main theoretical sources behind Evans-Wentz's argument have never been precisely discussed, the perception of Evans-Wentz's early work has remained distorted. I want to demonstrate how Evans-Wentz contextualized the experiences he gathered in the field in a theoretical framework. This framework was developed partially through dialogue with the Irish Theosophist George William Russell (1867-1935), and with poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), who was heavily influenced by Swedenborg. By using unpublished parts of Evans-Wentz's handwritten *Notes for an Autobiography* (1921), his main theoretical sources can be specified even further to include Alfred Percy Sinnett's (1840-1921) *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883), and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's (1831-1891) *Isis Unveiled* (1877).

Being aware of these sources not only illuminates that during his sparsely documented time at Oxford, Evans-Wentz was more deeply connected to Theosophical circles than he gave account of in his study; it also sheds new light on Evans-Wentz's most well-known publication, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927). In contrast to the current opinion that there is a break between Evans-Wentz's earlier Celtic, and later Tibetan Buddhist publication on the after death state, it can thus be demonstrated that behind both books are the same (Theosophical) principles; which Evans-Wentz saw as universal to all genuine religions. As hinted in the introductory sentence: a crucial principal for Evans-Wentz is the evolution of consciousness and its relation to a subjective after-death state which is especially connected to higher and lower beings that can be seen by clairvoyants in trance states.

Dell J. Rose
The Sacred Synapse:
Swedenborg's Theological Neurology

Emanuel Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences is well known amongst scholars of Western esotericism, yet the role that it played in Swedenborg's anatomical studies and his philosophy of consciousness remains under considered. This paper seeks to emphasize the importance of Swedenborg's understanding of correspondences played in his neurological research, as well offer a concise overview of Swedenborg theory of the nervous system and its connection to the soul and consciousness. The search for the location of the soul and an understanding of how it animates the body was one of Swedenborg's earliest and strongest drives, and this led him into the field of comparative anatomy. Through conversing with many of the leading anatomists of his day as well as his participation in numerous dissections, Swedenborg focused in on the nerves as the source of conveyance between the soul and the body. His attention to the fillamentum, led him both to the discovery of spinal fluid as well as a new and complex theory of the nervous system which bridged everything from the structure of the nerves themselves, to their role in defending against the influence of darkness. Swedenborg, as an esoteric thinker, engages and critiques insights from Alchemy and the work of Paracelsus in a interesting way which sheds light on the vitality of these strains of thought during the Enlightenment. The nerves, and their spiritual correspondence, are the initial step in a system that seeks to reconcile heaven and earth into one coherent system, and is an important chapter in the study of esoteric formulations of the mind-body relationship.

Aren Roukema
Scientists and Psychonauts:
Empiricism and Experience in A.P. Sinnett's *Karma: A Novel*

In *The Occult World* (1881) and *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883), Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840–1921) published accounts of esoteric experiences, primarily those related to the mediumship of H.P. Blavatsky and the knowledge received through her from occult 'Brothers', particularly Koot Hoomi. Sinnett's 1886 *Karma: A Novel* enfolds this experience-based knowledge into fiction. *Karma* is structured around a set of experiments designed to substantiate psychical phenomena. Aware that normative empirical research will not accomplish this task, a powerful German occultist has gathered a group of elite English researchers and socialites to witness and verify exhibitions of psychical abilities. Convinced that the experiment's research subjects have walked the astral planes, the novel's characters are tasked with sharing accounts of their abilities in England to instigate further psychical research.

Karma thus reflects, and is generated by, a central Victorian knowledge problem: Confronted with thousands of claimed psychical experiences, mental physiologists of the day sought to empirically explain such events by turning to under-developed sciences of the mind and of human behaviour. Such research was challenged by an epistemological chasm between the physical tools of empirical research and narrative accounts of inner experience. While some scientists rejected the possibility of empirically verifying unreliable accounts of unrepeatable personal experiences, others, most famously the Society for Psychical Research, sought to enlist such accounts as empirical proof of supernormal phenomena. Sinnett's novel takes advantage of science fiction's aura of empiricist verisimilitude to mirror this project, insisting on the

empirical legitimacy of psychical abilities by projecting his own experiential knowledge onto the extra-dimensional planes of fiction. This paper explores the manner in which the Victorian tension between human experience and empirical method generated science fictional narratives, both in *Karma* and in other occult fiction of the period, and was in turn illustrated, challenged and redefined by them.

Tim Rudbøg

Alice A. Bailey and the coming altered state of world consciousness

Alice Ann Bailey (1880-1949) was raised in an Anglican home and had performed missionary work in India, but later in life she joined the esosophical Society (Adyar) in the US. Not long hereafter, she embarked on a highly productive journey writing twenty-four comprehensive books of which nineteen are said to have been written in an altered state of telepathic communication with a Tibetan master known as Djwhal Khul. Despite the fact that Bailey hereby became one of the most prolific esoteric writers in the twentieth-century building upon earlier esophy, she has not yet been given much scholarly attention. This paper will especially analyze Bailey's role in remodelling earlier esosophical ideas of consciousness and altered states in connection with what can be described as her 'progressive millenarianism'. Bailey wrote during the crises related to the two World Wars and as this paper will show, this larger historical context clearly framed Bailey's innovative combination of concepts about personal and collective evolution of consciousness, the coming New Age, and the Christ in a narrative that stressed the urgency of cultivating good-will and a life in accordance with the divine plan. Bailey's conceptualization of consciousness and ideas about the new age became integral to the New Age ethos of the many groups that emerged after the second World War and marked a shift from early esophy and occultism to new experimental and spiritual ideologies focusing on consciousness alteration and group-living.

Gadi Sagiv

Hasidic Masters Interpret their Dreams

Dreams as states of consciousness are considered in various religious traditions as channels through which supernal knowledge is conveyed to human beings. The Hasidic movement was no exception and a number of 18th and 19th century Hasidic masters including Moshe Haim Ephraim of Sudilkov, Nahman of Bratslav, Yitzhak of Radvil documented some of the dreams they experienced. In addition to recording or recounting their dreams, some Hasidic masters theorized about the nature of dreams though they rarely did so systematically. Instead, their ideas about dreams were generally expressed in the form of homilies to classical texts such as the biblical account of the dreams of Joseph and Pharaoh.

While previous research on dreams in Hasidism treated the personal accounts of dreams and the theoretical discussions separately, the purpose of this paper is to connect the two and examine the dream accounts in light of the dream theories.

The paper will focus on two case studies: The dreams of Yitshak Yehudah Yehiel Safrin of Komarno (1806-1874) and the dreams of Tsaddok ha-Cohen of Lublin (1823-1900). Both of these Hasidic leaders and prolific authors reported dreams they experienced and also reflected on the nature and significance of dreams more generally. I will argue that when they theorized about the functions and meaning of dreams, they were also had in mind their own dreams.

The coupling of the personal account with a theoretical explanation – both attributable to the same person – offer us a dual perspective on dreams as altered state of consciousness: the subjective experiencer and the objective interpreter. That approach of integrating personal accounts with impersonal exegetical references can be employed in deciphering other types of altered states of consciousness.

Liana Saif

Islamic Physiognomy as a Science of Intuition

In the context of medieval Islamic divination, medicine, and mystical writings, this presentation will focus on ‘ilm al-firāsa, physiognomy which is analysed here as a science that systematises and legitimises the application of ḥads, “intuition”. The paper looks at the various definitions of this term and shows that it refers to a faculty of knowledge that stems from ḍamīr, which can be described as the conscious/thinking interior, and can also refer to the things that are hidden within one’s mind. In the context of divination, we find that in the first sense ḥads is the tool of the physiognomer’s knowledge, and in the second sense it reveals the private thought and personal traits of others. It is very much unlike evidence-based discursive knowledge of “reason”. This brought physiognomy closer to medicine, which is also considered to be based on intuition or ḥads that is able to read symptoms or signs without awareness of causes; physiognomy was therefore medicalised to a large degree. However, physiognomy was also “esotericised” by Sufis and bāṭinīs whose ideas and practices were hinged on intuitive knowledge. The paper will highlight these different epistemological frameworks to physiognomy, and in particular the different approaches for employment of “consciousness” – through ḥads – to derive information about the characteristics of individuals from the marks on their body.

Francisco Santos Silva

Sousa Martins:

The Cult of the Academic Medical Doctor who Became a Spiritist saint in Catholic Portugal

Dr. José Tomás de Sousa Martins (1846-1897) was a renowned Portuguese doctor, a university lecturer in Medicine at Lisbon’s Medical University, a researcher, and the Portuguese envoy to the International Sanitary Conference in Vienna in 1874. Working particularly in the field of Epidemiology he fought for better treatment for tuberculosis. Eventually after contracting tuberculosis himself, he committed suicide by injecting himself with a large dose of morphine. After his death he was eulogized by the Lisbon intelligentsia including the King of Portugal who called him the “greatest light of my kingdom”.

This seems a peculiar figure to become a folk saint in the overwhelmingly catholic context of Portugal, an atheist doctor, who commits suicide, which left writing consisting overwhelmingly of epidemiological scientific articles. Yet, he is one of the most popular figures in spiritist practice in Portugal, being associated with faith-healing and mediunic possession. The statue to Sousa Martins in Lisbon is covered with marble plaques as thanks for his miraculous healing powers, there are constantly flowers and burning candles on the statue and in his grave outside Lisbon. Mediums claiming to be possessed by Martins have appeared on national television and it is easy to buy a statue of the doctor in any shop selling catholic saints. You can also get candles

with his figure, incense, essential oils and a whole paraphernalia of spiritual items. In the mind of many Portuguese he is a saint, even if there is no connection to the Catholic Church. How and why did such a scientifically inclined character, by all accounts an atheist and a sceptic, become the centre of a widespread faith-healing mediumistic cult?

Dilek Sarmis

**Bringing together Sufi Conceptions of Consciousness and
Western Transpersonal Psychology:
Beyond-Ego and Contemporary Islamic Psychology in Turkey**

The paper focuses on developments of recent Turkish Transpersonal Psychology in relation with Sufism (Tasavvuf). Psychiatrist Mustafa Merter is a main representative of this trend. Claiming conformity with Islamic spirituality and the Islamic way of life, this trend satisfied the need in Turkey for a psychology that is no longer culturally limited or specifically Sufi, but is coupled with a critique of Western rationalistic and dualistic civilization. Founder in 2005 of the Turkish Association for Beyond-Ego Psychology and Psychiatry, Merter claims to combine twocomplementary affiliations, one with American Transpersonal Psychology and its self-actualization concept, the other with the classical Islamic and Sufi psychology inherited from the *Ilm-ü'n nefis* (science of the ego). He opposes conceptualizations of consciousness in Western Ego-psychology by proposing a Sufi reading of Western transpersonal psychology where consciousness is altered through a specific therapy and relocated in a wider psycho-cosmology that makes the ego vanishing. Merter claims a new category of "Superior Unconscious," challenging the binary construction opposing consciousness and unconscious. This epistemological paradigm, deriving from Freudian Psychoanalysis, is the result of his readings of Carl Jung's synchronicity concept and critics of linear causality, and of Abraham Maslow's and Anthony Sutich's humanist and transpersonal psychologies. Developing the idea of a multi-dimensional individual, open to a real and significant improvement, Merter criticizes the dualism and separation between body and *nefis* (ego) that he identifies in modern conceptions of psychology. His theories, which are very close to Robert Frager's Islamic Transpersonal Psychology, claim to supersede the opposition between outer and inner worlds.

Jost Schieren

**From Enlightenment to 'Intuition':
Rudolf Steiner's Conception of Thinking as a Spiritual Experience**

During the Age of Enlightenment, rationality and reason were regarded as the birthplace of autonomy and individuality and hence became core concepts in philosophical and political discourse. One result of this was a widening gap between rationality and spirituality; science and religion were increasingly interpreted as opposites, even as contradictions. Kant's critical philosophy in particular widened and cemented this paradigm which understood thought based rationality as different from and contradictory to the spiritual experience, relegating the latter into the realm of mere feeling. The romantic philosophers following Kant, particularly Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, but also poets like Novalis, developed a different approach to this question. So did Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), in the wake of his rereading of German Idealism, one century later. In his philosophical and anthroposophical writings, Steiner attempted to bridge the gap by describing the thinking process itself as a spiritual experience. If we not merely theorize

about our mental activities while we think, but actually observe them, Steiner postulated, the spiritual nature of thought activity can become evident, as human cognition itself evolves in this very process of self-observation.

This paper examines Steiner's attempt to remedy the predicament of enlightenment by critically analyzing and contextualizing the phenomenological methodology which is at the base of Steiner's conception of 'intuitive' knowledge and by which he intended to advance and modernize the Romantics insight into the evolutionary potential of cognition.

Jens Schlieter
“No Religion,” and “Beyond Belief”?
The Epistemic Innocence of Theosophy's Higher Consciousness

In classical writings of theosophists, a hierarchy of different forms of consciousness is depicted ranging from forms of limited, individual self-consciousness to higher, absolute, universal, or cosmic consciousness. Various intentional practices of mental cultivation are mentioned that may help adepts to become aware or realize higher states of consciousness. In this context, different means were used to overcome limitations of lower self-consciousness such as astral projection, forms of Yoga practice, unblocking latent memory, or the use of psychoactive drugs. However, A. Ludwig and Ch. Tart saw in the late 1960s “altered states of consciousness” an “impairment of reality testing to various degrees,” whereas usual wake consciousness is an adaptive strategy to meet the requirements of the life-world. Are “altered states” simply “maladaptive”? With a focus on the relation between the intentional induction of these states and the post-ecstatic reporting of their efficacy, the contribution will make use of a recent discussion in consciousness studies, namely, the concept of “epistemic innocence” (Bortolotti 2015, Letheby 2016). Here, it has been argued that epistemically sub-optimal cognitive processes such as “motivated delusions” may nonetheless yield epistemic benefits, especially if alternatives are not available. Given the spiritual interests of theosophical practitioners, I will ask if, and in which sense, the intentional generation of “higher” consciousness and the latter itself could be described as “epistemically innocent.” With a look at autobiographical reports, it will be argued that practices of inducing certain states of consciousness were an important cornerstone for the argument that theosophy is “no religion” and “beyond belief.”

Schlieter, Jens
Experiments with Experience:
Spiritual Practice as Scientific Experimentation

The presentation will introduce and discuss guiding hypotheses of a project newly funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (2019-2022). Over the last two centuries, many prominent spiritual practitioners from India and the West have described their religious practice as “spiritual experimentation,” “experimental metaphysics,” or the like. In addition to the modern scientific understanding of experimentation, religious discourse on “experimentation” and “experience,” however, draws on various earlier strands – most prominently, Neoplatonist, Theological, Mystic and Occult conceptions of *experimentum* and *experientia* as epistemic access to hidden dimensions of the practitioner's own true nature. The 19th and 20th century discourse on religious “experimentation” developed, however, clearly in parallel to the rise of scientific experimentation in the natural sciences. In close interaction, some “experimentalists” saw their

practice as a continuous experimentation according to the modern understanding of the scientific ethos – as a rigorous process of pursuing new methods of discovery. They declare to be consciously aware that the outcome might differ from their predictions or expectations, to capitalize on failed experiments as new points of departure, or to conduct new experiments with revised goals. Experiments with spiritual experience can be defined as experimenting with “technologies of the self” (Foucault), or as “experimental systems” (Rheinberger) of experiential bodily states. For systematizing purposes, we will use recent models of as theorized in Science Studies, asking how experimentalists in the religious field can be described as developing experimental systems of, e.g., magnifying, minimizing, accelerating, or decelerating processes in the experiential subject, as actors hold in regard to meditation techniques, fasting, etc. Are these parallels fully functional analogies, or more metaphorical in nature?

Angelika Schmitt
The Hermetic Symbolism of Andrei Bely’s Philosophy of Culture

Having spent four years as an esoteric disciple of Rudolf Steiner in Western Europe, the Russian symbolist Andrei Bely (1880-1934) returned to his native country in 1916. During the first decade of the Soviet period, he developed – parallel to Steiner, who had worked out his “Symptomatology of History“ since 1918 – his own historiosophical system, written down in the “History of the Becoming of the Self-consciousness Soul“. The unfinished 1200-page fragment can be regarded as Bely’s major theoretical work, but remained unknown for almost one century. In 1999, an incorrect version of the second part came out in Moscow and in 2020 the whole work is expected to be published with a commentary, based on the original manuscript. It has been prepared in a bilateral project organized by the University of Trier/Germany (Prof. Henrieke Stahl) and the Bely Memorial Apartment in Moscow (Dr. Monika Spivak).

Bely’s opus magnum gives an interpretation of Western cultural history over the last 2000 years, which is to be called hermetic in two senses: Bely picks up the thread of hermetic tradition – alchemistic metaphors are widely employed to describe historic processes while anthroposophical terms are also used, yet provided with meanings, differing from Steiner’s semantics, and the central hermetic principle of correspondence governs the entire philosophic conception of Bely’s work. On the other hand, the text itself is of hermetic character. The statement is not evident or even provided on the conceptual level, but must be extracted from the metaphorical, rhythmical and symbolic structure of the script, which is completed by complex drawings and geometrical schemes. Behind this method, we are able to discover a differentiated theory on poetry, which Bely worked out in his late theoretical works on literature. It is founded on the principles of anthroposophical meditation practice and Bely’s own experiences in this field.

Mark Sedgwick
Sufism, Personality and Consciousness in the Enneagram

The paper looks at the interpretation of personality and consciousness using the Enneagram, a technique of allegedly Sufi origin that in fact blends elements of Gurdjieff’s “Fourth Way” (a major influence on the development of later esoteric conceptions of consciousness) with modern Western psychology. The paper will trace what is known of the origins and development of the Enneagram, starting in Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way and developed in Chile by two South

American esoteric teachers of the 1970s, Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo. The paper then looks at the re-appropriation of the Enneagram by contemporary Argentinian Naqshbandis, especially in the teachings and writings of Abdul Karim Baudino, showing how their emphasis on the Sufi origins of the Enneagram allows them to turn the focus of its use from the analysis of personality to the understanding of consciousness and spirituality in an Islamic framework. Baudino's successful seminar series uses the "hook" of Sufi psychology to take attendees through the exploration of consciousness into Sufism and, sometimes, further into mainstream Sunni Islam. The paper is based on textual sources and on interviews in Argentina and Chile during 2018.

Stephanie Shea
Alter-Human Identities and the Imaginary:
Experiencing Consciousness as a Plural System

Otherkin, Therian, Machinekin, Fictionkin: all refer to non-human and fictional (human) identities, collectively known as "Alter-Human"; these people experience their lives in various ways that differ from the perceived standard societal norm of 'human'. This paper proposes to investigate one manifestation of the Alter-Human that relates to those who identify as "plural systems", i.e., people who have more than one identity/mind/person in the same body, the best-known example being Tulpas. A significant segment claim to hear and communicate with inner voices and/or with disembodied entities, and sometimes they act as a 'channel' for these entities.

Opinions differ as to the cause of this alter-human identity. Some ascribe a 'spiritual' or 'religious' significance to their identity, while others consider it to be the result of diverse psychological or neurological processes. Such heterogeneity presents challenges when attempting to study a group that does not neatly fit within the definitions of 'religion'. Furthermore, while alter-humans realize that their experience could be considered by the medical establishment to be a mental disorder, most contest the claim that they are suffering from a delusion. Yet if this is not a fantasy, how can we explain what is happening with these people?

This papers suggest that the concept of alter-human identities, together with associated experiences, can be explored via Western esoteric notions of the 'imagination', the 'imaginary', or the *Mundus Imaginalis*. The 'imaginary' in this sense is seen not as 'make believe' or an unreal construct, but as a liminal space that can be seen as being 'real', or as a place for encounters with varying levels of reality. Research data taken from qualitative interviews and participant observation fieldwork will be compared to an array of ideas regarding the imagination and possibilities of existence. This is not intended to serve as a *top-down* approach by which I try to make a theory 'fit' a phenomenon, but more as a type of thought experiment that can generate ideas and explore boundaries within the study of consciousness.

Sergey Shtyrkov
Ritual Feast and Transpersonal Experience:
Ossetian Religious Traditionalists in Search of Legitimization of Their Revivalist Projects

New projects on creation and the re-creation of ethnic religion often imply severe and consistent criticism of Christianity (based on Nietzschean and Marxist arguments) and of the very Christianity-centered concept of religion. New religions claim to overcome alleged narrow-

mindedness, backwardness and the repressive (often colonial) social nature of all Abrahamic religious doctrines as agents of globalization. Activists of ethnic religious projects do their best to find reputable sources for the ideological legitimation of their initiatives beyond Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Besides the natural sciences, they look for reference points for such discussions in Oriental philosophies and religious teachings as well as certain forms of new spirituality, including Western esotericism. In the Republic of North-Ossetia-Alania (Russian North Caucasus) there are several ongoing projects which present certain religions as traditional (i. e. real) and of ethnic origin. In this respect, one can determine these movements as traditionalistic (traditionalism as an ideology supposes that the most favorable situation for the preservation and development of a particular social group is the affirmation of the way of life that existed in the group's history). Some Orthodox activists present their version of traditionalism and see Orthodox Christianity as an ancient Ossetian religion. But they have their opponents – so called native believers. The “native faith” version of religious traditionalism proposes purification of everything Ossetian from the “external” veneer of Orthodoxy and the return of Ossetians to their pre-Christian past, to their “Indo-Aryan” spiritual roots, which had predetermined the greatness of contemporary civilization in opposition to Middle Eastern religious teachings. The main direction of the activists' ideological activity presupposes the search of these roots and eventually the reconstruction of the ancient Aryan system of faith. In doing so some of them use the legacy of Russian esoteric teachers (Helena Blavatsky, Nicholas and Helena Roerich), others prefer to base their narratives on certain academic writings (e. g. Joseph Campbell). The most important way in which they represent their nativist project as a real religion is to use some trendy psychological concepts and conceptions like transpersonal psychology and transpersonal experience. The activists describe their allegedly ancient ritual practices as a mechanism of reaching expanded consciousness and deliverance from the duality of Abrahamic (primarily Christian) religious worldviews. The altered states of consciousness produced by rituals are seen as main tools of anticolonial and anti-Western spiritual resistance. Ironically, here they use a global New Age discursive regime to cope with an imaginary ideological westernization.

Christa Shusko
Consciousness-Altering Sex, Sex Altering Consciousness:
Alice Bunker Stockham's The Lover's World

Born in 1833, Alice Bunker Stockham began working as a medical doctor following her studies at the Eclectic Medical College in Cincinnati in the 1850s. But Stockham was not only be a medical doctor; she actively participated in a number of educational, social, and religious reform movements beginning in the 1880s, including temperance, suffrage, social purity, kindergarten, vegetarianism, home economics, and metaphysical healing. Perhaps surprisingly the ultimate progress of these reforms would, for Stockham, depend upon specific practices spiritualized sexual intercourse which would aid in the development of a divine human consciousness.

While Stockham began considering methods of controlled sexual intercourse as a form of birth control as early as the 1880s, she would soon develop a much more extensive theory concerning the uses of controlled sexual intercourse for mental and spiritual transformation. In *Karezza* (1896), Stockham argued that “In the physical union of male and female there may be a soul communion giving not only supreme happiness, but in turn conducting to soul growth and development.” Stockham's final published work *The Lover's World* (1903) more fully elaborated

upon her theories of sexual intercourse and creative energy. Stockham wrote “The province of the LOVER’S WORLD is to teach the transformation or regeneration of the sexual life. Creative energy is to be used, not abused. Passion is good, not evil; it is the insignia of life, of the ability to create. In realization of love, the essence or the God-life in sexual functions, we control and generate power to do and to be.” For Stockham, controlled sexual ecstasy had the ability to transform the individual—and the world—through the harnessing of creative power. This paper contextualizes Stockham’s vision of transformative sexual intercourse within fin de siècle esoteric circles, identifying her influences as well as her influence on later sexual mysticisms.

Elsa G Simonetti
The role of ‘light’ in the Hermetic writings

Light (φῶς) is an absolutely central and recurrent theme in the Hermetica. Humans are conceived as luminous beings (φῶτες): their intellect, made of light and thus consubstantial with the supreme god (cf. Poim. 6), allows them to achieve a perfect knowledge of the truth (θεωρία, ἐποπτεία) conceived as an illumination and initiation into mysteries (μυστήρια). Light is the medium that reconciles the antithesis between the sensible and the intelligible realm: reflexions (ντανακλάσεις) of the incorporeal cosmos shine into the material realm, while the sensible world is itself reflected in the intelligible reality. In theurgic practices, the statues of the gods constitute the best vehicle for the union (σύστασις) between the practitioner and the deity, granting protection from the excessive, unbearable luminosity that a direct encounter with the divine would instead imply (cf. CH 17).

The present contribution intends to examine the multiple uses and meanings that the key notion of ‘light’ acquires in the Hermetic writings. In particular, it will employ this concept to identify and explore possible conceptual interconnections between the Hermetica and the philosophical systems developed by contemporaneous Platonists — who were similarly attributing a pivotal role to the imagery and terms related to ‘light’. The aim is to show that the element of ‘light’ fills a crucial gap, from a theoretical and logical perspective, in the Hermetic writings, as well as in the Neoplatonic texts — both founded on the central idea of an ascending path of knowledge acquisition and ethical improvement leading to the revelation of hidden, superior truths.

Vladislav Slepoy
The voices in the “Voice”:
Voices, demons and supernatural beings in R. Moshe Zacuto’s *Qol ha-ReMeZ*

R. Moshe Zacuto’s halakhic work has not been extensively studied. It is, however, obvious that his halakhic writings, which contain numerous biographical details, can shed new light on the formation of his kabbalistic concepts. R. Moshe Zacuto dissolved the boundaries of practical Kabbalah by applying its elements on the halakhic decision-making process. A close examination of the impact of the Kabbalah on Zacuto’s halakhic writings may lead to a more comprehensive understanding of his literary and spiritual activity. My paper shall include a concise overview of the characteristics of R. Moshe Zacuto’s halakhic works, especially of his wide-ranging commentary on the Mishnah *Qol ha-ReMeZ* (“The Voice of R. Moshe Zacuto”), first published in Amsterdam 1719. Based on this overview, selected case studies from Zacuto’s commentary will be analyzed in the light of references to supernatural experiences and beings mentioned there.

Various motifs and methods linked to both theoretical and practical Kabbalah will be explored. In doing so, the impact of Kabbalah and Magic on R. Moshe Zacuto's halakhic writings will be evaluated, emphasizing thereby the essential role they played in Jewish lifestyles in the course of the 17th century.

Terje Sparby
The Trappings of 'Imagination':
Meditation and Visual Experiences in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy

Visual experiences occurring during meditation are central to many different religious, contemplative and esoteric traditions. The interpretation and significance of such experiences have often been contested. So, too, in the works of the Austrian philosopher and "spiritual researcher" Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). This article traces the development of Steiner's concept of "imagination", which he presents as a visual form of higher knowledge arising from meditation and altered states of consciousness. In particular, I will investigate conflicting statements made by Steiner about imagination and how he attempts to distinguish his notion of authentic meditative visual experiences from unreliable visions and hallucinations.

An interesting issue is that Steiner at one point starts to claim that visual experiences of colors in mediation are only authentic if they lack sensory content but are still experienced as if one is experiencing colors. How can we understand this claim? What were Steiner's reasons for introducing it? Does this feature of imagination also hold for other aspects of meditative visual experience, such as seeing figures? If we consider further developments of Steiner's concept of imagination, it seems that he had a notion of authentic meditative knowledge that indeed involves sensory color-experience. In other words, I aim to show that Steiner's concept of imagination contains unresolved tensions and is a fruitful field for further study.

David Sterkenburg
'Alchemical Visionaries:
Dreams and Visions in Early Modern Alchemy'

Accounts of dreams and other experiences of a visionary nature feature prominently in alchemical literature from antiquity to the early modern period, from the 'visions' of Zosimos of Panopolis (3rd century) to *Bloomfield's Blossoms* (16th century) or *Ben-Adams Traum-Gesicht* (17th century). But to what extent such literary accounts may represent an actual practice of visionary experiences in an alchemical context, rather than just a popular stylistic framework, remains a mostly unexplored question.

In this paper I will discuss various examples from the (European) early modern period of the use of dreams and other visionary experiences in the practice of alchemy. I will discuss the importance given to dreams and other visionary experiences by some alchemists (such as the famous Swiss physician Paracelsus, the Belgian alchemist and physician J.B. van Helmont, or the American alchemist George Starkey, better known as *Eugenius Philalethes*) as a means to obtaining alchemical knowledge, including through (visionary) contact with 'intermediary beings', such as angels or spirits, or even the souls of diseased alchemists. And I will present various examples of the use of alchemical processes and substances to induce dreams and visions, again including in some cases for the express purpose of making contact with 'intermediary beings' such as angels or planetary spirits. In this context I will also broach the

issue of the possible historical use of alchemical entheogens. In conclusion I will argue that for a certain segment of alchemists of the early modern period dreams and other visionary states formed an integral part of their alchemical praxis.

Avinoam Stillman
“Better Than Schnapps”:
Psychedelic Research and Neo-Kabbalah in America

The experimental psychological and neurological study of psychedelic substances – and the visionary experiences they often induce – has expanded over the past decades, after being neglected (and legislatively suppressed) since the 1960s. In parallel, recent years have seen critical and historical studies of religion, “spirituality,” and psychedelics, including the work of Karl Baier and Christopher Partridge. Other (often popular) books have presented syntheses of psychedelic research and spirituality, like the psychiatrist Rick Strassman’s “DMT: The Spirit Molecule” or the religious studies works of Huston Smith. This overlapping academic and experiential discourse about psychedelics has informed the study of Jewish mysticism in the United States since the 1960s: academic Jewish Studies scholars and Jewish religious teachers alike pointed to resonances between psychedelic altered states and kabbalistic and Hasidic themes. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of “Jewish Renewal,” took LSD with Timothy Leary in 1962; Herbert Weiner’s popular 1969 book *9½ Mystics: The Kabbala Today* also addressed the spiritual uses of psychedelics. The American academy fostered “scholar-practitioners” like scholar of Hasidism and theologian Arthur Green, who wrote “Psychedelics and Kabbalah” in 1968 under the pseudonym Itzik Lodzer, and the Zohar scholar and translator Daniel Matt. Since the 1980s, Orthodox neo-kabbalistic authors such as Aryeh Kaplan and Joel David Bakst also referenced psychedelics – in Bakst’s case, dedicating a book and videos (available on YouTube) to DMT. The internet also provided the platform for blogs such as “Cannabis Chassidis.” Academics also proposed historical theories about psychedelics and Judaism; these include speculations about the *qaneh bosem* of the Temple incense, the biblical manna, and the contents of the Ba’al Shem Tov’s pipe. The rise of “psychedelic neo-kabbalah” in American Judaism and Jewish Studies reflects interest in esoteric and ecstatic experiences and textual traditions within American religious groups and universities since the mid-20th century.

Graham St. John
The Spirit Gland and Psychedelic Occulture

The contested legacy of the pineal gland runs rampant in popular esoterica. Advocates of disparate perspectives on the human condition have championed the pineal gland, notably Helena Blavatsky and H. P. Lovecraft, for whom this tiny gland positioned in the center of the brain is either an organ for spiritual evolution or gothic hopelessness. In this paper, I address these converse positions on the pineal, as represented by Modern Theosophy and Horror Fiction. At the turn of the millennium, this ontological conflict was spiced by the proposition that the pineal produces the powerful visionary psychedelic DMT, the so-called “spirit molecule,” a speculation gaining momentum in the wake of clinical psychiatrist Rick Strassman’s early 1990s clinical trials at the University of New Mexico. Proposing that the pinecone-shaped gland is a likely source of DMT production, Strassman speculated upon the role of the “psychedelic pineal” in death and rebirth. Navigating its animated career in popular

occulture, the paper explores the legacy of the “spirit gland” in contemporary cinema and TV. A mascot for spiritual reawakening or a fetish for nihilism, inaugurating experiences holy or unhinged, begetting “entities” with a spectrum of motives, appealing to apologists of discordant esoterica, I will demonstrate how the “spirit gland” has proven itself to be versatile myth.

Julian Strube

**From Mesmerism to Tantrik Occultism:
Contested Paths to Higher States of Consciousness**

At least since the development of Mesmeric practices, Western esotericists have been concerned with methods to induce altered states of consciousness. While “India” or “the East” was a prominent point of reference for European and North American esotericists from early on, it was not before the second half of the nineteenth century that they had access to first-hand information about South Asian yogic and meditational practices. In their encounter with learned Indians, they debated new understandings of consciousness, the individual self and its existential conception, as well as epistemological concepts pertaining to the nature of mind and matter. Far from being unidirectional, these exchanges had a profound impact on the modern understanding of esotericism and took place, as will be argued, within the context of global debates about the meaning and relationship of religion, science, and philosophy.

This paper will examine the ambiguous relationship between Western and Indian actors in that context. It will revolve around questions of authenticity and cultural agency within the colonial framework, highlighting the ways in which Indians interacted with originally Western currents such as Spiritualism, occultism, Theosophy, and New Thought. Rather than being imitated, these currents were transformed within Indian contexts and, in turn, exerted a decisive influence on their Western representatives. In this process, the Orientalist idea that Eastern knowledge was more original and pure bestowed Indian pandits with an extraordinary authority in their dialogue with esotericists. Esotericism became thus not only the field for Indian disputes about the meaning of “Hinduism,” but also for claims of Indian superiority over Western knowledge. It will be demonstrated in what ways notions of mind, consciousness, and altered states thereof were central to these debates, which remain influential up to the present day.

Karen Swartz

**Management matters:
Discursive strategies and the question of authority
in a post-Steiner Anthroposophical Society**

Although often countered by various sorts of hedges and other linguistic sleights of hand he himself embedded in his own productions, one of the many claims made by Rudolf Steiner was that individuals with the proper training could also – just like he according to his own reports had been able to do – gain insight into the workings of great cosmic processes and their whys and wherefores by means of developing the appropriate clairvoyant faculties. In the years following Steiner’s death, the organization that he founded has witnessed the emergence of a number of individuals, such as Judith von Halle, who have testified to having acquired just such abilities. This paper will investigate how such claims are discursively dealt with by the Anthroposophical Society as an organization. While these figures are not infrequently celebrated by certain enclaves of members, in both official and unofficial texts of varying kinds

they are at times marginalized, mocked or even operationalized against as threats to the governing body's authority and its means of legitimization.

György E. Szönyi
Visions, Voices, Altered States in the Shadow of the English Revolution:
The Heterodoxy of John Pordage, the Visions of Samuel Pordage
and the Enochian Walks of Jane Lead

During the English Revolution numerous radical and heterodox religious movements thrived, the "enthusiasts" were often attracted to esoteric ideas, alchemy, magic, and the Kabbalah, too. In my paper I revisit the intellectual circle of John Pordage, whose members during and after the Revolution played an important part in the amalgamation of religion and hermeticism.

John Pordage (1607-81) received a BA from Cambridge and a medical doctorate from the University of Leiden. He enjoyed the patronage of Elias Ashmole who respected him for his knowledge of astrology and alchemy. While in the 1640s Pordage developed radical theological views and was examined on repeated occasions, his household became the gathering place of heterodox people: the Judaising John Tany; Richard Coppin and Abiezer Coppe, both notorious for heresy and blasphemy; Elizabeth Poole, a Baptist prophetess; and William Everard, one of the leaders of the Diggers. In this excited and millenarian atmosphere Pordage fell into a trance while preaching on September 8, 1650. Running home he found his wife, Mary, in a similar state, which was not her first fit.

In 1654 Pordage was found guilty on fifty-six accounts of heresy, chief being "intercourse with spirits." He was expelled from his rectory and he spent the following years with esoteric reading, translation, and building up a small group of followers focused primarily on the works of Jakob Böhme. In 1661 his son, Samuel summarized the father's experiences with angels, and vindicated his visions in a fascinating epic poem (*Mundorum explicatio*), which in many ways can be seen as a forerunner of *Paradise Lost*. Samuel's mother, Mary died in 1668 but her spiritual place was filled by my last protagonist, Jane Lead (1624-1704) who began experiencing visions in 1670 and four years later moved into the Pordage household. Her studies of Böhme and other occult authors, combined with the ecstatic "transportations," developed to the foundation of the Philadelphian Society, headed by Lead and aiming at the "advancement of piety and divine philosophy."

Svetlana Tambovtseva
"VseyaSvetnaya Gramota":
Post-Soviet Exercise in Russian Kabbalah

The case I will discuss in my paper can be described as a new religious movement with an elaborated "folk-linguistic" doctrine. The name of the doctrine – "Vseyasvetnaya Gramota" (VG) – can be translated both as a "Planetary Alphabet" (Bennett 2011) and a "Pan-International Charter" (Laruelle 2008). Ananyj Shubin-Abramov, the leader of the movement, who introduced the doctrine in 1979, declares its supposedly ancient, pre-Cyrillic origin and precedence above all other writing systems. Adepts of the movement share the belief that the original divinely given letters had multiple dimensions and thus presented a perfect source of communication with the universe. According to the doctrine, the mystical power and the capacity of containing esoteric meaning have been lost after the script was deprived of its spatial multidimensionality,

the letters became plane and their number was reduced. The letters of VG mostly resemble the pre-reform alphabet that was used in the Russian Empire a century ago; some of them keep the Church-Slavonic names. Various modifications and combined ligatures provide the alphabet with a considerable number of letters – namely, 147. The hermeneutic principals suggested by VG are vague and based on the chains of phonosemantic associations between tag words and notions.

Although autochthonous and grass-root, the doctrine emerges within a rich European esoteric tradition and its hermeneutical patterns and implicit philosophical grounds date back to the Renaissance period. The letters of the VG appear to be perceived primarily as geometrical figures. In a way, it resembles a number symbolism applied to letters (Brach 2009: 75–89). The conception of the letters as ontologically independent entities is Neo-Platonic in its substance. The followers of the VG movement develop a kind of “Kabbalistic” natural philosophy, considering the letters to be omnipresent, and thus proving the providential design of the universe. My paper presents an attempt to track direct sources of the nationalistic “Kabbalistic” doctrine in the late Soviet context and to figure out its place in contemporary Russian New Age culture.

Anna Tessmann
Post-Soviet Visionaries and Astrology:
Specialist Types and Prognose Models

Flourishing in the late Soviet underground, astrology has successfully captured the post-Soviet New Age market of esoteric services in the early 1990s. Individual frustration, economic and political insecurity, as well as hopes for free development of personality and new visions of the future, led to establishing astrology as one of the most visible components of post-Soviet mass culture. Diverse astrological practices of constructing a horoscope with their interpretations outside – on TV, in print and electronic mass media – and inside of closed circles and lectures have appeared. The trendsetters in the field, the public astrologers, have been recognized by their adherents as visionaries. They were and still are participating in the discourses on self-improvement, health, memory and imaging past and future. Based on select oral and written sources from the 1990s, this paper explores the relationship between astrology and visionary experience in the post-Soviet astrological milieu and discuss relevant interpretative models of prognoses.

Marleen Thaler
Timothy Leary’s Psychedelic Orientalism

Timothy Leary (1920 – 1996) slipped into various roles throughout his life: he was a clinical psychologist at Harvard University, advocate of the therapeutic potentials of LSD and psilocybin, leading spokesman of U.S. American counterculture, outlaw, or as Richard Nixon put it: “The most dangerous man in America”. Yet, one of his most controversial roles was that of a guru of psychedelic religion. Together with Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert (who later became a Neo-Hindu spiritual teacher, known as Ram Dass), Leary accomplished a manual on the ritual use of LSD as a means of reaching an enlightened state of consciousness. In *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1964) Leary thus moved beyond a mere therapeutic approach towards the development of what he called applied mysticism.

Similar to other representatives of the 1960s psychedelic culture, for Leary the glorification of the mystic East served as a basic ingredient of his spiritual quest with South Asia occupying a crucial position. Aldous Huxley's remarks on Indian culture and religion, Evan-Wentz's Theosophical Neo-Vedantic approach, and tantric Hindu traditions, to name but a few, influenced Leary's specific perspectives on South Asian religion. Furthermore, all these South Asian references confirmed Leary's American dream of the re-emerging of cosmic consciousness by means of an entheogenic revolution.

The aim of this paper is the exposition of the major sources, that inspired Leary's psychedelic Orientalism, as well as the examination of Leary's reception of South Asian literature and practices.

Alexandre Toumarkine
Spiritism and Freudianism in Turkey

Freudianism, as literary knowledge if not as a practice, penetrated Republican Turkey in the 1920s and the 1930s. It did not, however, become widespread. The notion of the unconscious as elaborated by Sigmund Freud was badly translated and poorly understood in Turkish context. In the middle of the 1940s, when Turkish Spiritism, mainly based on French Kardecism, was reestablished after a break of more than thirty years, little interest in Freudian ideas, and especially in the notion of the unconscious, was shown by Dr. Bedri Ruhselman, the leader of Turkish Neo-spiritism. This paper examines the reasons behind this failed encounter, a failure that is especially surprising given the common interest in hypnosis.

Anna M. Vilenó,
'Reconcile the irreconcilable':
Knorr von Rosenroth's mystico-philological project

Christian Knorr von Rosenroth is probably the most famous seventeenth-century Christian exponent of Kabbalah. Although he is mostly known for his work as a translator of Jewish kabbalistic texts, and hence, for his philological skills, one can find, scattered through his Kabbala denudata and his last work *Messias puer*, various personal statements that shows him at pains to justify the recourse to Hebrew and Jewish sources in a Christian framework.

This paper aims at presenting the way Knorr related to sources available to him with particular respect to supranatural experiences reported in the texts he was dealing with and at examining how he tries to legitimate them by relying on the comparison with Christian practices. Finally we shall address the question of the extent to which philology and exegesis appear as gateways to esoteric knowledge.

Christopher Wagner
The Tetrad and the Tree:
Revelations of the 'Self' Archetype in the Works of C.G. Jung

Over the course of his career, the Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, developed a methodology by which to uncover, identify, and sort collective patterns of the human psyche through consideration of their manifested symbolic forms—patterns he eventually called 'archetypes.' As conveyed through his original texts, Jung's approach consisted largely in the examination of

relatively spontaneous psychical patterns gleaned through clinical research—products of ‘the unconscious’ contained in fantasies, visions, and dreams—and patterns of psyche distinguished in historical texts. Although not disclosed in his scientific writings, this method took account as well of Jung’s own experiences of the unconscious, which, in retrospective consideration of his output, appears to have significantly propelled and informed his model of archetypes. This paper focuses upon Jung’s discernment and depiction of the ‘Self’ archetype, particularly as manifested symbolically through quaternary configurations and botanical motifs—symbols that may be represented, respectively, through expressions of the ‘tetrad’ and the ‘tree.’ Concentrating upon his output from the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the presentation highlights Jung’s professional and personal confrontations with these symbols as spontaneous products of the unconscious, together with his encounters and deliberations upon them as historical artefacts of the Western and non-Western mind. It addresses, additionally, the ways in which Jung interpreted these symbols as interrelated—indeed, synergistic—representations of psychical ‘wholeness,’ a phenomenological state which characterizes the ‘Self.’ The paper concludes with discussion of how Jung came to associate each of these symbols with Western alchemy, an historical area of research with which he became increasingly occupied from the 1930s onward. In its weighing of Jung’s reception, interpretation, and interrelation of particular symbols, the presentation serves to clarify the method by which he recognized and confirmed collective patterns of mind.

Luke Walker

From the ‘Blake vision’ to ‘Plutonian Ode’:

Allen Ginsberg as student of Western esotericism

This paper discusses the role of Western esotericism in the life and work of the Beat poet and countercultural activist Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997). Ginsberg’s poetry, politics and spirituality have often been interpreted within the context of either his adopted religion of Buddhism or the mythopoesis of his poetic ‘guru’ William Blake (1757-1827). In 1948, Ginsberg had undergone a mind-expansive visionary experience, during which he heard the voice of William Blake speak to him; this experience was not drug induced, but later prompted Ginsberg to experiment with a wide range of psychedelic drugs, as well as to discover his own distinctive poetic voice and to evangelize on Blake’s behalf within the Beat movement and Sixties counterculture. Later, Ginsberg’s engagement with Buddhist and Hindu traditions also played in key role in popularizing Eastern religion within the counterculture.

However, a lesser-known aspect of Ginsberg’s life and work was his long-lasting interest in Western esoteric traditions, including Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and the Kabbalah. Clearly, there was significant intersection between these interests and Ginsberg’s devotion to Blake; however, he also studied Western esoteric texts in their own right. He made explicit reference to Gnostic texts and terminology in many interviews and several poems, often linking the key tropes of Gnosticism to the political situation of the 1960s and 1970s.

One of Ginsberg’s works which makes most sustained use of Western esoteric tradition is ‘Plutonian Ode’ (1978); this poem arose in part out of Ginsberg’s friendship and correspondence with the founding father of the academic study of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem. Equally, Ginsberg always emphasized that his original 1948 ‘Blake vision’ had arisen not only out of his reading of Blake, but also the works of Plato, Plotinus and the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages. By appreciating the depth of Ginsberg’s engagement with the various streams of Western

esotericism, we can better understand the relationship between these spiritual traditions and the counterculture of the 'long Sixties', in which Ginsberg played such a central role.

M.E. Warlick
Parlor Games:
Leonora Carrington and the Tarot

From the seances conducted during its earliest years, the Surrealist movement in Paris was deeply committed to esoteric pursuits. André Breton reinforced these activities in his second *Manifesto*, 1929, when he called for “the profound, the veritable occultation of surrealism.” Anticipating the question of how to achieve that goal, he stated, “I think that there would be great interest if we could attempt a serious investigation into those sciences which for various reasons are today completely discredited, such as astrology, among all of these ancient sciences, metaphysics (especially as it concerns the study of cryptesthesia) among the modern sciences....In the course of diverse experiments conceived under the form of “parlor games” whose value as entertainment, or even as recreation, does not seem to me to any way affect their importance.” Recent scholarship has documented the abundance of surrealist imagery related to a variety of esoteric “games,” including images of tarot cards, crystal balls, astrology, and palmistry. They imagined women to be particularly adept at clairvoyance. As more women artists joined the movement from the 1930s onward, they too experimented with these esoteric “games,” emphasizing the feminine aspects of the intuitive unconscious. This paper will explore similar themes found in the paintings of Leonora Carrington produced during her years in Mexico, particularly her images of seances, the tarot, talismans, and witchcraft to shed light on the magical practices she incorporated into her own creative work. Her adaptations of traditional esoteric imagery often emphasize feminine powers and her fusions of multiple traditions reflect her readings of nineteenth and early twentieth century illustrated texts on hermetic traditions and imagery, including texts by Éliphas Lévi, P.D. Ouspensky, E.A. Grillo de Givry, Kurt Seligmann, and Gerald Gardner.

Thomas Willard
The Rosicrucian Theory of Consciousness
in Thomas Vaughan’s *Lumen de Lumine* (1651)

This paper will explore the theory of consciousness set out in a book by the Welsh alchemist Thomas Vaughan, who in 1652 edited and introduced the first English edition of the Rosicrucian *Fama* (1614) and *Confessio* (1615). The focus will be on the engraved “image of the magical school” (*Scholae magicae typus*) in *Lumen de Lumine: or, A New Magical Light* and on “a letter from the brothers of R. C. [the Rosy Cross] concerning the invisible magic mountain,” which follows the engraving. Both have sources, previously unidentified, in German books printed just after manifestos first appeared. Together they identify a theory of consciousness similar to several promulgated in the last century—principally the theory of “three awarenesses” developed by the Canadian critic Northrop Frye, who was familiar with Vaughan’s book and its biblical sources, but also the ideas of Jungians like Jeffrey Raff and parapsychologists like Jeffrey Mishlove. The talk will be illustrated with projected images of the Rosicrucian magic mountain from ancestors in the *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* of Heinrich Kuhnraeth (1595) to descendents in the *Geheimne Figuren der Rosenkreuzer* (1775–1788). It will be supplemented as time

allows with comments on mountain symbolism by the likes Michael Maier and Robert Fludd among others.

Jake Winchester
Seers of The Second Sight:
The Celtic Otherworld and Visionary Consciousness in 17th-Century Scotland

In 1678 Robert Boyle began investigating the Scottish phenomenon known as the “second Sight” His interest inspired that of a number of other scholars concerned with antiquary and metaphysical questions including John Aubrey Henry Baker and Edward Lhuys—ultimately instigating a period of sustained inquiry into the topic During this period several Scottish treatises on the second sight appeared including Robert Kirk’s *The Secret Commonwealth* John Fraser’s *Deuteroscopia* and Martin Martin’s *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*. These texts indicate that in 17th-century Scotland the second sight was not principally considered a means of divining the future” but rather a means of gaining visionary access into the celtic Otherworld—a world peopled in Kirk’s words” by “Subterranean Invisible People” Descriptions of the second sight found in these works suggest substantial alterations of consciousness and the possible use of trance-inducing techniques. By engaging with the large body of primary texts treating the subject, this paper aims to establish the precise relationship between alterations of consciousness, the visionary phenomenon of the “second sight”, and trance-inducing techniques in late 17th-century Scotland. It goes on to raise a possible connection between the folkloric motif of the “fairy ointment” and the psychoactive solanaceous salves documented primarily in texts related to the witch trials.

Lucian Wong
Kṛṣṇa in the Sky with Diamonds:
Vaiṣṇavism and the Psychedelic Movement

With its roots in the devotional ecstasies of the sixteenth century Bengali Kṛṣṇa bhakta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (1486 –1533), the Gauḍīya (or Bengali) Vaiṣṇava tradition evinces a deep concern for states of consciousness that transcend everyday awareness. It privileges in particular those states that are devotionally-oriented toward the dark-hued Hindu pastoral deity, Kṛṣṇa, on account of the incomparable experience of bliss (ānanda) these purportedly afford. Grounded in a conception of devotion (bhakti) as causeless (ahaitukī) and independent (svatantra), and informed by a brāhmaṇically-aligned ethical framework and its general aversion to intoxicants, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theological discourse nevertheless appears to leave little room for entertaining the notion that psychedelic substances can serve as effective means for the realisation of such exalted states. This was indeed the basic position adopted by Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta (1896 – 1977), an orthodox Gauḍīya renunciate and founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), when he found himself at the epicentre of America’s psychedelic counterculture in the mid 1960s. Yet, as this paper aims to highlight, Bhaktivedanta and his early followers made ample use of psychedelic discourse and culture to promote his nascent global Vaiṣṇava movement. The paper argues that such engagement betrays an implicit recognition of the psychedelic counterculture’s having created social and cognitive conditions favourable to the effective pursuance of Bhaktivedanta’s religious agenda.

David W. Wood
Signatura rerum:
The Parallel Epiphanies of Goethe and Jacob Böhme

Goethe's autobiographical text, *Italian Journey*, draws a direct parallel between his own revelatory experience of life and the world of art in Venice and a mystical vision recounted in Jacob Böhme's biography. In the latter, it is said that Böhme came to be enlightened about the "secret nature" of the universe after looking at a polished bowl. This passage is the only time Jacob Böhme's name is explicitly mentioned in Goethe's entire oeuvre. There are diametrically opposed interpretations as to its significance. Scholars like Ronald Douglas Gray prefer to suppose Goethe extensively reading Böhme's mystical writings and related authors in 1769 as a 20-year-old. While for more recent researchers like Paola Meyer, any deeper Böhmean impact on Goethe's writings should be rejected: "Although it is possible that Goethe did read Böhme, there is absolutely no evidence to this effect."

In this paper I will argue that evidence for a threefold impact of Böhme's writings and visionary experience can be immanently found in Goethe's works. Firstly, Goethe presents a Böhmean conception and instances of a polysemic Adamic language in his *Farbenlehre* (Theory of Colour). Secondly, the idea of Great Chain of Being, implicit Böhme's vision of the polished bowl, is artistically reflected in several examples in Goethe's poetic writings that are strikingly interrelated with Böhme's theosophical writings. Thirdly, Goethe consciously interlinked and textually placed his own scientific and artistic epiphanies as forms of initiatory experience into the same tradition of mystical enlightenment recounted in Jacob Böhme's biography. All this can be summed up by saying: Goethe adopted and modified in a scientific, poetic and biographical manner Böhme's philosophical doctrine of signatures.

Cüneyd Yildirim
Visions and Vampires in 19th-Century Sufism

In spite of the political, social and economic developments during the "long 19th century", numerous charismatic Sufi masters appeared in the Islamic World during that century, claiming powerful visions, especially of the Prophet Muhammad. These include Aḥmad al-Tijānī (died 1815), Aḥmad ibn Idrīs (died 1837) and Muḥammad Nūr al-ʿArabī (died 1888). The latter, a native of Egypt who spent most of his life in the Ottoman Balkans, has not yet been adequately studied by Western historians of Sufism. On September 27, 1870, he proclaimed himself the "pole" of his age, the chief saint of his era. He legitimized his sacred rank through an autobiographical text, according to which he had experienced altered states of consciousness. Muḥammad Nūr reports how his soul leaves his body like a snake shedding his skin. But mostly the text is about the experience of the "reality" of the prophet Muhammad. This is related to Sufi cosmology which forms the theoretical basis of experiences of Muḥammad's nūr (light). In connection to this same cosmology he also explains the existence of vampires as dead people whose souls cannot transcend this world because of the vices they have committed. The paper thus contributes to the understanding of altered states of consciousness in the esoteric literature of Islam.

Dangwei Zhou
The Translation and Spread of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*

This paper will explore the translation process of the ancient Chinese text *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, as conducted by German sinologist Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930), and the interpretation of this book by Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). To begin with, the paper will examine the origin of this text, which comes from a Chinese esoteric circle. The discussion will take into account the development of this work in Chinese Daoist tradition and the way in which Wilhelm translated the work. Then, the paper will analyse Jung's commentary on this book. It is safe to say that Jung's commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower* made this little-known work popular and widely accepted. It is therefore necessary to conduct an analysis of Jung's ideas expressed in his commentary, especially with regards to Jung's application of notions of conscious (and unconscious) mind that appear remarkably far from the original designation of consciousness in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Finally, the paper will investigate the procedure through which this book is brought back to Eastern culture with Jung and Wilhelm's contributions. In conclusion, this paper will explore the significance of this text in Wilhelm and Jung's bridging Eastern and Western notions of consciousness, Jung's connection with Chinese esoteric tradition, and their tendency to psychologise ancient Daoist tradition.

Kateryna Zorya
**Keeping out of Meatspace:
Post-Soviet Practitioner Views on States of Consciousness**

The idea that the practitioner must reach a certain state of consciousness for her work to be effective is not new in esoteric discourse. However, different currents have different views on what such conductive states of consciousness are, how often must the practitioner attain them to be effective, and whether there are states of consciousness that must be avoided. In this paper, I will examine a number of views on states of consciousness extant among post-Soviet practitioners of magic, in particular focusing on how post-Soviet practice often sees 'normal' states of consciousness as automatic and thus undesirable, incorporating a tradition that stems from George Gurdjieff, and stimulates the practitioner to retain a constant state of semi-detached awareness, a "bird's eye" view of reality. This ascended view is seen as the key to a correct and direct understanding of reality: the correct state of mind leads to correct perception, which, in turn, is synonymous with correct interpretation. Emotions and passions are often seen as a manifestation of baser states from which a practitioner must ascend, and an inability to escape them at will marks a practitioner as "having fallen into the meat", someone who has succumbed to their base passions and is thus incapable of performing effective magic or esoteric practice. At the same time, Post-Soviet practice cultivates a narrative in which the practitioner could be challenged to perform at any moment, whether by their own inner self, the gods, or the universe, and so a key characteristic of "the exemplary practitioner" is the ability to consistently maintain the proper state of consciousness in everyday life, a state that is seen as markedly different to the one most people reside in.

