



CORBIN ON THE INNER CHURCH  
FOWDEN ON HERMETIC SECRETS  
FRANCIS PETERS ON THE OCCULT  
PARPOLA ON MESOPOTAMIA

Novalis <sup>1</sup>

We are close to waking, when we dream that we're dreaming."

Rilke:

"I am too alone in the world, and yet not alone enough  
to make every moment holy.  
I am too tiny in this world, and not tiny enough  
just to lie before you like a thing,  
shrewd and secretive.  
I want my own will, and I want simply to be with my will,  
as it goes toward action;  
and in those quiet, sometimes hardly moving times,  
when something is coming near,  
I want to be with those who know secret things  
or else alone. <sup>2</sup>

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P.D. Ouspensky:

"Gurdjieff further claimed that knowledge, especially esoteric knowledge, . . . is finite and cannot be freely distributed to everyone. This higher knowledge, to be

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<sup>1</sup> HKA II, p. 416

<sup>2</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*

effective as a spiritual nutrient, needs to be concentrated and "preserved among a small number of people and not dispersed among the masses."<sup>3</sup>

This view is diametrically opposed by Robert A.F. Thurman:

### SAMAYA GYA GYA GYAH!

"This expression reminds us that this teaching is esoteric, sealed by a vow and protected by angelic beings. The reason it has been traditionally kept a secret is not because of some elitism or stinginess on the part of enlightened teachers. It has been kept secret because it can easily be misunderstood by the uneducated, misunderstood as meaning that there are no efforts to be made towards freedom, that all ethical restraint, virtue, and mental development are really unnecessary, and that anything goes. When the raw egotist feels that his impulses should be allowed unchecked sway, that person tends to become harmful to himself and others. However, after a person has cultivated detachment from blind passion, freedom from reactive hatred, and insight into the relativity of all attitudes and states of personality, this simple teaching no longer needs to be sealed away by angels. It becomes readily available. In modern society, particular in societies influenced by ideologies that teach that reality is either evil and threatening or neutral and ultimately meaningless, the literate public has a right to hear this radically positive teaching."<sup>4</sup>

### Outer, Inner, Secret

Outer	ch'i ( <i>phyi</i> )	ឆី
Inner	nang ( <i>nang</i> )	នំ
Secret	sang ( <i>gsang</i> )	សង់

The sociologist Edward Tiryakian has argued that the role of "esoteric culture" has been vital at such moments of "shifting cultural paradigms":

"The particular thrust of efficacy of esoteric culture lay, I would suggest, in the exoteric culture having what may be characterized as a loss of confidence in established symbols and cognitive models of reality, in the exhaustion of institutionalized collective symbols of identity, so to speak. There was what may be called a "retreat from reason into the occult"..., a retreat ... in the sense of a religious retreat, a temporary withdrawal for inspirational meditation which provides a restoring of psychic energy to be used in re-entering everyday life with greater vigor."<sup>5</sup>

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Klaus Geus and Mark Geller:

<sup>3</sup> P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), p. 37. <http://gurdjieffourthway.org/pdf/cosmo.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Robert A.F. Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of The Dead. Liberation Through Understanding in The Between*, Bantam Books, New York, 1994, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> Note 22 Edward A. Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," in *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult*, ed. Edward A. Tiryakian, New York, 1974, pp. 274-75.

"One benefit of an interdisciplinary approach is the surprising result which can follow from the confrontation of the same idea between disciplines. A case in point is the concept of 'esoteric knowledge', to which the present collection of articles is devoted, which will trace the frame-work of esoteric knowledge from Babylonia to Greece and into Christian thought, highlighting similarities and differences within each *episteme*. The journey is rather crooked and full of potholes. Moreover, the expression 'esoteric' is used today rather indiscriminately. Within the category of 'esoteric knowledge' one understands a variety of related expressions, such as 'mystical' or 'occult', as well as the more concrete 'absolute' or 'elevated' knowledge, which can also be considered as 'hidden', 'secret', or 'inaccessible', and even 'fanciful' or carried away. The confused pattern of such definitions advocates a look at the historical development this concept.

The term 'esoteric' originates from the Greek for 'inner', not however with the sense of 'psychic', 'spiritual', or 'mystical', but with a purely local meaning of being 'further with-in' something. The antonym is 'exoteric', namely 'external'. There is no corresponding terminology in Babylonia, although the concept of knowledge exclusively reserved for scholars increasingly appeared in colophons of cuneiform tablets emanating from the scribal academies and royal libraries, such as that of Assurbanipal of Nineveh (mid 7th century BCE). These colophons make the matter quite explicit: revealing the contents of a particular academic tablet to someone uninitiated (literally 'not knowledgeable') is a taboo of a god. But what kind of composition contains such hidden (or esoteric) knowledge?

This question is not easy to answer. On one hand there are neither terms for or any textual evidence for 'esoteric' versus 'exoteric' knowledge, since neither category is defined, al-though there is an implicit assumption of 'insiders' (lit. *mudû* 'learned') and 'outsiders' (lit. *la mudû*, 'not learned') among possible readers of the tablets. Beyond this crude distinction in colophons, there are references to secret knowledge or lore often associated with divination . . ." <sup>6</sup>

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Juliette Wood:

"Increased interest in ritual techniques, complex systems of symbol and metaphor, cipher languages, and the increased allegorisation of alchemy contributed to the emergence of the idea that a coterie of individuals, rather than single thinkers, possessed this secret knowledge. In this context, esoteric systems were thought to have the power to transform, not just the individual, but whole societies. This is the process which underlies the esoteric tarot; categories identifiable at a philosophical level are transferred to a pseudo-historical context and eventually, through Jungian speculation, into the idea of archetype." <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Klaus Geus and Mark Geller (eds.), Esoteric Knowledge in Antiquity, TOPOI – Dahlem Seminar for the History of Ancient Sciences Vol. II, 2014. From: CHAPTER 1, Esoteric Knowledge in Antiquity – Some Thoughts, Mark Geller & Klaus Geus [Freie Universität Berlin], pp. 3 – 6 .

<http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/Preprints/P454.PDF>

<sup>7</sup> Juliette Wood, The Celtic Tarot and the Secret Tradition: A Study in Modern Legend Making, *Folklore*, Vol. 109 (1998), pp. 20-21.

**Esotericism** or **Esoterism** signifies the holding of **esoteric opinions** or beliefs,<sup>[1]</sup> that is, ideas preserved or understood by a small group or those specially initiated, or of rare or unusual interest.<sup>[2]</sup> The term derives from the Greek ἐσωτερικός (*esôterikos*), a compound of ἔσω (*esô*): "[within](#)", thus "pertaining to the more inward", mystic. Its [antonym](#) is "exoteric".

### [Esotericism@Wikipedia](#)

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John Crowley:

"A secret story had been going on for centuries, for all time, and it could be known; here was its outline or part of it, the secrets spilled, or if not the secrets, the secret that there were secrets."<sup>8</sup>

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### **esoteric**

adjective intended for or understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest. **Derivatives:** **esoterically** adverb - **esotericism** noun - **esotericist** noun - **Origin:** 17: from Greek *esoterikos*, from *esotero*, comparative of *eso* 'within', from *es*, *eis* 'into'. **esoterica** - plural noun [treated as singular or plural] esoteric subjects or publications. **ORIGIN:** early 20th cent.: from Greek *esoterika*, neuter plural of *esoterikos* 'esoteric'.

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David Gordon White:

"Derived from the Greek term *esoteros*, esotericism refers to what is 'inner' or hidden, what is known only to the initiated few, and closed to the majority of mankind in the exoteric world."<sup>9</sup>

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Shawn Eyer:

"... one of the earliest usages of the term *esôterikos* in reference to spiritual tradition is in the essay *On the Pythagorean Life* by Iamblichus (250–325 ce), where it is said that the students in the Pythagorean school at first had to listen to their master from behind a veil. Those who passed the probationary period were called *esôterikoi*, and permitted to sit within the veil and see Pythagoras as he taught them. William Preston, [...] refers to this portion of Iamblichus' text directly when he noted in 1801 that the ancient teacher "divided them into the esoteric and exoteric classes: to the former he intrusted the more sublime and secret doctrines, to the latter the more simple and popular." This is one of the earliest Masonic uses of the term esoteric, and it informed how later Masonic writers would conceive of the notion. Of course, also an early example of the word "exoteric," meaning "those outside."<sup>10</sup>

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### **What is Esotericism?**

"The word "esoteric" derives from the Greek *esoterikos*, and is a comparative form of *eso*, meaning "within." Its first known mention in Greek is in Lucian's ascription to

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<sup>8</sup> John Crowley, *Aegypt*, p. 76. [London, 1987 edition]

<sup>9</sup> David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Shawn Eyer, *Defining Esotericism from a Masonic Perspective* [Online preview article: a summary of a more comprehensive treatment which will appear in *Ahiman: A Review of Masonic Arts & Letters*, volume 1].

Aristotle of having “esoteric” [inner] and “exoteric” [outer] teachings. The word later came to designate the secret doctrines said to have been taught by Pythagoras to a select group of disciples, and, in general, to any teachings designed for or appropriate to an inner circle of disciples or initiates. In this sense, the word was brought into English in 1655 by [Stanley in his \*History of Philosophy\*](#)<sup>11</sup>

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Paul J. Bagley:

“Esotericism, formerly called esoterism, is a complex phenomenon which does not permit any simple or uniform explanation. The practice of esotericism or the detection of esoteric doctrines has a lengthy history involving occultists, alchemists, kabbalists, numerologists, poets, mystics, and astrologers. In almost every case the contention that a book or a doctrine contains an esoteric or arcane message generates controversy. But perhaps nowhere is the subject more controversial than in the suggestion that esotericism was practiced by philosophers of the past. My intention in this essay is to consider some general aspects of esotericism as it applies to philosophy and philosophic communication and then focus on a particular type of it which has become quite neglected.”<sup>12</sup>

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Tanya Marie Luhrmann:<sup>13</sup>

“To call esoteric knowledge "secretive" is to use the word in a strained way: truths of the mysteries are intentionally hidden only if you believe that there is a god who conceals them. But this is more or less what magicians do believe - or at least it is the myth-like account by which this knowledge is conceptualized. Magicians call esoteric knowledge secretive and speak about initiations through which deity-like initiators reveal knowledge that they have previously concealed. The real point seems to be that "esoteric knowledge" is the name given to a certain sort of experience, and that access to the experience itself is restricted to participants of secretive groups. Writing about the experience cannot give access to this knowledge: the experience must be experienced, and only the experiencer can lay claim to his own, unique and inherently hidden knowledge of what happened.”

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Perhaps it would be germain<sup>14</sup> to widen the perspectives on the methodology & definition of the word ‘esoteric’, parallel to the emerging academic constructs. For example, Peter Kingsley writes:

“ . . . true esoteric teaching aims not at filling the disciple or pupil with mere fascinating theories but with opportunities for making these ideas and theories real in his own experience. Romantic notions of an esoteric text as a document containing earth-shattering statements that need locking away from the profane are naïve and

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<sup>11</sup> From: *Esotericism, Art, and Imagination* Conference Notes.

<sup>12</sup> Paul J. Bagley, On the Practice of Esotericism, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1992), pp. 231-247.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Anthropology / Stanford University.

<sup>14</sup> To Phoenix Academy Facebook Group, Thursday, 10 November 2011

vastly oversimplistic. The fact is that hardly anyone would recognize such a text for what it is, let alone know how to use it.” [15]

I am using the word “widen” in the analogical sense as in Juan Garcia Atienza:

“ . . . the researcher must be willing to throw a stone into the pond of knowledge and to follow to their limits the rings that spread from its point of contact with the water, for these waves consist of so many other forms of knowledge that may have been forgotten.”<sup>16</sup>

Or, in the beautiful words of Thornton Wilder:

“Faith is an ever-widening pool of clarity, fed with springs beyond the margin of consciousness. We all know more than we know we know.”<sup>17</sup>

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I have recently considered the ramifications of replacing the word ‘esoteric’ with the word ‘secret’. For example, as a Tibetan Buddhist, I have texts that are marked: SECRET: FOR INITIATES ONLY. There is a general classification of the material into OUTER, INNER and SECRET. This material is not in the public domain.

Etic and emic . . .

“Unlike the knowledge imparted by academics, this conquering knowledge comes from a conscious immersion in the transcendent experience of humans and countries that has been accumulating throughout time. Through the exercising of this knowledge, those who conquer oblige us to forget who has held the power at each moment in time, who those who would succeed in their plan know submission is even more effective when the ignorance of the submitted is encouraged. In this way, when Christianity installed itself in power through the church, it reversed whole centuries of human evolution, prohibiting practises and customs and knowledge that its new parishioners had preserved from time lost to memory. Islam did the same thing during its first days, when the conquering caliphs of North Africa ordered the library at Alexandria destroyed and its volumes burned, alleging that these books told lies, they were contrary to the Koran, and that if they revealed truths, those truths were already included in the pages of the Koran.”<sup>18</sup>

“Throughout human history, heterodoxy and individuals and minorities from the margins have attempted to approach the clues left by tradition in order to extract its messages. The powers that be have always rejected such attempts and indeed persecuted and condemned them.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 369-370.

<sup>16</sup> Juan Garcia Atienza, *The Knights Templar in the Golden Age of Spain. Their Hidden History on the Iberian Peninsula*, Destiny Books/Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, 2006, p.9.

<sup>17</sup> Thornton Wilder, *The Eighth Day*.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Garcia Atienza, *The Knights Templar in the Golden Age of Spain. Their Hidden History on the Iberian Peninsula*, Destiny Books/Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, 2006, p.264

<sup>19</sup> Juan Garcia Atienza, *The Knights Templar in the Golden Age of Spain. Their Hidden History on the Iberian Peninsula*, Destiny Books/Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, 2006, p.265.

"The solution lay in telling another encoded history, which could eventually be fully understood by those who were adept at decoding certain ciphered languages commonly used throughout the Middle Ages." <sup>20</sup>

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In Tibetan Buddhism:

"It concerns the profound reality underlying the Teaching, indeed, making possible liberation itself. It teaches radical nonduality, the immediate and liberating presence of ultimate reality in the here and now, and the actuality of peace, security, benevolence, and bliss. This is especially healing in our modern culture where some current interpretations of religions tend to devalue our immediate experience of life, and secularism reduces all to meaningless matter." - <sup>21</sup>

"Naked vision" is liberated intuition – unmediated experience. It can function when all conceptual direction, both conscious thought-orientation and unconscious ingrained prejudice, has been thoroughly suspended. The central notion is that all Deity is the natural clarity of intelligence itself, All positive awareness, love, confidence, stability, power, clarity, and goodness – the strong force of the universe – *is itself* our bare intelligence. The task then is to strip away all confusions and distorted programmings and let our natural goodness be there, to find our own natural security in our actual deepest reality." - <sup>22</sup>

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Francis E. Peters:

"THE OCCULT is what is hidden. But not to everyone. Wherever there is something hidden, there is necessarily someone who knows. Nor is the occult something that is merely ignored. It has, by implication, been concealed, by some agent and to some purpose, to all except those same inevitable knowers. Thus to ignore the occult would be folly, the equivalent, in parabolic terms, of failing to submit a bid on the Pearl of Great Price.

The occult is doubly occult: it is a hidden knowledge of hidden truths or powers. These latter were concealed, it is agreed, by the Maker of Truths who appears to have been generally reluctant to cast his Pearl before swine, while those who do possess them are careful to keep a close guard on their treasure. Indeed, in many societies those "knowers," who everywhere and always constitute an elite, banded together in guilds and brotherhoods to stand guard over the extremely useful and valuable knowledge that was theirs.

The secret knowledge these adepts possessed – *gnosis* for the Greeks, *hikmah* to the Arabs – was more than useful; it was highly sensitive and indeed dangerous, having passed, as it did, from the dimension of the divine, the Other, into the realm of the human. The clergy – and this was the normal form of self-association among the Knowers – were the conductors of this divine electricity. They were not consumed by their knowledge: they could enter the Holy of Holies, handle the Sacred Species with impunity, go up to the Sacred Mountain, eat of the Tree of [p.186] Knowledge, even peer into the Abyss. If the clergy grew rich on their

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<sup>20</sup> Juan Garcia Atienza, *The Knights Templar in the Golden Age of Spain. Their Hidden History on the Iberian Peninsula*, Destiny Books/Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, 2006, p. 225.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A.F. Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of The Dead. Liberation Through Understanding in The Between*, Bantam Books, New York, 1994, p. 227.

<sup>22</sup> Robert A.F. Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of The Dead. Liberation Through Understanding in The Between*, Bantam Books, New York, 1994, p. 227 - 228.

privy knowledge of what they discerned in the Abyss and then passed it out in regulated dosages to the profane and unknowing laymen, they probably deserved their tithes: they were daredevil tightrope walkers on what their societies generally conceded were high-voltage lines. For our own part, we are more inclined to regard the priestly guilds of Egypt and Babylonia and Israel as confraternities of skilled technicians or even as mere charlatans who knew full well that there was no power in those circuits. To us their fees appear exorbitant and their priestly secrecy no more than oppression since we have, at least on the philosophical level, a very different view of knowledge: science is an open and public enterprise, self-achieved rather than bestowed, dialectical, cumulative.”<sup>23</sup>

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## GARTH FOWDEN

(S.H. xxii).<sup>8</sup> *The Ogdoad reveals the Ennead* also emphasizes the importance of studying the books of Hermes in general, and in particular of not divulging its own contents, on pain of terrible penalties. In short, although the ultimate revelation of divine knowledge can occur only in the personal intercourse of master and pupil, there is a parallel and supplementary literary tradition which, since it records what passes between Hermes and his adepts, has a sanctity of its own. That is why Hermetic texts, technical as well as philosophical, are frequently referred to as [...], 'sacred discourses', emphasizing their scriptural status; and one can imagine that access to them, and the obligation not to reveal their mysteries, will have acted as a powerful bond between Hermetic adepts. That the requirement of secrecy was controversial we have already seen, and its neglect in practice is attested by the impressively wide circulation the *Hermetica* attained; but that does not render unreasonable the assumption that, at least to begin with, the aura which attached to the books of Hermes reinforced the group-cohesiveness of those who wrote and read them.”<sup>24</sup>

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Umberto Eco:

“The principle of proportion was also the basis for a kind of heraldic symbolism employed in architectural practice. This was an esoteric business, a kind of mysticism of proportion. It began with the Pythagoreans, and although it was exorcised by Scholasticism it lived on in artisan circles as a kind of heraldry, used to give an extra importance to the trade and to preserve its rites and secrets. This is the most likely explanation for the frequency of pentagonal motifs in Gothic art, especially rose ornaments in cathedrals. The five-petaled rose was an image of the pentad, in addition to its many other symbolic meanings in medieval times, from the Romance of the Rose to the Wars of the Roses. It would be quite wrong to look upon every representation of the pentad as a mark of some esoteric religion, but it certainly bore witness to an aesthetic principle or ideal. The masonic guilds used it as the basis of their rituals, and this seems to show again an awareness of a connection between craft and the aesthetic.

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<sup>23</sup> Peters, Francis E. "Hermes and Harran: The Roots of Arabic-Islamic Occultism," in Michel M. Mazzaoui & Vera B. Moreen, eds., *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honour of Marlin B. Dickson*. Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1990., pp. 185 - 186.

<sup>24</sup> Fowden, Garth, 1986. *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Princeton University Press, 1993, p.158

We find the same kind of thing in the geometrical marks used by artisans as their 'signatures'. Studies of the *Bauhütte*, the secret society of master masons, stonecutters and carpenters in the Holy Roman Empire, show that their *signa lapidaria* – that is, the personal signs with which they marked important parts of their works, such as cornerstones – were geometrical marks based upon common master keys or 'grids'. The underlying belief was that locating the centre of symmetry meant locating the way, the truth, and the light. Aesthetic custom and theological doctrine went hand in hand. The aesthetics of proportion was the medieval aesthetic *par excellence*.<sup>25</sup>

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Vettius Valens sees the Art of Astrology within an Initiatory context:

"I adjure them by the sacred circle of the sun, by the varied paths of the moon, by the powers of the five other stars, and by the circle of the twelve signs to keep these matters secret, never to share them with the ignorant or the uninitiated, and to remember and to honour the one who inducted them into this art."<sup>26</sup>

James Evans:

"In *L'Egypte des astrologues*, Franz Cumont gave an argument for situating astrology in the temples of Egypt. Cumont analysed the writings of Greek and Latin astrologers, sifting them for information about the culture in which they lived and worked. He believed that he perceived the temple and the priesthood in the foreground and argued that, by comparison, the interior life of the Greek city was scarcely represented. Hermetic texts, especially, often associated the astrologers with the priests."<sup>27</sup>

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Rodney Lawrence Thomas:

"Philo wrote in *On the Cherubim* 42 [<sup>28</sup>] as follows: 'For this is a divine mystery and its lesson is for the initiated who are worthy to receive the holiest secret, even those who in simplicity of heart practice the piety which is true and genuine, free from all ornament. The sacred revelation is not for those others who, under the spell of the deadly curse of vanity, have no other standards for measuring what is pure and holy, but their barren words and phrases and their silly usages and ritual.'"<sup>29</sup>

Simo Parpola:

"This point of contact with the Jewish mystical tradition opens important gates. In Mesopotamian sources, the symbolism of the tree is not explained with a word, despite the ubiquity and obvious importance of the motif. This indicates that the

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<sup>25</sup> Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 39 -40

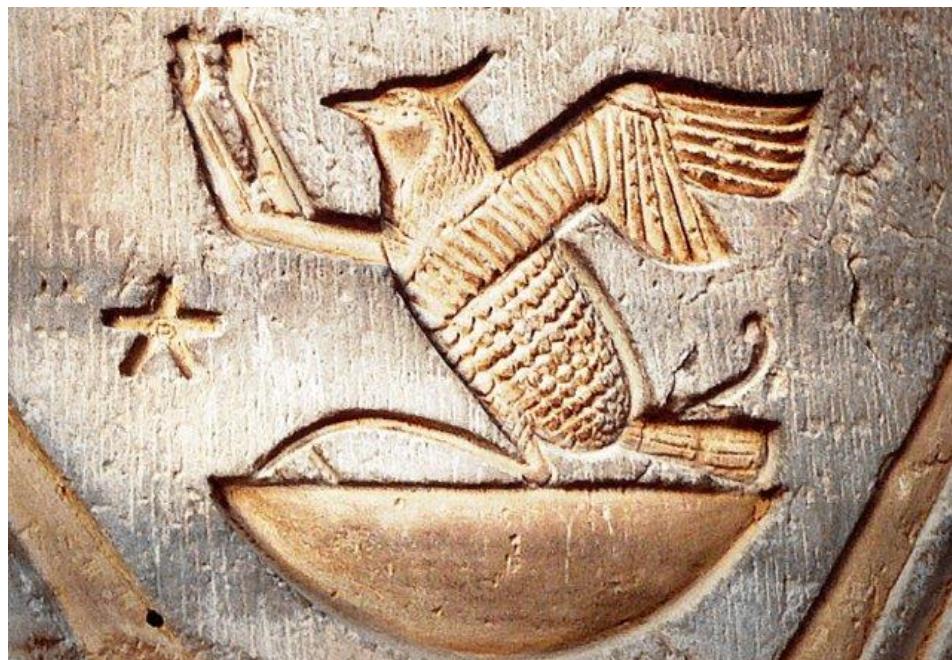
<sup>26</sup> Mark Riley, [A Survey of Vettius Valens](#), California State University. [Online]

<sup>27</sup> Evans, James, The astrologer's apparatus: a picture of professional practice in Greco-Roman Egypt, *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, Vol. 35, Part 1, No. 118, 2004, p.25.

<sup>28</sup> F . H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, trans., Philo, vol. 2, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library series; 227 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2001), p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, Rodney Lawrence (2007) Magical motifs in the Book of Revelation, p. 156. Durham University E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1892>

associated doctrines were guarded as "secrets of heaven and earth" that were passed on to a limited number of initiates only." <sup>30</sup>



Lapwing at prayer ... this image represents the sound-sense "dwa" : "to worship" both by the position of the arms of the lapwing in the sign that means adoration <sup>(31)</sup> and in the placement of the five-pointed star ("dwa") <sup>32</sup> which can mean both "star" and "gate" as well as "worship" depending on context and determinative. The lapwings that visit parts of Europe in the summer are often on a migration path from Egypt and North Africa. They nest in marshlands and a mother lapwing is a mistress of protective deceit ... should someone approach her nest she will pretend to be injured and will try to lead the intruder off in another direction ... that is why it became a symbol of encoding - the protective cloaking of a sacred secret to preserve the vulnerable and endangered sources of life ... even now we accept the necessity of keeping secret the location of the nests of certain species of wild birds to frustrate the plans of poachers, gamekeepers, hunters and thieves . . .

...  
The lapwing of the Hebrew scriptures is actually the hoopoe - its symbolic equivalent. Lapwing is to hoopoe is as hawthorn is to acacia. <sup>33</sup>

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The reference to Arethusa brings us to the *Atalanta Fugiens* if Michael Maier in the sense of an Underground Stream – also the Plutonic qualities of Sicily and the Myth of the Abduction of Persephone by Pluto – taking place on that island . . .

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<sup>30</sup> Simo Parpola, The Mesopotamian Soul of Western Culture, BCSMS 35 (Quebec. 2000) Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies. pp.29 ff.-

<sup>31</sup> See the hieroglyph Gardiner Signlist code: A4 .. the determinative for the verb "dwa" .. "to worship"  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_hieroglyphs/A](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hieroglyphs/A)

<sup>32</sup> Gardiner Signlist code: N14 the Five-Pointed Star: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_hieroglyphs/N](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hieroglyphs/N)

<sup>33</sup> <http://topicalbible.org/l/lapwing.htm>.

The Underground Stream in Arcanum 14 – it ‘transforms’ and ‘radiates’ or ‘transmits’ as in radio waves – and can thus be received by ‘receptors’ unconsciously, and there is no empirical evidence for this process except the injunction:

‘By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them.’

## THE MANTLE

The cloak of invisibility, the mantle of protection etc . . .

## TRUE ESOTERIC TEACHING

Peter Kingsley:

“ . . . true esoteric teaching aims not at filling the disciple or pupil with mere fascinating theories but with opportunities for making these ideas and theories real in his own experience. Romantic notions of an esoteric text as a document containing earth-shattering statements that need locking away from the profane are naïve and vastly oversimplistic. The fact is that hardly anyone would recognize such a text for what it is, let alone know how to use it.”<sup>34</sup>

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## CORBIN ON REVELATION

“It was best to begin by asking ourselves if the Arabo-Persian vocabulary of mystical theosophy did not already offer us a term for a corresponding process. Indeed, there is such a term circulating within the sphere of mystical theosophy (*‘erfān*), a term so common in fact that it serves as title for more than one book. I am speaking of the term *Kashf al-mahjūb*, which signifies precisely “the unveiling of that which is hidden”. Is that not precisely the activity of the phenomenologist, an activity which - in unveiling and in bringing the hidden meaning, occulted beneath the outward appearance, beneath the phenomenal, out into manifestation - fulfills in its own way the program of the Greek science: *sôzein ta phainomena* (to save the phenomena)? *Kashf*, is the unveiling (*Enthulling*, *Entdecken*) which causes the true meaning itself, initially occulted by that which is the apparent, to emerge into manifestation, the *phainomenon* (here we might do well to call to mind that which Heidegger has said about the concept of *alétheia*, or truth). We are ourselves the veil so long as we abstain from the “act of presence”, so long as we are not being-there (*da-sein*), at the hermeneutic level in question. And so, is it not clear that we are traveling a self-same route, even if we keep in mind the eventual difference between the levels of the destinations sought by the seekers, a difference heralded by the fact that our “theosophers” understand this unveiling to be of the *esoteric* hidden beneath the *exoteric* appearance. Upon this very point, their hermeneutic remains faithful to that which is simultaneously its source and springboard: “the phenomenon of the Revelation of a Holy Book”, to which I had called our attention at the beginning of this discussion.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 369-370.

And this is precisely the meaning suggested by the Arabic term that corresponds most closely to the term "hermeneutics": I am speaking of the term *ta'wil*. Etymologically, the word *ta'wil* means to re-conduct something to its source, to its archetype".<sup>35</sup>

## CORBIN ON THE INNER CHURCH

"Unfortunately, there are those who can only think in terms of "conversion"; that is, in terms of a process that would permit them to assign you a collective label. No. To speak of "conversion" is to have understood nothing of "esotericism". A philosopher knows very well that to be a Platonist is not to register one's self in some Platonic Church, and even less to prohibit one's self from also being anything else besides a Platonist. Each and every 'Orafa, whether from the East or from the West, cannot but think and weigh things in terms of interiority and interiorization, which means making in one's self a permanent accommodation and abode for the philosophies and the religions towards which one's Quest conducts one. And such a one must keep his or her secret: *Secretum meum mihi*. A secret that belongs to the Castle of the Soul. It is not through some external sociological choice that he will outwardly manifest this profound internal reality. It is in the "personal" work that he produces, the exteriorization of which results from the concordance of all of his or her "modes of being". The "community", the *omma* of the esotericists, found in all places and in all times, is the "inner Church", **and there is no confessional act of adherence required for one to be a part of it.**

But it is precisely **this inner connection** that is the true connection because it is not such as can be prescribed and is moreover invulnerable, and because it is in this sole case that one may truly say that the mouth speaks of the abundance of the heart."

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### Henri Corbin - Penetrator of Horizons

Corbin sets the direction for the Abrahamic Dialogue, on an esoteric level, *not* interfaith tea parties. Through the *mundus imaginalis*, the Tarot can act as a bridge - this is obvious when he compares the esoteric underpinnings of Proclus, the Kabbalah and Sh'ite mysticism - he does not mention the microcosmic/macrocosmic operations amongst the Hurufi/Bektashi.

In Truth, Peace will Arise, not through surface mediation. Thus Truth = *hierognosis* = the *esoteric*.

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### Henry Corbin:

"The difference between "symbol" and what nowadays is commonly called "allegory" is simple to grasp. An allegory remains on the same level of evidence and perception, whereas a symbol guarantees the correspondence between two universes belonging to different ontological levels: it is the

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<sup>35</sup> From Heidegger to Suhrawardi: An Interview with Philippe Nemo  
<http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/anglais/interviewnemo.htm>

means, and the only one, of penetrating into the invisible, into the world of mystery, into the esoteric dimension." <sup>36</sup>

And some phrases Corbin uses:

penetrator of horizons - epiphanic places - analogical knowledge - *ab extra ad intra*  
" . . . constantly amplify the same archetypes in new symbols."  
*hierognosis*, a higher sacral knowledge . . .  
the discipline of the Arcanum

From Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*,

Based on the Corbin quote - an old obsession of mine, that Interfaith Groups will achieve very little until they engage at the deepest levels - that is to suggest - the esoteric . . . or perhaps more accurately, the *gnostic*.

Henri Corbin:

"I must, however, rank among the very first of these my friend Gershom Scholem, to whom Kabbalistic studies owe their complete renewal. His monumental work is for us, not only an unlimited resource but one that carries with it an imperative message we cannot ignore: we must no longer consider the "esoterisms" of the three great "Religions of the Book" as isolated phenomena."

Two points here. The great Corbin is correct in his appreciation of the great Scholem, and secondly, it is essential that the esoteric currents of the three great "Religions of the Book" have to be studied as grounded on the same tectonic plate. The "esoterisms" of Islam, as transmitted mainly through Sufi vehicles, are well attested and undergoing something of a Renaissance at this moment in time. The "esoterisms" of Christianity, are harder to discern, but would appear to be undergoing a revival since the emergence of the so-called Gnostic Gospels.

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"The History of Religions is destined to play an important role in contemporary cultural life. This is not only because an understanding of exotic and archaic religions will significantly assist in a cultural dialogue with the representatives of such religions. It is more especially because . . . the history of religions will inevitably attain to a deeper knowledge of man. It is on the basis of such knowledge that a new humanism, on a world-wide scale, could develop."

Mircea Eliade

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Rodney Lawrence Thomas:

"In Revelation 5 everything hinges upon the opening of this hermetically 'sealed' scroll with the 'seven seals'. It must be opened in order for the drama of God's judgments in chapter 6 to unfold. The idea that secret revelations were not meant for

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<sup>36</sup> Henri Corbin, 'Mysticism and Humour', in Spring (1973), p. 27, quoted in S. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton 1999), p.93.

everyone, but only for the 'worthy' is an idea that is found at various places in the literary works from the time of the New Testament."<sup>37</sup>

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**endo-** combining form - internal; within: endoderm. ORIGIN=- from Greek *endon* 'within'.

**exo-** prefix external; from outside: exoskeleton. ORIGIN = from Greek *exo* 'outside'.

Exocentric - endocentric ..

Exoteric -      Esoteric -

                  Endoteric

**esoteric** - adjective intended for or understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest. Derivatives - **esoterically** adverb - **esotericism** noun - **esotericist** noun

Origin - C17: from Greek *esoterikos*, from *esotero*, comparative of *eso* 'within', from *es*, *eis* 'into'.

**exoteric** - adjective formal intended for or likely to be understood by the general public. The opposite of **esoteric**.

Origin - C17: via Latin from Greek *exoterikos*, from *exotero* 'outer'.

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Philip A. Harland:

"Harpocration in the *Cyranides*: "Medical knowledge from the gods.

The basic story of Harpocration preserved in the *Cyranides*, which in some form likely goes back to the second century CE, shows that Thessalos' work is not the only medical guidebook to follow such patterns. This Hermetic work also invokes an autobiographical story which involves gaining wisdom from divine sources in foreign lands in order to legitimize certain curative techniques. Here Harpocration, the ostensible author, relates his journeys to Seleucia in Babylonia, where he finds an "old man skilled in foreign learning." This man shows Harpocration "everything" including a temple and certain pillars with strange letters written upon them. As the wise old man explains to Harpocration, one of the pillars has an inscription that outlines divine healing secrets concerning sympathies between the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, on the one hand, and stones, fish, herbs, and birds, on the other. Harpocration then publishes this knowledge from the gods in his book.<sup>38</sup>

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(*Kυρανίδες*; *Kyranídes*). This treatise in four books of unknown authorship is preserved in Greek and in a Latin translation from 1169. It deals with the healing properties of stones, plants and animals (in alphabetic order) and is allegedly the work of Harpocration [3] of Alexandria and a certain Cyranus. Some scholars (e.g., M. Wellmann [7]) prefer the form 'Coeranides', but in agreement with textual tradition, the spelling 'Cyranides' should be preferred [1]. CYRANIDES [WIKI]  
HARPOCRITON [WIKI]

Astrologers, or astrology practised by some, has in turn jettisoned aspects of the 'masses of rubbish'. This point becomes clear when any exploration of the history of astrology produces no result when the other disciplines, or rather, falsely attributed compartments of academic discourse, are ignored. This also applies to the Tarot - which in modern times has been integrated into the Hermetic matrix, in its totality.

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas, Rodney Lawrence (2007) Magical motifs in the Book of Revelation, pp. 155- 156. Durham University E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1892>

<sup>38</sup> Philip A. Harland, Journeys in Pursuit of Divine Wisdom: Thessalos and Other Seekers [pdf document online]

The Wheel, Mandala, Orb, Sphere, Cycle, Process, whichever way we observe this structure – say as a one dimensional plan – or as a continuation of a process until it returns to itself – in other words - the Compass has held a position in mystical terminology! Why? When the point of the compass is placed on the paper – it describes the CENTRE and the metal bridge carries us to the tip of the pencil which makes a mark and continues to do so – equidistant from the centre – thus creating the circle.

The Koran makes reference to Jesus the Christ which is pleasing and acceptable to most Christians. The Hebrews make reference to Mohammed which is pleasing and acceptable to the Moslems. But Krishna Consciousness degrades the Buddha in perspective to Krishna. Now if we see this process of degradation being one of the major factors in the psychological selection or rejection of favourable factors in our lives, our minds and spiritual texture – we should perceive that drama as such, is the process by which we cut through the degrading syndrome and face the reality of the situation as it is. (e.g. Chechov or Euripides.) We degrade in ratio to the inability to accept the situation as it is. Losing the Gordian Knot or as Buddha put to Ananda – we must reverse the process and dissolve the coagulations of the mind in the order, sequence in which they materialized. For one religion to belittle another is rich evidence that that religion is unable to assimilate the texture of the religion it thus has to degrade in order to validate its existence. This applies on a personal level, as well as in a political context – *ahimsa* causes violence. Perhaps here we see the laws of polarity, rather concretely manifested in dualistic thinking. So to look for the . . .

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Stroumsa, Gedaliahu A. G.:

"A similar filling up of divine space was underway in the 'underworld' of Platonism, as Dillon calls the confluence of Gnostic, Hermetic and Chaldaean thought characteristic of late antique paganism. That humanity is at the mercy of unfathomable forces of the universe is also the key conviction behind late antique magic, devoted to the control of such forces by manipulation of the angels in charge of them." <sup>39</sup> (Crone, *Book of Watchers*, p. 22.)

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Moshe Idel:

"One question remains: Who were "those men who came forth from the great eternal knowledge" (73:18-20) whom the Gnostics joined, and who protect the Gnostics by "the shadow of their power" (73:21)? According to the similarity already detected between 72:1-14 and 73:13-24, they should be identified with the "angels of the great light" (72:10-11). I therefore propose to identify them with the seed of the heavenly Seth."

"These great cultural changes are rarely a matter of the transmission of esoteric oral lore, or initiation in ancient theological or mystical doctrines; more often, they are effected by translation and general teaching of written material. The role of personal contact is rarely so crucial as in the transmission of kabbalistic lore." <sup>40</sup>

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## VEDA - SEE - KNOWLEDGE

Kate Alsobrook:

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<sup>39</sup> Stroumsa, Gedaliahu A. G., Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology, Nag Hammadi Studies, 1997  
<https://arcaneknowledgeofthedeep.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/studiesingnosticmythology.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah of the Divine Names*

"The word *veda* itself means "knowledge" and is directly related to the linguistic root meaning, "to see." Therefore, the *Vedas* were a source of sacred knowledge, and the practitioner who understood the *Vedas* participated in the divine. According to Mahony, such a perception "allowed a visionary to see through a process of direct perception, ecstatic experience, or inner vision what were regarded as fully sacred modes and structures of being, even ultimate reality itself." The texts were thought to be divinely inspired, and to reveal hidden truths about the gods and the cosmos."<sup>41</sup>

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Antoine Faivre & Karen-Claire Voss,

**Summary:**

"The term "esotericism" refers here to the modern esoteric currents in the West (15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), i.e. to a diverse group of works, authors, trends, which possess an "air de famille" and which must be studied as a part of the history of religions because of the specific form it has acquired in the West from the Renaissance on. This field is comprised of currents like alchemy (its philosophical and/or "spiritual" aspects); the *philosophia occulta*, Christian Kabbalah; Paracelsianism and the *Naturphilosophie* in its wake; theosophy (Jacob Boehme and his followers, up to and including the Theosophical Society), Rosicrucianism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent similarly-oriented initiatic societies; and hermetism, i.e. the reception of the Greek *Hermetica* in modern times.

This article provides: 1. An overview of the historical background of the field, particularly of the emergence of a specific referential esoteric corpus in the Renaissance. 2. A sketch of the ways in which esoteric currents have been discussed since the Renaissance against the background of the prevailing philosophical and scientific paradigms, and later in the context of scholarly research.

3. A methodological proposal (modern Western esotericism is presented here as a form of thought identifiable by the simultaneous presence of four to six components; the idea of universal correspondences; living Nature; imagination/meditations, transmutation, and concordance; transmission) This leads to the consideration of esoteric studies *vis-à-vis* other disciplines and forms of thought. 4. A discussion about the distinction between esoteric *studies* and esoteric *worldviews*, (or experiences), again with an emphasis on methodological issues.

5. A number of recommendations for the future development of the field of esotericism within the academy as a whole, e.g. relations between esotericism and humanities, the need for scholarly exchanges at an international level, criteria for selection and clarification of data in library catalogues and computer databases."<sup>42</sup>

Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

**ARK  
ARCHETYPE**

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<sup>41</sup> Kate Alsobrook, *The Beginning of Time: Vedic and Orphic Theogonies and Poetics*, MA Thesis. Department of Classics, College of Arts & Sciences, Florida State University, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Antoine Faivre & Karen-Claire Voss, Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions, *Numen*, Vol. 42, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1995, pp. 48 ff.

ARCANA

Bly, Noah's Ark

Materialism - Bodies of Knowledge

Tantra - transmitted orally for thousands of years - as were the Vedas -

[VEDA - SEE - KNOWLEDGE](#)

Silver and Golden Key

Psyche - Techne

Prajna - Upaya

Wisdom - Skillful Means

IMAGE: Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Night.