

**The Eranos Experience:  
Spirituality and the Arts from a Comparative  
Perspective**



*The Central Spiritual Sun*

@Artwork Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn

**Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, 17-18-19 November 2022**

## Thursday, 17 November 2022

09:30 – 10:00 Welcome greetings

- ◇ **Francesco Piraino**, Director of the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities
- ◇ **Marco Pasi**, University of Amsterdam
- ◇ **Andreas Kilcher**, Professor of the Institute for Literature and Cultural Studies at the Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich
- ◇ **Gianmario Borio**, Director of the Institute of Music

10:00 – 11:30

- ◇ **Andreas Kilcher**, Federal Institute of Technology - Zurich, “Scholem's Golem and the Concept of Creation Between Science, Magic, and Art”
- ◇ **Wouter Hanegraaff**, University of Amsterdam, “Generous Hermeneutics: Hans Thomas Hakl and Eranos”
- ◇ **Jean-François Chevrier**, École des beaux-arts de Paris (emeritus), “Raw Comparatism, or « Personal Values » according to René Magritte”

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee break

11:45 – 12:45

- ◇ **Federico Dal Bo**, University of Heidelberg, “The Jewish image of man must be cubist. Gershom Scholem on Cubism: on the Imaginary, Psychology, and Figurative Arts”
- ◇ **Lieven De Maeyer**, Titus Brandsma Institute/Radboud University Nijmegen, “Some Reflections on the Metaphysics of Surrealism’s Turn to Magic”

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 15:30 Tour of the Cini Foundation

15:30 – 16:30

- ◇ **Daphne Tan**, University of Toronto, “Victor Zuckerkandl’s Eranos Experience”
- ◇ **Agnès Parmentier**, Université Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines, “Attending Eranos as a Writer: Overview of an Experience”
- ◇ **Mario Carrozzo**, Music Conservatories of Naples, “A journey in psychic space: Renato de Grandis’ music as an embodiment of Theosophy”

17:00 -17:45

- ◇ Screening of the silent short film “**Eranos 1951**” by Ximena de Angulo and Willi Roelli, presented and discussed by **Giovanni Sorge**, University of Zurich

## Friday, 18 November 2022

10:00 – 11:00

- ◇ **Aaron W. Hughes**, University of Rochester, “When the Particular is Indexical of the Universal: The Spirit of Eranos and the Creation of a New Comparative Framework”
- ◇ **Philipp Kuster**, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, “Searching for meaning in the sciences. Natural scientists at Eranos in the postwar years”

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45

- ◇ **Sébastien Mantegari Bertorelli**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, “Between inner god and universal gods Synthesis and survival of religions in the artistic work of Carl Gustav Jung”
- ◇ **Martina Mazzotta**, Independent scholar and curator, “Luigi Pericle and Herbert Read: encounters in Ascona through the Eranos Circle”
- ◇ **Ahmad Bostani**, Kharazmi University of Tehran, “Eranos’ Legacy in Social and Political Theory”

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00

- ◇ **Hadi Fakhoury**, Harvard University, “The Mystic as Artist: Human and Divine Creativity in the Work of Henry Corbin”
- ◇ **Manoël Pénicaud**, CNRS – Idemec, “Louis Massignon, Pilgrim of Eranos (1937-1955)”
- ◇ **Chloe Sugden**, ETH Zürich, “Meditations on Metamorphosis in the Occult Cosmograms of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn”

18:00 – 19:00 Concert

- ◇ **The mdi ensemble** will play the music of Ernesto Rubin de Cervin, Renato De Grandis, and Giacinto Scelsi (at the Squero)

## Saturday, 19 November 2022

10:00 – 11:00

- ◇ **Sara Petrucci**, University of Neuchâtel, Gothic Modernism and embodied weightlessness in the artistic research of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962) and Charlotte Bara (1901-1986),
- ◇ **Marco Pasi**, University of Amsterdam, “Natura renovatur: Giacinto Scelsi’s music and the spirit of Eranos”

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45

- ◇ **Charles Stang**, Harvard Divinity School, “The Eranos Experience: Spirituality and the Arts from a Comparative Perspective. The Imaginal in Phillip Pullman’s *The Book of Dust!*”
- ◇ **Gísli Magnússon**, University of Iceland, “Reminiscences of Eranos in Naja Marie Aidt’s Novel *When Death Takes Something from You Give It Back: Carl’s Book*”

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 15:00

- ◇ **Riccardo Bernardini and Fabio Merlini**, Eranos Foundation, “Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881–1962): A Woman’s Individuation Process through Images at the Origins of the Eranos Conferences”

15:00 – 16:00

- ◇ Round table

# Abstracts

## **“Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881–1962): A Woman’s Individuation Process through Images at the Origins of the Eranos Conferences”, Riccardo Bernardini and Fabio Merlini, Eranos Foundation.**

Almost 90 years have passed since the founding of the Eranos Conferences in 1933. This pioneering endeavor of interdisciplinary gatherings, which has been properly recognized as “one of the most creative cultural experiences in the modern Western world” and “one of the richest centers of intellectual and spiritual interchange known to our century”, was promoted in Ascona (Switzerland) by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881–1962). In the case of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), who was among the main inspirers of Eranos since the early ‘30s, the recent publication of *The Black Books* and the *Liber Novus* or *The Red Book* helped to realize all the more the strict connection between his personal and his intellectual paths. Up to now, several of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn’s allusions have sounded much more hermetic. For example, she stated, “The deepest things in human life ... can only be expressed in images” or “I beg your pardon if I am speaking through images! This is the way my mind works.” These are words that become much clearer now in the light of her artworks: a first series of “Meditation Plates,” created between 1926 and 1934, and in particular during her collaboration with esotericist and theosophist Alice Ann Bailey (1880–1949), among others scholars and practitioners of occult disciplines; and a second series of “Visions”: an outstanding collection of over three-hundred paintings that was realized – with the support of the Jungian technique of active imagination – between 1934 and 1938. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn’s artworks testify to the intimate bond between inner reality and the outer world, as well as between psychological processes and the creative dimension. It is this bond that yields perhaps the full meaning of Eranos, which Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn herself alluded to: “The history of Eranos can be found in a book that has no writing, which I often go through, read, examine, and compare. I observe the images too, in that there are many in this book, and I look for the connections that form the whole in a meaningful and unifying way. The overall image, the model that has become visible, is so wound around and interwoven with the model of my life that it is really hard to separate them.” Some of these paintings have recently been included in international exhibitions: “The Great Mother” (Trussardi Foundation and City of Milan, Royal Palace of Milan, 2015); “The Keeper” (New Museum, New York, 2016); “Elles font l’abstraction. Une autre histoire de l’abstraction au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle” (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2021); and “Mujeres de la abstracción” (Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao 2021–2022); a monographic exhibition dedicated to Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn’s art is currently being prepared under the auspices of the Eranos Foundation.

## **“Eranos’ Legacy in Social and Political Theory”, Ahmad Bostani, Kharazmi University of Tehran**

Henry Corbin was one of the most important members of the Eranos circle, an esoteric movement inspired by the post-war situation revolving around the critique of Western knowledge and the renovatio or the mystical restoration of symbolism, hermetism, and tradition (Wasserstrom 1999). Henry Corbin, alongside other Eranos scholars, attempted to provide a novel approach to religion, which was based on the rediscovery of some cosmic worldviews, the emphasis on creative imagination (instead of rationality), the cyclic temporality (instead of historicism), and verticality (instead of horizontality). In recent decades, some scholars have discussed the implications of the Eranos thinkers (e.g., Eliade) for elaborating anti-secular social theories (Segal 1989). However, the influence of Corbin’s philosophical system on social and political thought has remained understudied. Although Corbin’s thought was apolitical and asocial, some of his disciples, such as Gilbert Durand (himself a member of Eranos), attempted to offer an alternative non-secular social theory based on his approach to religion (Durand 1975). My paper aims to discuss Eranos’ legacy in social sciences, focusing on Henry Corbin’s esoteric and Oriental approach to religion. Corbin, like other Eranos thinkers, provided a radically different conception of the human “reality” as the object of human sciences (Hakl 2014: 11), which could pave the way for a new conception of “the social” as the object of sociology. Following this scheme, Durand pursued the inception of a “sociosophy” that would not address the material reality but “the imaginal reality” of a community based on a

“hierarchical sodality” rather than horizontal concepts such as class (Durand 1977: 65). Religion thus is neither the mere object of sociology nor the subjective orientation of the sociologist. I will argue that although this theory claims to provide answers to the discontents of secularism, it can pave the way for pathologic forms. As examples, I will briefly discuss two global trends as Corbin’s approach inspires them: the movement of the indigenization (or Islamization) of social sciences in post-revolutionary Iran and the ethno-sociology of Alexander Dugin, the Russian ideologue (Dugin 2019). Both trends, directly or indirectly, took assumptions from Eranos’ approach to human reality and especially Corbin’s anti-secular conception.

### **“A journey in psychic space: Renato de Grandis’ music as an embodiment of Theosophy”, Mario Carrozzo, Music conservatories of Naples**

The Institute of Music of Fondazione Cini in Venice holds a large archive of Renato de Grandis’ compositions and writings. This Venetian composer (1927–2008) earned various national and international prizes in his early years, having his compositions performed in Darmstadt, whose summer courses since 1946 were at the core of the avant-garde music of the post-Second World War period. He resided in Darmstadt for two decades from 1962 becoming one of the most influential composers of those years. De Grandis, endowed with multifaceted artistic and intellectual skills (he was also a painter, poet, and essayist), early on revealed his interest in Eastern cultures and, from the 1970s, developed a fascination for Theosophy. He nurtured these interests by frequently travelling to Asia and becoming increasingly involved with Hindu and Buddhist mysticism. As a result, he became a leading activist in the Italian section of the Theosophical Society, and, on this basis, he re-envisioned the nature and goals of the artistic and musical experience. Hence, his definition of music as "the physical body of Theosophy" and, reciprocally, the theosophical references embodied in his compositions. Therefore, it is possible to interpret de Grandis’ musical output concerning two perspectives. On the one hand, the respect for musical transculturation and cosmopolitanism, which shaped the postmodern cultural climate of the late 20th century (Appadurai: 1996; Rice: 2014). On the other hand, the historical take on how other great composers engaged in the relationships between music and mystical/spiritualistic thought, creating an underground stream that flows across much of the musical output of the past century (Sarno: 2018); this is the case not only of some "tutelary deities" of the first half of the century, such as Alexander Scriabin or Arnold Schönberg, but also of composers chronologically and geographically closer to de Grandis, such as Giacinto Scelsi. I will try to show how, according to these two perspectives, the peculiar de Grandisian declension of spiritualism makes his musical conception and style distinct and historically noteworthy.

### **“Raw comparatism, or « Personal Values » according to René Magritte”, Jean-François Chevrier, École des beaux-arts de Paris (emeritus)**

From the perspective of the history of painting and visual arts in 20th century, the contribution of the Eranos Encounters mainly confirms the impact of Carl Gustav Jung’s thinking. However, it is enough to go through the yearbooks to note how rare this approach of art was in the Encounters. It is thus not surprising to find no reference to Eranos in the book-catalogue directed by Maurice Tuchman, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, published in Los Angeles in 1987. The impact of Jung’s thinking in the United States, in the art circles influenced by surrealism, did not go through Eranos, which remained rooted in Europe and largely defined by a verbal, literary approach to imagination. I would nevertheless like to nuance this aspect through considering the role played by Henry Corbin (1903-1978), the great historian of Islamic philosophy and mystic. What stands out immediately is that Corbin was a regular speaker at Eranos from 1949 on. With regard to the history of artistic forms, his contributions had little effect. In 1939, as he was librarian at the Printed Material Department of the National Library in Paris, he (modestly) took part to the organization of a great exhibition devoted to the Arts of Iran. I have not found any echo to this undertaking (or to a similar one) in the Eranos publications. However, on a philosophical level, one of Corbin major concepts, the “Imaginal” –distinct from the “Imaginary”– has found and may still find echoes outside his field of expertise. I will particularly stress on an episode in the history of the raw, or wild, comparatism that surrealist imagery has aroused. This episode took place in the late work of the

painter René Magritte. The notion of “raw comparatism” suggests how the Imaginal may take part in a transcultural approach to the image, going beyond the knowledge-based partitions.

**“The Jewish image of man must be cubist.” Gershom Scholem on Cubism: on the Imaginary, Psychology, and Figurative Arts, Federico Dal Bo, University of Heidelberg**

Scholem was interested in religious imagination as a means for experiencing mysticism not only on a philological basis but also on a figurative one. The Eranos seminars were the best platform for accessing both. While philology allowed him to claim scientific objectivity, figurative arts represented for him a privileged way for accessing religious imagination and experiencing the *Ergriffenheit* (being moved), mobilized by the Eranos organizer Olga Froebe-Kapteyn. Already in 1917, in his Diaries, Scholem exalted Cubism as a quintessential Jewish art due to its theological potentialities, its detachment from ordinary representation, and ability to stir imagination. Cubism allowed for a symbolic understanding of reality without infringing the Biblical prohibition of “making likeness that is in heaven above” (Ex 20:4). While counterpointing Florenskij’s doctrine of the icon, Scholem famously said: “the Jewish image of man must be cubist.” I will explore this nexus between Scholem’s yearn for a true religious experience and his fascination for visual arts as a means for stirring religious imagination. I will especially argue that his early intuition on Cubism was further substantiated by attending the Eranos seminars and especially conversing with the Jewish psychologist Erich Neumann—who famously claimed, in 1958, that “whether Picasso represents this world of the beginning or whether in his cubist efforts he opposes its chaos the driving force is in every case the participation mystique.” Accordingly, I will examine Scholem’s seminal *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (1962) and focus on four notions: God’s mystical figure, the representation of evil, the image of the righteous, and the vision of the astral body. I will show that Scholem’s regular attendance at Eranos allowed him to refine his early enthusiasm for Cubism into a more developed doctrine of religious experience against Rabbinic Judaism that, he claimed, could produce no transformation of reality.

**“Some Reflections on the Metaphysics of Surrealism’s Turn to Magic”, Lieven De Maeyer, Titus Brandsma Institute/Radboud University Nijmegen**

The surrealist movement was undoubtedly one of the 20th century’s most consistent and influential attempts to resist and even undo the ‘disenchantment of the world’. Rejecting the all too restrictive label of ‘art movement’, surrealism saw itself as a revolutionary movement that sought to unleash a “revolution of the mind” by reconnecting human thought to its primordial, subconscious origins. To do so, it rehabilitated artistic, religious and philosophical works and disciplines forgotten or deliberately ignored by modern rationalism. From the Second Surrealist Manifesto (1929) onward, magic – including alchemy and divination – became included among those disciplines; moreover, by calling for the “profound occultation of surrealism”, André Breton explicitly tried to solidify the affinities he saw between his movement and the occult sciences. Because of this ‘turn to magic’ in the late 1920’s, surrealism is now commonly associated with various strands of esotericism, as is evidenced by a score of recent publications and exhibitions (including *Surrealism and Magic*, which opened recently at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice). What is often overlooked, however, are Breton’s conscious efforts, in interviews and later publications, to present surrealist publications and activities from the formative years as already prefiguring the turn to magic, as already being magical in some sense. In this paper I defend the hypothesis that Breton’s retroactive ‘magical’ reading of early surrealism is an attempt on his part to cover up a ‘breaking point’ between the formative years of the movement and the later turn to magic. I argue that the turn to magic is predicated on a more fundamental change in the way surrealism conceived of the relations between the human subject and its other(s). More precisely, I argue that surrealism’s turn to magic involves a shift from subversion of the modern subject to a full-on rejection of it. To make this point, I will compare statements from Breton’s two major texts on the visual arts: the early *Le surréalisme et la peinture* (1928) and the later *L’art magique* (1957). The second text is surprisingly understudied and summarizes very well the change that surrealism underwent. It features several references to authors connected to Eranos (Jung, Eliade, W.F. Otto), but is indicative of a wider desire to formulate an alternative to Western rationalism that feeds into both surrealism and the discourses of many Eranos intellectuals.

**“The Mystic as Artist: Human and Divine Creativity in the Work of Henry Corbin”, Hadi Fakhoury, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School**

This paper focuses on Henry Corbin (1903-1978), a French theologian, scholar of Islamic mysticism, and a central presence at Eranos. Corbin sought to mediate between modern European philosophy and traditional eastern intellectual traditions. He did so by developing a hermeneutical phenomenology that enabled him to mediate between different intellectual, religious, and linguistic idioms, thereby establishing new ways of engaging with traditional texts in a modern, pluralistic context. My paper offers a new reading of Corbin by analyzing his theory of humans in their relation to their productions—religious, philosophical, and artistic—and his concomitant theory of humans in their relations to the divine. For Corbin, the act of producing cultural artefacts (scripture, mystical narratives, sacred art, music, etc.) and the act of understanding them are two sides of a triangle that culminate in a spiritual event. This means that hermeneutics is religious in nature: the operation of leading the letter or exoteric dimension (*zahir*) of a text or a work back to its inner meaning or esoteric dimension (*batin*), i.e. to the “event of the soul” which gave it birth, presupposes a transformation in the soul of the exegete. Hermeneutics thus reproduces in the soul of the interpreter the “event of justification” at the origin of creative productions, i.e. the inner event that made these works possible in the first place. This operation—simultaneously exegetical and spiritual—is nothing but the experience of the divine as freedom and as creativity. Thus, Corbin’s work offers resources for the development of a general theory of human creativity. By elucidating Corbin’s theory of humano-divinity creativity, my paper will shed light on ways in which Corbin negotiates ideological tensions between tradition and modernity, and will outline a theoretical framework for new and multidisciplinary engagements with his work.

**“Generous Hermeneutics: Hans Thomas Hakl and Eranos”, Wouter Hanegraaff, University of Amsterdam**

Inspired by Paul Ricoeur’s seminal discussions in *De l’interprétation* (1965), this article argues that the academic study of Eranos has suffered from a binary logic which falsely assumes that scholars must choose between either a hermeneutics of faith or a hermeneutics of suspicion. Hans Thomas Hakl’s Eranos exemplifies a neglected intermediary approach that may be referred to as the hermeneutics of generosity. Hakl’s insistence on the maxim *audiatur et altera pars* allowed him to transcend narrow ideological positions and apply the principle of charity to thinkers across the political spectrum from left to right. Furthermore, instead of approaching scholars such as Jung, Eliade, Corbin, or Scholem as unique and isolated figures, he contextualized them historically as parts of a scholarly tradition that had been neglected by the academy. Although his true agenda was to discuss Eranos in terms of an alternative *Geistesgeschichte* with special attention to its “esoteric” dimension, the sheer pressure of the dominant discourse may have actually caused him to overemphasize political issues. Updated future studies of Eranos should be able to follow in Hakl’s footsteps while expanding the scope of inquiry to dimensions that still remain neglected, including that of Eranos as a characteristic manifestation of high modernity. It is suggested here that the famous “spirit of Eranos” reflects a refusal of the linguistic turn in twentieth-century thought and an insistence that meaning comes to the self rather than from it. Its characteristic hope of being *ergriffen* or *interpellé* by “the impossible” is best understood in terms of the dark existentialist mood among intellectuals during the period dominated by two world wars.

**“The Legacy of Eranos in Academic Sufi Studies and Popular Sufi Movements in the West: Corbinian Thought and the *Inayatiyya*”, Marcia Hermansen, Loyola University Chicago**

The proposed paper will consider certain representations of mystical Islam at the Eranos meetings, in particular, the contributions of Henry Corbin. Corbin has recently attracted renewed academic attention in terms of his personal identification with the object of study and commitment to other strands in esoteric 20th century religiosity. As a framework the paper will initially review themes of Corbin’s published contributions to the Eranos



sessions while seeking to identify his general concepts of spirituality and comparison that either resonated with or challenged Jungian perspectives. In addition, the influence of Eranos scholarship on Sufism both within the Western academy and popular Western Sufi movements will be outlined. In particular I will trace explicit invocations of Corbinian themes and interpretations of Persian Sufism within the Inayati Sufi lineage as incorporated by Pir Vilayat Khan (d. 2004) who had studied with Corbin at the Sorbonne. In fact, Corbin contributed a preface to a 1962 work by Vilayat Khan on meditation. I will therefore describe how Vilayat Khan and his successor, Zia Inayat Khan, explicitly draw on Corbinian interpretations of Ishraqi themes in their symbolism as well as in the practical cultivation of meditative states. One possible connection to this resonance and embrace may be the infusion of Persian hikmat themes into the teachings of the Order's founder, Inayat Khan (d. 1927), himself an Indian Chishti Sufi, and this background will also be investigated in the paper. In some of my earlier publications I considered the development of forms of "Sufi psychology" that are heavily influenced by Jungian approaches among Western Sufis groups. I have also published on the academic study of Sufism in American Universities. Therefore I feel that I have a suitable background to consider the Eranos contributions in this light and I further look forward to interacting with scholars who share interests in cultural studies and Western esotericism.

### **"When the Particular is Indexical of the Universal: The Spirit of Eranos and the Creation of a New Comparative Framework", Aaron W. Hughes, University of Rochester**

Eranos played a formative role in establishing the study of religion firmly within the Humanities. The gathering's attention to archetypes and its desire to extoll the role of myth and mysticism radiated far beyond the study of religion to inform many cognate disciplines. In many ways Eranos signals a massive paradigm shift from an earlier evolutionary and anthropological approach to religion to one interested in universal deep structures and mythopoesis. Significantly, Eranos also shaped subfields within the academic study of religion, especially the two of which I am most familiar and in which I work—Islamic and Jewish studies—through the path-breaking work of Henry Corbin and Gershom Scholem. Both thinkers radically overturned traditional approaches to these two subfields by de-emphasizing law, ritual, and social history, and by turning their attention to the subterranean depths of human creativity as manifested in the mystical dimensions of both traditions. Recent years, however, have seen a reversion to descriptive textual study on the one hand and, on the other, historical positivist accounts that, among other things, question the utility of the very category "religion." A real question that arises—and one that this contribution seeks to address by revisiting the work of Corbin and Scholem—is how do we take the spirit of what Eranos offered and have it both inform and be informed by textual and historical study. Here it might be worth noting that neither Corbin nor Scholem were like Jung or Eliade in the sense that they did not engage in grand comparisons but were instead deeply immersed in only one tradition. But in that one tradition they located deep structures and archetypes that they considered to be panhuman. My contribution thus focuses on the importance of comparison—both of Corbin and Scholem, and as a method of analysis—that can aid in thinking about human creativity through myths, symbols, but in a manner that does not completely eschew history.

### **"Scholem's Golem and the Concept of Creation Between Science, Magic, and Art", Andreas Kilcher, Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich**

Since 1950, Scholem has been one of the most prominent members of the Eranos circle. For thirty years he regularly took part in the Eranos conferences and thus created his own corpus of religious-historical essays with their own methodology. This is particularly evident in his lecture on "The Idea of the Golem" which he gave at the Eranos conference in August 1953. Moreover, Scholem's work on the Golem not only reveals his genuine, creative scientific procedure, that needs to be analyzed also critically. Using this remarkable subject, he also analyzes an emphatic concept of creation, which he derives primarily from the Kabbalah and thus from the Jewish tradition, but at the same time also situates it in a more general transitional area between magic and art. Starting from Scholem's conceptualization of the legend of the Golem, the lecture analyses this triple phenomenology of the concept of creation: as a scientific procedure, as a magical creation and as an artistic production.

**“Searching for meaning in the sciences. Natural scientists at Eranos in the postwar years”, Philipp Kuster, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München**

Eranos is now chiefly remembered in religious studies and in adjacent fields in the humanities, but there is one episode in the history of the Tagungen that went in a different direction: After the Second World War, the major concern of the conferences shifted from the relationship between so-called Eastern and Western traditions to an interdisciplinary anthropology and the relationship between the sciences and the humanities. This reorientation was inspired mainly by organiser Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn’s perception that the war reflected a deeper cultural crisis which could only be addressed through a new synthesis of the specialised branches of knowledge. For this purpose, several natural scientists were invited, among them the physicist Erwin Schrödinger and the mathematician and physicist Hermann Weyl. One of them, the biologist Adolf Portmann, came to identify so much with the Eranos meetings that he returned every year of his life, and even succeeded Fröbe-Kapteyn as their organiser after her death in 1962. In my contribution based on my master’s thesis, I investigate how these scientists presented the natural sciences to an audience dominated by scholars from the humanities. In their lectures they tried to frame science as a humanistic project that is not just useful but also meaningful to human beings and in which the human mind played a central role. In contrast to the wider context of humanists having to defend their approach against the influence of the natural sciences, these lectures are examples of the prestige that the humanities, and specifically the version of the humanities that was prevalent at Eranos, held for a certain subset of scientists. Eranos can therefore complicate our view of how the humanities developed in relation to the sciences in the twentieth century.

**“Reminiscences of Eranos in Naja Marie Aidt’s Novel When Death Takes Something from You Give It Back: Carl’s Book”, Gísli Magnússon, University of Iceland**

Naja Marie Aidt (b. 1963) is one of the most recognized living Danish authors. In 2017, Aidt published the autobiographical book *When Death Takes Something from You Give It Back: Carl’s Book* about the tragic death of her 25 year old son, Carl Emil. On the cover, there is the meditative drawing *The Central Spiritual Sun* by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, and Fondazione Eranos, Ascona is credited for granting the permission to reproduce the cover picture. Although the drawing by Fröbe-Kapteyn indicates an interest in spirituality, neither she nor the Eranos foundation are mentioned further in book. Nevertheless, there is a clear connection between the themes of the book and the spiritual heritage of Eranos. *Carl’s Book* is characterized by an ambivalence concerning the spiritual/mythical as such (which is positively connotated) and spiritual explanations or justifications (which are negatively connotated). In a book about grief, this is understandable. The loss implies a radical sense of meaninglessness and disenchantment. Aidt portrays both Carl and her (beautifully described) relation to him and the experience of devastating grief following his death, but *Carl’s Book* is also a meta-poetic novel about the loss of language in the face of trauma and the tentative and fragmented process towards being able to create again – partly through rich intertextuality involving authors who also lost a child, sibling or spouse such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Anne Carson, Denise Riley, Jan Kochanowski, Cicero, and C.S. Lewis. Just as the Eranos-movement seeks to define spirituality in a posttheological, postdogmatic way where it is not philosophically and psychologically separated from the scientific achievements of modernity, Aidt – following her poetic idol Inger Christensen - fluctuates between two belief systems involving materialistic/scientific disenchantment and spiritual re-enchantment. This is exemplified through two central passages in the middle of the book: After an anti-spiritual creed in capital letters where she denies all spiritual attempts of making sense of Carl’s death, she writes a beautiful account of a visit to Mark Rothko’s Chapel in Houston, Texas. In accordance with the idea of perennialism, Aidt notes: “It’s for everyone, believers and nonbelievers, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, atheists, Hindus, and so on—it’s for all people on earth.” In a meditative state, staring at a painting, she establishes a kind of visionary contact with Carl, she “sees” him and starts to cry in a cathartic way. Then, she picks up *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* and on a random page, and she reads: “The helplessness as you observe your living family.” In *Carl’s Book*, Aidt also writes about astrology (in an ambivalent way), a visit to a healer, prophetic poems, precognitive dreams, and shamanism. She even describes shamanism as a kind of family religion involving shamanic dream journeys which in some cases can help cure diseases. In accordance with the romantic belief in

the spiritual power of poetry, passages from her own poetry are interpreted as foreseeing the death of Carl. And through visionary, symbolic dreams, she both foresees Carl's death and establishes a kind of communication with the departed. This seems to be in accordance with Jungian thought (he described precognitive dreams). In a situation of unbearable loss, Aidt finds a path back to meaning and writing through spiritual and "re-enchanting" literature (Inger Christensen, Emily Dickinson, Rainer Maria Rilke, Walt Whitman, H.C. Andersen, Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir, Ursula Andkjær Olsen), art (Rothko, Ragnar Kjartansson), and music (Samuel Barber, Nick Cave). Additionally, Aidt refers extensively to the philosophical and mystic roots of Western culture in ancient times and antiquity: the Orphic mysteries (Hipponion Tablet), Plato, Sokrates, Gilgamesh. In my paper, I will explore these more or less hidden links to the nondogmatic, academically and historically informed spirituality of Eranos, with references to Eliad's writings on shamanism, Jung's theories on dreams and the theories on myth by Károly Kerényi and Joseph Campbell.

### **"Between inner god and universal gods Synthesis and survival of religions in the artistic work of Carl Gustav Jung", Sébastien Mantegari Bertorelli, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne**

Among the great figures of annual meetings of the Eranos circle, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) is almost tutelary. The Swiss psychiatrist took part in all the meetings organized by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn on the shores of Lake Maggiore from 1933 through 1952 (except in 1944). Every year, he operated as a speaker, apart from the last year when he attended the meetings as a listener<sup>1</sup>. The comparative research presented at Eranos on Eastern thoughts and their possible relationships to Western philosophies, as well as the exploration of a form of universality or religious phenomena and archetypal patterns<sup>2</sup> were indeed resonant with his scientific research<sup>3</sup>, as they were central to his own artistic practice. Jung's artworks include, in addition to the famous Red Book<sup>4</sup>, several dozen paintings, drawings, sculptures and the Bollingen Tower itself<sup>5</sup>. In this body of work, Jung develops an original plastic language, in terms of both the forms employed – which range from the most classical figuration to the most contemporary abstraction – and the ideas they symbolize. Closely linked to the development of his psychological theories, his works show attempts to externalize unconscious psychic processes as well as a form of image setting of his personal myth. This one, with each individual should achieve, would let him free from the influence of the archetypes of the collective unconscious and accomplish his own individuation<sup>6</sup>. Jung's plastic experiments depict different deities or characters performing rituals, with a clear syncretic intention. We can thus observe the Orphic god Phânes alongside the Cabires of Samothrace, when Jung did not choose to represent figures of patterns with a more ambiguous and archetypal identity, whose symbolic complexity and syncretism make them universal. By using a sort of anthropology of images<sup>7</sup>, this scientific proposal aims to study the survival<sup>8</sup> of the various mythical, ritual and divine representations that are present in Carl Gustav Jung's artistic works. The purpose of this communication is to identify, when possible, the traditions or religions from which these patterns are drawn but, above all, to show how, through them and beyond, Jung sought to constitute and express an iconographic synthesis in order to achieve a plastic representation of universal myths, rites and divinities. In close relation to the Eranos Archive für Symbolforschung, from which he was drawing for his own research<sup>9</sup>, Jung's artworks could constitute a plastic transposition on canvas and in stone.

### **"Luigi Pericle and Herbert Read: encounters in Ascona through the Eranos Circle", Martina Mazzotta, Independent scholar and curator**

This paper aims to explore the work of the artist Luigi Pericle (1916-2001) through the influence and echoes of Eranos in his practice, and in particular through the lens of Sir Herbert Read (1893-1968). Indeed, the famous British art historian regularly attended the Eranos meetings from 1953 to 1964, the year he visited the artist's studio in Ascona. After becoming internationally well known as an illustrator, author, and painter during the 1950's and '60, Pericle abruptly retired from the artistic scene in 1965, thus representing a remarkable case, among the protagonists of abstract spiritualism, of what has been defined as "posthumousness". Indeed, his studio-house in Ascona remained inaccessible until 2016, when its entire, multifaceted content - encompassing paintings, drawings, books and documents - was purchased by the Biasca-Caroni Family. This would later become an

international centre of studies, known as *Archivio Luigi Pericle*. Its first project, the retrospective entitled *Luigi Pericle. Beyond the Visible*, was held at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in 2019, during the 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale. Luigi Pericle's paintings must be understood as one aspect of a more comprehensive investigation, which includes many writings and broad-gauged spiritual enquiries (spanning from Ancient Egypt to Renaissance studies, from Zen Buddhism, Cabala, Alchemy, Theosophy to contemporary physics, medicine, and music). The impact of this artistic production on Herbert Read was immediate: *I found an artist whose work immediately impressed me by their professional skill and strange beauty (...) Sometimes there was a vague suggestion of naturalistic forms, but forms itself was established beyond phenomenal appearances, to represent some inner essence, some spiritual condition that can be represented only in the abstract harmonies of line and color. A metaphysical art, therefore, but one that remains faithful to the sensuous qualities of the material of the painter's craft (...) a long pursuit of an absolute beauty.* Today's visitors of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn house can admire two large works by Luigi Pericle, displayed centrally in the drawing room. Starting from these premises, this paper aims to investigate further the impact of continental spiritual modernism in Great Britain during the years following World War II, whereupon Eranos plays a central role.

### **“Attending Eranos as a Writer: Overview of an Experience” Agnès Parmantier, Université Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines**

If one wants to fully understand Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn's vision of Eranos, it is necessary to take into account the deep interest she had in the arts. Even though the point of these meetings was mainly intellectual, they can rightly be described as a continuation of the artistic circles composed of musicians, painters and writers that she gathered at her home in Wannsee during her Berlin years, and later on in Zurich. Her relationships with poets such as Adriaan Roland Holst, and especially Ludwig Derleth, deeply influenced her. The importance she attached to literary matters is something she wanted her Eranos guests to remember, for instance by encouraging them to read Talbot Mundy's occult novels which she left in their rooms. It is therefore no surprise if many writers went to the Eranos meetings from 1933 to 1988. The aim of this contribution is to present a concise overview of this specific part of the attendees. Based on the guest book of the Eranos archive, the Eranos-Yearbooks, autobiographies and letters, I will explore three main questions:

- Their basic identity features (nationality, preferred literary genre)
- Their status at Eranos: were they speakers (Max Pulver, Sir Herbert Read) or members of the audience (Aline Vangelin, Hans Sterneder)?
- The inspiration they were seeking: were they mostly interested in the setting (the beauty of the place, the dramatic/narrative dynamics of a gathering organized behind closed doors) or in the content of the conferences?

Very little has so far been written on the artists I will focus on. This global mapping will thus enable me to deepen our understanding of the influence Eranos has had on literature. Until now, our attention was drawn to figures who are less relevant to the topic but who are way more famous. Some of them are German-speaking writers like Rainer Maria Rilke, Hermann Hesse or Thomas Mann, whose connection to Eranos was at best indirect. Some others are keynote speakers who were to some extent poets or fiction authors, but came at Eranos as intellectuals (Mircea Eliade, Gershom Scholem). This contribution will give me the opportunity to bring out new hints on one of the major problems of the relationship between esotericism and literature, namely the existence of a boundary between 'mainstream' and occult writers and the possibility to define substantial criteria to differentiate them. As I will demonstrate, the rigid scale of literary values which is often used to oppose them leads us to neglect some literary figures even before we have read them.

## **“Natura renovatur”: Giacinto Scelsi’s music and the spirit of Eranos, Marco Pasi, University of Amsterdam**

Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988) is undoubtedly one of the most enigmatic composers of the last century. Since his death, there has been a growing interest in his work, especially in Italy and in France, with the publication of critical literature and the recording of his musical compositions. Yet, several aspects of his artistic work remain to be explored in depth. His eccentric personality and peculiar biography has generated a sort of mythical aura around his name, and critics have sometimes expressed radically opposing opinions about his work. Scelsi’s musical compositions and literary texts show a deep influence of modern esotericism and alternative spirituality. Although Scelsi never seems to have attended the Eranos meetings, his understanding of artistic creativity shows a clear affinity to the underlying spirit of these meetings. This is also made evident by his friendship with the art critic Herbert Read (1893-1968), who was one of the most prominent speakers at Eranos in the 1950s and early 1960s. Scelsi offers an interesting case study for understanding a certain model of spiritual creativity because of the radicalism of his aesthetic choices and the way in which he theorised the relationship between esoteric ideas and musical composition.

## **“Louis Massignon, Pilgrim of Eranos (1937-1955)”, Manoël Pénicaud, CNRS - Idemec**

Based on a biographical approach, this paper proposes to trace the itinerary of the French scholar Louis Massignon (1883-1962) at the Cercle Eranos, on Lake Maggiore near Ascona, Switzerland. This renowned Catholic Orientalist and Islamologist can in many ways be considered one of the pillars of these annual meetings from the 1930s to the 1950s. Indeed, he was one of the most assiduous members, nine times between 1937 and 1955, at the invitation of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn and Carl Gustav Jung, with the intention of bringing East and West into dialogue, among thinkers from different disciplines. The climax of the exchanges between Louis Massignon and Carl Gustav Jung was reached in 1939, when the annual theme of the meeting was centred on the symbolism of “rebirth”. Sitting at the round table, the Frenchman presented his work on the anticipated resurrection of the Ahl Al-Kahf (People of the Cave in Arabic, also known as Seven Sleepers in Christianity) and on Al-Khadir (The Green One) in Sura 18 of the Qur’an, two topics that deeply captivated the Swiss psychiatrist. Despite the Second World War, in subsequent editions, the latter introduced the French scholar to the notion of 'archetypes', which Massignon integrated into his mystical conception of history, as well as to his trans-historical vision of certain figures of sanctity mainly across Islam and Christianity. Apart from his intellectual and mystical relationship with Jung, Louis Massignon also met many other prestigious guests of Eranos, such as Heinrich Zimmer, Martin Buber, Mircea Eliade, Marie-Madeleine Davy, all interested in the study of religion, mysticism, and (inter)spirituality in a comparative perspective. He was also the one who introduced Henry Corbin, who would become another pillar for the decades to come. Finally, this paper will contextualise the end of Massignon’s “annual pilgrimage” to Ascona, partly due to his political commitments in the 1950s (War in Algeria, conflicts in Holy Land).

## **“Gothic Modernism and embodied weightlessness in the artistic research of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962) and Charlotte Bara (1901-1986)”, Sara Petrucci, University of Neuchâtel**

In the 1955 April issue of the Swiss cultural magazine DU devoted to Eranos, Mircea Eliade, quoting from a metaphor by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, compared the process of the symposia to a dance. We can argue further that rituals and symbolisms were part of the mechanisms of transformation towards new forms of individual and collective enchantment operating in the art and research by Dutch artist, iconographer, and founder of the Eranos circle, Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962), as well as in the dances by Belgian Charlotte Bara (1901-1986) also known as “the gothic dancer”. The creation of an agentive typology of images and gestures along with the actual building, in 1928, of their new “temples” of expression and knowledge, (Teatro San Materno and Casa Eranos) both close to Monte Verità, compose a still understudied legacy, which is yet paramount, in my view, in understanding cultural negotiations between chaos and cosmos, that not only looked back at a fantasized primordial past, but also towards exoteric spiritualities infused with an imaginary of imponderable energies. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn and Charlotte Bara met, according to the 1934 list of participants of the second Eranos symposium; they also shared common interests and acquaintances, like musician Leo Kok for instance. More

importantly, all the while being one of its kind, their visual semiotics seemed to stem from a phenomenological if not kinaesthetic relationship with art history and its iconographic legacy. In this paper I would like to investigate to what extent “gothic” revivals and sensibility played an essential role in their creative forms of a transcendent self. I would also argue that Gothic tropes (architectural, ornamental) and ideas (like death-drive and vital forces), which will have to be scrutinized, infused the neo-romantic, syncretic, and vibratory worldview of these two protagonists of Ascona’s effervescence during the turmoil of the Interwar and beyond.

### **“The 1951 Eranos meeting: A filmic portrait”, Giovanni V.R Sorge, University of Zurich**

At the Eranos meeting of 1951, a young couple realized a b&w, 22 minutes long, silent movie, which remained largely forgotten for years in the Eranos Foundation archive in Ascona and in few other archives. The film, titled «Eranos 1951», was written by literary critic Ximena de Angulo (the daughter of the ethnomusicologist Jaime de Angulo, and of the C.G. Jung collaborator and translator Cary Fink Baynes) and filmed by photographer Willi Roelli. «Eranos 1951» beautifully returns the atmosphere of the famous interdisciplinary symposia on the Swiss shores of Lago Maggiore, portraying different moments of the conferences headed by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn: the arrival of the speakers, the conference hall, the luxuriant garden, the baths in the lake, and naturally the guests sitting around the famous «round table», which Olga Fröbe considered the real centre of Eranos, for there the conversations i.e. the intellectual exchanges could take place after the lectures. The 1951 Eranos meeting was devoted to the subject ‘Man and Time’ and was attended by thirteen speakers including H. Corbin, M. Eliade, A. Portmann, G. Scholem, H. Wilhelm, C.G. Jung. Noticeably, the latter concluded his almost twenty-years-long participation to the Eranos meetings with a subject, the «synchronicity», which combined psychology and physics while confirming and sealing the path undertaken by Eranos’ activity after the war, which was characterized by an exchange between «Naturwissenschaften» and «Geisteswissenschaften». As an exclusive anticipation of a forthcoming book dedicated to Ximena de Angulo (and Eranos), De Angulo’s and Roelli’ movie “Eranos 1951” will be screened after an historical and critical introduction.

### **“Meditations on Metamorphosis in the Occult Cosmograms of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn” Chloe Sugden, ETH Zürich**

Occult movements arose across Europe and America in the latter half of the nineteenth century, constructing distinctive models of the world across multiple modernities. Such world-models often synthesised science and occultism<sup>1</sup> with diagrammatic aesthetic strategies. Pertinent decisions are encoded in all objects of knowledge production, and the particular epistemological problem that the occult entails is the attempt to aestheticise revelatory authority and occult knowledge. My research centres on a visual mode that modern individuals adopted in seeking to positivise occult cosmologies that cannot otherwise be seen, illustrating the imperceptible: the cosmogram. In my research, the ‘modern occult cosmogram’ as an image-object denotes fin de siècle artworks whose hieroglyphic, mandala-like artistic languages envision occult praxes, experiences, worldviews and systems in condensed modes. Such objects lie somewhere between art and instructive image, the tangible and the immaterial. Occult cosmograms seek to establish a symbolic and tactile connection between internal and external worlds, transmuting the ever-perplexing world-whole of an esoteric cosmology to a compact, partially legible medium—as the basis for an antinomously concealed exposition. As compressed symbolic images, cosmograms are riddles that archive specific theories of representation, historical events, cultural ideas, belief systems, etc., and hold in their forms and generic histories a potency—a spell; a word-defying, yet poignantly suggestive ‘force’ that at once works on and eludes the observer. In my paper, I show several iconographically challenging, under-analysed works by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962), taken from her geometrical prints in the Art Deco style, Meditation Drawings (c. late 1920s to early 1930s). I approach these works as occult cosmograms, contemplating the eclectic symbolic language of spiritual and psychological transformation that characterises Fröbe’s art and esoteric worldview. In founding Eranos, Fröbe demanded that personal experiences of mental and spiritual ‘renewal’ be integrated into academic research. As part of her research practice, she assembled the Eranos Archive for Research in Symbolism<sup>2</sup>, amassing over six thousand photographs of art-objects and ritualistic and mythological subjects, traversing epochs, religions and cultures. Aligning with the Archive, the Meditation Drawings integrate modern occult symbols of spiritual transfiguration with earlier motifs of transmutation found

in, for example, medieval alchemical manuscripts. Fröbe's visual vocabulary also encompasses Christianity, Theosophy, Eastern philosophy, I Ching divination, phenomenology, Jungian analysis, and ancient mystical schools, e.g., Pythagoreanism and Hermeticism. Assuming a Jungian task, Fröbe created the Drawings under psychotherapeutic guidance, capturing transfigurative psychological experiences and her intimate relationship with her unconscious, or her 'self-analysis.' Yet her multifaceted symbolic expressions are constrained and obscured by the totalising and harmonising geometrical forms of her works. While her art abbreviates and abstracts her syncretic cosmology, Fröbe also seeks to illustrate and inflame the wider phenomenon of 'occult illumination' through these works. Their spell-circles enclose and envelope the individual: they fix and order the world at a moment where there is otherwise chaos. I will reflect on how one might approach Fröbe's enigmatic Meditation Drawings as living, vacillating articulations of an occultcosmological system.

**“The Eranos Experience: Spirituality and the Arts from a Comparative Perspective. The Imaginal in Phillip Pullman's *The Book of Dust!*” Charles M. Stang (Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School)**

This paper will explore the influence of Eranos on contemporary Anglophone fiction, specifically the influence of Henry Corbin (1903-1978) on Philip Pullman's latest trilogy, *The Book of Dust*. A follow-up to Pullman's much-celebrated trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, *The Book of Dust* continues the story of Lyra Belacqua (Silvertongue): Volume I, *La Belle Sauvage* (2017) is set earlier than the original series, when Lyra is an infant; Volume II, *The Secret Commonwealth* (2019) is set later, when she is an undergraduate; Volume III has yet to be released. The paper will focus on “imaginal” journeys in the first two volumes, and how Corbin's interpretation of the *alam al-mithal* or *mundus imaginalis* can help us better appreciate Pullman's theory of the imagination and what might be called his “imaginal” fiction. Themes to be treated include: the nature of time during imaginal journeys; Pullman's animism, and the role of the more-than-human world; the place of alchemy, subtle bodies, and psychedelia in the new trilogy; and his further exploration of the relationship between each human and his or her individual daemon.

**“Victor Zuckerkandl's Eranos Experience”, Daphne Tan, University of Toronto**

This talk examines the significant impact of Eranos on the writings of Victor Zuckerkandl (1896– 1965), an Austrian American musicologist and philosopher. Zuckerkandl's presence in Ascona challenges historical accounts of Eranos in which musicians are on the periphery. Indeed, in the 1960s, he delivered five lectures at the annual conferences and moreover became a member of Eranos's governing inner circle. In turn, Eranos was a testing ground for many ideas that would appear in the second volume of Zuckerkandl's widely read *Sound and Symbol*, while his encounters with the work of other participants, past and present (e.g., Jung, Kerényi), would make their way into his lesser-known writings. Zuckerkandl's output as a whole—three books and numerous published and unpublished lectures and essays—is notable in its appeal to general audiences. He held that music, as “part of the great attempt to master the world through the mind,” did not require specialized knowledge to discuss but rather a “musical thinking” that went beyond “merely logical” thinking (*Vom musikalischen Denken*, 1964, 9). In Zuckerkandl's Eranos lectures we witness such musical thinking in action, as he vividly demonstrates, for instance, the transformation of a single interval into a Bach fugue subject (“*Die Tongestalt*,” 1960) or describes Bach's compositional process as stemming from a utopian “third space,” beyond “inner” (dream) and “outer” (reality) worlds (“*Die Wahrheit des Traumes und der Traum der Wahrheit*,” 1963). Yet Zuckerkandl's approach to music, replete with metaphors of organicism, depth, and dynamism, is very much in keeping with specialist perspectives, including that of Schenkerian theory, a dominant approach in North America. Drawing on the five Eranos lectures, as well as unpublished correspondence between Zuckerkandl and Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn and Rudolf Ritsema, I highlight both the tensions and rewards inherent in Zuckerkandl's adaptation of specialist approaches for Eranos's multidisciplinary audience.