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9780-521-19621-5 - Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

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ESOTERICISM AND THE ACADEMY

Academics tend to look on “esoteric,” “occult,” or “magical” beliefs with contempt, but are usually ignorant about the religious and philosophical traditions to which these terms refer, or their relevance to intellectual history. Wouter J. Hanegraaff tells the neglected story of how intellectuals since the Renaissance have tried to come to terms with a cluster of “pagan” ideas from late antiquity that challenged the foundations of biblical religion and Greek rationality. Expelled from the academy on the basis of Protestant and Enlightenment polemics, these traditions have come to be perceived as the Other by which academics define their identity to the present day. Hanegraaff grounds his discussion in a meticulous study of primary and secondary sources, taking the reader on an exciting intellectual voyage from the fifteenth century to the present day, and asking what implications the forgotten history of exclusion has for established textbook narratives of religion, philosophy, and science.

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF is Professor of History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of *New Age Religion and Western Culture* (1996) and *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447–1500)* (with R. M. Bouthoorn, 2005). He is editor of the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (2005), and co-editor of six other books including *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* (co-edited with Jeffrey J. Kripal, 2008).

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Chapter epigraphs

Page 1, quotation from Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* III.5. “Merely pointing out that which is concealed so carefully, means destroying it.”

Page 5, quotation from John Crowley, *The Solitudes*. Copyright © 1987, 2007 by John Crowley. Published by The Overlook Press in 2007. All rights reserved.

Page 77, quotation from Jean Baudrillard, “La part maudite.” Copyright © The UNESCO Courier. All rights reserved. “Exorcizing means producing something in order to curse it.”

Page 257, quotation from Gershom Scholem, “Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies.” Copyright © 1997 Gershom Scholem. Reprinted from *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, The Jewish Publication Society, with the permission of the publisher.

Page 368, quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* II.13. “Only that which has no history can be defined.”

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Acknowledgments

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