

PREFACE

It is with feelings of great pleasure and satisfaction that we present the reader with this first issue of *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, published by Royal E.J. Brill Academic Publishers. *Aries* is the continuation—as a new series with a strongly revised editorial formula—of the trilingual journal *ARIES* (Association pour la Recherche et l'Information sur l'Ésotérisme) founded by R. Edighoffer and A. Faivre in 1985 and published consecutively by La Table d'Émeraude and Archè-Edidit.

Our journal in its new incarnation intends to reflect as well as stimulate the academic recognition and professionalization of the study of western esotericism which has become increasingly evident during the last decade and is likely to continue in the years to come. Our ambition is to make *Aries* into the internationally recognized podium for academic investigation and intellectual discussion regarding a field of study which has been seriously neglected by earlier generations of researchers – to the detriment of our understanding of modern and contemporary western religion and culture. Because of the need for a journal which facilitates and stimulates contact and exchange between scholars working in many different countries, *Aries* accepts contributions in four languages: English, French, German and Italian. Furthermore, all articles will be followed by an abstract in another language, so as to make the contents as accessible as possible across linguistic borders; and the editorial board contains a number of “international consultants” who will act as primary representatives of the journal within specific linguistic and regional domains.

While *Aries* covers the entire period from the late 15th century to the present (while also accepting contributions on antiquity and the middle ages if clearly relevant to modern and contemporary developments), this first issue happens to have a 20th-century focus. Wouter J. Hanegraaff presents an article of a programmatic nature, on the study of western esotericism since the 1960s and some problematics related to its present development into a recognized academic discipline. John F. Moffitt's article investigates the relevance of cryptography and alchemy to the art of Marcel Duchamp and his American mentor Walter Arensberg, thus exemplifying the relevance of western esotericism not only to the study of religion, but to interdisciplinary research including domains such as the history of art. Natale Spineto addresses the influence of Traditionalism on the work of Mircea Eliade, thus making more broadly accessible the results of Italian research on this question. And Carole Frosio contributes a critical analysis of the recent French Dictionary of Esotericism

published by the Presses Universitaires de France, thereby putting on the agenda basic methodological questions similar to those addressed in the first article of this issue. The book review section contains critical discussions of recent publications in Russian, Dutch, French, English and German. And the issue ends with an overview of congresses and symposia.

Future issues will contain contributions ranging from the Renaissance to the present, approached from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. We heartily invite colleagues to contribute manuscripts or submit review copies of new publications, and to keep us informed about any information of specific or general interest to the academic study of western esotericism.

The editors