



eranos

an alternative
intellectual history
of the
twentieth century

Hans Thomas Hahl

Translated by Christopher McIntosh

ROUTLEDGE



Thomas Hakl has given us here the definitive study of Eranos and, in the process, has sharpened and deepened our understanding of the history of the study of religion. A magnum opus fully deserving the name and certain to change the conversation.

Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Rice University, USA*

Any complete history of Eranos must convey a sense of its inner meaning as well as adhere to high standards of scholarly documentation. Thomas Hakl's revised and newly translated study more than meets both of these criteria. In discussing the many personalities, controversies, and themes which have figured in its history he adds immeasurably to the literature about this important incubator for a new global humanism.

Jay Sherry, author of *Carl Gustav Jung, Avant-garde Conservative*

Every year since 1933 many of the world's leading intellectuals have met on Lake Maggiore to discuss the latest developments in philosophy, history, art and science and, in particular, to explore the mystical and symbolic in religion. The Eranos Meetings – named after the Greek word for a banquet where the guests bring the food – constitute one of the most important gatherings of scholars in the twentieth century.

Eranos presents a set of portraits of some of the century's most influential thinkers, all participants at Eranos: Carl Jung, Erich Neumann, Mircea Eliade, Martin Buber, Walter Otto, Paul Tillich, Gershom Scholem, Herbert Read, Joseph Campbell, Erwin Schrödinger, Karl Kerényi, D. T. Suzuki, and Adolph Portmann. The volume presents a critical appraisal of the views of these men and how the exchange of ideas encouraged by Eranos influenced each, and examines the attraction of these esotericists towards authoritarian politics.

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ERANOS

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Eranos

An Alternative Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century

Hans Thomas Hakl

Translated by Christopher McIntosh
with the collaboration of Hereward Tilton

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For my dear wife, Franziska

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Contents

<i>Preface and Acknowledgments</i>	xi
Introduction: How This Book Emerged	1
1. The Significance of Eranos	7
2. An Esoteric Prelude to Eranos	12
3. Yearning for the East: Monte Verità and the School of Wisdom	33
4. Toward Eranos	43
5. The First Eranos Meeting: An Idea Comes to Life	54
6. Eranos and National Socialism	69
7. The Years 1934–37	90
8. Eranos 1938: The United States Shows Interest	109
9. The War Years	122
10. New Prospects after the World Conflict	138
11. The Heyday Begins	154
12. The Early 1950s	169
13. Polytheism Versus Monotheism	225
14. An End, Some New Beginnings, and Repeated Turbulence	242
15. Delicate Questions and Attempts to Answer Them	257
16. Eranos as a Prototype	274
17. The End of a Cycle ... or Perhaps Not	289
<i>Notes</i>	293
<i>Bibliography</i>	391
<i>Index</i>	427

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Just over two years were needed to complete the first version of this book. Since then a further decade has passed. There have been numerous new publications on the main Eranos protagonists and on more peripheral figures, as well as specialized studies on particular themes addressed at the meetings. All of this has made possible a more accurate picture of Eranos. The unfinished Eranos manuscript of Catherine Ritsema, wife of the long-standing Eranos president, has also come to light, as has Gerhard Wehr's unpublished manuscript on the history of Eranos. And the history of Eranos itself has continued and demands to be told. Furthermore, it has become increasingly clear how significant Eranos was for the history of religion and for the scholarly study of esotericism. If ten years ago Eranos was a largely unknown subject, today there is a whole series of publications bearing its name in their titles, and an Internet search will yield tens of thousands of entries. Thus the need for an expanded and corrected edition of this book had become pressing. This meant that the English translation, which had been on the agenda for several years, had to be delayed, added to which the task proved difficult since many passages and quotations had very subtle undertones and were far from straightforward, presenting a special challenge to the translator. For her great patience, my thanks are due first of all to Janet Joyce of Equinox, and I also thank Kate Williams of Acumen for her accuracy and immediate responses and Tristan Palmer, also of Acumen, in spite of our occasional differences of opinion. Next I wish to thank translator Christopher McIntosh, himself an author, for his friendly cooperation over several years. I have greatly admired his intuitive ability to find the right tone and to evoke in his translation the things that consistently moved me while writing the original. I would also like to thank Hereward Tilton, who assisted with parts of the translation in the final stages.

My friend Professor Allison Coudert, an expert on the history of religion and esotericism, put me into contact with Equinox, for which I am extremely grateful. Thanks are also due to two people who were always willing to keep me informed about new material in the archives of the venerable Eranos Foundation in Moscia-Ascona, namely Riccardo Bernardini and Giovanni Sorge, both of whom have carried out research into Eranos—the former wrote his doctoral dissertation on the subject and has published essays and independent works on Eranos. Another person who most kindly provided me with information about the Eranos Foundation was Gisela Binda, who for many years has been taking care of the administration there. And John van Praag, then president of the foundation, was always willing to receive me when I was in Ascona, despite his limited time. So was Fabio Merlini, who succeeded him.

As always, my friend Giovanni Casadio gave me great help, especially with the task of correction and supplying me with specific information. Warmest thanks are also due to Gerhard Wehr and Augusto Sabbadini Shanteena for enabling me to consult hitherto

unpublished manuscripts and fragments on Eranos. Mac Linscott Ricketts generously gave me copies of his English translation of the unpublished diaries of Mircea Eliade.

If I continue with a straight list of names it does not detract from the thanks that I owe to each person individually for the help they have given me. Without putting them in alphabetical order (which would be rather too artificial) I would like to mention the following: Erik Hornung, Elisabeth Staehelin, Petteri Pietikäinen, Mihaela Gligor, Annemarie Aeschbach, Gustavo Benavides, Florin Turcanu, Alfred Ribi, Walter Thys, Angela Stadler, Konstantin Burmistrov, Claudio Bonvecchio, Friedrich Niewöhner, Peter Mulacz, Gerhard Zwieauer, Hans Pichler, Ralf Liedtke, Matthias Korger, Fabrizio Frigerio, Ferdinand Leopold, Willem Hofstee, Hubert Treiber, Wigbert Grabert, Jeff Kripal, Christoph W. Abdelmu'min Clairmont, Olaf Räderer, Michael Kuper, David Williams, Basil Wilby, Bruno Fellinger, Nuccio d'Anna, Deborah Forman, Eugen Ciurtin, Hermann Jung, and Axel Voss. I also want to thank Harvey Shoolman for a decade's long encouragement and the lesson he taught me. Many thanks also go to Chas Clifton, my copy-editor, for his competence and patience with this complicated text and its endless notes. My particular thanks are due to Werner Hausheer and his firm, the Verlagsgemeinschaft für europäische Editionen, for his support—which was not only moral and intellectual but also of a distinctly concrete kind.

Sadly, but unavoidably, I must report the deaths in recent years of Magda Kerényi, Rudolf Ritsema, and William McGuire as well as Annemarie Schimmel, without whom this book would never have become what it is now. May they rest in peace. It is to be wished that the influence of their legacy may continue, and this was one of the main reasons why I undertook the often arduous task of revising the book and helping with the translation.

This book is intended to serve—and why should I not declare this openly?—as a plea for mental and spiritual expansion. This calls for tolerance above all—tolerance and understanding not only towards foreign cultures but also towards other modes of thinking within our own cultural sphere even if they concern past political attitudes. As a trained lawyer I regard the ancient Roman maxim *audiatur et altera pars* (hear the other side also)—especially when we do not really want to hear it—as no outmoded relic but a living principle that is close to my heart. It is also my profound conviction that our culture cannot survive just on reason and technological efficiency. We need to be able to draw strength from the deeper levels of our being too, and these can only be activated through myths, images, and symbols. And that is precisely what this book is about. At Eranos, I believe, the trail was blazed for an “alternative intellectual history of the twentieth century,” running counter to the domineering claims of materialism and positivism, those sterile parents of a mathematical, technical, and predominantly economic worldview which is out of touch with humanity and in which the “gods” are finally dead.

Acknowledgements for the First Edition

The fact that this work has been accomplished at all is due to the help of many friends, acquaintances, and correspondents. Not all of them wish to be named, and this desire must be respected. Nevertheless they can be assured of my thanks. In listing the following names I have treated their titles as implicit, since most of them are doctors, professors, or

holders of honorary titles. The order of names does not imply any judgment on my part as to the value of their contribution.

In expressing thanks it is always difficult to know where to begin, so I shall start by thanking the publishing firm of *Scientia Nova* for their understanding and for the way in which they relieved me of much time-consuming work by organizing long-distance library loans and by visiting on my behalf the German Literature Archive at Marbach. The debt of thanks that I owe to William McGuire can hardly ever be repaid. His support ranged from providing me with copies of his own original material to putting me into contact with important persons connected with Eranos. Magda Kerényi assisted me with many important questions and corrected the sections dealing with her late husband. I thank her also for providing me with many photocopies and for her permission to quote from her reports and reviews. Equally helpful was Ximena de Angulo, who has been involved with Eranos since 1933(!). By virtue of her close contacts with Olga Fröbe, C.G. Jung, and other prominent Eranos figures, she was able to give me much important information. She also gave me access to the correspondence between her mother, Cary Baynes, and Olga Fröbe, and she drew my attention to the only book published (privately) by Fröbe. Furthermore, she allowed me to quote from her lively unpublished report on Eranos as well as from private correspondence. I must also thank her for many heart-warming conversations.

My friend Antoine Faivre played a valued role in paving the way for an objective attempt to penetrate the esotericist thicket. He encouraged me by his positive reaction to my initial outline and cautioned me not to rush into publication too quickly, which meant that I had time to gather additional material and to think more carefully about the main focus of the book. In addition he made available his uncensored diary entries about Eranos as well as much other material, including private photographs of the meetings, and he gave me valuable guidance both orally and in correspondence. He also most willingly read and corrected the manuscript. Erik Hornung, for his part, facilitated my access to the manuscript department at Basel University and thus to the literary estate of Adolf Portmann. He also provided me with articles and tips and granted me many informative discussions. Ultimately he was even prepared to read the entire completed manuscript and drew my attention to various mistakes.

Sonu Shamdasani also most selflessly read the finished manuscript with the eyes of a Jung expert and made a number of important corrections. Tilo Schabert not only provided me with literature but also gave me the benefit of his often highly critical comments. Walter Thys told me, in connection with André Jolles, much about the early life of Olga Fröbe, which would otherwise have escaped me. In particular he found out for me the address of R.A. Beguin, the grandson of Olga Fröbe, who generously allowed me to publish any material from his grandmother's writings that I considered relevant. Without these verbatim quotations this book would have been much less authentic. Mr. Beguin deserves my special thanks for this.

One set of documents that came as a complete surprise to me, as I was previously unaware of their existence, were those given to me by Gertrude von Schoeler on the subject of Eranos and especially concerning Erwin Rousselle. Margaret Dierks has my thanks for her comments and also putting me in touch with Martin Kraatz, who gave me many valuable insights regarding Rudolf Otto and brought to my attention Otto's letters to Olga Fröbe. I thank him also for his detailed corrections to the first draft of my portrayal of Otto and for bringing to my attention the Friedrich Heiler letters that I have quoted. Uwe

Bredhorn of the Marburg University Library then kindly made copies available to me of the correspondence between Heiler and Fröbe. He also provided corrections and pointed me in the direction of further sources. Shaul Baumann deserves thanks for giving me a summary of his dissertation on Jakob Wilhelm Hauer and the transcript of a talk that he had given on the same subject, thereby affording me new insights. James Hillman I thank most warmly for his illuminating corrections to the passages dealing with him personally. I am grateful to David Miller for his positive appraisal of the manuscript and for his permission to quote from it for publicity purposes. To the following people I am grateful for encouraging me to persevere or for giving me important and interesting pointers or actual material: Gerhard Wehr, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, Jay Sherry, Martin Erler, Annemarie Schimmel, Aleida Assmann, Ada and Hans Gottfried von Stockhausen, Marianne New, Irmgard Schnetzler, Viviane Hartenberg, Angela Stader, Maria Babwasingh, Yvonne and Fritz Hugelmann, Eveline Hasler, Rudolf Deelmann, Ulrich Linse, Friedrich Niewöhner, Julia Encke, Ron Margolin, Bruno Rhyner, Karlheinz Weißmann, Michael Großmann, Giovanni Filoramo, Piero Fenili, Giovanni Monastra, and Mario Gandini.

Natale Spineto deserves my heartfelt thanks for providing me with an important book as well as two hitherto unpublished manuscripts by him and some photocopies of relevant Italian newspaper articles. I am especially grateful to him for bringing me into contact with Stella Corbin, who allowed me to examine the papers of her late husband, kept in Zurich, and to quote from certain parts of them, even though they did not yield a huge amount of material, unfortunately. I thank the heirs of C.G. Jung most warmly for being allowed to examine certain interesting material from the as-yet-unpublished papers of their illustrious forebear and for permission to quote from them. My thanks go also to Moshe Idel, who was able to tell me much about Mircea Eliade, as both of them came from Romania. My friend Giovanni Casadio was a valuable interview partner, gave me an abundance of documents and tips and made a number of corrections. Yvonne Bölt told me much about the town of Ascona and its environs. Barbara von Reibnitz, for her part, allowed me to see her as yet unpublished work on Eranos. Similarly, I obtained a preview of an essay by Wouter Hanegraaff on the significance of Eranos for the academic treatment of esoteric themes, and for this I thank him sincerely.

Another important contact was with Steven Wasserstrom, who has expressed concern about the danger of losing the proven standards of—originally God-inspired—ethics and objective science in the study of religion (as in the world as a whole?) with the onward march of “esoteric” and therefore more individualistic approaches. I respect his point of view even though I myself believe that we need a carefully considered re-orientation, with all its problems and birth pains. Steven Wasserstrom kindly gave me some pre-publication glimpses of his book *Religion after Religion*, which has meanwhile appeared, and has given me much food for thought and above all confirmation. There were inevitably certain overlaps and parallels between our two books, although I had the undeniable advantage of being able to consult his book—somewhat late but nonetheless in time to benefit from it. For both of us, after studying abundant source material, have identified the essentially esoteric underlying character of Eranos, even though we evaluate it differently.

I must also acknowledge Rudolf Ritsema and Christa Robinson, the latter now president of the Eranos Foundation in Moscia. Although they were not always unreservedly happy with my changing approach to the project, I am grateful to them for the criticisms

and improvements that they made (unfortunately only in the early stages). I would have dearly liked to spend more time in the Eranos archive in Moscia, but unfortunately did not at first receive the necessary permission. Only when the book had already been set did the situation change, thanks especially to the new director of Eranos Moscia, Jay Livernois, but also to Christa Robinson. Unfortunately it was only possible at that point to insert a few additions, otherwise the publication would have been excessively delayed. We hope, however, to bring out a supplementary volume with important documents and additions.

The California bookseller Todd Pratum always endeavored promptly to obtain for me any out-of-print and also new books from the English-speaking world that I required. Laszlo Toth performed a similar service for me in France. Gunther Nickel of the German Literature Archive in Marbach, Michele McKnee of the Kristine Mann Library in New York, and Yvonne Voegeli from the Library of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich were always willing to help me in my researches and, where necessary, to grant me permission for quotations. All the letters to or from C.G. Jung that I have quoted are held, unless otherwise stated, in the C.G. Jung archive at the Swiss Federal Technical Institute. Matthias Dalvit from the Central Library in Zurich also supported me and provided me with additional valuable materials. Thanks are also due to my friends and business partners Werner Hausheer and Charles-Pierre Schöbi, for together we created the material basis that has made possible at all the pursuit of such “hobbies” as writing a book about Eranos. Last but definitely not least, I would like to express special thanks to my friend Joscelyn Godwin, who relieved me of a large burden of work that really should have fallen to me, and thus enabled me to continue working on the present book.

There is one important point that I would like to make concerning the documents and letters from public and private archives that I have made use of. In quoting from these I have taken it upon myself to correct obvious orthographic mistakes, without indicating this each time. Leaving such mistakes uncorrected would only have made the language flow less easily for the reader, without adding to the authenticity of the passages concerned.

Here I would like also to express general thanks to all the publishing houses from whose books I have continually quoted—while naturally observing the accepted scholarly rules. One that deserves a special mention is Princeton University Press, publisher of the celebrated Bollingen Series, which played such a key role for Eranos, as this book has made clear. Another that I wish to thank is Hohe Warte (Franz von Bebenburg) Verlag, formerly publisher of a periodical from which I have quoted two extensive passages. Unfortunately it was not always possible for my publisher or myself to locate all copyright owners. This applied not only to textual passages but also to photographs. In many cases I had received the photographs from private individuals who no longer had any idea who had taken them. Several probably were from the Vienna photographer Margaretha Fellerer, whose heirs we have not been able to identify. I and my publisher would like to emphasize that we had no intention of infringing any copyright. If anyone is the holder of such copyright, we invite them to make themselves known to us so that they can be compensated according to the usual practice.

I cannot express high enough praise for the patience of my wife Franziska, especially as she must already assume that after this work I shall of course embark on another one. What is more, the whole house was constantly overflowing with books and periodicals, and notes written on sheets of paper often lay in places where they did not belong (even

from my rather tolerant perspective), but my reproachfully questioning glance immediately fell on *her* when there was something *I* was not able to find. My parents too, who are no longer as mobile as they were, have learned that a mania for research can easily fill up days, weeks, months, while everything else gets short shrift. And only dog owners will know how much my dog suffered while his master sat for so long at the computer when the world outside smelt so enticing. To the Swiss Confederation, which constitutes the setting for my story and where I spent so many enriching years, I also partially dedicate this book in the hope that the country will not fall victim to the great simplifications of our age. And perhaps—who knows?—I should also thank the unknown *genius loci* of Eranos. Similarly I must thank the beneficent and demanding spirits of a private library, which already contained the great majority of the books used for this work, so that I only had to reach out when I needed them.

Introduction: How This Book Emerged

“Books have their fates,” as the old saying has it. The present book is a wonderful example. Originally I planned to write an introduction of some twenty pages to a selection of Eranos lectures with distinctly esoteric themes. I felt such an introduction to be necessary in order to make the reading public familiar with the history and significance of the Eranos meetings, although at that time I myself did not know a great deal about the subject. Not all that many people are in fact aware that, over a period of seventy years, men and women enjoying a high academic reputation met regularly at Ascona on Lake Maggiore in order to give scholarly lectures to a relatively small audience about their latest insights in the fields of religion, philosophy, history, art, and science. But these people were not motivated merely by the desire to transmit detailed knowledge, as is usually the case in universities. Their concern was rather to locate such knowledge within a universal spiritual stream reaching from antiquity to the present day, from East to West and from North to South, stimulating all humanity. This, incidentally, was what sparked off my interest in the subject.

Then came the first surprise: there appeared to be no published reports or historical information about the meetings and how they came into being (I shall say more about this in the next chapter). After some initial research, however, there began to come my way—at first slowly and then ever faster—information that was highly intriguing and evidently important.

When I then tried to squeeze all the facts that I had gathered into the prescribed parameters, I realized how much highly interesting material simply could not be accommodated. Very well, I thought, forty pages will certainly be enough. I informed the publishing house accordingly: there would be a delay. However, as it was the seeking and finding of material that I most enjoyed, more and more stuff accumulated, and gradually it became clear to me that in Eranos I was dealing with something far more important than I had originally assumed. My rather general interest in the meetings began to deepen. Having initially concentrated on printed material, albeit including published primary sources such as diaries and conference reports, I extended the search to unpublished manuscripts, letters, and diary entries. This led to conversations and correspondence with a number of Eranos speakers and participants. The leading figures in the story came more and more clearly into focus, becoming real human beings rather than just world-famous names from diverse academic disciplines. They came to life again in all their feelings and emotions—envy and joy, pride and vanity—but also in their self-sacrifice and their metaphysical longing. Their long-forgotten hopes and disappointments were revived—if only in my mind. Furthermore, what had previously been for me a purely intellectual sympathy for spiritual and cultural strivings in general, now became more and more emotionally tinged and increasingly focused on Eranos in particular.

Equally gradually I began—at first only dimly—to perceive connecting threads. Had the *genius loci*, the daemon of Eranos, which had touched so many of the protagonists of these meetings, also possessed me? I cannot and will not deny that something stirred in me as I stood alone one day in the summer of 1998 in front of the famous stele in the garden of Eranos in Moscia-Ascona—that same stele which had been erected in honour of the “daemon of the place” by the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, the religion scholar and clergyman Gerardus van der Leeuw, and the founder of Eranos Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn. How many important people had already stood there like me, carrying their dreams, hopes, and disappointments with them?

But let us go on with the story of this book. Forty pages, or so I thought, would be enough for what I wanted to write. Naturally they were not nearly enough. Could it still truthfully be called an “introductory essay”? And the publisher was still waiting patiently. Other tasks, other duties distracted me. The work on Eranos lay fallow for a long time. Then I took it up again, as I had been looking forward to doing. Meanwhile the extensive correspondence with authors and professors who had already written about Eranos, as well as with libraries and booksellers all over the world, had continued unabated. The books had gone on piling up, and heaps of newspapers and above all copies of manuscript material from archives and legacies lay unread in my study. As I wrote on and on, and the pile grew only fractionally smaller, while at the same time new sources of material opened up, it became increasingly clear that, instead of a mere introduction, I would have to write a complete book.

There came another discussion with the publisher, and of course once again the deadline—already postponed three times—could not be met. As I immersed myself ever more deeply in the minds and lives of the leading Eranos figures, I found that the story’s connecting threads, of which I had already become dimly aware, took on the quality of a firm, albeit finely woven web that went far beyond the individual *dramatis personae* and reached out into some far wider realm of collective thought and consciousness.

Olga Fröbe’s introductions to the conference yearbooks made it quite clear that the dance was meant to continue, even if individual dancers went away. What was being striven towards was a “new humanism”, which tried, within the world of classical antiquity as well as in foreign religions and cultures, to find certain familiar tones constituting the “primal melody” that is common to all humanity. This quest also went far beyond the individual research endeavors for which the Eranos protagonists were already famous.

The search for our spiritual roots, the intuitive knowledge of a common transcendent origin of humankind, and the corresponding longing for a “return” to what in religious language is called the “divine”—all of this seemed to me to constitute the deeper connecting motivation that sustained the Eranos project for so many decades. This longing is expressed in images and thus supra-rationally in the famous *Hymn of the Pearl*,¹ in which a “king’s son” falls, as it were, from “heaven” into matter, forgets at first who he is and then, after various wanderings and false turnings, is able to return to the splendid realm from which he came. Arguably (according to the theory of Victor Magnien) the same meaning can be found in the Eleusinian mysteries, based on the myth of Persephone’s descent into the underworld and her mother’s search for her and struggle to bring her back to the upper world. In this connection, the “psycho-anthropologist” Giuseppe Lampis, in the first volume of his work *Maschere e demoni* (Masks and Demons),² develops the scenario of a conflict in ancient times between humans and gods. The defeat of the humans in this struggle means that they now have to make an

immense effort in order to return to the gods and therefore to themselves. This longing for a (spiritual) “home” that characterizes so many of the “Eranians” is not just my projection but is also backed up by the official writings cited in this book as well as by the personal observations of Eranos participants.

This book did not therefore arise out of a long-prepared and well thought out “master plan.” On the contrary, a series of small fragments of information and insight gradually came together, until finally an increasingly clear picture began to emerge, as in a mosaic where the pattern emerges slowly out of a mass of tesserae laid out on the ground.³

Despite the ample size that this study finally reached, it still cannot be described as an even moderately comprehensive history of Eranos. For that it would be necessary to include many more biographical sketches of the participants, and furthermore it would be essential to deal at least with the salient lectures given at the meetings. However, considering the sheer bulk of important material contained in the Eranos yearbooks, this would have necessitated a work of several volumes. Consequently, although the lectures are the most important aspect of Eranos, I decided from the start to leave them almost entirely aside.⁴ Only individual, in-depth studies by specialists in different fields can really throw a clear light on the great influence of Eranos in intellectual history. My study therefore is intended primarily to offer an initial historical overview, encompassing numerous original documents and dealing especially thoroughly with the prehistory and early years of the Eranos meetings.

Although occasionally the flow of this narrative is interrupted by digressions on matters of intellectual history or philosophy, I do not feel called to embark on a real analysis of Eranos in its entirety because of the great complexity of the material involved. Hence my analyses do not go beyond certain obvious elements such as anti-historicism, anti-positivism, interdisciplinarity, and the emphasis on spiritual perspectives. However, I have intentionally emphasized the “esoteric” and “political” dimensions of Eranos (and also of the speakers, especially those of the first, “critical” years). Some people will probably, and with some justification, say that I have been too one-sided and that certain countervailing aspects should have been emphasized. But, taking into account how difficult it is to give a balanced portrait of even one single prominent person (and there were enough of those at Eranos), I hope readers will tolerate my leaning more to one side in the balancing act. It is for this reason that the role of artists, philosophers, and scientists—with the exception of Adolf Portmann—appears in the framework of this study to be less significant than it probably was. At the same time it must be said that certain famous people, such as the physicist Erwin Schrödinger, the philosopher Karl Löwith, the sociologist Helmuth Plessner and others, attended only once. The reason for this probably lay in the particular spiritual climate of Eranos, by which one felt either attracted or put off, even excluded.

Undoubtedly it was this particular mental climate that gave rise to the frequent critical comments about Eranos. What were and what are these criticisms? First of all there is the accusation of irrationalism (because of too pronounced a sympathy for esotericism of whatever hue), and second there are the alleged links to authoritarian and fascist currents of thought. This might, incidentally, be one of the reasons why Eranos has been given such an unfairly small amount of space in academic literature. In giving at least a provisional answer to these accusations, and in trying to elucidate the true facts of the matter, it was necessary to carry out as exact a stocktaking as possible, neither ignoring unwelcome facts nor taking these as indicative of a whole way of life or

thought. Hence the many quotations from documents of the time that are not always easily accessible.

In the perspective of that period and on the basis of more precise information, it will become easier to understand certain facts, such as the participation of National Socialists like Jakob Wilhelm Hauer and Gustav Heyer at the Eranos meetings. Nevertheless, some readers will feel impelled to deliver a verdict of more or less gross carelessness in dealing with tyranny. Such a verdict, of course, cannot be applied to Eranos as a whole but only to certain speakers. However, a thorough treatment of this question would demand an entire book on its own and therefore, in my expositions on this theme, I have concentrated on the less well known participants. On the well known entanglements of C.G. Jung and Mircea Eliade there is already enough informative literature that is relatively easily accessible. In this whole debate one should, however, never forget the following passage from Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

My opinion is that it's certainly best to separate an artist far enough from his work, so that one does not take him with the same seriousness as one does his work. In the final analysis, he is only the precondition for his work, its maternal womb, the soil or, in some cases, the dung and manure, on and out of which it grows—and thus, in most cases, something that we must forget about, if we want to enjoy the work itself.⁵

And when one looks more closely at the “esoteric” aspect of Eranos one must ask oneself the question what is in fact meant by the word “esoteric” and whether the accusation is an accusation at all.⁶ To anticipate this question right away: the term “esoteric”⁷ is defined here—in contrast to the scholarly definition of Antoine Faivre—as simply the conscious pursuit of a religiously motivated path “inwards”, a path towards a Know-thyself (that is, one's “divine” self). In other words the “esotericism” of Eranos is concerned with “individuation”, with a “*descensus ad inferos = ascensus ad superos*”, which takes place in the spiritual and symbolic realm and not in the world of the rational intellect, but can nevertheless be recognized by the intellect. Hence the skepticism that one finds again and again at Eranos towards a purely and exclusively rational attitude, and hence the deliberate incorporation of analogical, “mythical” thinking. Only those who make themselves open to the “inner” world are capable of bridging the boundaries between cultures, epochs, and disciplines, as Eranos aims to do. For in the “inner” dimension we find something which deeply connects all human beings and which, although manifesting itself in countless different outward forms, is always one and the same—the “archetypal”, to use Jung's term. The way to that place requires myths, symbols, that is to say “pictures” that work on the psyche. Esoteric disciplines such as astrology, tarot or the Chinese *I Ching* offer particularly suitable images for this purpose. In this sense Eranos is a place where one “experiments in touching the boundaries of one's own being” and also where one “puts one's ear to the secret *stream* of time”⁸ and does not become lost in the fleeting fashions of the moment. This is what is “anachronistic” or, more accurately, “timeless” about Eranos. Only thus is it possible to span the boundaries between cultures and epochs with their different conceptions of time.

Another reason why the “esoteric” component of Eranos has moved into the foreground is that I did not want an undue emphasis on the “masculine” academic approach to push aside the “feminine” perspective, so sensitively represented by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (and which she herself characterized as “irrational”), since both elements were

important for the continuing vitality of Eranos.⁹ Rather, I wanted to place the central role of Olga Fröbe—with all her anguished efforts on behalf of Eranos and her own personal struggles—clearly in the foreground. Apart from the unquestionable legitimacy of Olga Fröbe’s “esoteric” viewpoint, which will be described in due course, there was certainly also enough support from the male side for her course. For one reason or another, the “feminine” side of Eranos has up to now stood too much in the shadow. Without the personal efforts of Fröbe and the financial support of Mary Mellon, perhaps also the services of Cary Baynes as an intermediary, all those participants—however distinguished—would never have been able to come together to even engage in discussion. In this sense, one can undoubtedly see Eranos as a modern continuation of the “salon” tradition, which was so widespread in the two preceding centuries and in which women also played the central role. It seems that the female sex simply has more social skills than the male.

At any rate, my wish was to gather as much basic material as possible, so as to stimulate further sound research—perhaps focusing on other aspects of the topic. This may arouse in the reader the regrettable—but hopefully not permanent—impression of a heap of papers spilt from an overturned filing cabinet. And this touches on the biggest problem that I faced when writing this book. According to which criteria was I to decide what information to include and what to leave out, when I had such an abundance of useable material?¹⁰ Further difficulties becomes apparent when, for example, I use long notes to deal with questions that may not directly concern the history of Eranos but are of great importance for understanding the intellectual background of the meetings and the lecturers.

Such questions are, for instance, how precisely to assess the phenomenon that is designated here as “esoteric” or “gnostic”: how to address its transmission as a current of thought from the Renaissance, through the Romantic era to the present day; its interaction with (as well as opposition to) the scientific tradition; the fascination exerted by myths as well as the links between mythology and politics; the equally politically relevant debate about the nature of “modernity”; the great abundance in the first half of the twentieth century (in comparison to the present day) of widely varied—indeed contrasting—publications in the field of intellectual history and works addressing the fundamental ethical questions of humankind; the way in which writers and teachers are embedded in their age and the responsibilities which result from that situation; and so forth. I would like in advance to apologize for any questionable conclusions or factual errors that specialist readers find in this work as a result of the volume of material that I drew upon. Despite the help of good friends I was not able to check the accuracy of every printed source and every piece of orally transmitted information.

A further point requires clarification. The fact that I deal only summarily with speakers from the late 1970s, in contrast to those of earlier years, has nothing to do with the magnitude of their achievement and does not reflect any lack of interest on my part or fear that I might bore the reader. The reason lies rather in my reticence in expressing judgments about people who are still in the midst of their work. My concern was that they would inevitably have been given short shrift. Some of the present-day Eranos speakers are people that I know and value personally. I simply do not want to touch living matter unnecessarily. It winces and gets tense. It was difficult enough to attempt to do justice to the various Eranos meetings since 1988 and those responsible for them. I am naïve enough to hold to my belief in the Socratic doctrine that the human will is, by its very nature, geared to strive for moral goodness (who has the right to define it?), and that

consequently evil can only come about through ignorance.¹¹ Therefore I have ventured to follow Socrates and believe in the “goodwill” of the protagonists. It is only regrettable that people—despite their striving for the “good”—have so little ability to forget their own “I.” When this is placed in the foreground it all too easily obscures the “good.”

All in all I did not want to conceal my sympathy for Eranos and its goals. Certainly I feel such sympathy to be justified, as Eranos is undoubtedly one of the most significant intellectual adventures of the twentieth century. At any rate, the “cast list” of this adventure is unique. I accept that such sympathy is not consistent with the standards of pure scholarship, but this I did not aim for. I sometimes, for example, also quote (albeit rarely) from letters that are not publicly accessible and therefore cannot be checked as sources. And one other thing kept my ambitions within bounds, namely the realization of my own limitations, which became increasingly clear to me, the deeper I went into this material.

1. The Significance of Eranos

For more than seven decades the Eranos meetings have played a unique role in the cultural and intellectual history of our age, taking place each year with amazing regularity (with the single exception of 1989). The deaths of the founder and the key early participants have altered nothing except for the outer form. On 30 March 1957, C.G. Jung wrote, “May the light of the European spirit, which has radiated out from Eranos for so many years during this time of darkness, enjoy a further lease of life so that it can fulfill its role as a beacon lighting the way towards the unification of Europe.”¹ As he had already remarked in 1951, Eranos was “the only place in Europe where scholars and interested lay participants could come together and exchange ideas, unrestricted by academic boundaries.”²

Jung’s follower, the well-known psychologist Erich Neumann, went even further when he described Eranos as “inconspicuous and off the beaten track, and yet a navel of the world, a small link in the Golden Chain,”³ by which he meant the Golden Chain of wisdom teachers, beginning with Hermes Trismegistus. And Mircea Eliade, probably the best-known religious scholar of the twentieth century, wrote in his autobiography: “Ascona and the Eranos group fascinated me from the start.”⁴ No wonder, for there he met intellectual giants like Jung, Gershom Scholem—the most influential Kabbalistic scholar of our age—and Karl Kerényi, the mythologist and expert on ancient Greece. In the foreword to the second volume of his diaries he described the “spirit of Eranos,” the theme that we shall examine in detail in this volume, as “one of the most creative cultural experiences in the modern Western world.”⁵ In an issue of the Swiss journal *Du*, dedicated to the Eranos meetings, he even compared these to “certain ‘circles’ during the Italian Renaissance or the German Romantic period, that is to say [with] groups that, at a certain moment in history, represent the most fruitful and advanced intellectual tendencies.”⁶ The significance of this remark will be apparent to anyone who knows the central role that these Renaissance groups played in the history of ideas and the importance that Eliade attached to them.

Art historian, writer, publisher, and critic Sir Herbert Read for his part saw in Eranos the upsurge of a “new humanism,”⁷ and the biologist Adolf Portmann went so far as to say that his “encounter with the circle that met during the Eranos meetings at Moscia-Ascona was like a stroke of destiny”⁸ and that Eranos came to be a center of his “innermost life.”⁹ Another commentator, Michel Cazenave, responsible for the French translation of Jung’s works and himself a much-respected author, called Eranos “one of the richest centres of intellectual and spiritual interchange known to our century” and a place of central importance in the life of Jung.¹⁰

This provisional selection of quotations should for the time being suffice to make clear that Eranos was no commonplace phenomenon. The list of contributors contains

one prominent name after another. Besides those already mentioned, the participants included the physicist and Nobel prize-winner Erwin Schrödinger; the theologians Paul Tillich, Ernst Benz, and Hugo Rahner; the Japanese scholar Daisetz Taitaro Suzuki, who brought Zen Buddhism to the West; the ethnologist Paul Radin; the expert on Gnosticism Gilles Quispel; the philosopher and sociologist Helmuth Plessner, who described Eranos as the “Bayreuth of depth psychology”; the classical scholar Walter F. Otto; the philosophers Karl Löwith and Hans Leisegang; the scholars of religion R.C. Zaehner and Robert Eisler; the philosopher and humanist Martin Buber; the prominent rabbi Leo Baeck; and the orientalist Giuseppe Tucci, Hellmut Wilhelm, Henry Corbin, and Heinrich Zimmer. Later the names include the “archetypal” psychologist James Hillman, the mythologist Joseph Campbell, the expert on Western esotericism Antoine Faivre, and the “alternative” physicist Herbert Pietschmann. In addition, the cultural philosopher Jean Gebser took part in the sessions between 1942 and 1948 and established fruitful contacts with Jung, Kerényi, and Portmann, although he did not actually give any lectures.¹¹

From the most recent times one could mention, *inter alia*: Annemarie Schimmel, Moshe Idel, Reinhold Merkelbach, Ilya Prigogine, Erik Hornung, Zwi Werblowsky, Jan Assmann, Moshe Barash, David Carrasco, Remo Bodei, and Elémire Zolla. The smaller-scale Eranos meetings, which have taken place in Moscia since 1990 with an emphasis on the *I Ching*, have included such names as Stephen Karcher, Michiyoshi Hayashi, Bruno Rhyner, Claudio Risé, and Claudio Bonvecchio. And we shall encounter other important participants as we explore the history of these meetings. The Swiss psychological journal *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* has commented, “Eranos is among the most important manifestations of the present age.”¹² Perhaps I will succeed, within the scope of the present investigation, to show that this description is not merely rhetorical exaggeration.

Consequently, I could not understand why there was hardly any information to be found about such an important and long-standing intellectual forum. There is no reference to Eranos in any of the relevant reference books on the history of religion (including the sixteen-volume *Encyclopedia of Religions*, edited by Mircea Eliade, nor in the second edition edited by Lindsay Jones), nor in standard works on anthropology, psychology, and philosophy (not even in the index to the truly comprehensive *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, published by the Presses Universitaires Françaises, with its 11,000 large-format pages and its countless cross-references), nor in numerous dictionaries of esotericism, symbolism, and mythology. I was able to find only two entries on the subject. The first one, in the third volume of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Dictionary of theology and the Church), although very brief, does at least mention Rudolf Otto’s description of Eranos as “a place of encounter between East and West.”¹³ The second, somewhat longer, entry was written by Magda Kerényi and appears in the six-volume *Schweizer Lexikon* (Swiss lexicon).¹⁴ One might argue that the thematic range of Eranos is too wide for a specialized dictionary, but even the twenty-five-volume *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Wörterbuch* (Meyer’s encyclopedic dictionary) and the twenty-four-volume *Brockhaus* mention only the ancient Greek word *eranos*, meaning a banquet, without saying a single word about the meetings.¹⁵

The world-famous *Encyclopedia Britannica*—at least in the Internet version, which one would assume to be complete—also contains not a single entry. However, under the entry “religion, study of” one finds a passage referring to Eranos in the context of an article about C.G. Jung, stating that the Eranos circle has made a considerable contribution to the history of religion and that this movement was one of the main factors in the modern

resurgence of interest in the analysis of myths. Giovanni Filoramo, a religious historian at the University of Turin, in a chapter on Eranos in his interesting work *Il risveglio della gnosi ovvero diventare dio* (The revival of gnosis or how to become God),¹⁶ which I shall return to later, also laments the lack of a proper history of these meetings. It is true that Olga Fröbe had in 1958 conceived a plan to collect contributions from the Eranos speakers themselves and work these into a history of the project, but this plan was never realized.¹⁷

Nevertheless, after some searching I did find a book that, although primarily not a history of the Eranos meetings, nevertheless yields the largest amount of information that has hitherto been available on the subject.¹⁸ Its author, William McGuire, was for many years the editor of the valuable Bollingen book series that also included Jung's collected works translated into English. Through his work with and for Jung, McGuire went to Switzerland regularly from 1951 for almost twenty years and visited Ascona, where he got to know many of the key participants at Eranos. This series was financed by the American Bollingen Foundation, created by Paul and Mary Mellon, who undertook, at enormous expense, to have works (largely European ones) in the history of ideas and similar fields translated into English and made available in the United States. A large number of authors and researchers were by this means enabled, free of economic worries, to occupy themselves with specialized themes that would never have interested a purely commercial publisher. As the founder of Eranos as well as many of the speakers were also supported by the Bollingen Foundation, there were close connections between the two institutions. Thus, in his history of Bollingen, William McGuire also provides much interesting information about Eranos.

Looking further, we find that the Austrian "intellectual" radio network ORF 1 broadcast on 18 September 1998, as part of the series TAO, an informative forty-minute program on the Eranos meetings, which I have made use of in this work. There was also a report on Eranos broadcast by the Swiss radio network DRS in its first program on 22 April 1999 as part of the series Az.B. ("For Example").

At the end of 1999 Princeton University Press published a book by the religious scholar Steven Wasserstrom that partly deals with a particular but very important episode in the history of Eranos. The book is entitled *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos*. However, it contains no historical overview of the conferences or their participants. Instead the focus is on the "mystical" approach of the three scholars of religion, which Wasserstrom attributes to the "esoteric" atmosphere of Eranos and which he in part sharply criticizes. The fact that this atmosphere existed is not to be denied, but the question is whether one should judge it as negatively as Wasserstrom does. One of the main reasons for Wasserstrom's critical attitude lay in the real or imagined political implications of these esoterically tinged attitudes, which he associated with fascist or fascistoid worldviews.¹⁹

Thus, up to the appearance of the German first edition of this book in 2001 there was no historical treatment of the conferences and their emergence—a fact that still surprises me. Even essays on the subject of Eranos in specialized journals were rare.²⁰ Besides the articles already mentioned and the journal *Du*,²¹ which I shall come to later, it was only the Spanish periodical *Anthropos* that covered Eranos to any extent.²² *Anthropos* contained several substantial essays and even a complete list of the speakers and lectures up to 1988. In addition, the journal published a review, averaging two pages, of each Eranos yearbook up to the 1988 volume. Furthermore, in that year there appeared a comprehensive supplement, containing a whole series of mainly philosophical essays about Eranos. This added up to a large amount of material but no historical facts.

Even the Internet offered practically nothing on Eranos in 2001. In the meantime this has changed. Awareness of the significance of Eranos has been significantly raised, probably first by Steven Wasserstrom's work and the discussion that followed it, and later by my own rather more historically focused book. Gradually more and more scholars, especially younger ones, have begun to delve into the subject.

In 2004 a further book came on to the market thanks to the initiative of the Amici di Eranos (since dissolved) under the leadership of Tilo Schabert.²³ The subtitle of this book, mentioning Eranos, aroused certain expectations, but for me at least it is somewhat disappointing, as I had hoped for more investigation and new insights. Too many of the contributions deal only peripherally with Eranos.

However, since the first German edition of this book, research on Eranos has taken a further step forward thanks to Riccardo Bernardini whose dissertation *Da Monte Verità a Eranos* (From Monte Verità to Eranos) includes a mass of documentation containing previously unknown information. Much of it is from the archive of Eranos-Moscia, which was at that time closed to me. The dissertation also contains important information that adds new detail to the picture, especially concerning Oscar R. Schlag. But what is particularly striking about this documentation are the numerous photographs of Olga Fröbe and the leading participants at the meetings. Also included is a complete list of participants up to 1953.

I know of no dissertations on Eranos apart from that by Riccardo Bernardini already mentioned, although the conference organizer at the Amici de Eranos, Tilo Schabert, had plans to encourage scholarly work on certain aspects of Eranos. These plans were evidently abandoned when the Amici di Eranos were dissolved in 2007.

However, in the meantime a number of very interesting partial studies have appeared, the most important of which I would like to draw attention to, especially the report of the proceedings of the 2004 conference of the International Association for Analytical Psychology, held in Barcelona.²⁴ These contain the lectures given on 1 September 2004, which are grouped together under the title "Walking in the Footsteps of Eranos" and include contributions from Eranos speakers David Miller and Gilles Quispel as well as from the director of the Daimon publishing firm, Robert Hinshaw, who has close connections to Eranos. Particularly noteworthy is a "photographic journey" presented by Paul Kugler, who showed previously unknown photographs of the Eranos conferences. As these pictures appeared regrettably small in the proceedings, the "photographic journey" was also published in the *Festschrift* commemorating the seventieth birthday of David L. Miller, this time in considerably larger format.²⁵ I shall return later to this source of information on Eranos.

A particular gem of a book on Eranos appeared in 2007, again involving Riccardo Bernardini, the general theme of which is C.G. Jung at Eranos.²⁶ Apart from the scholarly articles, two things about the book stand out: first and most conspicuously, the numerous wonderful photographs, printed on art paper, most of which had never been seen by the general public before; second, a document, previously thought to have been lost, relating to a 1943 seminar given by Jung on the medieval author and miniature painter Opicino de Canistris, on which no report had been published.

Two further valuable documents have come to light since the death of the long-standing President Rudolf Ritsema. One is the manuscript of a book on the history of the conferences by Gerhard Wehr, Jung expert and specialist on mysticism. The book had been commissioned by the Eranos Foundation in Moscia, but evidently had not been to

their liking. The work had been paid for but never printed and subsequently kept more or less under lock and key. The second document is an unfinished history of Eranos by Catherine Ritsema, the wife of Rudolf.²⁷

Meanwhile the name Eranos crops up more and more in scholarly publications, and often particular aspects of the subject are addressed. This is a further hopeful sign of an increasing recognition of the important role that the conferences have played in the intellectual history of the twentieth century. While at first the outer history of Eranos consisted largely of gaps, the inner and intellectual content of the meetings has always been openly accessible and is, in every sense of the word, weighty. It has been assembled in almost ninety yearbooks (if one includes the three different Eranos factions), which contain all the lectures (although not the discussions) in an extended form. These fill some 30,000 printed pages, and a whole series of important lectures are recorded on cassette. As F.C. Kunz writes in *Main Currents in Modern Thought* (published in 1954, since when over forty more volumes have appeared): “The value of these [Eranos] yearbooks is truly incalculable. A fabulously rich store of learning.”²⁸ And the University of Jerusalem affirms that the Eranos volumes constitute one of the most valuable acquisitions that have enriched its library during the past few years.²⁹ The opinion of North German Radio on the volumes is also perhaps of interest: “As can be seen, there is hardly anything comparable to them; the Corpus Eranos will remain as one of the few encyclopedias of our time.”³⁰

Originally Eranos was conceived by its founder, Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, as a forum for interchange between Eastern and Western religion and spirituality. Over time, however, the scope widened to include not only subjects such as psychology, art history, music, and natural science but also “hermetic” and “esoteric” themes.³¹ Eranos was thus not exclusively concerned with learned scholarship but equally (although not in the case of all participants) with the spiritual transformation of humanity. Both the rational and the “mythical” sections of humanity were to be given their due. As a justification for why I want to examine the mythical/esoteric aspect in greater detail later on—besides dealing in a regrettably fragmentary and partly anecdotal way with the history of Eranos (unfortunately it was not possible to deal with all the speakers in equal measure)—for the time being a quotation from the biologist and long-time head of Eranos, Adolf Portmann, will have to suffice:

The Eranos meetings have always aimed to serve the life that exists within the mesocosm [i.e. the intermediary spiritual world between the macrocosm and the microcosm].^[32] Their exploration of archaic traditions of thought has not been for the sake of irrationality per se nor because of any fundamental opposition to the existence of rational attitudes. The reason for cultivating this archaic world view was because it offered a domain where a richer and purer form of harmony exists between rational and irrational experience, and because here the creative powers can bear forceful witness to the vastness of the inner, spiritual realms and to things that have the power to make us whole, things which we are in danger of losing—indeed which many people in the West have already lost sight of to an alarming extent ... Eranos is a grand, earnest game, which is played repeatedly. Each time the game resembles that of the previous year, yet every year the old form is filled with new content, giving us a glimpse of what a re-sanctification of life and the cosmos can bestow on us and how it can bring us a sense of comforting shelter and vital well-being.³³

2. An Esoteric Prelude to Eranos

Olga Fröbe: An Extraordinary Woman

The story of Eranos—at least over the first twenty years—is unthinkable without its founder, Olga Fröbe. Even someone with as skeptical a mind as Gershom Scholem could write in 1979, after three decades of participation at Eranos,¹

When we, Adolf Portmann, Erich Neumann, Henry Corbin, Ernst Benz, Mircea Eliade, Karl Kerényi and many others—scholars of religion, psychologists, philosophers, physicists and biologists—were trying to play our part in Eranos, the figure of Olga Fröbe was crucial—she whom we always referred to among ourselves as “the Great Mother.”^[2] Olga Fröbe was an unforgettable figure for anyone who came here regularly or for any length of time. I have never been a great Jungian ... but I have to say that Olga Fröbe was the living image of what in Jungian psychology is called the Anima and the Animus.

Henry Corbin, the great expert on esoteric Islam, dedicated to her a very hieratic poem, full of alchemical and mystical allusions, in which he called her “The one who let the call go out from the *centre*, who worked the miracle and who caused a divine gift to flow into our souls.”³ Heinrich Zimmer, for his part, addressed her in his letters as “Liebe, verehrte Urmutter (dear adored Ur-mother)”⁴ and Rudolf Otto once gave her the title “Honorable Mother.”⁵ Mircea Eliade, in one of his diary entries,⁶ described a waking dream in which he had seen her in the manner of a “high priestess of a new religion.”⁷ The only dissenting voice was Julius Evola, the Italian cultural philosopher and esotericist, who was well known for his provocative way of putting things. In a hitherto unpublished letter of 8 June 1952, addressed to Mircea Eliade, who must have told him about Olga Fröbe, he wrote:⁸

So you are now in Ascona. That is a place which has certainly attained a special renown, but which I found to be dull. Apart from her fanatical devotion to Mr. Jung, she [Olga Fröbe] belongs to the category of those elderly women who present themselves as being highly spiritual and whom I wholeheartedly detest. I once went to her house when I was staying with a female friend whose villa is almost opposite that of Olga Fröbe. At any rate, I wish you an entertaining time^[9] at Eranos.¹⁰

Olga Fröbe had Dutch parents, but was born in London in 1881 and grew up in Bloomsbury.¹¹ Her mother, Truus Muysken, was an anarchist by philosophy and a friend of George Bernard Shaw and the famous anarchist Prince Kropotkin. By contrast, her father, Albertus Kapteyn (alternatively written Kapteijn), was an engineer and inventor, who worked as director of the British Westinghouse Brake and Signal Company. He was

also an enthusiastic photographer. Later on, Olga Fröbe often said that her deep interest in archetypal images could be traced back to the fascinating hours that she had spent as a child in her father's darkroom, watching films being developed and seeing the pictures gradually taking shape.

In 1900 the family moved to Zurich, since Albertus Kapteyn's business obliged him to travel a great deal and he wanted to live in a more central location in Europe. From 1906 to 1909, Olga was a student at the School of Applied Arts and then attended lectures in the history of art at Zurich University. There she learned German, French, and Italian. Dutch and English she already knew.

In 1909 she married Iwan Fröbe, a Croatian orchestra conductor of Austrian parentage, but her married life was short, as her husband was killed in an air crash in 1915 while testing an aerial camera for the army behind the Russian lines. As Deirdre Bair writes, there was also a rumor that he had been executed as an enemy spy.¹² During her married years Olga Fröbe lived first in Munich and then in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee. Also living at that time in Wannsee with his family was the philologist and expert on classical but also modern literature André Jolles, who was already a friend of Olga's parents. As the Jolles expert Walter Thys informed me in a letter, Olga developed a deep friendship with André.¹³

Jolles, a Dutchman by birth, had originally come to Germany as a student and loved the country. He had married the daughter of the mayor of Hamburg, Johann Georg Mönckeberg, and in due course had adopted German citizenship. Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War he even enlisted in the German army. What is more, in the spring of 1933 he joined the National Socialist Party. By profession he was a university professor of Germanic studies. Later, on account of his special knowledge of symbolism, he worked for the Reich Security Office, Section VII (for research into hostile *Weltanschauungen*), and also served as an expert on Freemasonry for the SD (the security service of the SS), which he joined in 1937. In 1944 he won the Goethe Prize and received the medallion that went with it, the last one to be handed over by Hitler in person. According to Walter Thys, this award was for Jolles' totally non-political book *Einfache Formen* (Simple forms),¹⁴ although Gerd Simon believes that it was for his masonic researches.¹⁵

But let us return to the period before the First World War. An evocative account of these years has been left by Annemarie Pallat, who also lived in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee at that time with her husband, the archaeologist and educator Ludwig Pallat. Annemarie Pallat recounts that Jolles had built up a lively and many-faceted circle of friends, which included painters, musicians, and writers. They would meet once a week for readings or musical performances. "What I enjoyed especially," she writes:

were the musical evenings hosted by the Fröbes in the small wooden house opposite the Jolles. Olga Fröbe was a quiet Dutch woman with an air of refined reserve, who kept modestly behind her husband, but who created an agreeable atmosphere through her style of home-making. Iwan Fröbe, a fiery Hungarian, was an orchestra conductor and played every instrument that exists, especially the flute. We enjoyed wonderful chamber music there.¹⁶

In 1911 Jolles also founded a sewing club called The Needle, to which Annemarie Pallat and Olga Fröbe also belonged. Jolles was especially keen to develop a new style of women's clothing based on ancient Greek motifs, in which cutting was kept to a minimum, and the material was shown off to best advantage by using its natural folds. Olga Fröbe

ornamented the clothes with “wonderful embroidery” and beads. Her fondness for such clothing was something that she was also known for in later years.

After the death of her husband Iwan in 1915, Olga sold the house in Wannsee and returned to Zurich, where she had studied. Interestingly, she did not go back to her parents in Scheveningen, Holland. To the great regret of Annemarie Pallat, the artistic circle of friends in Berlin came to an end (Jolles had also gone to the front), as did the small school for local families, which Jolles had also founded and where Olga had taught English.

It was only after the death of her husband that Olga Fröbe gave birth to twin daughters, on whom André Jolles later kept a very kindly eye. One of them, Ingeborg, was mentally handicapped owing to a birth complication: twins had not been expected, and medical help arrived too late. Placed in a nursing home in Germany, Ingeborg died under mysterious circumstances during the National Socialist regime, possibly under the so-called euthanasia program. This is of significance because there were repeated rumors, which I shall go into later, that Fröbe had National Socialist sympathies. Deirdre Bair in her Jung biography mentions a collection of letters in an unnamed private archive, according to which Olga Fröbe went to the home to visit her daughter and found her missing.¹⁷ Only then was she informed of her death. According to the same source, this tragic event led to a strong “anti-Nazi activism” on her part, which only ceased with the German invasion of Holland, when she was threatened with the arrest of her second daughter, Bettina, who lived there. Allegedly C.G. Jung himself knew about all these events. Unfortunately there are no further details about the above-mentioned report.

Quite apart from this, one can say that Olga Fröbe evinced a decidedly anti-Nazi attitude from at least 1934. This is clear, for example, from the following quotation from her letter of 24 June 1934 to the theologian and scholar of religion Friedrich Heiler, who was going to be transferred away from his position because of his political standpoint: “It is also difficult for us living abroad to look on and know that nearly all our friends are facing inner as well as outer conflicts.” Evidence that she even feared National Socialism, at least from 1937 onwards, is contained in a diary entry by Ludwig Pallat of 28 July 1937.¹⁸ Pallat mentions how Olga Fröbe, evidently through his mediation, had gone to see an official of the Nazi Party. The official had apparently been “very amused at her astonishment that he, as a Party member, had not immediately eaten her alive or raped her.”¹⁹ In earlier years she is said to have had a fondness for Germany, doubtless influenced by her father, who was reputed to be strongly pro-German, as well as by the equally pro-German André Jolles, who undoubtedly exerted a strong influence on her in all matters. However, such an outlook should not be confused with National Socialist sympathies.

From 1915 to 1920, that is to say during and immediately after the First World War, Olga Fröbe lived in Zurich (although she did not become a Swiss citizen until 1934).²⁰ There she applied her artistic talents and became known for her remarkable embroidery and jewelry work. She was also a daring equestrian and a successful skier, as well as being one of the first women to undergo the risks and exertions involved in climbing Mont Blanc, which she did by a particularly difficult route.

One person who knew her at this time was the writer and professor of German literature Robert Faesi, who stemmed from a patrician Swiss family and knew all the prominent poets of his age from Rilke to Hesse. In his memoirs he recounts that in the post-war period in Zurich she already had a salon, where readings took place and which was evidently intended as a continuation of the meetings run by Jolles in the

Berlin years.²¹ Faesi reports that on one occasion there was a reading from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which by then had become well known. Another of Fröbe's guests at that time was André Germain, a restless, wandering art enthusiast whose father was the founder of the French bank Crédit Lyonnais. At the same time, his interest in literature prompted him to acquire certain literary rights, for example the French rights to Maxim Gorky's works. Being a person of considerable wealth, he was at that time patron of Alastair, an esoterically minded illustrator as well as an imaginative dancer, singer, and poet, who had a good knowledge of ancient cults and medieval fraternities. Alastair had met Germain in 1914 through Gabriele d'Annunzio. The latter, after he had seen Alastair dance in Paris, had drawn him into his large circle of acquaintances.²² Thus Fröbe also came into contact with Alastair (the name means "fallen star") who is said to have claimed, shortly before his death in Munich in 1969, that he was the illegitimate son of King Edward VII.

She must have known Alastair well since at least 1920, for there exists a copy of his book of verse, *Das flammende Tal*,²³ presented to her with the inscription: "To dear and true Olga in friendship and trust. Munich 1920. Your epistolary friend Alastair." And, in a letter of 1 February 1928, she wrote to Ludwig Derleth's sister, Anna, that Alastair wanted to come and visit her at the Casa Gabriella, but that she could "not have him at the moment." Robert Faesi also knew Alastair and described him as an extremely attractive personality. Alastair, whose real name was Hanns Henning Otto Harry Baron von Voigt, was born in Karlsruhe in 1889. After graduating from school, he studied philosophy for a time, traveled widely and taught himself to draw. He became best known as a *Jugendstil* book illustrator, strongly influenced by Aubrey Beardsley.²⁴ In addition he designed posters and many costumes. Accordingly he traveled with numerous pieces of luggage containing his magnificent garments.²⁵ He could rarely pay the hotel bills, but he gave the staff handsome tips, commensurate with his reputation for extravagance and largesse.²⁶ As a dancer he was a partner of Isadora Duncan, who revolutionized choreography. Many international friendships—for example with Gabriele d'Annunzio as already mentioned and Count Kessler—also contributed to his mysterious and esoteric aura. He lived mainly in London, Paris, and Munich, where he gained access to the circle of Stefan George. At the *Jours*, the regular meetings hosted by the poet Karl Wolfskehl, who also belonged to the George circle, Alastair would appear with his hair dyed a flaming red color, accompanied by some dark-skinned beauty.

Within this milieu he also formed a friendship with the poet Ludwig Derleth.²⁷ After the latter's death he wrote: "Ludwig Derleth liberated me to myself; I found myself through him." Here are a few selective quotations from the two hundred or so letters to his friend: "You are the only pure spring at which I can kneel down" (28 February 1912). "Your image is for me painted in the clearest colors on the gold background of love" (22 February 1918). "There are certain people who, in a special sense, cannot do ill (and also those who cannot do good)—even when they wish to—you belong to the first of these groups" (15 February 1922). And finally: "How many hearts have been stirred up by the heavenly, turbulent glow of your authenticity" (29 August 1933). Ludwig Derleth, to whom we shall return in some detail, was undoubtedly among the strongest influences on Olga Fröbe. Besides Derleth, Alastair also knew Rainer Maria Rilke and apparently counted Elke Lasker-Schüler among his admirers. He was also in contact with politicians such as Walter Rathenau and scientists like Werner Heisenberg and Werner von Braun, with whom he even lodged for a time.

Hans Blüher, who was acquainted with Sigmund Freud and the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld and who chronicled the *Wandervogel* movement and its erotic aspects, described Alastair as:

an old soul ... which must have had a previous and very passionate life in the early Middle Ages and which did not really fit into its present incarnation. He could only think in old-fashioned Catholic-ecclesiastical categories, and the modern world was so alien to him that he constantly needed to seek orientation. As a lover of women, however, he was not at all suited.²⁸

A few lines from a poem by Alastair, dealing with the symbolic death and resurrection of the mythical figure of Adonis, will perhaps serve to give a small insight into the kind of creative milieu in which Olga Fröbe moved at that time.

Here lies the sacrifice
 Hyacinths lifting a maimed perfume
 From his blood
 Violets binding his mortal wounds
 With a soothing, faded intimacy.
 This still repose seems merely slumber
 Yet already through the matted hair
 Shimmers the message of decay
 The maw of the grave yawns wide, the wailing of the sisters
 Fades away and silent there they stand
 With singed hair and deathly pale cheeks
 Fingernails clawing at the breast
 Already is revealed to the gaze
 New devotedness
 New wonders
 New raptures.²⁹

Even before 1920, Olga and her father had taken a health cure at the Monte Verità Sanatorium above Ascona, which specialized in natural treatment. As Olga never wanted to leave this beautiful place again, she lived for a time in the Casa Monte Tabor in Porto Ronco, where she received a number of visits from Ludwig Derleth. Albert Kapteyn then decided to buy the Villa Gabriella, lying directly on the shore of Lake Maggiore at Moscia-Ascona, which had previously been the home of André Germain.³⁰ Olga Fröbe finally moved in there permanently in April 1920. Only in 1927, after the death of her father, who left a princely legacy, did she learn that he had already made the house over to her seven years earlier. Until receiving this inheritance she had been obliged to live from his rather meager donations.³¹ With the inherited wealth she could now enter fully into the role to which she had long felt called, namely to invite artists, poets, and people of esoteric interests to her home. She was free to pursue her religio-philosophical interests and her theosophical inclinations. Above all, she was able to build on her property the lecture room that was to play such a leading role at Eranos. She was altogether not well disposed towards the artists' colony at Monte Verità. In a letter to Annemarie Pallat of 20 July 1920 she wrote, "The Ascona Bohemian crowd is of a kind that I do not like, all of them parasitical, half-talented types who consider themselves geniuses."³²

A little-known fact about this period is that in the early 1930s Olga Fröbe burned all her old photographs, letters, and other memorabilia in order to forget the past and concentrate on her future activity as organizer of Eranos, as Catherine Ritsema has recorded.³³

She appears to have traveled around a great deal and to have frequented various literary, artistic, and philosophical study circles. In 1926 she visited the cultural *Semaine Européenne* in Lausanne, organized by her friend André Germain. There she met Aadrian Roland Holst, probably the Netherlands' most significant modern poet.³⁴ Holst, with his unquestionable poetic gifts, possessed, like Fröbe, artistic dreams and mythical leanings, and they quickly discovered many things in common. He was also a great charmer and ladies' man, who was supported by his banker father and never needed to work. Nevertheless he was constantly short of money. Olga Fröbe soon invited him to visit her at Moscia. However, it was not until 1929, when Holst was suffering from a creative block, that he actually accepted her invitation, for on Lake Maggiore he could find exactly the peaceful conditions that he wanted. There she introduced him to various interesting people and helped him with the English translation of his prose autobiography *De Afspraak* (The agreement). The two of them, as Holst's biographer van der Vegt recounts, spent much time together at the translation work and at mealtimes, "but did not share the same bed."³⁵ Holst did not leave Moscia until 23 June the following year.

In April 1933 Holst paid another visit. Some time had elapsed since Fröbe had written to him saying that although she could only express her feelings with difficulty, he was welcome to come back whenever he wanted. In the middle of July he departed again, and therefore did not take part in the first of the Eranos meetings. Despite his penchant for the transcendental, he had no scholarly interest in the subject, and C.G. Jung's researches left him cold. He was equally uninterested in taking part in the "simple ceremonies that Fröbe, clad in a white robe, performed in the garden house."³⁶ Her "occult activities," which had been ironically described to him in a letter from a friend in Ascona, could have been the reason why he did not make a further visit in 1936, as his biographer believed.³⁷

It was not until 1938 that Roland Holst visited Olga Fröbe again. Then he had to leave in the summer because the villa was needed for other guests. Fröbe, who was now short of money, rented out individual rooms, and the summer was the most profitable time for this. Holst stayed in Ascona and moved in with a Russian Jewish woman friend named Elena Frank. Nevertheless Olga Fröbe, who saw him subsequently in Amsterdam, invited him to stay with her again in 1939. Holst, however, preferred to stay with Elena Frank, with whom he was having a love affair. Unfortunately Elena "could not keep her mouth shut for an instant," as Holst's biographer relates, and this made it impossible for him to work. On the other hand, Fröbe was becoming more and more "immersed in the occult." Holst's friend the lawyer Wladimir Rosenbaum, of whom we shall have more to say later, wrote him a long letter and advised him to go to Olga, who was admittedly "somewhat meschugge, but at the same time tolerant, honest and no preacher."³⁸ But, as men will be men, Roland Holst naturally opted for Elena Frank. In 1947 Holst came again to Ascona, this time accompanied by a woman thirty years his junior, and Olga invited them both to stay with her. On this occasion he made the acquaintance of the mythologist Karl Kerényi.

However, of all her friends and all the artists and writers with whom she mingled, Ludwig Derleth was probably the one who influenced her most strongly and who laid the foundation for her later course.

The Munich “Cosmics” and Eranos

Ludwig Joseph Moritz Derleth (1870–1948), after a many-faceted course of studies in Munich (ancient philology, literature, chemistry, theology, philosophy, and later on even psychology), had become a grammar school teacher, a career during which he was transferred many times.³⁹ During school holidays he traveled a great deal. In 1897 he was drawn to Rome, entering a monastery but leaving soon afterwards. Further important experiences in his life took place in Paris, where he mingled with the most famous French esotericists of the time, such as Papus (Gérard Encausse), the Catholic Rosicrucian Sâr Péladan, and the very prolific writer Sédir (pseudonym of Yvon Leloup). In the late 1890s he came into contact with the circle of Stefan George, a group that will be mentioned frequently in this book. In 1906 he finally gave up his teaching profession. Later stages in his life took him back to Rome, then to Basel, to Perchtoldsdorf near Vienna, and finally to the Tessin district of Switzerland, where he died in 1948.⁴⁰ His late marriage to Christine finally freed him of all financial worries, so that in the Tessin he was able to live in style in a palazzo in Stabio.

Derleth professed an ascetic and militant Christianity, strict and medieval, not to say ancient, in character,⁴¹ in which Christ and Caesar were merged into the figure of Christus Imperator. Besides striving for a radical reform of the Church, he advocated a new theocracy as a counter-reaction to the mass democracy that he found so repulsive. In order to bring this about, he wanted to found a rigorously hierarchical, exclusively male order⁴² composed of lay members, a “golden beehive, a close band of warm hearts in a world grown cold for lack of love.”⁴³ Only an elite, he believed, was capable of bringing about a decisive change in the world. However, his efforts over some decades in this direction proved to be in vain, probably because his authoritative behavior alienated prospective members. Male sodalities such as the Templars, the Assassins, and the Jesuits were for him both exemplary models and objects of research. At the same time some of his concepts borrowed elements from the French socialist Charles Fourier, whose writings were required reading for Derleth’s followers. Fourier’s principle that “paradisical man is the beginning and end of creation” was also Derleth’s motto. His aim was to create an ideal community, which he called Rosenburg. Politically, he was vehemently opposed to democracy, which he saw as an ethos of the masses. He was equally resistant to progress and science in the usual modern sense of the word. Contemporary Christianity was also anathema to him.

Consequently, for a time Derleth even took it into his head to become pope, since according to Catholic doctrine it is basically possible for any baptized Catholic to take that position. Derleth, who always dressed in black, was anything but a straightforward figure. His wife wrote about him, “Everyone thinks they know the poet, but this poet had so many faces, was so full of contrasts and so difficult to reduce to any common denominator that any statement about him would bring denials from his friends, because they claimed to have experienced him otherwise.”⁴⁴

As a poet, Derleth was discovered by Harry Kessler, a man who busied himself with many political and artistic activities and who published a number of Derleth’s poems in the famous journal *Pan*.⁴⁵ For decades Derleth worked on his conceptually monumental magnum opus, *Der fränkische Koran* (The Franconian Koran), which he did not live to see printed in its entirety.⁴⁶ In this work, written in a highly contrived language, Derleth sought to bring together the two powerful themes that drove him: that of his native

Franconia and that of the Islamic Orient, which he interpreted in a strict Catholic sense. *Der fränkische Koran* was intended—like the Koran itself—to be to a work of poetry as well as a prayer book, a set of laws and a book of general guidance for both East and West and for this life and beyond. The Catholicism expressed in it is so exaggeratedly grandiose, so seamless, and all-encompassing that even the Middle Ages could not have matched it. The language of the work is often perceived today as overloaded, turgid, and hard to understand. Whoever reads it, however, should realize that its poetic side is only one aspect. The prophetic, apodictic, and profoundly pious nature of the work places it also in the category of religious writing.⁴⁷ In terms of content, the work deals with the pilgrimage of the human soul—away from the dense matter of the earth and towards God.

Lothar Helbig, the alter ego of the Stefan George-follower Wolfgang Frommel, in his essay *Ludwig und Anna Derleth*, reports having been told by the poet himself that it was he, Derleth, who had first made Olga Fröbe “acquainted with Creuzer, Bachofen and with various of the mysteries such as those of Baalbek, Eleusis and Samothrace.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, there were “hidden threads leading from the Munich Cosmics (*Kosmiker*) to the foundation of Eranos in Ascona.” In other words Derleth—who at the turn of the century had been close to Stefan George’s circle of aesthetes, poets, and esotericists⁴⁹—was the one who first introduced Fröbe to the mythology and mystery teachings of classical antiquity that were later to play such an important role at Eranos. He also encouraged her to study symbols and images, an interest that later resulted in the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, which I shall speak about later. Apparently Olga Fröbe also wanted to involve Ludwig Derleth in the foundation of Eranos, but for unknown reasons this did not happen.⁵⁰

The Derleth scholar Dominik Jost, in his book on the poet, adds that Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn had written “a series of letters that provide valuable documentation for research on the prehistory of Eranos.”⁵¹ And the mythologist Karl Kerényi mentions in his *Tage- und Wanderbüchern 1953–1960* that, after taking into his care the literary estate of Walter F. Otto, he had been invited to visit Christine Derleth “just at the moment when there were certain gaps to be filled in the pre-history of Eranos.”⁵² Unfortunately he remains silent about this prehistory “because it was at that moment not ripe for publication.”⁵³ And even Mircea Eliade mentions “meetings and surprising discoveries, that preceded the founding and first phase of the Eranos circle.” He also adds, however, that “unfortunately I was unable to set down in the *Journal* everything.”⁵⁴

It is not clear what Eliade and Kerényi meant by these hints. And as Olga Fröbe herself also drew a veil over her own history in the period preceding Eranos, it has not yet been possible for me to find out what events are here being alluded to.⁵⁵ I was, however, able to see the letters, mentioned by Dominik Jost, from Fröbe to Anna Derleth and, more importantly, those that she wrote to the poet himself. Altogether there are about a hundred of these missives. It is not possible, however, to say whether this collection is complete. At any rate, Christine Derleth and her friend Angela Stader, who for many years shared a household, handed over all surviving letters to the German Literature Archive in Marbach on the Neckar, where the entire literary estate of Ludwig Derleth is preserved in eighty-five filing boxes. I have not, however, been able to discover the “valuable documentation for research on the prehistory of Eranos” that Dominik Jost mentions. The content of the letters is, as we shall see, of a rather different nature. And unfortunately Dominik Jost, who was professor at the Cantonal School in St. Gallen and *Privatdozent*

for German literature at St. Gallen University, died many years ago, taking with him whatever further information he might have been able to provide on the subject.

It is clear from the correspondence between Fröbe and Derleth, which stretches into the 1940s but is particularly extensive during the 1920s, that Fröbe not only regarded Derleth as a spiritual master but also had feelings of love towards him. In all probability Derleth, as in the case of other women, did not return this love (at least in the usual mundane sense).⁵⁶ Anna Derleth, writing on 2 May 1962 to Dominik Jost on the occasion of Olga Fröbe's death, says that Ludwig was not capable of this kind of love, for "his love was so strong that it transcended the earthly kind." And she added another reason: "During his lifetime everything flowed into his writing."

Olga Fröbe was not alone in her veneration of Derleth. A whole circle of artistic and, in some cases, aristocratic women swarmed around him. Even Katia Pringsheim, who later married Thomas Mann, is said to have been a devotee of the poet, as was the undoubtedly free and emancipated writer Franziska zu Reventlow.⁵⁷ In a succession that went on in subsequent years, female devotees came repeatedly to visit him, and he favored them with long, individual conversations. For Derleth himself, however, it appears to have been his sister Anna who played the central role in his female cosmos. Even the marriage to his wife Christine, a woman with inherited family wealth, only came about after she had been in effect his secretary for ten years. Derleth, not the easiest person to live with on account of his moodiness and dictatorial behavior, had a basically negative attitude toward the thought of marriage.⁵⁸ Stefan George had early on put his finger on it in his poem *An Derleth* (To Derleth):⁵⁹

In our circle, one thing makes us twins:
Free of all ties of house and goods,
Only we, whenever the first rush comes,
Can go forth from where we stand to follow the fanfare.

The letters from Olga Fröbe are mostly without any salutation, sometimes undated and frequently unsigned. They are partly in German and partly in English (when she wants to express difficult thoughts precisely and yet with lyrical feeling). Sometimes she addresses Ludwig Derleth with the familiar pronoun *du* only to revert a little later to the formal *Sie*. These are deeply felt writings, revealing someone of great sensitivity, who often tortures herself in the search for meaning. They all revolve around a single point: Ludwig Derleth, from whom she expects physical, mental, and spiritual redemption. She suffers so intensely from this longing for love and redemption that she even believes herself to have taken a powerful love potion in a previous life: "The fire that consumes me is perhaps age-old, older than the world."

The rather rare salutations include "Dear Ludwig," "Beloved Maître fabuleux," and "Dear Master of my heart" and are followed by fervent pleas for a visit, a meeting or the answer to some question that has been weighing on her. The letters themselves are highly intimate, revealing a person trembling like a volcano about to erupt, at the same time modest and yet unbounded. When one reads these letters, with their intelligence and reflective depth, their delicate and yet always vigorous language, strewn with lyrical turns of phrase, one realizes the profound well of energy, intuition, and unwavering determination that this woman possessed. Her endurance and strength of will were intense, even perhaps measureless, commensurate with the intensity of her self-doubt and her inner

anguished struggle. She sought the “Master” in order to find direction, orientation, and tranquility. On 27 August 1921 she wrote to Derleth: “In seeking a fixed point in the midst of the chaos, an unchanging star or a fiery cloud, I was always seeking someone infinitely superior to myself—a soul so strong and wise that my understanding could be burned and renewed in his flame.” And in another letter to the poet she says, “You are the great unbroken string, a strange and unfathomable harmony with apparently a great dissonance at its origin—an extraordinary mixture of the Marseillaise and the *Te Deum laudamus*.”

She believed that Derleth had implanted something eternally abiding in her heart, something that would require a lifetime—her lifetime—to come to maturity. But at the same time she also perceived it as a “seed of madness,” from which she hoped the angels would protect her. In her earliest letters to Derleth she writes how much she owes to him in terms of knowledge of symbolism, and says that more and more she recognizes the symbolic-mythological background of everything that surrounds her. Thus, in a letter of 23 August 1921, she says: “It was really you who first brought me into contact with classical antiquity, and for this I am deeply grateful to you.” In the same letter she reports that her friend from earlier times, André Jolles, while spending a holiday at her house, had recounted the myth of Ariadne and the labyrinth and had spoken of a Romanesque church as the “highest form of magic.”⁶⁰ She also writes about the Kabbalists, about the hermaphrodite as secret goal, and about the *arcantum* of sexuality: “the awesome, blood-red mystery.” She also sometimes describes her dreams and her artistic activities.

On 23 February 1922 she wrote a long letter in English under the title “The Quest.” As Derleth was still in financial difficulties at that time, she tried to persuade him to spend at least part of the year in her house. Her daughter Bettina had also taken warmly to Derleth, whom she addressed as the “magician” and to whom she wrote a child-like and highly moving letter, accompanied by one of her own drawings. On 3 September 1940, writing on notepaper with the heading “Eranos Meetings,” Fröbe speaks about her coming trip to the United States and says that the meeting with Derleth and his wife had once again created an oasis of peace for her. She also mentions the “symbolic” Eranos meeting of 1940 and says that, despite the adverse circumstances, forty people had attended.

In this context an Italian professor of German literature, Furio Jesi, who died tragically at a relatively young age,⁶¹ makes the serious accusation that Ludwig Derleth had devised pseudo-magical and darkly anti-Semitic rites. By way of background, he explains that Stefan George had idolized the Austrian Empress Elisabeth (Sisi), murdered in Geneva by the anarchist Luccheni, as well as her sister Sophie, who died in a fire in Paris. George had seen them as almost heavenly figures. Derleth had allegedly gone even further and regarded these blows of fate against the houses of Habsburg and Wittelsbach as the work of an “esoteric and exoteric Jewish international, working in secret.”

According to Jesi, Derleth believed that through magical means he could restore a sacred protection to both royal houses. And Jesi further maintains that “there are indications that a not entirely coincidental connection exists between Derleth’s disciples and the esoteric circle [i.e. Eranos] which emerged in Switzerland around C.G. Jung and which was supported through the financial resources and dedication of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn.” Fröbe herself was allegedly an “extremely willing disciple” in precisely these “anti-Semitic rituals.”⁶²

Unfortunately Jesi gives no sources for his accusations. In the reference section relating to the passages in question he mentions Edith Landmann’s *Gespräche mit Stefan*

George,⁶³ Ludwig Thormaehlen's *Erinnerungen an Stefan George*,⁶⁴ and Kurt Hildebrandt's *Erinnerungen an Stefan George und seinen Kreis*,⁶⁵ but only in a general way, without giving page numbers and quoting the title of Hildebrandt's book in an incomplete form. Having searched through these writings, however, I have found no reference to any such rites having been carried out by Derleth. Hildebrandt mentions Derleth only three times and merely *en passant*, Thormaehlen only twice and in an equally unimportant connection. Only Edith Landmann, besides three short references, has a passage in which she expands on Derleth a little more. She says of him: "Derleth, like Ignatius [Loyola], drew people to him and assigned prayer exercises to them."⁶⁶

Jesi repeats his accusations against Derleth, albeit without mentioning Fröbe, in *Cultura di Destra*, his perhaps best-known work.⁶⁷ In this case, however, he gives no sources whatever. Turning to another book by Jesi, *Germania Segreta*,⁶⁸ one might expect from the promising title, which he took from Stefan George, that the book would yield rather more detailed information on this question, yet interestingly the name of Derleth is totally absent. As we are dealing here with serious accusations that could significantly compromise the early history of Eranos, and as Jesi's bibliographical evidence is deficient or blatantly inaccurate, I found it necessary to carry out my own researches into Derleth in order to examine the truthfulness of Jesi's charges.

In the above-mentioned letters from Fröbe to Derleth there is absolutely nothing remotely connected with anti-Semitism, magical rituals, and the like. Apart from a few references to symbolism, the letters deal with her relationship to Ludwig Derleth and nothing else. If there had really been any anti-Semitic rituals stemming from Derleth, then one would have expected to find at least some allusions to Judaism in the more than one hundred letters, especially as she wanted to make Derleth positively disposed towards her and was continually asking him for a meeting. In Christine Derleth's memoirs of her husband, to which I have already alluded, one would not necessarily expect to find such events reported,⁶⁹ and the same would apply to Dominik Jost's above-mentioned biography.

Jost also gives some additional information concerning the friendship between the poet and Fröbe, and he describes a journey that she made with him to Rome in October 1922. He also makes it clear that she continued to visit Derleth, who later also lived in Tessin, right up to the end of his life.⁷⁰ He furthermore quotes the following passage from a letter that she wrote to the poet: "My meeting with you belongs to the eternally beautiful things of my life. I have not forgotten. That experience lies within my rich present-day life like a concealed treasure, a 'rose garden of the blood.'"⁷¹ In his second book on Derleth,⁷² which Jost calls an "introduction to the work," he deals with the way in which Derleth demanded strict obedience.⁷³ At the same time Jost recognizes that for Derleth—who doubtless did behave in an authoritarian manner—obedience was important "for the inner process of spiritual unfolding." Jost also makes clear that Derleth's work is full of "many and various *topoi* from traditional mysticism" and that the poet is rooted in a "world of archaic, pre-civilized values."

The philosopher of religion Alfons Rosenberg, who stayed for weeks with Fröbe and in whom she confided closely during their many conversations, recounts, in one of his *Flugblätter* (circular letters)⁷⁴ to his friends, that Derleth had once invited Fröbe to Munich and arranged to meet her at midnight on the Marienplatz.⁷⁵ He had then walked with her through the streets of Munich until daybreak. In this way, as Rosenberg relates, Derleth made her familiar with the symbolism of Munich, indeed he "turned the city into a carpet woven out of symbols." Thus Derleth acted as her mystagogue, introducing

her to a symbolic way of thinking and giving her access to her own inner, un-manifest life. “This,” according to Rosenberg, “was the beginning of a road that would lead to the foundation of Eranos.” The importance of this event is also pointed out by Tilo Schabert, then head of the Friends of Eranos association, in his introduction to the 1998 meeting.

Rather less personal consideration for Derleth was to be expected from Stefan Breuer’s work *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus*.⁷⁶ Breuer does, it is true, give a very clear survey of Derleth’s life, describing his attempt to “reactivate a militant and heroic Christianity” and characterizing him as “a missionary prophet demanding from the world a form of active asceticism.” But of magical rituals Breuer apparently knows nothing. However, what must surely be the most searchingly critical view of Derleth is provided by Richard Faber, an expert on the “Cosmics.”⁷⁷ Faber’s ironic quotations from other people’s remarks about Derleth speak for themselves; one gave him the sobriquet “Jesus Bonaparte,” while the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, who was essentially well disposed towards Derleth, described his ideas as “Genghis Khan Catholicism.” One can therefore assume that Faber, who is also an expert on the extreme right, would hardly have omitted to mention the anti-Semitic magical rituals if they had indeed been carried out. But there is not a single line about them.

Another book dealing with the anti-Semitism of that era is *Dichter, Denker, Fememörder*, by Hermann Wilhelm, who is described on the book jacket as a chronicler of the history of Munich.⁷⁸ Here also there is no trace of such accusations, although Derleth is not exactly dealt with in a friendly manner. Even in a dissertation on Ludwig Derleth,⁷⁹ submitted to the University of Vienna in 1943 while National Socialism still held sway, there is not a single mention of anti-Semitic rituals to be found, and this despite the fact that the author Friedrich von Dauber felt obliged to explain why a preoccupation with Derleth was relevant at that time. He characterized the poet as a man who had pointed to the signs of decline that marked his era and thus had become “the builder of a bridge to a new Germany.” Derleth had discovered “the light of our ethnicity” and ultimately he was without doubt “a German poet” both “by blood” and “in his innermost being.” It is apparent from the several pages of explanation given by von Dauber that he felt under pressure to justify himself. Thus, if Derleth had really been responsible for anti-Semitic activities or written statements, these would have been gladly mentioned by the author of the dissertation, although he was really more concerned with Derleth’s poetic work.

After looking through numerous writings and studies from the extensive literature relating to Stefan George,⁸⁰ I can only assume—until documentary evidence proves otherwise—that Furio Jesi’s accusations are totally groundless and probably based on hearsay. Being a Marxist, devoted to pure rationalism and the spirit of the Enlightenment, Jesi would surely have seen the Eranos meetings as imbued with the irrationalism which he so feared and which he saw as leading inexorably to racism and fascism. This is what he wanted to react demonstrably against.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that a virulent anti-Semitism did exist among the circle surrounding Stefan George and especially among the Munich “Cosmics.”⁸¹ This, however, has more to do with figures such as Alfred Schuler⁸² and Ludwig Klages⁸³ and very little to do with Derleth.⁸⁴ As Alfred Schuler did indeed venerate the Empress Elisabeth (Sisi), I must conclude—sad though it is for Furio Jesi’s reputation—that Jesi simply confused Ludwig Derleth with Alfred Schuler, as both of them were to be counted among the “Cosmics.” Schuler believed that he discerned in the Empress Elisabeth “nothing less than

the living vessel of undiluted cosmic fire.”⁸⁵ He perceived her as being, like himself, lonely and “overshadowed by baleful experiences.” However, as she had power at her disposal which she could have used to change the conditions of the age that he so lamented, he wished to be granted an audience with her. After several rather inept attempts, he spent one and half years and the remainder of his fortune making a precious work of art as a gift for her, containing a parchment scroll with his petition written in magnificent calligraphy.

Just when he was close to achieving his goal of meeting the Empress, there came the news of her assassination by Luigi Luccheni in Geneva. As his friend Klages observed, “The effect on him was terrible. He saw Luccheni’s shameful act as a piece of contract work; in the background, behind the curtains, he saw Jesuit conspirators and secret societies working as instigators.” In his seventh lecture *Die Entscheidung im Zentrum* (The decision at the center), in which he also counts Ludwig II of Bavaria among the victims of history, Schuler says: “They fell as the last line of resistance under the turning black wheel that now reigns over much of the earth.” This sentence also points more to the notion of a Jesuit rather than a Jewish hegemony.

As Schuler was interested in ancient cult practices such as “blood brotherhood, blood vengeance, atonement through blood, and the use of blood in healing and protective magic,” the Cosmics Schuler and Klages contemplated literally “forging the desired connection with the past through a magical blood sacrifice.”⁸⁶ Their master Stefan George, however, rejected the idea. When they nevertheless came to the point of wishing to perform the sacrificial ceremony, “they did not dare to make a real blood sacrifice, nor did they know the correct moment at which to carry it out.” All that was left to them was “their fruitless attempts at the nocturnal meeting place to experience the ‘primal cosmic shiver,’” and “they soon felt, like Schuler in the autumn of 1903, the unutterable horror of being thrown again and again back into the old inactivity.”⁸⁷ Derleth himself wrote scornfully about them: “They are practicing magic? I would say they know everything and yet they couldn’t move a straw from here to there.”⁸⁸ So here again we find no real rituals and certainly not anti-Jewish ones. While Schuler may appear as a somewhat peculiar figure, he must also have had a fascinating side, otherwise Rainer Maria Rilke would not have sent him a letter of admiration and thanks on 30 November 1917, in which he wrote: “You know that I consider what you have to give to be of incalculable value.”⁸⁹

Nevertheless, we have adduced a few points that could help to explain the background to Jesi’s most probably groundless accusations against Eranos, although this in no way excuses his carelessness in confusing Derleth with Schuler. While both men can be counted among the Cosmics and although they shared many points of view and undoubtedly influenced each other, nevertheless there existed a surprising enmity between them, which led to a final break in 1901. Already in 1896, Derleth had spoken unflatteringly about Schuler to Count Harry Kessler during a visit from the latter. Derleth had described Schuler as an “intense swamp, lacking any noble side but with a fine understanding of all manifestations of culture.”⁹⁰ Schuler’s fanatical brand of matriarchal Neopaganism and Derleth’s equally fanatical ascetic-Catholic Caesarism could presumably not be reconciled with each other. And when George broke with Schuler and Klages because of their anti-Semitism, George’s friendship with Derleth remained intact. Indeed, as soon as Derleth heard about the rupture he went straight to George and handed him his first poems for publication in George’s *Blätter für die Kunst*.⁹¹

One of the reasons for Jesi’s negative attitude towards Derleth could have to do with Thomas Mann, a writer with whom Jesi was intensely preoccupied. Because of the close

connection between aestheticism and violence in Derleth's work, Mann regarded him—at least for a time—as a precursor of National Socialism and took him as the model for two of his fictional characters. Derleth first crops up in *The Magic Mountain* and then again, in a parodied form, as Daniel zur Höhe, both in the short story *At the Prophet's*⁹² and in *Doctor Faustus*. Later on, however, Mann largely abandoned this rather sombre assessment.⁹³

Theosophy and the Arcane School

After pursuing this lengthy—but necessary for the sake of a more accurate understanding of Eranos—digression, we can now return to Olga Fröbe during the 1920s and 1930s. Maggy Anthony, in the context of a work on Jung, also discusses her and maintains that in the pre-Eranos period she lived an extremely reclusive life, even to the extent that for seven years she had contact with no one save her domestic servant. During this time she is said to have been mainly preoccupied with the study of Vedanta and other Indian spiritual paths until the onset of a neurosis forced her to seek medical help and she was treated by Jung. Allegedly Jung concluded that such a withdrawn life was harmful for someone of her rather extraverted nature, and he advised her to seek friendships with people who shared her interest in oriental forms of spirituality. It was then (1928) that she built the large conference room in which the Eranos meetings later took place.⁹⁴

In her Eranos manuscript, Catherine Ritsema quotes a document, the original of which has unfortunately never come my way. It concerns a talk about Eranos which Olga Fröbe is supposed to have held in several European cities in 1939 and in which she said:

Eranos first emerged in 1927, at a time when I was very much preoccupied with a geometrical drawing—one of a series of about two hundred . . . While in this frame of mind (that is, the frame of mind in which one makes such drawings),⁹⁵ the idea came to me to build an auditorium in the garden, and to hold conferences there related to the studies that I have been pursuing for many years.

Thus in building this room Fröbe appears to have followed an inner impulse, without having any clear idea in mind as to what she wanted to do with it. As Magda Kerényi reported to me, she even asked Jung how she should use the room. Evidently Jung then suggested that it should serve as a lecture room that would be a “meeting place between East and West.”⁹⁶ Commenting on the matter in 1959, Fröbe recalled that at that time she was only vaguely contemplating founding a sort of summer school with lectures, intended for people with spiritual interests, although she admitted that she had no contacts of that kind.⁹⁷ She therefore experimented, as she wrote, “for some years with smaller groups such as the circle around Rudolf Maria Holzapfel, creator of a doctrine that he called ‘pan-idealism.’”⁹⁸

Rudolf Maria Holzapfel belonged to those “prophets of a new and better world,” who were much talked about at the beginning of the twentieth century, but later fell into total obscurity. His admirers included such famous intellectual figures as Ernst Mach, Thomas Mann, Hermann Bahr, Arthur Schnitzler, Hermann Graf Keyserling, and Romain Rolland. The last-named, who had also been active in spreading the ideas of Ramakrishna and Gandhi, contributed a foreword to Vladimir Astrov's adulatory book on Holzapfel, *Das Leben Rudolf Maria Holzapfels*,⁹⁹ in which Rolland describes visiting Holzapfel near

Lausanne. Even the *New York Herald Tribune*, reviewing Holzapfel's book *Panideal*, said that it presented an almost religious ideal of a new age and described it as a guide to perfection in every sphere of life and a foundation upon which the kingdom of the spirit will be built.¹⁰⁰ Other newspapers that commented on the book included *De Telegraaf* of Amsterdam and *Der Bund* of Bern. The Berlin *Tageblatt* positively overflowed, describing the book as "incomparable and unparalleled by any other creative work," although it then went on to draw a comparison with the work of Leonardo da Vinci.

There were, however, those who voiced rather different opinions. One of them was Heinrich Berl, who was excluded in 1939 from the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (the German writers' guild) because of his opposition to National Socialism and who was also a contributor (e.g. in 1923 and 1924) to Martin Buber's journal *Der Jude* (The Jew). Berl summed up Holzapfel as follows: "Rudolf Maria Holzapfel was a noble and mighty spirit. He was much too clever to have compared himself with Christ. What is Christ when compared with a Holzapfel? A partial ideal and nothing more."¹⁰¹

Holzapfel, the son of an Austrian doctor, was born in Krakow and led an eventful life that took him to South Africa, England, and Switzerland. The doctrine that he propounded was most notably presented in his magnum opus *Panideal: Das Seelenleben und seine soziale Neugestaltung* (Panidealism: the life of the soul and its social reform),¹⁰² which the author dedicated to "the pilgrims who are seeking a new world."¹⁰³ Perceiving a general sense of loneliness and universal longing,¹⁰⁴ Holzapfel tried to give human beings a new kind of conscience, which would oppose any form of individual or collective egoism, whether of a national or a racist character. The goal was the perfection of humankind, which was to be achieved by educating people towards a new "panidealistic" culture. To this end he devised a plan for an "academy," whose task would be to develop and promote creative minds. In these ideas we already find some of the basic elements that were to characterize the subsequent endeavors of Olga Fröbe. Holzapfel later developed his thinking along religious lines, as expressed in his two-volume work *Welterlebnis* (Experience of the world),¹⁰⁵ which is dedicated to "the pilgrims who are seeking a new heaven" and covers a wide spectrum of topics ranging from the stages of consciousness to the erotic dimension of life.

Sybillie Rosenbaum-Kroeber gives a somewhat different version from Maggy Anthony of Fröbe's early spiritual history. As Rosenbaum-Kroeber was in close personal contact with the subsequent founder of Eranos she can perhaps be credited with a better knowledge of the immediate circumstances. At any rate, she reports that in 1924 Fröbe had taken part in a course at Monte Verità given by Martin Buber about Lao-Tse (Laozi),¹⁰⁶ and that she had first met Jung in 1930 in Darmstadt at a meeting of Count Hermann Keyserling's School of Wisdom.¹⁰⁷ This version is also confirmed by a certain H.A.W., who published an article in *Die Tat* of 16 September 1950, entitled "Begegnungen in Eranos" (Encounters at Eranos), based on an interview with Fröbe. H.A.W. writes that she first met Jung "in the circle connected with Keyserling and the School of Wisdom."

Fröbe also had early contacts with members of the Ramakrishna movement as well as with the Theosophical Society, and she is said to have even been close to the then-president of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant (successor to the founder, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky), and to her "foster son" Krishnamurti.¹⁰⁸ When Krishnamurti then withdrew from the role of "World Teacher," which had been assigned to him without his consent, a scandal blew up and many people turned away from Theosophy.

Thus one can certainly discern a Theosophical influence on Fröbe, and the question arises to what extent Theosophical ideas co-influenced the original concept of Eranos. Such an influence seems to me highly probable, and this can be supported by quoting the three objectives of the Theosophical Society, as stated in its constitution:

- To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
- To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
- To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.¹⁰⁹

The statutes of the Austrian Theosophical Society in my hand, which are in line with those of the main Society, state furthermore that:

The Theosophical Society pursues no political goals. It is not a religious sect and has no dogmas. It recognizes no authority in spiritual matters and does not represent a form of religion. It is an association of seekers after truth, who wish to collaborate in the spiritual development of humankind and seek to promote the ideal way forward for the human spirit.¹¹⁰

One could of course argue that these aims and principles are expressed in such a general way that they could be applied to any group that was preoccupied with spiritual and esoteric matters in the broadest sense. At the same time one should not forget that the tenets of the Theosophical Society were formulated in the second half of the nineteenth century, when colonialism in Africa and Asia was still generally accepted policy in world affairs. However skeptical one may be towards some of the Theosophical Society's esoteric teachings, one has to admit that it was responsible for conveying the notion of a spiritual community of all peoples (including the "primitive" ones) to a widespread audience in Europe and the United States—and this despite its doctrine about the various "root races," which seems quite odd to us today.

After the seven years of "disciplined concentration" Fröbe finally established contact with another esoteric teacher, namely Alice Bailey.¹¹¹ Bailey came from a prosperous English family and by her fifteenth year had made three suicide attempts. According to her own account, at the age of fifteen she came into contact for the first time with a "Master of Wisdom," who appeared to her dressed in European clothes but with a turban on his head. He informed her that she would later serve the same spiritual hierarchy to which he belonged and which worked in secret for the benefit of humanity. Her first marriage ended in divorce owing to the violent tendencies of her husband, by which time she was living in the United States, where in 1915 she came into contact with the Theosophical Society. In 1919 she married again, and she and her husband, Foster Bailey, soon attained high standing in this society.

In 1920 came a quarrel over leadership issues with Annie Besant, whose position as president had been shaken by the debacle over the "World Teacher" Krishnamurti. This, together with the independently channeled messages that Alice Bailey began to receive in 1919, led to a break with the Theosophical Society.¹¹² Finally in 1923 she founded the so-called Arcane School on the basis of her channelings. Her husband remained at her side and always supported her fully. Even in the books that later appeared under his own name he explained that the teachings contained in them stemmed from his wife and from the secret Master.¹¹³ Mircea Eliade, who met him and Alice Bailey in London in 1940, described him as a "nonentity" and found her books to be "unreadable and absolutely worthless."¹¹⁴

The Alice Bailey writings teach a comprehensive plan of spiritual evolution for humankind, which around the year 2025 will supposedly culminate in a world federation of nations and universal brotherhood. At the same time human beings will move beyond crass materialism and live in harmony with divine principles. The Arcane School emphasized especially the belief that humankind is entering a New Age, namely the much heralded “Age of Aquarius,” a concept that was first popularized by Alice Bailey. Furthermore, the messiah of this age, namely Christ, who is identical with the Buddha Maitreya, is just about to return.¹¹⁵ These prophecies allegedly came from a “Master” whom Bailey called Djwahl Khul, the “Tibetan.” The Arcane School saw its task as being to train its pupils to enter into contact with the finer-plane Masters, who were believed to direct the destiny of the world.¹¹⁶ To this end Bailey founded a whole range of esoteric organizations. In addition to the Arcane School, these included the Lucis Trust, the New Group of World Servers, and the so-called Triangles (followers working in groups of three), all of which were intended to further the evolution of humankind towards the goals described.

In her autobiography¹¹⁷ Alice Bailey gives a detailed account of her acquaintance with Olga Fröbe. She writes that, at the time when they became acquainted through correspondence, Fröbe already had a good foundation of knowledge. Evidently Fröbe was also interested in the teachings of the Arcane School (Frank McLynn even describes her as having mediumistic gifts¹¹⁸) and intended to contribute to its dissemination in the world. Alice Bailey recounts that in 1930 Fröbe turned up in Stamford, Connecticut, where the Baileys lived, and told them of her plan to form in Ascona a non-sectarian, spiritual center that would be unrestrictedly “open to esoteric thinkers and occult students of all groups in Europe and elsewhere.”¹¹⁹

The Summer School before Eranos

The first course in Fröbe’s auditorium was organized for the summer of 1930 under the spiritual leadership of the Baileys. A prospectus about the summer school was issued in English, designating Fröbe as “Organizing Secretary” and inviting the reader to a “School of Spiritual Research,” encompassing “the study of Theosophy, Mysticism, esoteric Sciences and Philosophies, and all forms of spiritual research.”¹²⁰ In the prospectus Olga Fröbe guarantees that the gathering will be free of dogma and sectarianism and that a multiplicity of spiritual paths will be represented. She especially emphasizes that the acquired knowledge “will be of very actual help to students.” The meeting began at 5 p.m. on 3 August 1930 with an opening speech by Fröbe, describing the aims of the teaching. A short extract from this speech should suffice to make clear Fröbe’s idealistic thinking, which also probably lay behind the Eranos initiative:

We represent no society, order or fraternity, no special creed or faith. Our purpose is to create a meeting point where those of every group and faith may gather for discussion and synthetic work along spiritual lines. We hope that the most broadminded in the many various groups may make use of this centre, and that gradually a nucleus may grow up around it, a Tree with many branches, rooted in the Supreme One, Who enfolds all beings. We are profoundly conscious that the source and the goal of humanity are one and the same for every unit, and that here lies the fundamental truth of Brotherhood. The paths of men diverge, according to race, temperament, mentality and tradition, but the goal is the same for all.¹²¹

She went on to speak of the aim to create “a meeting place for East and West, where the spiritual ideals and methods of both may be discussed and ways of synthesis suggested.” Western psychology had already begun to recognize the importance of the soul, and the West was also beginning to sense the potency of Eastern art, just as the East had come to value Western science. “If a spirit of synthesis could replace the spirit of competition, the world culture would be greatly heightened, wars would cease, and all problems of a political and social nature would be greatly simplified.”

The course lasted three weeks and the teaching took place every day except Sunday. A fourth week was given over to private conversations with the lecturers. At midday those who wished could attend a general meditation session led by Sri Vishwanath Keskar. The lecture topics ranged from meditation to “Man and Superman” and from mystery schools to “Thought Forms and Telepathy.” Grand Duke Alexander of Russia spoke about “The Spiritual Nature of the Human Being.” Other speakers included Prof. Vittorio Vezzani of Turin on yoga, and the esoteric writer Violet Tweedale, who featured the subject of her book *The Cosmic Christ*. Fröbe herself contributed to a lecture on symbolism, illustrated by the already mentioned paintings of occult geometrical symbols, which can still be seen today at the Casa Anatta on Monte Verità.¹²²

Interestingly, another person who attended in 1930 was Alexandra David-Neel, famous to this day for her accounts of her travels in Asia. She signed her name in the guest book, but evidently gave no lecture. Instead of entering her place of residence like the other guests, she simply wrote beside her name the words “*de partout*” (from everywhere).

One sentence that is given special emphasis in the *Report of First Session* will serve to make clear Fröbe’s main intention at that time and most probably also subsequently. “Above all we are seeking to make this centre one in which the quality of the speakers will be so high, and the message so spiritual, yet so full of practical purport, that it will serve as a focal point on the physical plane for those subjective forces and spiritual leaders of the race, who are working strenuously at the uplift of humanity.” She stated furthermore that it was important to keep the summer school free of self-promotion, sectarianism, and dogmatism. This was the only way that people could “find their way onto the path of discipleship.” Through harmony and solidarity the liberation of humankind could be brought about.

In the first year it was a rather small group that came in the mornings and afternoons to the lectures, albeit an international one including people from fifteen different nations. However, as the Baileys, who always traveled with their three daughters, loved Lake Maggiore and kept coming back every year, the audience increased steadily, drawing people from many parts of the world. At any rate, Bailey described these meetings as a “great success.”

In Ascona Alice Bailey met for the first time the psychologist Roberto Assagioli, who had already been acting as her representative in Italy. Assagioli had worked with Sigmund Freud and, after 1915, above all with C.G. Jung. Freud in particular had placed great hopes in his gifted Italian pupil. Assagioli was Jewish, but even as a child had already come into contact with Theosophy through his mother. According to his own account, he was strongly influenced by the mystical tradition of Venetian Judaism.¹²³ He was also the editor of an anthology of the writings of the so-called “Magus of the North,” Johann Georg Hamann.¹²⁴ After working as deputy director of the Theosophical journal *Ultra*, whose contributors included Julius Evola and the Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci, he