

Call for Papers

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



*The Central Spiritual Sun*

@Artwork Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn

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

The Eranos circle originated from the meetings organized by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962) on Lake Maggiore in Ascona, Switzerland, from 1933 on. These meetings focused on spirituality, mysticism, myth, symbolism, and brought together some of the greatest scholars of the time, such as Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), Henry Corbin (1903-1978), Heinrich Zimmer (1890-1943), Martin Buber (1878-1965), Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961), Louis Massignon (1883-1962), Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883-1965), Daisetsu Teitarō Suzuki (1870-1966), Gilbert Durand (1921-2012), and Antoine Faivre (1934-2021).

The intellectual roots of Eranos can be traced back to German Romanticism, with figures such as Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), and to the religious phenomenology of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937). Its presiding figure however was Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), who combined his work on psychoanalysis with the search of a comparative and unifying theory of religious phenomena. In particular, Jung provided language and structure to the meetings of Eranos, understanding psychoanalysis not as a separate discipline, but as the basis of the humanities and social sciences, including the history of religions. Following this perspective, religious symbolism was seen as a tool not only for paths of individual psychological reintegration, but also for the welfare of society, since the individual unconscious is always perceived as reflected in the collective one.

These ideas were considered as problematic by those who had a more disenchanting understanding of culture and religion. In this context, spiritual and religious subjects were considered as less and less pertinent for contemporary societies in the framework of growing secularization. In any case, religion, spirituality, mysticism were supposed to be on their way out as a result of cultural and social progress. Against this idea, the intellectuals of Eranos saw themselves engaged in a struggle against the disappearance of religion and the mystery from the world. Another source of cultural dissonance came from the fact that they often challenged Orientalist and colonial dogmas of Western superiority over other cultural and religious traditions.

The first phase of the Eranos meetings from 1933 to 1988 produced interpretations that have become highly influential for decades in the study of religions and other fields of the humanities. Especially since the 1990s, Eranos's ideas have been radically challenged by historicist approaches, which criticised the romantic search for universal structures and archetypes that was so typical of the Eranos approach.

## **Conference goals**

The influence of Eranos has been pervasive on twentieth-century culture, and it has gone beyond the boundaries of academic scholarship in a strict sense. This conference has two main purposes. The first is to understand how the legacy of Eranos has had an impact on the humanities and the social sciences: we will discuss the question of universals in religious phenomena, the value and usefulness of comparative approaches, the importance given to myths and symbols, the role of historicism, and the similarities between Eranos and contemporary developments such as the ontological turn in anthropology. The second goal is to explore the influence or the echoes of Eranos on the performing and figurative arts, in particular on music, dance, theatre, and painting.

## **Organisers**

The conference is organized jointly by Fondazione Giorgio Cini and the Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, in collaboration with the Chair for Literature and Cultural Studies at the ETH, Zurich

Participating institutes:

- The Institute of Music (Director Gianmario Borio);
- the Intercultural Institute of Comparative Musical Studies (Director Giovanni Giuriati);

- the Institute for Theatre and Melodrama (Director Maria Ida Biggi);
- the Centre for the Study of Comparative Civilization and Spirituality (Director Francesco Piraino);
- The Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents (HHP) of the University of Amsterdam (Dr. Marco Pasi);
- Institute for Literature and Cultural Studies at the Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich (Prof. Andreas Kilcher).

The conference will take place over three days and will be complemented by three artistic events (two musical performances and one dance performance). This hybrid event fits perfectly into the history of the Giorgio Cini Foundation, which since its origins has promoted the dialogue between research and art in different cultures and traditions.

## **Abstracts and Texts**

Abstracts up to 300 words, accompanied by a short CV, should be submitted in English by the 15<sup>th</sup> of April to [civilta.comparate@cini.it](mailto:civilta.comparate@cini.it). A notification of acceptance will be forwarded by the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. Two months after the Conference, we will ask participants to send us their full paper, to be published in a special issue or edited volume. We welcome submissions from doctoral students, early career researchers and established scholars.

## **Timetable**

1. The call for papers is open – 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.
2. Abstracts (300-500 words maximum) and CVs to be received by 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2022.

3. Notifications of acceptance will be given by 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
5. The conference will be held the 17-18-19 November 2022.
6. Final papers to be received by 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2023.
7. Publication of the special issue in late 2023, early 2024.

## **Practicalities and Funding**

The Giorgio Cini Foundation and the Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents will provide accommodation on San Giorgio Island, coffee breaks and lunches for all participants. Participants will arrange and pay for their own transportation. Extra funding may be available to cover the travel expenses of a limited number of scholars who cannot obtain funding from their own institutions. If extra funding is needed, please indicate this in the email with which you submit your abstract. The Library of the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities will appreciate it if participants can bring and donate one book they authored or in which they have participated.

For further information, please contact: [civilta.comparete@cini.it](mailto:civilta.comparete@cini.it)