

SOCIOLOGY AND THE OCCULT

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While a historical study of the occult has grown into its own discipline since the early 1990s, under labels such as 'the history of hermetic philosophy' and 'the history of Western esotericism', no comparable developments exist for a sociology of the occult. Attempts were made in the early 1970s, but the work in this regard by pioneering researchers such as Edward Tiryakian has largely gone without notice in broader sociology. With historians of the occult neglecting or being uninterested in sociological perspectives, and with sociologists interested in the study of the occult rarely paying attention to existing historiographical work, we have a situation where incompatible definitions abound and misunderstandings are difficult to avoid.

A Brief (and incomplete) History of Sociological Approaches to the Occult

The roots of the sociological study of what is today often termed the occult go as far back as to the early days of the discipline of sociology itself. In the early 1900s Ernst Troeltsch (1992) discussed 'mysticism' as a (Christian) religious orientation revolving around inner religious experience (Kippenberg 2009, 69), which is essentially individualistic and eschews social organization (Campbell 1972, 120; Partridge 2004, 20-21). Troeltsch's theories informed the study of cults as 'the organizational response associated with mystical religion' (Campbell 1972, 120), in effect implying loosely organized, inclusive, and doctrinally deviant religious groupings. Although having an origin in notions of 'mystical inner experience' studies of cult-type religiosity rarely employ the term 'occult' in any prominent way and have included many groups, practices, and philosophies that can hardly be recognized as occult. In the 1970s, however, studies that did just that emerged. Based on 'the worlds of the occult and the magical, of spiritualism and psychic phenomena, of mysticism and new thought, of alien intelligences and lost civilizations, of faith healing and nature cure' (1972, 122) having 'become a far more visible component of the total cultural system' (1972, 119), Colin Campbell formulated the notion of the cultic milieu as 'the cultural underground of society ...[which] includes all deviant belief-systems and their associated practices' (1972, 122).

With Edward Tiryakian in the forefront, the 1970s also saw attempts to formulate a sociology of the occult. For Tiryakian (1974b, 265) occultism stood for:

intentional practices, techniques, or procedures which (a) draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos that cannot be measured or recognized by the instruments of modern science, and (b) which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention.

He also strongly focused on secrecy as a main ingredient in occult philosophies, writing that '[a]t the heart of esoteric knowledge, is its concealment from public dissemination, from the gaze of the profane or uninitiated' (Tiryakian 1974b, 265-266). As with Campbell, and much sociological scholarship in the 1970s, Tiryakian contrasted 'occult culture' and 'normal' or "exoteric" culture, seeking to highlight the deviant nature of the occult (Tiryakian 1974a, 1; 1974b, 267). This was also the case with another important sociologist of the occult in the 1970s, Marcello Truzzi (1974, 244-245), whose emphasis on the deviant and countercultural nature of the occult is even stronger than Tiryakian's. For Truzzi occultism is a 'wastebasket, for knowledge claims that are deviant in some way', comprising of knowledge not accepted in mainstream religion, science, or culture (1974, 245). The major problem with these approaches is that esotericism/occultism becomes an empty category which can in essence include anything and everything, with the phenomena included ceasing to be occult when and if they cease to be deviant (for a critique of Truzzi, see Hanegraaff 1998, 40-42). This focus on deviance is problematic in marginalizing the occult and in making it dependent on other, more established categories of religion, science, philosophy, and culture. The focus on deviancy as constitutional is also unsustainable in light of the increased popularity of the occult, where the 'deviant alternatives' have become mainstream (Partridge 2004, 70).

Unfortunately, most sociologists have continued to employ the term 'occult' as a denominator for vaguely supernatural phenomena, beliefs etc. which cannot easily be placed in other categories (see e.g. McGuire 2000, 121-122; Clark 2003). There are, however, indications that change might be occurring, much due to the research of Christopher Partridge since the early 2000s. Partridge's work builds on the theories of sociologists such as Max Weber, Troeltsch, and Campbell, but is set in an explicitly contemporary framework where mass media, popular culture, and consumerism play significant roles. The basic premise is that the contemporary West is undergoing significant religious transformations, that we are witnessing a *re-enchantment* in which 'alternative' forms of religiosity are flourishing. As he expresses it: 'Western culture is not becoming *less* religious, but rather that it is, for a variety of reasons, becoming *differently* religious' (Partridge 2013, 116). Closely influenced by Campbell's notion of the cultic milieu, Partridge presents *occulture* as 'the spiritual/mythic/paranormal background knowledge that informs the plausibility structures of Westerners' (2004, 187) which 'includes those often *hidden, rejected* and *oppositional* beliefs and practices associated with esotericism, theosophy, mysticism, New Age, Paganism, and a range of other subcultural beliefs and practices...' (2004, 68). This milieu 'is constantly feeding and being fed by popular culture', and is thus constantly

updated with new material (Partridge 2013, 116). Indeed, as the title of Partridge's recent publication on the subject clearly states, 'occulture is ordinary'.

The Historical Study of Western Esotericism

Most research on the occult has been conducted by historians, since the early 1990s in the field of 'Western esotericism'. In this research a terminological distinction, which is actually of sociological significance, is usually made between occultism and esotericism, and I will therefore use the terms 'esoteric' and 'esotericism' when directly referring to historiographic studies. Whereas sociologists have defined the occult based on typological constituents, particularly a focus on 'deviance' and 'secrecy', historians of esotericism have instead looked at the historical continuity of certain forms of philosophies and practices. There are approaches which seemingly build on typologies, such as Antoine Faivre's description of Western esotericism as 'an ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history which share a certain *air de famille*, as well as the form of thought which is its common denominator' (Faivre 1998, 2), identifiable by the idea of invisible correspondences, the notion of a living nature imbued by divine forces, a focus on imagination as an 'organ of the soul' (Hanegraaff 1996, 398) and intermediary beings as central in the pursuit of hidden knowledge, and the experience of transmutation where the individual gradually purifies his/her soul or essence until a perfected state of being is reached (Faivre 1994, 10-14). This definition has been used as a 'check list' for determining if a phenomenon, practice, or philosophy is esoteric or not, but Faivre was in fact describing common denominators in a specific corpus of material. The description has been criticized for not taking the change over time into account (Hanegraaff 1998, 46-47; 2003), and Renaissance and early modern material will therefore appear more esoteric than later material.

An approach with typological inclination is Wouter Hanegraaff's discussion of reason, faith, and gnosis as three ideal typical modes of knowing in Western culture (2008. Cf. 1996, 518n5; 1998, 19-21). Reason-based claims, such as scientific ones, can be communicated easily and the validity of them can be checked by anyone with sufficient skills within the field the claim is made in. Faith-based claims, such as those found in religion, can be communicated to others but in no way checked for accuracy. Gnosis-based claims, however, relate to knowledge of an experiential nature which is essentially incommunicable and the validity of which cannot be checked by any conventional means.

Earlier historiographical studies proposed the existence of a more or less self-contained 'occult tradition' (see Yates 2002), but while still common among non-specialists (e.g. Katz 2005) and in insider accounts (e.g. Holman 2008), such notions have largely been abandoned in specialist scholarship. Prominent scholars in the field of Western esotericism are careful to emphasize that 'esotericism' is scholarly tool used by researchers to analyze certain phenomena in Western cultural and religious history, something which is 'not 'discovered' but *produced*' (Hanegraaff 1998, 11, 16). There is also a tendency towards staying clear of narrow definitions. For example, in Hanegraaff's most recent work the focus is on historically specific societal processes of exclusion, particularly linked to the Reformation and the 'scientific revolution', in which a number of previously accepted and in many cases unrelated phenomena

came to be deemed as either 'heresy' or 'flawed science' and marginalized as rejected knowledge (Hanegraaff 2012). The lumping together of these phenomena made it possible to regard them as constituting a single unified 'tradition', and subsequently in the nineteenth-century 'occult revival' be presented as a tradition which had unduly been persecuted and marginalized throughout Western cultural and religious history.

Kocku von Stuckrad has advocated a discursive approach in which the esoteric is regarded as a 'structural element of Western culture' consisting of '*claims* to 'real' or absolute knowledge and the *means* of making this knowledge available' (2005b, 9-10). The approach also reintroduces the notion of secrecy, which was largely downplayed in earlier historical approaches due to the exaggerated focus on it in sociological studies. However, von Stuckrad is not interested in 'knowledge hidden from all but a select few' but in the '*dialectic of the hidden and revealed*' (2005b, 10), that is to say, a *rhetoric* of secrecy where the *revelation* of 'hidden knowledge' is in fact more elementary than keeping it secret. Esoteric discourse crosses boundaries of religious identities, and the very concept of the esoteric becomes an analytical tool through which interreligious connections and processes of identity formation are investigated.

A Historical-Sociological Approach to the Study of the Occult

The historiographic study of Western esotericism, the sociology of the occult, and the study of contemporary religiosity with occult leanings, mainly in the fields of pagan studies and the study of new religions, have largely remained separate from each other. This means that even though the same phenomena may be discussed, the understanding of them can vary to the degree that misunderstandings are impossible to avoid. In part this is due to different definitions informed by different research questions, as in the uncovering of historical connections in historical studies and the examination of typological similarities in sociological studies. Some scholars have suggested that keeping these foci separate is satisfactory (Hammer 2004, 448-449), but I disagree. If fruitful dialogue and cooperation is considered desirable and is to be achieved sociological approaches to the occult need to be compatible with historical ones (Hanegraaff 1998, 41). As sustained research into the occult has primarily been conducted by historians of Western esotericism it is prudent to commence a search for common ground there.

As with recent approaches in the field of Western esotericism, it might be best to avoid strict and narrow definitions of the occult. As von Stuckrad puts it, 'instead of asking what esotericism is and what currents belong to it, it is more fruitful to ask what insights into the dynamics of Western history we might gain by applying the etic concept of esotericism' (2005a, 80). This also highlights the major benefits of the esoteric/occult as an analytical tool, namely the possibility to investigate the often neglected and seemingly discrepant territories between religious and secular-scientific traditions, institutions, and identities (von Stuckrad 2005a, 90-91; 2013). Three approaches discussed above, those of Hanegraaff, von Stuckrad, and Partridge, in many ways complement each other, and in combining elements from each a potential for a viable historical-sociological approach emerges. Hanegraaff's approach and studies shed light on historical processes whereby certain phenomena have been

lumped together, come to be seen as related to each other, and deemed to be both topics unworthy of serious scholarly investigation and practices and philosophies to be ridiculed and/or forbidden – while providing solid research on their actual historical roots and continuities, relations, and discrepancies. Partridge's approach and studies shed light on the processes and mechanisms whereby these practices are popularized, while providing theoretical tools for sociological investigation of the occult. Von Stuckrad's approach and studies provide means to examine typological qualities and similarities of use for sociologically inclined scholars while maintaining a solid historical grounding. By drawing on all three approaches it is possible to construct an overarching framework in which sociological topics and themes can be examined in ways that are historically sound.

Von Stuckrad (2005b, 6-11) presents a perspective of an esoteric field of discourse which crosses the boundaries of different religious identities and traditions as well as those of religious and secular-scientific institutions. In a sociological study focused on societal relations and responses it is of use to talk of 'the field of discourse on the esoteric', i.e. all engagement with the occult, including pro-, contra-, and scholarly discourse (Granholtm 2013, 557). This added dimension introduces new potentials for the study of the occult that are overlooked in strict focus on only 'that which is occult', further strengthening the relevance of the study of the occult for both historians and sociologists. Furthermore, in order to recognize both historical relations and continuities and new developments it is conducive to look for both uses of conventional occult notions and symbols and occurrences of '*claims* to 'real' or absolute knowledge and the *means* of making this knowledge available' (2005b, 9-10).

Naturally, introducing sociological perspectives to the study of the occult presents both new potentials and problems. Sociological studies introduce methodological tools such as ethnography and interviews, shedding light on the real life-contexts of lived occult practices and philosophies. This presents perspectives and may problematize ingrained assumptions in ways that a reliance on only textual material cannot. A questioning of the common propensity among historians to perceive of the occult as a concern for elites rather than 'commoners' springs to mind. Historical perspectives on continuities and disruptions may challenge the perspectives on and overestimations of 'the new' that sociologists are often preoccupied with.

Sociological Dimensions of the Occult

There are many dimensions of the occult which are more or less neglected in the historiographic study of Western esotericism but lend themselves well to sociological research. I will briefly discuss a small number of these, presenting examples for future research rather than providing research findings (see Granholtm 2011).

The idea of 'belief' as the core of religion is deeply influenced by Protestant theology and should be problematized, but at the same time it cannot be denied that the intellectual dimension is an important aspect of religion. 'Beliefs' as expressed in ritual manuals and occult treaties have been discussed to great extent in the historical study of the occult, however, how these beliefs are actually realized in ritual practices and lives and of the believer have received relatively little attention. If looking at discourse and rhetoric (e.g. Hammer 2001), it is possible to examine how communicative strategies influence and direct the lived lives and social contexts of

occult practitioners. For example, I have suggested a model of investigating occult currents as discursive complexes, i.e. the interplay of specific discourses in specific combinations which inform ritual practice, teachings, rhetoric, social organization and so on (Granholt 2013b). In this model the key discourses constituting a specific occult current – for example the primacy of nature and the goal to revive pre-Christian religion and culture in neopaganism – are fluidic and ever-changing, and in their interaction with broader societal discourses – e.g. those of secularism, feminism, or racialism – each manifestation of an occult current takes on unique forms, which then affect the lives and actions of the people involved in different ways. Just to give a couple of examples: Anthropologist Galina Lindquist (1997, vii-x) has discussed how members of the Swedish neoshamanic community actively opposed a construction project that would have leveled large areas of forest. The Swedish neoshamans' strong focus on the sacredness of nature resulted in direct social action. Conversely, Nordic Heathen communities often have to deal with accusations of fostering racist convictions, partly due to Nordic Heathenism being seen as closely linked to the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany and partly due to the focus on Old Norse *culture* that exist in many groups today. For some groups this has been resolved by maintaining a focus on race and culture, but recasting race as a spiritual quality meaning that there is no conflict in non-Scandinavians being involved. What we see here is an interaction between the neopagan discourse of reviving pre-Christian religion and culture, an opposition to racist discourses, and an alignment with pluralist-multiculturalist discourses.

Ritual is an important element of many occult groupings, particularly initiatory magic orders and fraternities. This dimension has been researched to a certain degree, but the focus has largely been on ritual texts rather than ritual practice in real-life contexts (e.g. Bogdan 2007. For anthropological studies see Granholt 2012b; Luhrman 1989). In stark contrast, for sociologists the primary focus in looking at ritual is not on the content of the act but on the symbolic meaning attached to it by participants (McGuire 2000, 17-18). While ritual in and by itself would constitute an interesting subject for sociological study, it is the social context of initiatory practices that are of most interest. Through initiations the participant links his/her self-identity and spiritual progress to the group itself as well as other members involved in the same initiatory processes. As higher degrees are commonly linked to increased organizational influence, the dynamics involved in initiation is central in the investigation of the interaction and interpersonal relations between members in a particular occult group.

Ritual connects to community, another dimension which is not really touched upon in historiographic studies. The shared experience in ritual reproduces and transmits a collective sense of identity and belonging among group members (McGuire 2000, 20-22). This sense of community often exists even in groups which have their membership spread across great geographical distances. A member may not have direct contact with other members, but has a sense of community in his/her identity as a group member. A certain sense of community can exist in settings which are much more loosely organized than those in initiatory societies, as for example in therapeutic or spiritualistic practices. In these cases the sense of community may be connected to a sense of spiritual kinship or to an extended family consisting of both living and deceased relatives. In addition, another sense of community, that of a

cross-cultural and -historical community of occultists joined in their pursuit of the same hidden knowledge. This imagined community grants the occultist a feeling of belonging, even though he/she might be the only one involved in the occult in his/her community, lacking any contacts with other living practitioners.

Demography is a dimension of interest for sociologists, and often a matter of quantitative research. If approaching the occult as an analytical tool rather than a 'religious tradition' expressed in self-identities, institutional affiliations etc., conventional demographic research is made difficult. Counting members of conventionally identifiable occult groups, participants at mind, body, spirit-fairs, and subscribers to occult journals is possible to some extent, but such an approach hardly includes all of the people who are in some way engaged in and with the occult. Finding suitable parameters to secure that all or most of these people are included is difficult, and may even be impossible.

Finally, secrecy, while downplayed by historians of Western esotericism, is a dimension of considerable sociological significance. Earlier sociologists of the occult approached the subject as the literal keeping of secrets, but a more fruitful approach is to look at the rhetoric of uncovering hidden truth. The dialectic of the hidden and revealed informs the perceptions and relation to the world of individuals inclined towards the occult, as it will make the person perceive an inherent meaning in events and experiences that another person would consider insignificant. This may in turn direct that person to act and relate to other people, social life in general, nature, professional life, and so on, according to the hidden meaning which has been discovered. In initiatory societies the social context is directly informed by the revelation of hidden knowledge. The secrets revealed are commonly ones that must be personally experienced, and as not all members of a group have access to these experiences it joins those that have together in a common identity, making the experience itself social capital which members who have not yet perceived the secret strive to.

In addition themes such as gender balance and relation, connection to and enactment of political ideologies, individual identity-construction, and relation to the surrounding society constitute subjects of sociological interest which have not been sufficiently addressed in historiographic studies of the occult.

Modernity and the Occult

As sociological studies commonly revolve around modernity as a series of large-scale social, cultural, and political transformations, starting in the post-Enlightenment West but with far-ranging global implications (Giddens 1990, 1-4, 14; Wittrock 2002, 48; Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992, 18-19), let us look at what some key theories on modernity might imply for the occult.

Modernity, in its western European forms,¹ is ideologically dominated by secularism, which, in simplification, posits a rationalist-scientific frameset as preferable to a religious one (Wittrock 2002, 54). Secularism is the driving force behind secularization, a process which is often regarded as the most elementary expression of modernization. Rather than forming a single theory detailing a more or less straightforward process, 'secularization theory' forms an overarching meta-theoretical framework, or even paradigm, containing several distinct and at times

conflicting theories, which in turn deal with a number of intertwined processes. At the core of most secularization theories is the differentiation of societal institutions and functions where religion becomes its own sphere no longer integrated into others, which then results in the privatization and decline of religion (Casanova 1994, 19-39; Granholm 2013a). If the occult is regarded as signifying phenomena that transgress the seemingly inviolable borders between the scientific-secular and the religious, the question arises to what degree the decline of religion, if taken as a matter of fact, also means the decline of occultism. The simple answer is that some forms of occultism decline, namely those with a strong religious ethos, whereas other forms might be unaffected or even flourish. New expressions of the occult were crafted under the impact of secularism, and this relates to the distinction between esotericism and occultism which is of significance in the historical study of Western esotericism, as mentioned earlier. For Hanegraaff, occultism signifies 'all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world' (1996, 422). Occultists actively engaged with, and often adapted to, the new rationalist-scientific worldview, resulting in, among other things, the emergence of an evolutionary paradigm in discourses of spiritual progress and 'the psychologization of religion and sacralization of psychology' (Hanegraaff 1996, 411-513; 2003). This meant that occultists were more inclined to perceive impersonal, causal laws of nature, and to manipulate occult *mechanisms*, whereas the pre-Enlightenment esotericist would have seen the world as organic and imbued by divine forces, and also to describe mystical experience and encounters with spiritual beings as occurring in the psyche rather than on objectively existing astral planes. In short, occultism involved both the 'scientification of religion' and the 'religionization of science'.

It should also be noted that secularization theory commonly relies on strictly substantive definitions of religion and is concerned with specific institutionalized forms of Christianity, and 'the decline of religion' thus mainly implies 'the decline of (some) Christianity'. This de-Christianization, in turn, meant that the possibilities for unorthodox and eclectic religious expressions were greatly enhanced. Increasingly, inspiration was drawn from non-Western cultures and non-Christian religions, much influenced by (as well as partly inspiring) the new comparative study of religions (Hanegraaff 1996, 442-462). Another result was that phenomena which had been marginalized in the boundary work-processes of the Reformation and the scientific revolution came to be regarded as a semi-independent and persecuted wisdom tradition, which spawned 'the occult revival' and the creation of an occult cultural sphere in the form of initiatory orders and societies.

As for the privatization of religion (a notion which is criticized by e.g. Casanova 1994), it is certainly true that some phenomena conventionally included under the label the occult, such as astrology, had a far greater role to play in pre-Enlightenment European political life (see e.g. von Stuckrad 2010, 136-134). However, if the understanding of 'the public sphere' is broadened to not only include political life but also mass media and popular culture, we instead see an increased visibility and massive popularization of the occult in the post-Enlightenment West. Subject matter which had previously been reserved for elites became available for the larger masses.

Turning to more recent times, to what sociologists have variously termed late, accentuated, liquid, and post-modernity, the processes set in motion in earlier phases of modernity have accentuate. The drive towards the differentiation of societal

institutions and functions has progressed to the degree where the ever-smaller fragments are no longer self-sustaining enough to maintain themselves and therefore flow into each other in new constellations which are constantly formed, broken up, and reformed (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992, 16, 36-37). In the modern individualist ethos, accompanied by a decreased trust in religious and secular authorities and the benefits of technological progress (Giddens 1990, 10; Bauman 1992, viii-x, xvii-xxii), increased pluralism and plurality brought on by greater immigration and multiculturalism, fluidic and often temporary occult approaches where elements of a diverse range of religious source material are dis-embedded from their original contexts and re-embedded in new constellations are formed to suit the needs and preferences of individual practitioners. Modernity, and particularly late modernity, thus inspires a more conscious, extensive, and accentuated eclecticism than what was pre-Enlightenment occultism, all in the desire to find increasingly distant exotic others² as the world shrinks due to globalization.

Along with the critique of many other the hegemonic truths of earlier phases of modernity, secularism is put into question. Guided by 'post-secular' discourses,³ people are more prone to both assess religion as beneficial for society and to perceive new functions and arenas for it. This applies primarily to non-institutionalized religiosity, and opportunities for the occult to thrive are ample. Post-secular discourses may be critical towards an overreliance on secularism, but they are also deeply dependent on the awareness of the precious hegemonic situation of the same, and the end result is thus not a return to pre-Enlightenment values and modes of life. Instead, the faculties of rationality, scientific findings, and offerings of contemporary society coexist with a renewed appreciation of the religious, meaning that the occult in late modernity moves away from the secular-religious divide of earlier phases of modernity. Metaphysical and scientific explanatory models exist side by side, relating to different by not opposed layers of reality.

In an increasingly globalized and transnational world, nation states and national identity experiences devaluation at the expense of revaluation of the regional. Translocal connections and interdependencies develop between various localities in transnational networks, and the distinctive is universally appraised in a 'universalization of particularism' at the same time as local and regional variations of global phenomena are forged in a 'particularization of universalism' (Friedman 1995, 72). The interconnectedness of different localities and the shrinking of the world also problematizes the view of the occult as a distinctly Western phenomenon, which is the dominant perspective in the study of Western esotericism (Granholt, 2013c).

The increasing treatment of occult themes and subject matter in popular culture plays an important role in the popularization of the occult (see e.g. Granholt 2012c), which in turn makes the inclusion of occult themes a more compelling prospect for economically motivated producers of popular culture (Cf. Partridge 2004; 2005). Increasingly, the identity-construction of people is informed by popular culture (Clark 2003; Partridge 2004; 2005; Lynch 2006), and it has even been suggested that popular culture helps drive the development away from a Christian culture to one informed more by the occult (Partridge 2004; 2005; 2013). New media and communication technologies, in particular the Internet, not only makes the maintenance of transnational networks possible (Friedman 1995, 70), but also results in a relative democratization of the occult where anyone in possession of the necessary technology

and skills can market their own particular brand of occultism. Furthermore, the new media climate also introduces new possibilities, gives rise to changed forms, functions, and premises of communication. Mediatization, implying a development where social or cultural activities are 'to a greater or lesser degree, performed through interaction with a medium' and where these activities become dependent upon the media they operate through, is increasingly a central social factor (Hjarvard 2008, 13). For many small groups it becomes possible to have its membership spread throughout the world, while still being able to communicate effectively. Many occult groups also operate solely over the Internet (see Arthur 2002; Lövheim 2003).

Conclusion

This essay has briefly discussed sociological perspectives on the occult, focusing more on potentials and possibilities than on providing any definite answers. While the historical study of the occult is well established, its sociological equivalent has barely seen the light of day. Much work remains to be done, and indeed needs to be done, but combining historical and sociological perspectives can have great benefit, particularly for the study of the occult in the present day.

¹ Modernity assumes many different and culturally specific forms and shapes (Eisenstadt 2003).

² A common view in occultism is that hidden wisdom resides with exotic others (see Granholm 2012a; 2013c).

³ This use of the term post-secular differs from the one used by Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas, a society being post-secular refers to 'a change in consciousness' in relation to religion within it (2008, 20), implying not religion 'returned to a position of renewed public prominence', but more 'a revision of a previously over-confidently secularist outlook' (Harrington 2007, 547). For an outline of the scholarly debate concerning the post-secular, as well as an introduction to the more common interpretations based on Habermas' work, see Granholm, 2013a; Moberg, Granholm and Nynäs 2012, 3-8).

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