



Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esoteric Traditions

By Arthur Versluis

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Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esoteric Traditions is a concise overview, from antiquity to the present, of all the major Western religious esoteric movements. Topics covered include alchemy, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy and many more. *Magic and Mysticism* is ideal for students of Mysticism and New Religious Movements, as well as for general readers of Metaphysics and Esoterica.

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Editorial Review

Review

Arthur Versluis' prolific writings on Western esoteric thought continue to shape and define the field. His current work, *Magic and Mysticism*, provides lucid insight into a scarcely known tradition that continues to exert a tremendous influence on the way we see our lives, and beyond. The breadth of his coverage alone is a reason to read the book. (David Appelbaum, SUNY New Paltz)

Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esoteric Traditions is an ambitious recasting of the gnostic insight that has inspired and influenced countless writers through the ages. Arthur Versluis, one of the generation's more prolific scholars of esotericism, has produced a volume that is both comprehensive in scope and exacting in detail. Moving beyond previous studies that separate mysticism and magic, Versluis argues that these two products of human imagination, which are not entirely reducible to rational analysis, need to be juxtaposed, as they help us define the larger spectrum of the esoteric. I have little doubt that this work will be of great interest to specialist and non-specialist alike, to historians of mysticism and esotericism in particular, and to students of comparative religion more generally. (Elliot R. Wolfson, New York University)

Persecuted throughout the ages by orthodox Christians and marginalized by scholars until recently, esotericism and esotericists have finally come into their own. In this succinct, deftly organized, and lucidly written account, Arthur Versluis presents a history of western esotericism from antiquity to the present. His book will appeal to anyone interested in the 'third' or 'gnostic' component of western thought, which provided and still provides a middle path between faith and reason for those striving for spiritual enlightenment. (Alison Coudert, University of California, Davis)

A remarkably clear, erudite, and concise guide to a field that has been far too long neglected. Versluis manages to compress an enormous amount of research and insight into a short space. This will be an extremely useful tool for scholars and seekers alike. (Richard Smoley, coauthor of *Hidden Wisdom: A Guide to the Western Inner Traditions*)

Versluis brings a delightful balance between scholarly attention to detail and a warm understanding of the subject and the characters involved. *Magic and Mysticism* is joy to read and ideal for anyone who wants to understand the importance of esotericism on Western culture and why it is still important to us today. (Mark Stavish, Institute for Hermetic Studies, author of *The Path of Alchemy*)

Arthur Versluis has written a wonderfully concise overview and analysis of Western esotericism. The scholarship is wide-ranging and up to date, yet the tone is quite readable and not overly academic. (Jay Kinney, former editor and publisher of *Gnosis*)

This newest work by an outstanding American scholar of Western Esotericism offers an integrative interpretation of three critical themes: gnosis, magic, and mysticism. Surveying the intertwined histories of these themes, the author provides a multitude of insights on the creative interactions between various historical schools, individuals, and historic periods, all set against the social dynamics of anti-esoteric and heresiophobic rhetoric. This is a crucial, transdisciplinary review that brings new definition and nuance to the study of Western Esotericism. In addition, the section on Theosophy give new scope and depths to that topic and shows its formative influence on contemporary esoteric thought and practice. Highly

recommended. (Lee Irwin, College of Charleston)

About the Author

Arthur Versluis is the founder and president of the Association for the Study of Esotericism and editor of the journal *Esoterica*. He is the author of many books and is a professor of writing, rhetoric, and American cultures at Michigan State University.

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