



MATERIALIZATION

Occult Research on the Soul

A lecture with
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Eidenössische Technische Hochschule Zurich

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4pm, HSSB Room 4080
University of California Santa Barbara

Sponsored by the Religion, Experience, and Mind Lab
and the Department of Religious Studies, UCSB

The notion of the soul is one of the premodern master concepts fundamentally criticized in modernity. While the term survived as a cosmological and psychological metaphor, the age of science and secularization has rendered especially the idea of the immaterial and immortal soul obsolete. At the same time, the soul was rediscovered notably in the rising movements of modern occultism. Occultism however connected contradictorily post-materialist neo-spiritualism with scientific rationalization. The soul was not anymore the object of belief but of research; it was understood as being essentially material and as such it could be experimentally explored and verified. The lecture analyzes the properties—and the contradictions—of the modern occult notion of the material soul as well as occultists' research on it.

About the lecturer: Andreas Kilcher is professor of Literature and Cultural Studies at the Eidenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich and director of the Center for the History of Knowledge. Kilcher is a prominent scholar of German-Jewish literature and culture, Kabbalah, esotericism and literary studies of knowledge. He is the current president of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE).

