

INTRIGUING ORGANIZATIONS

ESOTERES

They experiment on slaves and purchase corpses by the cartload yet mortals tolerate them because of their bribes, and power, and the beautiful goods they sell. The gods too do not interfere with their presence, the reasons for doing so as mysterious as the enigmatic group. The Esoteres: their saints are equations, their liturgy formulae that exceeds the confines of arcana, and from within their Tesseract they research the abstract, the absurd, and the impossible.



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HISTORY

Called by many names the Esoterics have existed for centuries—they were human at the start and in a hubris so common among humanity sought to achieve the divine through the study of powers unknown, fervently seeking godhood through spells, rituals, expanded consciousness, and, perhaps oddly, mathematics. Later scholars have claimed such a thing is impossible, that it takes divine magic whether freely given (or in rare cases stolen) to gain deific power. At first the organization's successes were few and rare but not without interesting results. Their experiments twisted and distorted their bodies over the years of their study, yet with those mutations came many things: alien wisdom, mighty intellects, and extended lifespans.

Only two or three decades after the group began their sages—those that survived both voluntary and sometimes forced experimentation—became more than what they were, undeniably ascended from their original forms. The less human the Esoterics became the more apathetic their attitude towards anything that did not serve their needs. Their souls grew monstrous, experimenting on stolen corpses and slaves, and with their heinous inhuman behavior came the hatred of many. Over the course of half a century they constructed a refuge for themselves and their critical work: the Tesseract, a testament to their power and genius just as strange and alien as its minders. On the outside it looks like a moderately large fortress of stone with very few windows and seemingly no guards yet within it is an ever-shifting labyrinth of halls, doors, and passages to unknown dangers. It is here these savants have done their work since its completion, hidden away except when a particular member's activities requiring venturing beyond the safety of its walls.

ACTIVITIES

From the Tesseract's completion onward the Esoterics have quietly researched increasingly abstract mathematics and secrets of the unknown. Many (themselves included) claim the group has long since abandoned its goal of godhood and that they now research for purely research's sake. They hide the most potent of what they learn but have on occasion traded secrets or strange magical

These are but a few of the remarkable yet utterly mundane items traded by the Esoterics.

Dream (100–2,000 gp). Esoterics have mastered the distillation of dreams into strange and hauntingly beautiful gel-like orbs. Eating one of these sweet-tasting wonders cause the imbibor to dream extremely vividly the next time they sleep. Specific details of the dream can be established beforehand with the Esotere broker for additional cost based on complexity—some are so perfectly modulated that their events are indistinguishable from the real world.

Epsilon-Model Longship (50,000 gp). While it may be identical in most ways to a standard [longship](#) this Esotere vessel has no sails or obvious means of propulsion. This ability alone is not what makes it so amazing however—through a technique utterly incomprehensible to outsiders it does this completely without magic. Although it is a mundane vehicle, only Esoterics are able to repair such a ship without the use of magic (such as *mending* or similar spells).

Flame Devourer (150 gp). Looking and feeling not unlike a gray sponge, these spheres can be tossed up to 20 feet into any non-magical flame as a bonus action, exploding into an unpleasant smelling goo that instantly snuffs out all fire in a 5-foot radius. After it is expended the item takes the shape of a cube approximately 1 foot across that smells strongly of rubber.

Immaculato Clothing (+150 gp). Through a mysterious series of unknown treatments an Esotere can take any standard non-magical item of clothing and cleans it completely, making it impervious to staining. The treated clothing is never dirtied and remains perfectly clean until it is significantly damaged, ending the effect.

Olympicene Extract (100 gp). This perfect copper dodecahedron can be smashed or thrown against a surface to release a corrosive liquid. Olympicene extract functions the same way as an [acid vial](#) but is much easier to conceal, granting advantage on any Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks made to hide it.

compounds with outsiders. For the right price (and information is an Esoterics' favorite coin), one can purchase beautiful dreams, the purest of colors, and more from one of their kind—one only needs to ignore the strange sounds from their fortress and the cries of slaves entering to never leave again.

Dealing the Esoteric. The Esoterics are no fools and know it is often easier to use their power to trade for what they desire rather than to seize it by force. By trading the odd bit of research or producing bizarre and beautiful items that defy understanding, they are able to keep a steady supply of slaves coming in and bribes going out to remain comfortably positioned as a disliked but tolerable organization. Striking at the Esoterics would mean making an enemy of their many trade partners and well-paid allies, including multiple warlords and at least one dragon.

Blackmailing the Powers. The work of the Esoterics has attracted the ire of many an archfiend and deity. While most mortals remain clueless to the cult's true purposes, the gods cannot be kept blind for long. A daring conclusion was reached by the organization's leaders long ago: they can be hated by even deities so long as it remains more convenient for them to exist than not. With this understanding they've made it known that should any god attack the Tesseract with their armies directly, they shall release the entirety of their archives to the wider world—whatever secrets the Esoterics hide, this threat has kept the angels and devils at bay.

MOTIVATIONS

The Esoterics are primarily motivated by a hatred of divine magic. The material world and most instances of magic (arcane included) are unjustly bound by the will of bickering gods, all the varied manifestations of deific power no more than extensions of that tyrannical will. Though they would never say as much (and many Esoterics have even had their minds wiped of such thoughts), there are two ongoing projects that have endured for centuries that drive most (but not all) of their research.

The first project—called simply Project One and the most promising of the two—is focused on hiding their work from the eyes of the gods indefinitely. The Esoterics want to break divine omniscience (on themselves and their work

exclusively) and, by extension, render useless any form of deific scrying or divinations into future events connected to their cult. They have found moderate success here: for brief periods (and at presently incredibly high cost) they can hide their own thoughts and even entire rooms from the eyes of prying gods while within the Tesseract. They are exceptionally careful with this ability however: they fear it shall anger one or many deities should they be noticed, and more importantly there is concern it simply does not work the way they presently *think* it does. Were the Esoterics to act as though no god was watching when one actually was, they know the results could be catastrophic.

The second project (technically nameless but sometimes called Project Zero) is researched almost entirely in rooms hidden as a result of Project One's gains and has had disappointing results thus far. The Esoterics' ultimate wish is to sever the Material Plane from all planes connected to it positing that if this was accomplished the gods would lose all of their worldly power and presence. It is fortunate that they have made little progress here for if the Esoterics succeeded it would be beyond apocalyptic: with their souls unable to leave the dead would not truly die, nearly all divine magic would be lost, and it is not clear if physics as they are known would continue to function.

MODUS OPERANDI

The Esoterics are incredibly secretive and their members usually only know the very basics of an experiment or the overarching purpose of any given field of esoteric research. The fewer who know of Project One's purpose (let alone the order's



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intention to sever the Material Plane) the more likely they are to succeed. Only a single Esotere is permitted to know the entirety of their organization's projects: the Broad Mind. The few outsiders who manage to learn of this unique creature's existence (and survive) would not be faulted for thinking of such a being as their leader but such thinking is at least partially inaccurate.

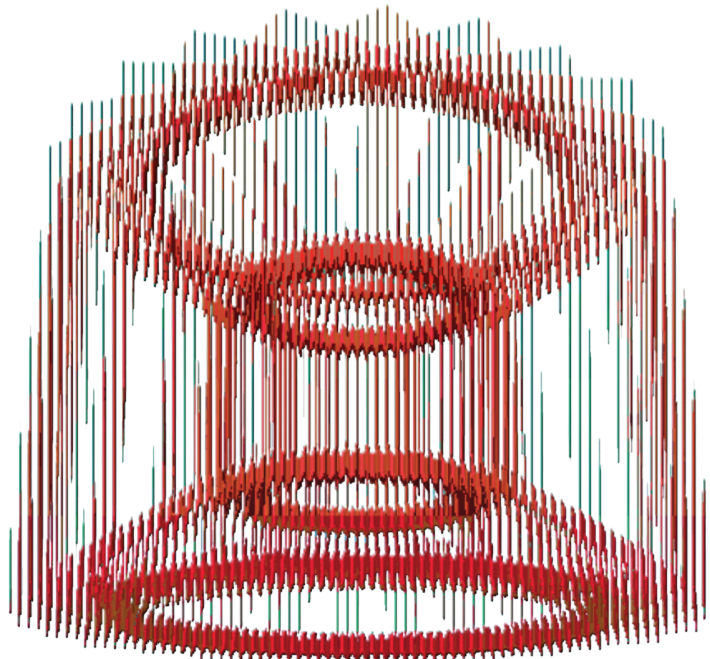
The Broad Mind is an Esotere who has converted into an archive for all of its peers' collected learning—as a group the mutated sages decide what avenues of experimentation and research to pursue, at which point the Broad Mind grants them access to “dangerous” information essential to their assigned projects. When a project is complete the Broad Mind absorbs its details before an Esotere has all potentially troublesome information about the project (both old and new) wiped from their own memory. The Broad Mind is barely sapient, speaking eloquently but without emotion, and is totally incapable of lying (although that doesn't stop it from withholding information). It does not speak unless spoken to with the sole exception of when it detects an error in an Esotere's work or some other issue that needs attention—its will is that of the Esoteris.

With the exception of the Broad Mind, these savants tend to work in one of three roles: Brokers, Researchers, and Dark Minds. Brokers buy and sell goods and information as deemed appropriate by the Esoteris. Researchers immerse themselves in

experimentation and study—for this reason they often by necessity are the most aware of the Broad Mind's overarching goals. Dark Minds (typically [Mages](#) and [Assassins](#)) are the unfortunates who have had their minds almost *entirely* wiped of memories unnecessary for a given task, mitigating any chance of them revealing their ties to the organization but relegating them to delivering messages to extremely powerful beings or to assassinate targets.

HEADQUARTERS: THE TESSERACT

On the outside the Tesseract appears to be a large three story circular stone structure with two smaller towers on either side of it. Floating atop the tower is its namesake: a large ever shifting tesseract, a fourth dimensional shape rendered in three dimensional space. In truth, it is an illusion but many outsiders still view it with wonder. On the whole, the building is clearly able to face mighty sieges and was even designed to be resistant to earthquakes. Inside the Tesseract is a maze, an unfriendly place filled by whimpering and mad laughter emanating from behind its numerous closed doors—many of them an entrance to a pocket dimension of one sort or another. Aside from food storage most of the chambers are either rooms for study or traps meant to kill intruders.



Esotere

Medium monstrosity, lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (17d8+51)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	8 (–1)

Saving Throws Intelligence +8, Wisdom +6

Skills Arcana +12, Insight +6, Nature +12,
Perception +8, Persuasion +7, Religion +8

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common,
Deep Speech, Infernal, Giant

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Compartmentalized Mind. The Esotere is immune to all forms of telepathy and mind reading except from a Broad Mind. In addition, it has advantage on saving throws made to resist being charmed.

Enemy of Heaven & Hell. When a creature targets the Esotere with a divine trait, class feature, or spell, the creature makes an ability check using its spellcasting ability (if it has no spellcasting ability, use the creature's highest ability score). The DC equals 12 or, if the Esotere uses its reaction to focus, 17. On a success, the creature's divine trait, class feature, or spell functions normally. On a failure, it fails and has no effect.

Esotere Cunning. The Esotere's magic is beyond the confines of typical arcana. When a creature attempts to *counterspell* or use *dispel magic* against one of its spells, they have disadvantage and treat the Esotere's spell as if it were one level higher than normal.

Magic Resistance. The Esotere has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The Esotere is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18; +8 to hit with spell attacks). The Esotere has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mending, message*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm, detect magic, identify, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *alter self, detect thoughts, invisibility, see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, dispel magic, fireball, nondetection*



4th level (3 slots): *dimension door, fabricate, private sanctum*

5th level (2 slots): *arcane hand, modify memory, scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate, forbiddance*

ACTIONS

Calculated Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage. On a successful hit, the target makes a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or is paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Doom Equation. Through a mix of alien knowledge and an ultimate mastery of mathematics, the Esotere unleashes a dangerous and unstable power. A 30-foot radius maelstrom of energized equations roils from the Esotere. The maelstrom spreads around corners. Each creature in that area (including the Esotere) must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or take 35 (10d6) necrotic damage and be stunned for 1 round.

Broad Mind

Medium monstrosity, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (forcefield)

Hit Points 126 (23d8+23)

Speed 20 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)	25 (+7)	20 (+5)	6 (–2)

Saving Throws Intelligence +12, Wisdom +10, Charisma +3

Skills Arcana +17, Insight +10, Medicine +10, Nature +17, Perception +10, Religion +12

Damage Vulnerabilities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses passive Perception 20

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Deep Speech, Infernal, Giant; telepathy 80 ft.

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Enemy of Heaven & Hell. When a creature targets the Broad Mind with a divine trait, feature, or spell, the creature makes an ability check using its spellcasting ability (if it has no spellcasting ability, use the creature's highest ability score). The DC equals 15 or, if the Broad Mind uses its reaction to focus, 20. On a success, the creature's divine trait, class feature, or spell functions normally. On a failure, it fails and has no effect.

Esotere Cunning. The Broad Mind's magic is beyond the confines of typical arcana. When a creature attempts to *counterspell* or use *dispel magic* against one of its spells, they have disadvantage and treat the Broad Mind's spell as if it were one level higher than normal.

Forcefield. The Broad Mind's armor class is reduced to 9 when it is petrified or unconscious.

Forget. A Broad Mind can use a bonus action to instantly forget any piece of information it desires, permanently wiping part of its memories. The Broad Mind can also use this trait on any willing creature within 80 feet.

Magic Resistance. The Broad Mind has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Oceanic Memory. Any creature that targets the Broad Mind with *detect thoughts* or any similar spell or effect makes a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is stunned for 1 round.

Rapid Learning. The Broad Mind can become proficient in any tool or language after approximately 2 hours of study. In addition, the Broad Mind can perfectly remember anything it has experienced.

Sharing Aura. Friendly creatures within 80 feet of the Broad Mind gain proficiency with one language or tool of its choice. This does not need to be the same proficiency and may differ for each creature.

Spellcasting. The Broad Mind is a 15th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). The Broad Mind has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm*, *detect magic*, *identify*, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *alter self*, *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *nondetection*

4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*, *fabricate*, *private sanctum*

5th level (2 slots): *arcane hand*, *modify memory*, *scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *eyebite*, *forbiddance*

7th level (1 slot): *prismatic spray*

8th level (1 slot): *maze*

ACTIONS

Overload. The Broad Mind targets up to three creatures it can see within 120 feet of it. The creature must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or take 44 (8d10) psychic damage. If the target fails by 10 or more, it takes double damage and is frightened of the Broad Mind for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.