

Anthroposophie in Deutschland. Theosophische Milieus und gesellschaftliche Praxis, 1884 bis 1945 (teilweise Habilitationsschrift Berlin 2002), 2 Bde., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (¹2007) ³2008, 1916 S. (Rezensionen zu diesem Buch s. unter „Anthroposophie“)

History of Anthroposophy (Contents, Abstract)

This first critical analysis of the history of Anthroposophy: It contains the history of institutions and ideas as well as the social history, focusing on the theosophical roots of anthroposophy, its adaption through Rudolf Steiner and on the practical effects. The central thesis of the paper claims that anthroposophy is the product of a transformed theosophy (in the tradition of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant). Rudolf Steiner did not create it through imitation or innovation, but rather through a creative process of adaptation. The contemporary sources of his “supernatural”, “higher” insights can be shown. The most important subject areas of the book are:

- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Christian Community
- Christology
- Eurhythmy
- Freemasonry
- Goethe
- Historical criticism / historicism
- Medicine in anthroposophy
- Mystery drama
- Philosophy of Steiner before 1900
- Politics (in World War One, “social threefolding”)
- Science, Steiner’s concept
- Social structure of Theosophy / Anthroposophy in Germany
- Theosophy (historical contexts, theosophical societies in the German-speaking world before 1945)
- Waldorf-Pedagogy
- Romantic natural philosophy of Steiner
- Haeckel and Steiner

Beyond the reconstruction of historical objects, the use of historiographical methods enables a better understanding of certain developments in anthroposophy:

- Oral and written tradition: The genesis of Steiner’s writings and the constitution of a community of followers was a process of secondary “oralisation” linked with a later “scripturalisation” (p 753-758),
- Charisma and its normalisation (“Veralltäglichung”): The theosophical (and anthroposophical) creation of an association was the result of charismatic leadership (p 408-418).

- Historicism: The theosophical (and anthroposophical) claim of “supernatural” knowledge was an opposing claim to historicism. With its source criticism, historicism led to the questioning of the foundations of the (European) culture. Historical criticism was thus the starting point for the rise of relativism, as knowledge of other cultures called into question the European claim of sovereignty (p 772-780).
- Movement: Theosophy is one of the first associations that combined the concept of an association with the concept of a movement (with the Worker’s Movement as precursor) and made graded membership possible (p 425-432).