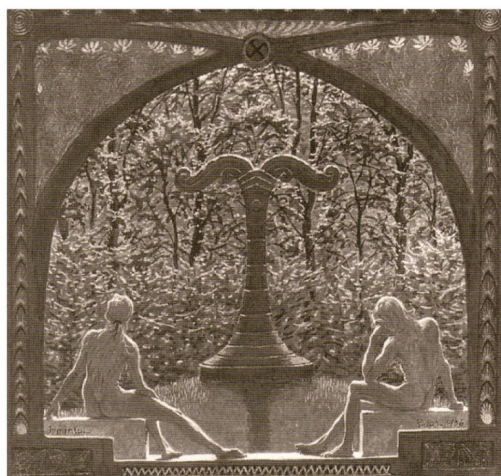


# Between Occultism and Nazism

Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race  
in the Fascist Era

**Peter Staudenmaier**



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## Between Occultism and Nazism

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*By*

Peter Staudenmaier



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# Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction: Spiritual Science and the Modern Occult Revival	1
1 Germany's Savior: Rudolf Steiner on Race and Redemption	25
2 The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Anthroposophy in Theory and Practice Before 1933	64
3 Accommodation, Collaboration, Persecution: Anthroposophy in the Shadow of National Socialism, 1933–1945	101
4 The German Essence Shall Heal the World: Ideological Affinities between Anthroposophy and Nazism	146
5 Education for the National Community? Waldorf Schools in the Third Reich	179
6 The Nazi Campaign against Occultism	214
7 The Spirit of the Race and the Soul of the Nation: Anthroposophy and the Rise of Fascism in Italy	248
8 Spiritual Racism in Power: Italian Anthroposophists and the Fascist Racial Laws, 1938–1945	284
Conclusion: Occultism and Nazism in Historical Perspective	319
Sources and Bibliography	328
Index	407

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## Spiritual Science and the Modern Occult Revival

This is a study of an unusual movement in an unusual time. It follows the changing fortunes of an idiosyncratic but influential group of spiritual seekers through the wayward terrain of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The movement known as anthroposophy was founded by Rudolf Steiner, a devotee of the occult, in the early years of the twentieth century. Today anthroposophy is esteemed for its efforts on behalf of alternative education, holistic health care, organic farming and natural foods, environmental consciousness, and innovative forms of spiritual expression. At the root of anthroposophy lies an elaborate esoteric philosophy based on Steiner's teachings. His plentiful books and lectures, which can seem inscrutable to outside observers, form the core of the anthroposophist worldview to this day. Steiner grew up in Austria and died in Switzerland, imparting an international character to his movement while grounding it firmly in German cultural values. In contemporary Europe anthroposophy is recognized as "the most successful form of 'alternative' religion" to arise in the last century.<sup>1</sup>

In much of the English-speaking world, however, the term *anthroposophy* and the name Rudolf Steiner remain unfamiliar. Even those acquainted with anthroposophy's public face—through experience with Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming, Camphill communities, Weleda or Demeter products—are sometimes surprised to learn of the esoteric doctrines on which these institutions are built. If the external trappings of anthroposophy are not always identifiable, its occult underpinnings are still less well known. Latter-day anthroposophists are often apprehensive about 'occult' vocabulary, though Steiner and the founding generation of the movement used it freely. For Steiner's present followers the practical application of anthroposophical principles is more important than their historical pedigree, and anthroposophists have earned respect for their contributions to pedagogical reform, their commitment to ecological sustainability, and their work with developmentally disabled children, among other fields. Anthroposophy's creative impact ranges from literature and architecture to art and agriculture, from the New Age

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<sup>1</sup> Stefanie von Schnurbein and Justus Ulbricht, eds., *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne: Entwürfe "arteigener" Glaubenssysteme seit der Jahrhundertwende* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), 38.

milieu to the rise of Green parties. Outstanding cultural figures such as Wassily Kandinsky, Saul Bellow and Joseph Beuys have found inspiration in Steiner's richly intricate work.

Understanding anthroposophy means taking conflicting internal and external standpoints into account. Steiner promoted anthroposophy as a "spiritual science," a comprehensive esoteric alternative to mainstream science. This ambitious program was based on the belief that materialism had degraded scientific thought and modern culture, and that a thoroughgoing spiritual renewal was necessary in order to revive humanity's relationship with the natural and supernatural worlds.<sup>2</sup> In the words of an adherent: "Anthroposophy is an occult science arising out of a deep Initiation-Knowledge that has been attained during many centuries, and which is pre-eminently given in the form that is right and suitable for our modern age."<sup>3</sup> Scholars view anthroposophy not as a science but as a variant of Western esotericism, a modern appropriation and amalgamation of various European esoteric currents assembled into an "invented tradition." From this perspective, Steiner was one of the foremost innovators in twentieth century German occultism and "arguably the most historically and philosophically sophisticated spokesperson of the Esoteric Tradition."<sup>4</sup> Anthroposophy emerged as an attempt to establish occult insights

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<sup>2</sup> See Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Science: A brief review of its aims and of the attacks of its opponents* (London: Watkins, 1914). Sympathetic treatments are available in Robert Galbreath, "Traditional and Modern Elements in the Occultism of Rudolf Steiner" *Journal of Popular Culture* 3 (1969), 451–67, and Robert Sumser, "Rational Occultism in *Fin de Siècle* Germany: Rudolf Steiner's Modernism" *History of European Ideas* 18 (1994), 497–511.

<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Merry, "The Anthroposophical World-Conception: An Introductory Outline" *Anthroposophy: A Quarterly Review of Spiritual Science* 7 (1932), 289–319, quote on 293. For anthroposophists, Steiner's teachings "may be called occult science, theosophy, spiritual science, esotericism, or anthroposophy; the name is not of much importance." "Introduction" to Rudolf Steiner, *Investigations in Occultism* (London: Putnam, 1920), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 329. For background see Wouter Hanegraaff, "On the Construction of 'Esoteric Traditions'" in Antoine Faivre and Wouter Hanegraaff, eds., *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 11–61; Titus Hjelm, "Tradition as Legitimation in New Religious Movements" in Steven Engler and Gregory Grieve, eds., *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion* (New York: de Gruyter, 2005), 109–25; James Lewis and Olav Hammer, eds., *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Andreas Kilcher, ed., *Constructing Tradition: Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm, "Constructing Esotericisms: Sociological, Historical, and Critical Approaches to the Invention of Tradition" in Asprem and Granholm, eds., *Contemporary Esotericism* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 25–48.

on a rational and empirical foundation. Its scientific aspirations were contested from the beginning but are central to the movement's self-understanding.<sup>5</sup>

Steiner lived from 1861 to 1925, spanning the era of the modern occult revival, the flourishing of esoteric worldviews in a rapidly modernizing Europe. These origins left their mark on the movement he founded. Anthroposophists believe there are "higher worlds" beyond the ordinary world and that access to these spiritual planes can be achieved by following Steiner's indications. Events on earth are guided by spiritual beings from the higher worlds. As Steiner explained, "behind the whole evolutionary and historical process, through the millennia up to our own times, spiritual Beings, spiritual Individualities, stand as guides and leaders behind all human evolution and human happenings."<sup>6</sup> Steiner's works include detailed accounts of spiritual hierarchies, angels and demons, and perilous occult powers attempting to divert aspirants from the proper path. The most important of these spiritual adversaries are Lucifer and Ahriman, associated with materialism and intellectualism. Working against them is the Christ Impulse, the primary force for human redemption and the integration of the physical and the spiritual. A prolific author and lecturer, Steiner spelled out his teachings in hundreds of works.<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of his

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The burgeoning scholarship on Western esotericism has yet to settle on consistent definitions of the "occult" and the "esoteric." Both terms were common in early anthroposophist contexts and were not clearly distinguished.

<sup>5</sup> See "Anthroposophie" in Max Dessoir, *Vom Jenseits der Seele: Die Geheimwissenschaften in kritischer Betrachtung* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1917), 254–63; Max von Laue, "Steiner und die Naturwissenschaft" *Deutsche Revue* 47 (1922), 41–49; T. Konstantin Oesterreich, "Theosophy—Rudolf Steiner" in Oesterreich, *Occultism and Modern Science* (New York: McBride, 1923), 129–53; Heiner Ullrich, "Wissenschaft als rationalisierte Mystik: Eine problemgeschichtliche Untersuchung der erkenntnistheoretischen Grundlagen der Anthroposophie" *Neue Sammlung* 28 (1988), 168–94; Sven Ove Hansson, "Is Anthroposophy Science?" *Conceptus* 25 (1991), 37–49; Helmut Zander, "Esoterische Wissenschaft um 1900" in Dirk Rupnow, Veronika Lipphardt, Jens Thiel and Christina Wessely, eds., *Pseudowissenschaft: Konzeptionen von Nichtwissenschaftlichkeit in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008), 77–99; Sabine Doering-Manteuffel, "Survival of occult practices and ideas in modern common sense" *Public Understanding of Science* 20 (2011), 292–302; Egil Asprem, "The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900–1939" (PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2013), 498–508, 518–32, and 546–54.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Occult History* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1957), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Central books include Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Occult Science* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1914); Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1961); Steiner, *Cosmic Memory: Prehistory of Earth and Man* (New York: SteinerBooks, 1987). In addition, thousands of Steiner's lectures have been transcribed and

followers Steiner was an Initiate, a seer blessed with clairvoyant powers and a herald of timeless occult truths.

For scholars studying esotericism, it is imperative to allow space for heterodox beliefs even when those beliefs have a compromised past. The task is to make historical sense of movements like anthroposophy, not to marginalize or denigrate them as irredeemably tainted by their undisclosed origins. This involves an appreciation of the countervailing possibilities latent within occult movements. Wouter Hanegraaff argues for seeing esotericism as “an open-ended phenomenon that is continually evolving in new directions.”<sup>8</sup> Anthroposophy’s future is not dictated by its past. But its past is much more complicated than adherents acknowledge.

This is particularly true of Steiner’s esoteric conception of race and nation: Anthroposophy embodied contradictory racial and ethnic doctrines with the potential to develop in different directions under different political conditions. Though anthroposophists insisted that their worldview was ‘unpolitical,’ an implicit politics of race ran throughout their public and private statements in the fascist era. These assumptions about the cosmic significance of racial attributes shaped anthroposophist responses to Nazism and Fascism. Some of Steiner’s followers embraced “spiritual racism” while others considered their own views anti-nationalist and anti-racist. The historical ambiguity of these stances is amplified by anthroposophy’s esoteric orientation, one that did not deem to concern itself with the distasteful realm of politics.

The modern occult revival crystallized in the 1870s with the beginning of the Theosophical Society. Founded in the United States by Helena Blavatsky

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published by his followers. Steiner warned that his teachings were not primarily designed for intellectual understanding or investigation: “A man who would receive Anthroposophy with his intellect kills it in the very act.” Rudolf Steiner, *The Life, Nature and Cultivation of Anthroposophy* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1963), 15. The most thorough and historically illuminating biography is Helmut Zander, *Rudolf Steiner: Die Biografie* (Munich: Piper, 2011). Heiner Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner: Leben und Lehre* (Munich: Beck, 2011) offers an insightful account of Steiner’s philosophy. Miriam Gebhardt, *Rudolf Steiner: Ein moderner Prophet* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2011) highlights Steiner’s involvement in ‘life reform’ causes. The best of the anthroposophist biographies is now available in English: Christoph Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: a biography* (Great Barrington: Anthroposophic Press, 2012). For an incomplete autobiographical account see Rudolf Steiner, *The Course of my Life* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1951).

<sup>8</sup> Wouter Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 155. He also notes aptly that “it is unacceptable to interpret all forms of contemporary esotericism as irrational nonsense or threats to democracy by default.” Wouter Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 377.

(1831–1891), a Russian noblewoman of German origin, theosophy advocated a “synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy.”<sup>9</sup> Steiner joined the German branch of the Theosophical Society in 1902 and quickly became its General Secretary, a position he held for ten years. Theosophy has been characterized as “the archetypal manifestation of occultist spirituality” in modern times.<sup>10</sup> Anthroposophy evolved out of the fractious theosophical environment of the turn of the century, developing its esoteric principles in a German setting. In the Weimar period following the First World War, growing public interest in the occult sustained a plethora of groups, publications, and charismatic spokespeople. By the early 1930s occultism was a mass phenomenon in Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Anthroposophy's roots extended beyond the occult milieu. Steiner also drew admirers from the vivid array of *Lebensreform* or ‘life reform’ movements that thrived in Imperial Germany. Life reform comprised an assortment of alternative currents preaching a back to the land ethos, experiments in communal living and non-traditional schooling, whole foods, natural healing, vegetarianism, and related practices.<sup>12</sup> Occult scenarios held considerable appeal for

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<sup>9</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888). Blavatsky and her successor, Annie Besant, were powerfully influential women in an esoteric context which offered substantial opportunities for female participation. A comparable figure in the German context is Marie von Sivers (1867–1948), who became Rudolf Steiner's second wife in 1914. Many other women played important roles in the anthroposophist movement.

<sup>10</sup> Wouter Hanegraaff, “The Study of Western Esotericism: New Approaches to Christian and Secular Culture” in Peter Antes, Armin Geertz, and Randi Warne, eds., *New Approaches to the Study of Religion* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 489–519, quote on 496. For background compare Bruce Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Olav Hammer, “Schism and consolidation: The case of the theosophical movement” in James Lewis and Sarah Lewis, eds., *Sacred Schisms: How Religions Divide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 196–217.

<sup>11</sup> See Karl Marbe, “Die okkultistische Bewegung in der Gegenwart” *Preußische Jahrbücher* 197 (1924), 47–59; Richard Baerwald, *Okkultismus und Spiritismus und ihre weltanschaulichen Folgerungen* (Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1926); Erich Rantsch, “Der Okkultismus als soziologisches Problem” *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Soziologie* 3 (1927), 413–62; A. H. Zeiz, “Die Okkultisten” in Rudolf Olden, ed., *Das Wunderbare oder die Verzauberten: Propheten in deutscher Krise* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1932), 237–71; Hans Liebstoeckl, *Die Geheimwissenschaften im Lichte unserer Zeit* (Leipzig: Amalthea, 1932); Friedrich Mellinger, *Zeichen und Wunder: Ein Führer durch die Welt der Magie* (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius, 1933).

<sup>12</sup> See Janos Frecot, “Die Lebensreformbewegung” in Klaus Vondung, ed., *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum: Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 138–52; Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900–1920*

middle class members of this early counterculture. Despite its German pedigree, Steiner's version of spiritual science was not unique. Similar dynamics emerged in other parts of Europe and fed into the forms of left-right crossover and diffuse discontent with modern social life which helped pave the way for the rise of fascism. A leading scholar of fascism has called for "seeing both the European occult revival that produced Theosophy and Anthroposophy, and the 'life reform movement' which cultivated alternative medicine, neo-paganism, and yoga, not as symptoms of a peculiarly German malaise, but as local manifestations of pan-European forms of social modernism bent on resolving the spiritual crisis of the West created by materialism and rationalism."<sup>13</sup>

Steiner presented his teachings as an inclusive alternative worldview, a systematic approach offering answers to questions in all areas of life, and this bold undertaking won anthroposophy enthusiasts as well as enemies. Anthroposophy's development in the fascist era was part of an uneven contest between esoteric hopes and political possibilities. A case study of the breadth of anthroposophist projects allows us to assess occultism as a historical subject in its own right rather than an easily dismissed oddity, a peripheral and fleeting phase from a bygone era, or a mysterious object of speculation and fantasy. Instead of an indictment of the follies of esoteric wisdom seeking, the history recounted here can serve as a reminder of the irreducible ambiguities of modernity. Twentieth century Europe witnessed incongruous efforts to reconcile these ambiguities, from Fascism in Italy to National Socialism in Germany, and occult movements partook of the same ambivalent atmosphere.

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(Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986); Eva Barlösius, *Naturgemäße Lebensführung: Zur Geschichte der Lebensreform um die Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1997); Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880–1933* (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1998); Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Kai Buchholz, ed., *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900* (Darmstadt: Häusser, 2001); Matthew Jefferies, "Lebensreform: A Middle-Class Antidote to Wilhelminism?" in Geoff Eley and James Retallack, eds., *Wilhelminism and its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890–1930* (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 91–106; Sabine Kruse and Jürgen-Wolfgang Goette, eds., *Von Ascona bis Eden: Alternative Lebensformen* (Lübeck: Erich-Mühsam-Gesellschaft, 2006); Florentine Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben: Die Lebensreformbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave, 2007), 258. On left-right crossover in countercultural circles see Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918* vol. I (Munich: Beck, 1990), 121–22, 152–53, 772–73, 788–89, 828–32.



As a hybrid of esoteric and life reform elements, Steiner's spiritual science proved particularly susceptible to such factors.

Proposing an equivocal assessment in 1926, Hermann Hesse diagnosed "Steiner's anthroposophy and a hundred similar creeds" as "signs of the mental life of our times":

A weakening of received systems, a wild searching for new interpretations of human life, a flourishing of popular sects, prophets, communities, and a blossoming of the most fantastic superstitions [...] this awakening of the soul, this burning resurgence of longings for the divine, this fever heightened by war and distress, is a phenomenon of marvelous power and intensity that cannot be taken seriously enough.<sup>14</sup>

Other contemporary observers subjected anthroposophy to stringent scrutiny and registered powerful criticisms of Steiner's message. Siegfried Kracauer called anthroposophy an "illusory bridge spanning the gap between science and religion" in a celebrated 1922 essay.<sup>15</sup> Franz Kafka took a skeptical view, while Theodor Adorno considered "Rudolf Steiner's wild superstitions" a consequence of cultural regression.<sup>16</sup> In 1932 Walter Benjamin traced the popularity of anthroposophy and its "associated swindles" to "the withering of the humanities" and "the decay of general education."<sup>17</sup> Ernst Bloch offered a caustic and comprehensive reproof of anthroposophy's "cobbled together mythocosmology" as second-rate mysticism, "Gnosis for the slightly touched middle class."<sup>18</sup> Such harsh evaluations reflected the provocative nature of esoteric claims to higher knowledge and the syncretic character of Steiner's doctrines.

In reaction to criticisms like these, anthroposophists denounced a broad spectrum of ostensible enemies of spiritual science, taking aim at what they

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<sup>14</sup> Hermann Hesse, "The Longing of Our Time for a Worldview" in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 365–68.

<sup>15</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 132.

<sup>16</sup> Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher 1910–1923* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1973), 35–39; Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (London: Spearman, 1967), 262.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Light from Obscurantists" in Benjamin, *Selected Writings* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 653–57.

<sup>18</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* vol. 3 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 1187. See also "Die Geheimlehrer" in Bloch, *Geist der Utopie* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1918), 238–43, and Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Zurich: Oprecht & Helbling, 1935), 128–39.



deemed the materialist cast of mainstream science and established religion. Steiner himself, in contrast, was acclaimed as the paragon of “scientific occultism.”<sup>19</sup> Historical arguments posed a special challenge to the movement’s esoteric self-conception. Anthroposophists rejected historiography for relying on “documents” and disregarding “the supersensory spheres.”<sup>20</sup> Steiner derided “the academic approach to historical research” as “absurd” because it ignored “supersensible knowledge.”<sup>21</sup> In Steiner’s view, “ordinary history” was “limited to external evidence” and hence no match for “direct spiritual perception.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed for anthroposophists, “conventional history” constitutes “a positive hindrance to occult research.”<sup>23</sup> An ingrained suspicion of customary forms of science, religion, and history remains a conspicuous part of the movement, with important consequences for anthroposophist views of their own past. Steiner’s followers have erected a mythology around him and obscured a fascinating historical figure. Academic studies of anthroposophy, rare as they are, arouse indignation among anthroposophists.<sup>24</sup>

Scholarship on Western esoteric currents nonetheless provides the indispensable background for making sense of Steiner’s movement. Though often relegated to the disciplinary margins, historians increasingly recognize eso-

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<sup>19</sup> Eugene Levy, *Rudolf Steiners Weltanschauung und ihre Gegner* (Berlin: Cronbach, 1925), 74. According to his followers, attacks on Steiner stemmed from “enemies of occultism” (Ludwig Deinhard, “In Sachen von Dr. Rudolf Steiner” *Psychische Studien* May 1913, 286–89, quote on 288). See also Ernst Boldt, *Rudolf Steiner: Ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit* (Munich: Rösl, 1921); Louis Werbeck, *Eine Gegnerschaft als Kulturverfallserscheinung: Die Gegner Rudolf Steiners und der Anthroposophie durch sie selbst widerlegt* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1924); Karl Heyer, *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1932); Walter Kugler, *Feindbild Steiner* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2001); Rudolf Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Emil Bock, *Das Alte Testament und die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1935), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1976), 36.

<sup>22</sup> Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 37–38.

<sup>23</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and its Relation to the Other Gospels* (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Company, 1944), 23.

<sup>24</sup> Recent examples include Karen Swassjan, *Aufgearbeitete Anthroposophie: Bilanz einer Geisterfahrt* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2007); Jörg Ewertowski, “Die Anthroposophie und der Historismus” in Karl-Martin Dietz, ed., *Esoterik verstehen: Anthroposophische und akademische Esoterikforschung* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2008), 82–123; Rahel Uhlenhoff, “Einleitung” in Uhlenhoff, ed., *Anthroposophie in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2011), 9–51; Holger Niederhausen, *Unwahrheit und Wissenschaft* (Baarle-Nassau: Occident-Verlag, 2013).

tericism as a significant feature of European modernity, one worthy of detailed attention.<sup>25</sup> The particulars of time and place have come to matter more and more in this endeavor, since it is through “concrete historical research” that “esotericism reveals itself as a subject.”<sup>26</sup> In this context, the modern German occult revival occupies a central yet enigmatic position, inspiring serious scholarly examination alongside profound misgivings. The Nazi era, above all, continues to attract unrestrained speculation, with conspiracy theories rushing to fill the void left by academic diffidence. Since the 1940s a proliferation of popular works has imaginatively linked the rise of Nazism to occult machinations, elaborating a baroque mythology of alleged esoteric underpinnings to Hitler’s regime.<sup>27</sup> The specter of ‘Nazi occultism’ remains a frequent theme in popular media. Images like these form an unfortunate but inevitable encumbrance on historical inquiry.

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<sup>25</sup> Compare Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); J. W. Burrow, “The Occult” in Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 219–33; Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (London: Equinox, 2005); Thomas Laqueur, “Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity” *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006), 111–35; Marco Pasi, “The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on some Crucial Aspects” in Wouter Hanegraaff and Joyce Pijenburg, eds., *Hermes in the Academy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 59–74; Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, “Der Esoteriker und die Esoterik: Wie das Esoterische im 18. Jahrhundert zum Begriff wird und seinen Weg in die Moderne findet” *Aries* 10 (2010), 217–31; Helmut Zander, “Esoterikforschung auf dem Weg in die Normalität” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 63 (2011), 88–93.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Bergunder, “What is Esotericism? Cultural Studies Approaches and the Problems of Definition in Religious Studies” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010), 9–36, quote on 32. For studies of other European contexts see Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); David Allen Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment: Occultism and Politics in Modern France* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Julia Mannherz, *Modern Occultism in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> A fine critical appraisal of this literature is available in Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, “The Modern Mythology of Nazi Occultism” in Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany 1890–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 217–25. See also “The Nazi Mysteries” in Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 107–27; “Die Nazi-Okkult-Welle” in Manfred Ach and Clemens Pentrop, *Hitlers “Religion”: Pseudoreligiöse Elemente im nationalsozialistischen Sprachgebrauch* (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 2001), 42–48; Julian Strube, “Die Erfindung des esoterischen Nationalsozialismus im Zeichen der Schwarzen Sonne” *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 20 (2012), 223–68.

A more nuanced portrait of the occult milieu in early twentieth century Germany emerges from recent analyses. Rather than a benighted form of superstitious irrationalism, newer studies tend to view occultism as an alternative form of modernity. The flourishing of esoteric tendencies in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, from this perspective, was an attempt to expand the parameters of the modern beyond the boundaries of conventional forms of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Steiner's spiritual science fits readily within this framework. The scope of his achievements in a remarkable variety of fields stands out within the panorama of contemporary occult movements. Anthroposophy gave rise to enduring alternative institutions; its notable innovations include Waldorf schools, known as Steiner schools in some countries; biodynamic farming, a prominent variant of organic agriculture; anthroposophical medicine, a successful extension of homeopathic and naturopathic principles; a type of expressive dance named eurythmy; and a church called the Christian Community. Disparate as these activities seem, for anthroposophists they are expressions of a unified esoteric whole.<sup>29</sup>

Historical scholarship on anthroposophy has been greatly advanced by the painstaking research of Helmut Zander, whose extraordinarily thorough account of the movement's origins and early development provides an optimal basis for further investigation.<sup>30</sup> Zander's history of German anthroposophy emphasizes the theosophical roots of Steiner's worldview, highlighting a con-

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<sup>28</sup> See above all Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). For contrasting approaches cf. Sabine Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte: Eine Erfolgsgeschichte im Schatten der Aufklärung* (Munich: Siedler, 2008); Hartmut Zinser, *Esoterik: Eine Einführung* (Munich: Fink, 2009); Thomas Steinfeld, ed., *Okkultismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2011); Claudia Barth, *Esoterik—die Suche nach dem Selbst: Sozialpsychologische Studien zu einer Form moderner Religiosität* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012). A broad overview, and a prolegomenon to the present study, can be found in Peter Staudenmaier, "Occultism, Race, and Politics in German-speaking Europe, 1880–1940: A Survey of the Historical Literature" *European History Quarterly* 39 (2009), 47–70.

<sup>29</sup> For detailed accounts in English see Heiner Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner* (London: Continuum, 2008), and Geoffrey Ahern, *Sun at Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and Gnosis in the West* (Cambridge: Clarke, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). For an extended appraisal in English see my review in *Aries* 10 (2010), 107–16. Zander's study provoked outraged responses from anthroposophists; see e.g. Andreas Neider, "Koloss auf tönernen Füßen—Helmut Zanders opus magnum" *Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland* September 2007, 1–2; Jörg Ewertowski, "Helmut Zanders Studie 'Anthroposophie in Deutschland' in ihrem historistischen Kontext" *Anthroposophie* December 2007, 292–304; Lorenzo Ravagli,

troversial aspect of its heritage. Anthroposophy was “the most significant movement” among the “myriad forms of occult mysticism” in the Weimar period, and it drew much of its conceptual apparatus from prior theosophical models.<sup>31</sup> This background had a lasting impact on Steiner’s distinctive teachings about race and nation. For Blavatsky as for Steiner, spiritual science borrowed substantially from the racial science of the day.

Race science was a prominent part of mainstream scientific research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when racial assumptions suffused much of Western thought. In selectively appropriating scientific themes, esoteric tendencies absorbed a variety of ideas about race and imbued them with spiritual significance. Theosophical thinkers incorporated racial categories into an overarching evolutionary paradigm which united the spiritual and physical realms, providing the scaffolding for esoteric doctrines on reincarnation, karma, the development of the soul, the evolution of humankind, and the unfolding of cosmic destiny.<sup>32</sup> Race became a focal point for esoteric efforts to conjoin scientific and spiritual narratives of progress, an emblem of the modern character of occult thought. Theosophical authors, keen to burnish their scientific credentials while opposing materialism, adopted flexible racial and ethnic concepts which accentuated spiritual factors above corporeal ones. Race was an embodiment of spirit, and different races and peoples reflected different degrees of spiritual development. The spirit of the race and the soul of the nation stood behind this evolution, guiding it as part of a divine plan.

From a historical perspective, occult racial doctrines are best viewed neither as precursors to Nazism nor as innocuous expressions of spiritual harmony but as efforts to stake out a specifically esoteric position within the contested terrain of modern race thinking. These efforts did not heed their own political

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*Zanders Erzählungen: Eine kritische Analyse des Werkes “Anthroposophie in Deutschland”* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962), 57.

<sup>32</sup> Compare Gauri Viswanathan, “Conversion, Theosophy, and Race Theory” in Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 177–207; Carla Risseuw, “The Case of Theosophists in India and Ceylon and their Ideas on Race and Hierarchy (1875–1947)” in Antony Copley, ed., *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 180–205; Colin Kidd, “Theosophy” in Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 237–46; Isaac Lubelsky, “Mythological and Real Race Issues in Theosophy” in Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, eds., *Handbook of the Theosophical Current* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 335–55.

ramifications, focusing on supernatural concerns rather than social conditions, and this allowed them to be appropriated by aggressive ideologies which recognized affinities between esoteric precepts and authoritarian practices. Theosophical texts offered an ornate account of the spiritual facets of racial difference. Membership in the Theosophical Society was open to people of all races and nations, and its stated goal was to promote brotherhood and unity within humankind. For theosophists, however, brotherhood contrasted sharply with equality. English esotericist Annie Besant (1847–1933), president of the Theosophical Society from 1907 onward, maintained that the principle of “universal brotherhood” was based on a “hierarchical order.”<sup>33</sup> According to theosophy’s vision of racial progress, “the survival of the fittest races and nations was secured” while “the unfit ones—the failures—were disposed of by being swept off the earth.”<sup>34</sup>

Theosophy’s racial doctrines were complicated by its involvement in India, where the Theosophical Society headquarters moved in 1879, and by its promotion of an esoteric variant of the Aryan myth. Blavatsky and Besant taught that racial evolution proceeded through a series of “root races,” divided into “sub-races,” each more advanced than the last. The “yellow and red, brown and black” peoples represented leftover remnants of previous races, the Lemurians and Atlanteans, who had been superseded by the Aryans. The extinction of “inferior races” was a “Karmic necessity.”<sup>35</sup> A divinely supervised program of “deliberate breeding” produced “the ideal type” of “the Aryan.”<sup>36</sup> This process stood under the aegis of “an Occult Hierarchy, which guides and shapes evolution.”<sup>37</sup> Thus “our own Aryan race” arose by “judicious selection” in which “the best-developed” were protected from “any admixture with lower races.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Annie Besant, *The Changing World* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1910), 77. Cf. Besant, “Some Results of Evolution” *Theosophical Review* January 15, 1898, 418–23; Besant, *Popular Lectures on Theosophy* (Chicago: Rajput Press, 1910), 14–28; Besant, *Theosophy* (London: Dodge, 1913), 75–89.

<sup>34</sup> Alvin Boyd Kuhn, *Theosophy: A Modern Revival of Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Holt, 1930), 230.

<sup>35</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* vol. II, 786, 825.

<sup>36</sup> Besant, *The Changing World*, 116.

<sup>37</sup> Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater, *Man: Whence, How and Whither* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1913), 3.

<sup>38</sup> C. W. Leadbeater, “Races” in Sarah Corbett, ed., *Extracts from the Vâhan* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904), 671–73. See also A. P. Sinnett, *The Beginnings of the Fifth Race* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1897); Annie Besant, *The Pedigree of Man* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904); Fio Hara, “The Secret Doctrine of

Ideas like these found fertile soil in German-speaking Europe at the fin de siècle. Perhaps the best known instance is an esoteric doctrine called ariosophy, originated by Austrian authors Guido List (1848–1919) and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954). Ariosophy preached an aggressively racist synthesis of theosophy and Aryan mythology. It has garnered considerable notice, both scholarly and popular, because of its presumed links to Nazism.<sup>39</sup> While ariosophy did inspire some of the obscure circles frequented by early National Socialists, organizational ties are difficult to discern. Groups like the Thule Society, sometimes considered an occultist sect, are better seen as a gathering point for the German far right in the aftermath of World War One.<sup>40</sup> Similar skepticism applies to the purported influence of occult thought in the upper echelons of the Nazi party. Rather than genuine enthusiasts of the occult, early Nazi leaders instrumentally employed “popular elements of the supernatural in order to appeal to a generation of ideologically uncertain and spiritually hungry German middle classes.”<sup>41</sup> Adolf Hitler, the usual centerpiece in the imagined pantheon of ‘Nazi occultism,’ exemplified this pragmatic attitude. Some observers detect parallels between Hitler’s racial views and ariosophist sources, but others note his diatribes against occult sects and his contempt for aspiring spiritual prophets.<sup>42</sup> Esoteric beliefs nevertheless contributed to the

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Racial Development” *Theosophist* August 1904, 661–69; Louise Appel, “Karma and Heredity” *Theosophist* December 1911, 380–91.

<sup>39</sup> The classic study of ariosophy is Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, which despite its title is circumspect in tracing direct lines of influence from ariosophy to Nazism. See also George Mosse, “The Mystery of Race” in Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Fertig, 1978), 94–112; Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Göttertrost in Wendezeiten: Neugermanisches Heidentum zwischen New Age und Rechtsradikalismus* (Munich: Claudius, 1993), 61–76; Rainer Kipper, *Der Germanenmythos im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 335–50; Gregor Hufenreuter, *Philipp Stauff: Ideologe, Agitator und Organisator im völkischen Netzwerk des Wilhelminischen Kaiserreichs* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> See Reginald Phelps, “‘Before Hitler Came’: Thule Society and Germanen Orden” *Journal of Modern History* 25 (1963), 245–61; Hellmuth Auerbach, “Hitlers politische Lehrjahre und die Münchener Gesellschaft 1919–1923” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977), 1–45; Jay Hatheway, “The Pre-1920 Origins of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 (1994), 443–62; Hermann Gilbhard, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft: Vom okkulten Mummenschanz zum Hakenkreuz* (Munich: Kiessling, 1994); Frank Jacob, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Uni-Edition, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> Eric Kurlander, “Hitler’s Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi ‘Supernatural Imaginary’” *German History* 30 (2012), 528–49, quote on 546.

<sup>42</sup> For divergent assessments see “Ariosophy and Adolf Hitler” in Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 192–204; Jeffrey Goldstein, “On Racism and Anti-Semitism in Occultism and Nazism” *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (1979), 53–72; Jackson Spielvogel and David Redles, “Hitler’s



eclectic ideology of high-level Nazi figures such as Alfred Rosenberg, Rudolf Hess, and Heinrich Himmler.<sup>43</sup> Neo-pagan predilections and a preoccupation with prehistory and mythology fit well with occult lore about Atlantis and Aryans.

If ariosophy was the more notorious offshoot of theosophical race theories, anthroposophy was the more successful, soon becoming chief inheritor of theosophy's legacy within the German occult revival. Unlike ariosophy, with its far-right affiliations, anthroposophy represented the ordinary face of occultism interacting with the modern world, a growing movement asserting itself in Germany's public life. Waldorf schools and biodynamic agriculture found admirers across the political spectrum. Steiner's complex and contradictory stance on racial questions did little to facilitate broad acceptance of anthroposophist institutions and generally stayed in the background, deeply meaningful for esoteric insiders but needless for the movement's external profile. Steiner maintained that his teachings on race derived from his own "inner mystical experience," the fruit of clairvoyant perception which relayed spiritual truths from the higher worlds.<sup>44</sup> He presented his doctrines as an alternative to "ideals of race, nation and blood" and told his followers that "racial prejudice prevents us from seeing into a man's soul."<sup>45</sup> But he simultaneously espoused a theosophical model of racial hierarchy as an integral part of the eventual elimination of racial and ethnic difference.

Divided responses have accompanied these teachings all along. Pointing to the emphatic individualism which forms a core part of anthroposophy, some

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Racial Ideology: Content and Occult Sources" *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 3 (1986), 227–46; Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 205–27, 350–53; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1999), 49–52; Michael Reißmann, *Hitlers Gott: Vorsehungsglaube und Sendungsbewusstsein des deutschen Diktators* (Zurich: Pendo, 2001), 113–72; Bernard Mees, "Hitler and Germanentum" *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004), 255–70.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Josef Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1970), 40–96; James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle: Open Court, 1976), 275–344; Ulrich Hunger, *Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1984), 159–70; George Mosse, "The Occult Origins of National Socialism" in Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution* (New York: Fertig, 1999), 117–35; Horst Junginger, "From Buddha to Adolf Hitler: Walther Wüst and the Aryan Tradition" in Junginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 107–77; Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77–81, 279–86.

<sup>44</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1985), 135.

<sup>45</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993), 186; Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, 74.

scholars hold that “Steiner was no racist.”<sup>46</sup> Others describe both Blavatsky and Steiner as “racists who camouflaged their disdain for darker hues of skin under incense and initiation. Steiner particularly made it his sacred task to spread the gospel of race during his hundreds of lectures throughout Germany.”<sup>47</sup> Public accusations of racism have dogged the anthroposophist movement for decades, in often polemical fashion. Steiner’s followers in turn express frustration at what they view as incomprehension of their founder’s statements from a century ago.<sup>48</sup> The problem is compounded for readers dependent on bowdlerized translations of Steiner’s published works, where racist content has been surreptitiously excised.<sup>49</sup> Anthroposophists continue to defend

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<sup>46</sup> Perry Myers, *The Double-Edged Sword: The Cult of Bildung, Its Downfall and Reconstitution in Fin-de-Siècle Germany* (New York: Lang, 2004), 111. Myers nonetheless concludes that Steiner belonged to the “large portion of the German intelligentsia” which “shirked unknowingly their responsibility to the German nation and eventually provided the symbolic capital for German Fascism.” Perry Myers, “Colonial consciousness: Rudolf Steiner’s Orientalism and German cultural identity” *Journal of European Studies* 36 (2006), 389–417, quote on 412.

<sup>47</sup> Philipp Blom, *The Vertigo Years: Europe, 1900–1914* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 355.

<sup>48</sup> “Racism Charges in Europe” *Anthroposophy Worldwide* May 2000, 3–4, from the official newsletter of the Anthroposophical Society, complains that negative public commentary on anthroposophy’s racial doctrines has led to “a one-sided, unclear, uninformed, and even completely false picture of Steiner’s views and intentions.” (4) For critiques see Jutta Ditfurth, *Feuer in die Herzen* (Hamburg: Carlsen, 1992), 217–28; Rainer Alisch, “Neuere Forschungen zur Anthroposophie im NS” *Das Argument* 200 (1993), 617–21; Gerhard Kern, “Der (esoterische) Rassismus aus der besseren Gesellschaft: Die Hierarchie der ‘Völker’ bei Rudolf Steiner” in Gerhard Kern and Lee Traynor, eds., *Die esoterische Verführung* (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 1995), 129–58; Harald Strohm, *Die Gnosis und der Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997), 57–69; Susanne Lippert, *Steiner und die Waldorfpädagogik: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 2001), 56–73; Claudia Barth, *Über alles in der Welt—Esoterik und Leitkultur* (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2003), 33–37, 86–92; Heiko Seiffert, *Rassistische Elemente in der Anthroposophie (1904 bis 1953)* (Aachen: Shaker, 2012). The most thorough critical analysis is Peter Bierl, *Wurzelrassen, Erzengel und Volksgesister: Die Anthroposophie Rudolf Steiners und die Waldorfpädagogik* (Hamburg: Konkret, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> In the current edition of Rudolf Steiner, *Universe, Earth and Man* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1987), 88–89, all references to “the black race,” “the Malayan Race,” “the Mongolian race” and “the American Indians” as “degenerate races” have been deleted without notice to the reader. English translations of Steiner’s book *Über Gesundheit und Krankheit* omit the paragraph on “Negro novels” examined in the following chapter. Steiner’s 1924 lecture on “The Essence of Jewry” was deleted from the translation of the book it appeared in: Rudolf Steiner, *From Beetroots to Buddhism* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999). Steiner’s 1923 lecture on “Color and the Races of Humankind” was similarly omitted from the translated volume: Rudolf Steiner, *From Limestone to Lucifer* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999).



Steiner's racial teachings, depicting them as humanitarian, tolerant, and enlightened.<sup>50</sup>

Anthroposophy's race doctrines center on a theory of racial evolution directly correlated to spiritual evolution. Adopting theosophical ideas about karma and reincarnation, anthroposophists view the physical body as a transitory form, a sheath for the eternal spiritual essence of each person. Steiner posited a hierarchy of racial stages arranged from lower to higher through which individual souls progress via a series of successive incarnations. Souls that advance spiritually reincarnate in a higher race, while souls that stagnate incarnate in less developed races. Physical characteristics are a reflection of spiritual characteristics, and specific races and peoples can take either an upward evolutionary course or a downward evolutionary course: some races are backward and decadent, while others are progressing into the future. For Steiner, less developed souls incarnate in races that have remained behind on earlier levels, while souls that have progressed further incarnate in an advanced race, in the bodies of racial and ethnic groups that have evolved further. Steiner taught that racial and national missions were vital to the cosmic plan, and each race and people had its particular role to play in the proper unfolding of evolution.

These beliefs lent themselves to adaptation far beyond the bounds of esoteric arcana. In Steiner's day, analogous ideas appealed not only to occultists but to participants in the nebulous *völkisch* scene which overlapped extensively with the life reform movement. The plethora of *völkisch* groups in early twentieth century Germany cultivated a mixture of Romantic nationalism, ethnic revivalism, and opposition to both socialism and capitalism, while promoting racist convictions as part of a hoped-for Germanic renewal.<sup>51</sup> Steiner and his followers partook of a broad stream of German reform movements

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<sup>50</sup> Bernard Nesfield-Cookson, "A Response to the Claim that Anthroposophy is Racist" in Sevak Gulbekian, ed., *The Future is Now: Anthroposophy at the Millennium* (London: Temple Lodge, 1999), 174–88; Stephen Usher, "Race—The Tapestry Of Love," *Journal for Anthroposophy* 74 (2002), 51–68; Hans-Jürgen Bader and Lorenzo Ravagli, *Rassenideale sind der Niedergang der Menschheit: Anthroposophie und der Rassismuskvorwurf* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2002); Uwe Werner, *Rudolf Steiner zu Individuum und Rasse: Sein Engagement gegen Rassismus und Nationalismus* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> See George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); Jost Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich: Volkish Utopias and National Socialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung' 1871–1918* (Munich: Saur, 1996); Uwe Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache, Rasse, Religion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001); Stefan Breuer, *Die*

combining a message of brotherhood and harmony with race mysticism and national messianism. Those features help explain the interest taken in anthroposophical matters by some of the Nazi and Fascist figures examined in the following pages.

If there is one aspect of anthroposophy that is more divisive and more controversial than Steiner's racial teachings, it is the history of his movement under the Third Reich. This chapter of the movement's past has received comparatively little attention, and attempts to address it can engender truculent responses. "It is common," as other scholars have observed, "for anthroposophists to react indignantly when connections between National Socialism and anthroposophy are mentioned."<sup>52</sup> Steiner's followers insist that they were "immune to Hitler."<sup>53</sup> Post-war anthroposophist accounts present the Nazi state as the terrible triumph of materialism, the culmination of the very trends Steiner so forcefully opposed. They portray Nazism as a tool of evil "occult powers" and demonic forces, a product of "black magic." The Nazis were an "Oriental" compulsion imposed on Europe by the "Mongolian-Turanian races" in order to thwart the "true German mission."<sup>54</sup>

Even detailed anthroposophist analyses of the Nazi era maintain that their own movement was simply a victim of National Socialism. According to this reassuring interpretation, "only a small group" of rogue anthroposophists accommodated themselves to Hitler's regime.<sup>55</sup> The vast majority of

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*Völkischen in Deutschland: Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Gert Groening, "The 'Landscape Must Become the Law'—Or Should It?" *Landscape Research* 32 (2007), 605.

<sup>53</sup> Gerhardt and Luise Bähr, "Wir Anthroposophen waren gegen Hitler immun" in Ingke Brodersen, ed., 1933: *Wie die Deutschen Hitler zur Macht verhalfen* (Hamburg: Reinbek, 1983), 102–10.

<sup>54</sup> Karl Heyer, *Wenn die Götter den Tempel verlassen: Wesen und Wollen des Nationalsozialismus und das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes* (Freiburg: Novalis, 1947), 81. Cf. Powell Spring, *A Nation's Gethsemane* (Winter Park: Orange Press, 1945); Trevor Ravenscroft, *The Spear of Destiny* (New York: Putnam, 1973); Gennadij Bondarew, *Anthroposophie auf der Kreuzung der okkult-politischen Bewegungen der Gegenwart* (Basel: Lochmann, 1996); Jesaiah Ben-Aharon, *The Spiritual Event of the Twentieth Century: The Occult Significance of the 12 Years 1933–45 in the Light of Spiritual Science* (London: Temple Lodge, 2001); Johannes Tautz, *Der Eingriff des Widersachers: Fragen zum okkulten Aspekt des Nationalsozialismus* (Basel: Perseus, 2002).

<sup>55</sup> Uwe Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 97. Werner is head archivist at the Goetheanum, the Anthroposophical Society's world headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland. For a critical assessment of Werner's book see the perceptive review by Rainer Hering in *German Studies Review* 23 (2000), 617–18. Further anthroposophist

anthroposophists, we are told, utterly rejected Nazism. There were in fact anthroposophists who opposed Nazi rule and fell victim to its crimes.<sup>56</sup> But the tendentiousness of standard anthroposophist works on the Nazi period yields a one-sided image of a multi-sided reality, and an apologetic tenor makes them ill-suited for scrupulous research. Their interpretative approach remains exculpatory rather than explanatory. Because of the lack of sources from outside the anthroposophist milieu, similarly distorted claims have surfaced in academic contexts as well.<sup>57</sup> The present study aims to fill this gap in historical scholarship.<sup>58</sup>

First-hand narratives of anthroposophical life in Nazi Germany were not always so forgiving. The memoirs of Hans Büchenbacher provide a striking example. Büchenbacher (1887–1977) was a prominent leader in the anthroposophist movement, editor of the official journal *Anthroposophie* and a personal student of Steiner, receiving esoteric instruction directly from the master. He served as chairman of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany from 1931 to 1934. Though raised Catholic, Büchenbacher had partial Jewish ancestry and was considered a “half-Jew” by Nazi standards. He emigrated to Switzerland in 1936. According to his post-war memoirs, “approximately two thirds of German anthroposophists more or less succumbed to National Socialism.” He reported that various influential anthroposophists were “deeply infected by Nazi views”

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surveys include Arfst Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung und Gesellschaft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Rendsburg: Lohengrin, 1992); Bodo von Plato, “Zur anthroposophischen Arbeit in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus” *Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland* Sonderheft 1995, 87–94; Christoph Lindenberg, “Unter totalitärer Herrschaft: Zum Verhalten der Anthroposophen in der Nazizeit” *Die Drei* November 1997, 1051–58.

<sup>56</sup> One example is the composer Viktor Ullmann, a member of the Anthroposophical Society whose family was of Jewish origin. He was killed at Auschwitz in 1944.

<sup>57</sup> Examples include Michael Reißmann, “Nationalsozialismus, völkische Bewegung und Esoterik” *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 4 (2003), 58–91, and Detlef Garbe, “Widerstehen aus religiösen Gemeinschaften” in Peter Steinbach and Johannes Tuchel, eds., *Widerstand gegen die nationalsozialistische Diktatur 1933–1945* (Berlin: Lukas, 2004), 160–62.

<sup>58</sup> A more detailed analysis can be found in my dissertation, “Between Occultism and Fascism: Anthroposophy and the Politics of Race and Nation in Germany and Italy, 1900–1945” (Cornell University, Department of History, 2010), which forms the basis of this book. For a condensed version see Peter Staudenmaier, “Der deutsche Geist am Scheideweg: Anthroposophen in Auseinandersetzung mit völkischer Bewegung und Nationalsozialismus” in Uwe Puschner and Clemens Vollnhals, eds., *Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Beziehungs- und Konfliktgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 473–90.

and “staunchly supported Hitler.” Both Guenther Wachsmuth, Secretary of the Swiss-based General Anthroposophical Society, and Marie Steiner, the widow of Rudolf Steiner, were described as “completely pro-Nazi.” Büchenbacher retrospectively lamented the far-reaching “Nazi sins” of his colleagues.<sup>59</sup>

This book takes no stance on internal anthroposophist disputes and does not try to adjudicate questions of moral responsibility. Its goal is to examine anthroposophy in the fascist era as a microcosm of larger historical dynamics whose relevance extends well beyond the occult milieu. For those whose primary concern is anthroposophy’s past or its present reputation, a historically contextualized account forestalls both guilt-by-association reasoning and ex post facto apologetics. For those interested in the wider historical significance of alternative institutions and esoteric worldviews, the findings may be unsettling, apt to disrupt longstanding assumptions and comforting clichés. The rise of fascism raises challenging questions for any history of twentieth century European esotericism. Modern and anti-modern trajectories were entangled in fascism as in occultism, and nascent fascist movements drew from both left and right while championing a vision of national regeneration. Apocalyptic and millenarian tropes were common. Recent scholarship views fascism as an alternative model of modernity which aimed to supplant what fascists saw as decadent versions of modernity in liberal or traditional forms. This opened appreciable room for intersections between occultism and fascism.<sup>60</sup>

The Nazi and Fascist regimes responded in significantly different ways to esoteric movements and ideas. Neither state pursued a consistent policy

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<sup>59</sup> Hans Büchenbacher, “Erinnerungen 1933–1947,” 34 page typescript, copy in my possession. The text is currently being prepared for publication. Büchenbacher’s memoirs, written in the final decade of his life, are marked by conspiracist assumptions but offer a telling internal perspective on anthroposophical affairs in the Nazi period.

<sup>60</sup> See Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 15–17, 122–24, 130–41, 255–60. For background compare Richard Bessel, ed., *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione* (Rome: Laterza, 2002); Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Sven Reichardt and Armin Nolzen, eds., *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland: Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005); Arnd Bauerkämper, “A New Consensus? Recent Research on Fascism in Europe, 1918–1945” *History Compass* 4 (2006), 536–66; David Roberts, “Fascism, modernism and the quest for an alternative modernity” *Patterns of Prejudice* 43 (2009), 91–102; António Costa Pinto, ed., *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism: Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave, 2011). In conventional usage, ‘fascism’ refers to the broad spectrum of fascist movements, while ‘Fascism’ refers to its original Italian form.

toward occult groups. Nazi officials and Fascist functionaries displayed a wide variety of attitudes to esoteric initiatives, some positive, some negative, many ambivalent. This ambiguous history goes against the grain of popular perceptions. One reason for the persistence of beliefs about 'Nazi occultism' is the temptation to view Nazism and Fascism as otherwise inexplicable eruptions of evil whose origins must somehow be traced to shadowy and malevolent forces. A more promising approach is to view Nazism, Fascism, and occultism alike as movements which converged and diverged in unpredictable ways under shifting circumstances. Each of them at times invoked similar axioms: "Fascism was a movement of high ideals, able to persuade a substantial part of two generations of young people (especially the highly educated) that it could bring about a more harmonious social order."<sup>61</sup> A better understanding of the contours of the fascist era allows a better understanding of the role of esoteric worldviews within it.

Toward that end, this book brings together several strands of scholarship that are not often connected in order to make sense of the convoluted history of anthroposophy in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Chapter One begins with an analysis of Steiner's early years in Habsburg Austria, where his conception of the unique German mission was formed. The mature Steiner looked askance at what he termed "national chauvinism," but his viewpoint was itself embedded in a series of nationalist assumptions about the spiritual mission of Germany.<sup>62</sup> Although anthroposophists today stress the universalist and humanist facets of his work, the chief focus of the opening chapter is on the development of anthroposophy's esoteric racial teachings. Steiner constructed his ideas on race and ethnicity in interaction with his intellectual environment and in response to specific social contexts. These ideas did not emerge full-fledged from Steiner's head as part of a seamless worldview, but were shaped through ongoing engagement with scientific and popular perspectives on race current at the time. Through an extended analysis of his writings and lectures, letting Steiner speak in his own words, the chapter traces the contradictions

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>62</sup> For Steiner's critique of "national chauvinism" see e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *The New Spirituality and the Christ Experience of the Twentieth Century* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1988), 112–15. Steiner held that individuals who maintain a living connection to their own national soul will not fall prey to chauvinism but will instead develop a healthy relationship with their ethnic community and its particular capacities and tasks.

built in to his evolving racial and ethnic doctrines and the spiritual goal of one day overcoming racial difference entirely.<sup>63</sup>

Chapter Two examines the growth of the anthroposophist movement during the Weimar republic, the pivotal period between the end of World War One and the establishment of the Nazi state. This was a time of passionate anthroposophical hopes that the message of spiritual science would prevail. Public attention was at a high point. As a like-minded observer recalled, “in Germany after the war it was almost impossible not to hear the name of Rudolf Steiner.”<sup>64</sup> Three years after Steiner died, a follower declared anthroposophy “the absolute spiritual leader” in the “realm of occultism.”<sup>65</sup> It was also the period when Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming, and anthroposophical medicine began to spread, attracting fervent supporters as well as detractors. The chapter takes a closer look at the multifarious ties connecting occult tendencies to life reform and *völkisch* circles. An avowed ‘unpolitical’ stance, common among esoteric groups, proved to have unanticipated consequences for Steiner’s movement.

At the heart of the book are three chapters detailing the rise and fall of anthroposophist ambitions in the Third Reich. The Nazis came to power in 1933, eight years after Steiner’s death, and the founder of anthroposophy could not foresee the Germany his followers would inherit. Chapter Three considers the contrary options available to proponents of spiritual science in a society subject to Nazi control. Some anthroposophists tried to ingratiate themselves with Nazi authorities only to the extent necessary to continue their own projects, while others embraced Nazism more energetically. Though Nazi measures against anthroposophy are examined as well, the focus is on anthroposophist efforts to arrange a co-existence with the new regime, which in many cases extended to active collaboration.<sup>66</sup> Anthroposophist records from the era form a core part of the evidence.

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<sup>63</sup> Quotations from Steiner throughout this book are taken from authorized translations, when available, or from original editions published during his lifetime, as well as from the *Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe*, the still incomplete official edition of his works. A critical edition of selected works has recently been launched under the editorship of Christian Clement. Though incorporating standard anthroposophical assumptions and thus of limited scholarly usefulness, it is an encouraging sign of increasing attention to the evolution of Steiner’s worldview.

<sup>64</sup> Rom Landau, *God is my Adventure: A Book on Modern Mystics, Masters and Teachers* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1935), 47. See especially chapter 3, “Occult Truth: Rudolf Steiner” (45–83).

<sup>65</sup> Alfred Heidenreich, *Im Angesicht des Schicksals* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1928), 87.

<sup>66</sup> The approach adopted here thus contrasts sharply with accounts which hew more closely to internal anthroposophist perspectives. Viewing events through this wider lens is not meant to

As with any historical account based on documents produced at the time, it can be difficult to determine whether such statements were sincere or merely tactical. In evaluating these sources the aim is not to take what anthroposophists said to Nazi officials at face value, or take Nazi assessments of anthroposophy at face value; the aim is to see what the documents reveal about the different ways anthroposophists and Nazis viewed one another. There is considerable consistency in anthroposophist statements across the time span examined here, whether circumstances seemed auspicious or grim. This suggests a high degree of genuineness. To round out the picture, archival evidence is accompanied by material derived from anthroposophist periodicals, pamphlets, books, and public events, as well as internal anthroposophical correspondence.

Following the detailed exposition in Chapter Three, the fourth chapter addresses the contentious question of ideological affinities between anthroposophy and National Socialism. From 1933 onward, an array of anthroposophists emphasized the commonalities between Steiner's doctrines and Nazi ideals. Hitler's new order initially appeared as an opportunity to advance Germany's spiritual mission; the task of the "German essence," in anthroposophist eyes, was to heal the world. Ideological overlap helps explain the conspicuous level of practical convergence between anthroposophists and National Socialists in several fields, but also led to mutual suspicion and animosity. Chapter Five investigates a singular instance of these antithetical reactions: the fraught relations between the Waldorf movement and Nazi educational expectations, both seeking a pedagogy in service to the national community. Not only were Waldorf leaders divided over the proper course of action, Nazi functionaries disagreed radically on whether and how to incorporate Waldorf principles into their designs.

Tensions between different factions within the Nazi apparatus marked the conflicted history of occult groups from the beginning of the Third Reich. Anthroposophy's success in the 1930s was also, in a sense, its downfall. Nazi officials who were suspicious of esoteric organizations begrudged anthroposophists their cozy relationship with other Nazis sympathetic to biodynamic farming or anthroposophical medicine or Waldorf schools. The tug-of-war between pro-anthroposophical and anti-anthroposophical contingents within the party and state lasted until 1941, when anthroposophist activities collapsed

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downplay Nazi persecution of anthroposophists, but to place it in historical context and make it comprehensible. Regardless of interpretive orientation, anthroposophist sources from the 1930s are especially problematic due to the severe divisions within the movement at the very time the Nazis rose to power.



under an all-out Nazi campaign against occultism. Chapter Six analyzes this campaign, surveying the treatment of Steiner's followers and of other esoteric movements. Anthroposophy's fate in Hitler's Germany was finally decided by the outcome of this struggle between rival Nazi tendencies.

The last two chapters turn from Germany to Italy. Italian Fascism presented anthroposophists with a distinct set of challenges and opportunities. Mussolini came to power a decade earlier than Hitler, shaping his own form of Fascism in Italy until he was temporarily deposed in 1943. The relatively small Italian anthroposophist movement responded in contrary ways to the rise of Fascism. This is the subject of Chapter Seven, which explores the range of political stances anthroposophists adopted in their efforts to forge a spiritual alternative to the ravages of materialism. Several of the most prominent anthroposophists in Italy found themselves collaborating with the Fascist regime, an aspect of the movement's past that remains unacknowledged today.

Steiner's Italian followers took a more aggressive approach, in some cases, to anthroposophy's racial teachings. The final chapter concentrates on the anthroposophist role in promoting "spiritual racism" under Fascist auspices. Anthroposophist participation in Italy's racial campaign led in turn to belligerent endorsements of Nazism. This was the foremost case of direct anthroposophical involvement in the Fascist state, and it depended centrally on a version of racial thought inspired by esoteric tenets. It offers an occasion to gauge the interplay of ideas and institutions, of esoteric theory and political practice. By charting the circuitous path from spiritual science to spiritual racism, the chapter brings to light a previously obscured link between ethereal occult visions and bleak fascist realities.

Historical interest in occultism is maturing at a remarkable pace and generating new scholarly insights from unexpected quarters. As a contribution to that ongoing discussion, this book affords an altered view of anthroposophy's past as well as its present. It poses provocative questions about the unexamined history of spiritual reform in its changing constellations, as well as scrutinizing underappreciated aspects of fascist ideals and their appeal. It augments the study of Western esotericism with a critical appraisal of both the private beliefs and the public activities of a notable esoteric movement: how they put their ideas into action in concrete projects under the conditions prevailing at the time. Restoring historical context provides a transformed picture of Steiner and the accomplishments he inaugurated.

What this history indicates is that esoteric worldviews do not belong to another intellectual universe far from our own. They are as much a part of their era as any other human creation. The standard image casts both Nazism and occultism as profoundly remote, fundamentally aberrant, essentially estranged



from the enlightened world of today. This image is untenable. As eccentric as they may seem, the details of esotericism's history warrant attention. Taking a sustained look at the apparently mysterious history of the occult in the apparently vanquished fascist era can illuminate unknown pieces of the past and spur us to re-examine those we thought were already sufficiently understood.

## Germany's Savior: Rudolf Steiner on Race and Redemption

At the height of his public renown in the early 1920s, Rudolf Steiner's followers referred to him as "Germany's savior," confident that future generations would one day view the founder of anthroposophy with awe.<sup>1</sup> The intense hopes and expectations that anthroposophists invested in Steiner revolved around a vision of spiritual renewal which would redeem Germany and, eventually, the world. Grounded in anthroposophy's distinctive form of esoteric spirituality, a central component of this redemptive vision was conceived in explicitly racial and ethnic terms. What was the Germany that Steiner and his followers hoped to save? What would its salvation entail? Why did race and nation matter to Steiner's esoteric worldview?

Messianic hopes for spiritual and national redemption in early twentieth century Germany were by no means the preserve of occult movements. They were widespread within Wilhelmine and Weimar culture and cut across political and confessional lines. Steiner was one of many seeking "to become prophets who would point the way to a national rebirth."<sup>2</sup> Anthroposophy soon came

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<sup>1</sup> Anthroposophist Albert Steffen quoted in Siegfried Kracauer, "Anthroposophie und Wissenschaft" in Kracauer, *Aufsätze 1915–1926* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), 110, originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1921. Wilhelm Vollrath, "Zur Soziologie moderner Lebenskreise (um Stefan George, Johannes Müller, Graf Keyserling, Rudolf Steiner)" in Max Scheler, ed., *Versuche zu einer Soziologie des Wissens* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1924), 347–64, also noted the hagiographic and messianic attitude prevalent among Steiner's followers.

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), xi. On this cultural context see Ulrich Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten: Erlöser der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Siedler, 1983); Klaus Schreiner, "'Wann kommt der Retter Deutschlands?' Formen und Funktionen von politischem Messianismus in der Weimarer Republik" *Saeculum* 49 (1998), 107–60; Martin Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation und Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 309–15; Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Alter Geist und neuer Mensch: Religiöse Zukunftserwartungen um 1900" in Ute Frevert, ed., *Das neue Jahrhundert: Europäische Zeitdiagnosen und Zukunftsentwürfe um 1900* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 185–228; Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaeneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008).

to be seen as “intellectually fashionable” among educated Germans.<sup>3</sup> Steiner’s vision of salvation was shaped both by theosophical theories of esoteric evolution and by his own Austrian and German intellectual background. These factors are an essential key to understanding Steiner’s development and the emergence of the anthroposophical movement.

Steiner was born in 1861 to a Catholic family on the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian empire. He studied at the Technical College in Vienna, editing several volumes of Goethe’s scientific writings, and moved to Weimar in 1890 to work at the Goethe and Schiller archive. He received a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Rostock in 1891. In 1893 Steiner published what he considered his magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Freedom*.<sup>4</sup> He met Ernst Haeckel in 1894 and by the end of the decade became a vocal defender of Haeckel’s controversial evolutionary doctrine of Monism, one of several attempted syntheses of science and religion from the fin de siècle era.<sup>5</sup> By the time he moved to Berlin in 1897, Steiner’s outlook combined elements of German Idealism, Romanticism, Nietzschean bohemianism and a radical individualism indebted to Fichte and Stirner.<sup>6</sup> Steiner spent years unsuccessfully seeking a university

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<sup>3</sup> David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 302.

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Philosophie der Freiheit* (Berlin: Emil Felber, 1894; the publication actually appeared in November 1893). For extensive context on Steiner’s philosophical formation see Hartmut Traub, *Philosophie und Anthroposophie: Die philosophische Weltanschauung Rudolf Steiners—Grundlegung und Kritik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> See Ernst Haeckel, *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft. Glaubensbekenntnis eines Naturforschers* (Bonn: Strauss, 1893); Niles Holt, “Ernst Haeckel’s Monistic Religion” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971), 265–80; Olaf Breidbach, “Monismus um 1900—Wissenschaftspraxis oder Weltanschauung?” in Erna Aesch, ed., *Welträtsel und Lebenswunder: Ernst Haeckel—Werk, Wirkung und Folgen* (Linz: Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum, 1998), 289–316. For Steiner’s vigorous defense of Haeckel, in terms strikingly at odds with those he was soon to adopt upon turning to theosophy, see Rudolf Steiner, *Haeckel und seine Gegner* (Minden: Bruns, 1900).

<sup>6</sup> On Steiner’s relationship to Nietzsche see Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 214–15; on Stirner’s influence on Steiner see Hans Helms, *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft* (Cologne: DuMont, 1966), 278, 333–39. For Steiner’s own views see e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *Friedrich Nietzsche, ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit* (Weimar: Felber, 1895), and Steiner, “Max Stirner” *Magazin für Litteratur* 1898, reprinted in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur 1884–1902* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1971), 211–19, as well as the numerous references to Nietzsche, Stirner, and Haeckel in Steiner, *Methodische Grundlagen der Anthroposophie 1884–1901* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1961). On Steiner’s early encounters with figures such as Dietrich Eckart and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck see Helms, *Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft*, 483, and Volker Weiß, *Moderne*

post. Failing to establish himself in an academic career, he pursued a series of literary and educational occupations, editing a prominent Berlin cultural journal, the *Magazin für Litteratur*, from 1897 to 1900 and teaching at the social democratic Workers' Educational School from 1899 to 1904. His involvement in Monist circles was particularly intensive around the turn of the century, and his intellectual development reflected the remarkably ambivalent ideological and political character of the Monist movement.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1900 and 1902 Steiner underwent a profound transformation from unaffiliated free-thinker to committed occultist. His conversion to theosophy, consolidated in January 1902 with his entry into the Theosophical Society, is not easy to explain biographically. While Steiner had briefly flirted with theosophical notions around 1890, his published discussions of theosophy during the 1890s were scathingly critical.<sup>8</sup> The philosophical position outlined in his pre-

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*Antimoderne: Arthur Moeller van den Bruck und der Wandel des Konservatismus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), 27, 104–05, 167, 177.

<sup>7</sup> For an incisive analysis see Gangolf Hübinger, "Die monistische Bewegung" in Hübinger, *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900* vol. II (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997), 246–59; cf. Matthias Pilger-Strohl, "Eine deutsche Religion? Die freireligiöse Bewegung—Aspekte ihrer Beziehung zum völkischen Milieu" in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, eds., *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne*, 342–66; Volker Drehsen and Helmut Zander, "Rationale Weltveränderung durch 'naturwissenschaftliche' Weltinterpretation? Der Monistenbund—eine Religion der Fortschrittsgläubigkeit" in Volker Drehsen and Walter Sparn, eds., *Vom Weltbildwandel zur Weltanschauungsanalyse: Krisenwahrnehmung und Krisenbewältigung um 1900* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 217–38; Frank Simon-Ritz, "Kulturelle Modernisierung und Krise des religiösen Bewußtseins: Freireligiöse, Freidenker und Monisten im Kaiserreich" in Olaf Blaschke and Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, eds., *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus—Mentalitäten—Krisen* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1996), 457–73; Paul Ziche, ed., *Monismus um 1900: Wissenschaftskultur und Weltanschauung* (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2000); Andreas Braune, *Fortschritt als Ideologie: Wilhelm Ostwald und der Monismus* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009). On the relations between Monism and occultism see Monika Fick, *Sinnenwelt und Weltseele* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), and Gauri Viswanathan, "Monism and Suffering: A Theosophical Perspective" in Todd Weir, ed., *Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion, and the History of a Worldview* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 91–106.

<sup>8</sup> Steiner's correspondence from 1890–1891 suggests a clear interest in esoteric ideas, albeit a temporary one, specifically connected to the Viennese theosophical circles around Marie Lang and Friedrich Eckstein; see Rudolf Steiner, *Briefe* vol. I (Dornach: Selbstverlag Marie Steiner, 1948). For Steiner's published polemics against theosophical and other occult tendencies see Rudolf Steiner, "Allan Kardec, Der Himmel und die Hölle" (1891) in Steiner, *Methodische Grundlagen der Anthroposophie*, 493–95; Steiner, "Das Dasein als Lust, Leid und Liebe" (1892) in *ibid.*, 510–11, attacking a recent anonymously published book by a leading theosophist, Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden, whom Steiner later came to

1900 works is decidedly this-worldly and makes no reference, even obliquely, to the “higher worlds” that stand at the center of theosophical and anthroposophical thought. Within the space of two years, however, Steiner was a convinced theosophist. In the context of the time, this transformation is not as perplexing as it may seem today; fin-de-siècle theosophy was a notably labile construct which attracted many people seeking an integration of scientific and spiritual insights. Theosophical currents shared affinities with Monism, with Nietzschean individualism, and with bohemian apostles of a new ‘spiritual aristocracy.’<sup>9</sup> Steiner’s early attraction to German Idealism may have facilitated the appropriation of esoteric principles.<sup>10</sup>

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view as a theosophical colleague and mentor; and above all Steiner’s fundamental critique, “Theosophen,” published in his *Magazin für Litteratur* in 1897 and reprinted in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur*, 194–96. In another 1897 text Steiner expressed stark disapproval of “Christian and mystical notions”; see Steiner, *Goethes Weltanschauung* (Weimar: Felber, 1897), 81. See also the published report from 1893 on Steiner’s critical lecture in Weimar on spiritism and related phenomena, in which he roundly rejected supernatural explanations and the notion of “otherworldly beings” and endorsed Haeckel’s Monism: “Hypnotismus mit Berücksichtigung des Spiritismus,” reprinted in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 99 (1988), 11–12. Similar sentiments appeared in Steiner’s 1893 *Philosophy of Freedom* and his 1895 Nietzsche book as well. As late as 1900, Steiner still flatly rejected the notion of a “supernatural order of the world” (Steiner, *Haeckel und seine Gegner*, 30).

<sup>9</sup> A fine overview of this milieu can be found in Ulrich Linse, “Libertäre und theosophische Strömungen” in Sabine Haupt and Stefan Würfel, eds., *Handbuch Fin de Siècle* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008), 218–37. In an unpublished passage from 1902, Steiner described his entry into the theosophical movement as “the culmination of a long inner evolution lasting years”: Steiner quoted in Robin Schmidt, *Rudolf Steiner und die Anfänge der Theosophie* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2010), 177. For important contextual material on Steiner’s theosophical period cf. Norbert Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie: Neue Aspekte zu ihrer Geschichte* (Göttingen: Klatt, 1993), and Katharina Brandt and Olav Hammer, “Rudolf Steiner and Theosophy” in Hammer and Rothstein, eds., *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 113–33. For a recent re-statement of the classic anthroposophist continuity thesis see Christian Clement, *Die Geburt des modernen Mysteriendramas aus dem Geiste Weimars* (Berlin: Logos, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> For an extended examination of these aspects of Steiner’s thought see Traub, *Philosophie und Anthroposophie*. His early debt to figures like Fichte may help explain some of the anomalies in Steiner’s later teachings; for provocative parallels see e.g. Klaus Ries, “Johann Gottlieb Fichte zwischen Universalismus und Nationalismus” in Wolfgang Hardtwig and Philipp Müller, eds., *Die Vergangenheit der Weltgeschichte: Universalhistorisches Denken in Berlin 1800–1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 29–50. Critical assessments of Steiner’s philosophical project include Alfred Trembl, “Träume eines Geistersehers oder Geisteswissenschaft? Die Erkenntnistheorie Rudolf Steiners” *Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspädagogik* 10 (1987), 17–24; Wolfgang Schneider, *Das Menschenbild der Waldorfpädagogik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 35–117, 175–

A number of personal and circumstantial factors also played a role in Steiner's theosophical turn. He was originally invited to speak to a theosophical gathering in Berlin in 1900, and in the course of 1900–1902 he applied unsuccessfully for jobs as a university lecturer and newspaper editor. Steiner's choice of a theosophical career, after some hesitation, brought him economic security and a position of authority within a community of like-minded souls. His about-face regarding theosophy may have involved a desire for social recognition of his prodigious talents, an urge to teach, and gratitude that the theosophists appreciated his abilities and sought his leadership. Steiner's increasingly close personal involvement with theosophist Marie von Sivers, whom he met in 1900 and eventually married, played an additional part.

Soon after joining the Theosophical Society, Steiner became General Secretary of its German section. With the blessing of Annie Besant he created an 'Esoteric School' for his inner circle in 1904. An acrimonious split with Besant and the theosophical leadership emerged in the following years. After a decade as head of the German branch of the Theosophical Society, Steiner broke with mainstream theosophy and founded his own movement, establishing the Anthroposophical Society at the end of 1912. In 1913 Steiner moved the headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society to the village of Dornach in Switzerland. From then until his death in 1925, he continued to develop anthroposophy as a worldview and as a movement, overseeing a steady rise in membership and public profile in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.<sup>11</sup>

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257; Heiner Barz, *Anthroposophie im Spiegel von Wissenschaftstheorie und Lebensweltforschung* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> For brief discussion of Steiner's place within the broader religious landscape of early twentieth century Germany see Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870–1918* (Munich: Beck, 1988), 145–46; a more thorough analysis is available in Bernhard Maier, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Stellung der Anthroposophie* (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 1988). The period after World War One brought a substantial increase in public interest in anthroposophy and a major expansion of the movement's membership. One longtime anthroposophist reminisced that after 1918 the Breslau branch of the Anthroposophical Society "grew from a few dozen to hundreds of members." Moritz Bartsch, "Ein Schlesier berichtet" in Erika Beltle and Kurt Vierl, eds., *Erinnerungen an Rudolf Steiner* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1979), 476. The general mood among Steiner's followers in the wake of the war emerges from the following passage: "At no previous time did Germany so stand in need of a cleansing storm, and the first streaks of lightning of such a storm have already flashed upon us. The brunt of the storm is yet to come. Awaiting it, Steiner and those about him stand prepared. They have accepted the challenge, and they are ready to take up the fight for Germany's civilization—for the German Soul: ready to fight this fight to a finish. This struggle will show on which side stand the Powers of Light and Truth, and on which are to be found those of Darkness and Falsehood." Ernst Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner* (London: Methuen, 1923), vii.

Steiner's apotheosis as "Germany's savior" and his transition to a messianic figure in the eyes of his followers crested in the chaotic aftermath of World War One. With Germany in cultural and political disarray, Steiner's combination of respectable nineteenth-century German philosophical roots and avant-garde spiritual teachings seemed to offer a way out of the crisis. In the view of prominent anthroposophists, Steiner had been "sent by God."<sup>12</sup> The Germany he was meant to save was above all a spiritual Germany, a Germany of lofty cultural achievements, whose "true German essence" had been obscured and obstructed by the corruptions of the modern world. Alongside constant invocations of Goethe, Fichte, and other paragons of German culture, Steiner's anthroposophy pointed consistently to the immense spiritual potential slumbering within the German *Volk*, the people or nation. Anthroposophy held the promise of a thoroughgoing spiritual renewal that would bring salvation not only to a beleaguered Germany, but to the rest of the world as well. What was necessary to reach this goal, according to Steiner, was a return to Germany's authentic spiritual mission.

This German spiritual mission was a central element within anthroposophy's elaborate occult cosmology, imparting special esoteric significance to questions of nation and race. The same themes were prefigured in Steiner's early German nationalist thought before his turn to esotericism: his involvement in the German nationalist movement in Austria in the 1880s revealed a number of tropes which re-appeared in spiritualized form after 1900 and powerfully shaped his later teachings. Foremost among them was an abiding commitment to the notion of a German *Kulturmission*, a cultural and civilizational mission. Steiner was actively involved in German nationalist student organizations during his studies in Vienna, where such notions took on par-

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<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Rittelmeyer quoted in Maria Josepha Krück von Poturzyn, ed., *Wir erlebten Rudolf Steiner: Erinnerungen seiner Schüler* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1957), 35. Steiner's wife Marie portrayed him posthumously as "a man who towered immeasurably above his time" and changed the course of evolution: "This source of light revealed itself to those of us who were seeking the path to the lost mysteries. An Initiate was present who could be the guide. [...] Rudolf Steiner laid his hand on the wheel of human evolution which was rushing along into the abyss and checked it. He alone resisted the forces of descent, pulled back the wheel with a strong hand and guided it again toward the slow ascent." Marie Steiner, "Introduction" to Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1940), 10. Steiner's public stature in the 1920s can be gauged by the obituaries, both critical and appreciative, published across the range of German newspapers of the era, from the *Börsenzeitung* to *Vorwärts* as well as the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and the *Münchener Neuste Nachrichten*. Copies of these 1925 obituaries and other memorials of Steiner can be found in BA NS5/VI/40345.



ticular resonance.<sup>13</sup> These convictions had their origins in the ethnic German communities of Austria-Hungary. Steiner described himself as “German by descent and racial affiliation” and as a “true-born German-Austrian,” emphasizing the crucial importance of this German identity within the multinational environment of the Habsburg empire in his youth.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the 1880s Steiner participated energetically in a small but significant Austrian movement calling itself *deutschnational*, a tendency sometimes rendered in English as ‘pan-German,’ centered on a variant of nationalist thought with roots as much on the left as on the right.<sup>15</sup> These youthful sympathies are attested in Steiner’s early correspondence and are on conspicuous display in the dozens of articles he wrote for the German nationalist press in Austria between 1882 and 1891.<sup>16</sup> His writings from this period do not espouse

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<sup>13</sup> See Rudolf Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1925), 86–87; Christoph Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1997), 61–62; Zander, *Rudolf Steiner*, 65–76.

<sup>14</sup> Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, 162–63. Steiner continued: “In these decades it was of decisive importance for the Austro-German with spiritual aspirations that—living outside the folk community to which Lessing, Goethe, Herder etcetera belonged, and transplanted into a wholly alien environment over the frontier—he imbibed there the spiritual perception of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing and Herder.” (168) These statements date from October 1918. For context on the notion of a ‘German mission’ see Ludwig Dehio, “Gedanken über die deutsche Sendung, 1900–1918” *Historische Zeitschrift* 174 (1952), 479–502.

<sup>15</sup> Looking back on this period in a 1900 article, Steiner identified himself with “the idealistic German nationalist tendency” in contrast to the racial antisemitism of Georg von Schönerer, while conceding that Schönerer’s rise did not induce Steiner and his companions to break with the movement: Rudolf Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte 1887–1901* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1966), 362. For overviews of the *deutschnationale* milieu see the chapter on “Deutschnationalismus” in Albert Fuchs, *Geistige Strömungen in Österreich 1867–1918* (Vienna: Globus, 1949); William McGrath, “Student Radicalism in Vienna” *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (1967), 183–201; Andrew Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools: Georg von Schönerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (New York: Vintage, 1981), 120–33; Günter Schödl, “Alldeutsch-deutschnationale Politik in der Habsburgermonarchie und im Deutschen Reich” in Schödl, *Formen und Grenzen des Nationalen* (Erlangen: IGW, 1990), 49–89; Lothar Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler: Die deutschfreiheitlichen Parteien Altösterreichs 1882–1918* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1993); Michael Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration: Die Ursprünge des Nationalsozialismus in der k.u.k. Monarchie* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Steiner’s German nationalist journalism from the 1880s and 1890s is collected in volumes 29–32 of the *Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe*. Among other outlets, Steiner contributed articles to the *Deutsche Zeitung*, the *Nationale Blätter*, and the *Freie Schlesische Presse*. Steiner first published in the *Deutsche Zeitung* in 1884 and in the *Freie Schlesische Presse* as early as 1882. The *Nationale Blätter* was the organ of the “Deutscher Verein” in Vienna, while the *Freie Schlesische*



a state-centered power politics or call for authoritarian solutions to the inter-ethnic conflicts of the Habsburg realm, but instead preach a cultural supremacy in which non-German communities are urged to embrace purportedly German standards of civilization. The culmination of Steiner's German nationalist journalism came in 1888, when he took over editorship of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* for six months. This weekly Viennese paper, bearing the subtitle "organ for the national interests of the German people," was a major mouthpiece of *deutschnationale* sentiments. In addition to writing a weekly column on politics and current affairs for the newspaper, Steiner contributed substantial programmatic essays with titles such as "The German national cause in Austria."<sup>17</sup>

Steiner's articles for the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* portrayed Germans in Austria as threatened by an "onslaught from all sides," comprising "Czech agitators" and "the evil Russian influence" along with Poles, Magyars, and other non-German ethnic groups. At the same time he celebrated "the cultural mission that is the duty of the German people in Austria."<sup>18</sup> According to Steiner, "modern culture" has been "chiefly produced by the Germans." He condemned accommodation to non-German ethnic groups and cooperation with

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*Presse* was the organ of the "Deutscher Verein" in Troppau in the Sudetenland. By the mid-1880s the *Deutscher Verein* was one of the major political organizations within the German nationalist camp in Austria, alongside parliamentary factions such as the *Deutscher Klub* and the *Deutschnationale Vereinigung*, both of which Steiner wrote about positively. On the political development of the *Deutscher Verein* see William McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 199–202; McGrath notes that during the period of Steiner's association with the group, the *Deutscher Verein* "placed the strongest emphasis on German nationalism" (201). The *Deutsche Zeitung* was originally founded by the German Liberals and came to be considered "the organ of German nationalism in Austria": Kurt Paupié, *Handbuch der österreichischen Pressegeschichte 1848–1959* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1960), 158. It was among the most prominent voices of German nationalist politics in the Habsburg empire in the 1880s.

<sup>17</sup> Rudolf Steiner, "Die deutschnationale Sache in Österreich," originally in *Deutsche Wochenschrift: Organ für die nationalen Interessen des deutschen Volkes*, Vienna, 1888, vol. VI, nos. 22 and 25; reprinted in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 111–20. On the role of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* in promoting a radicalized German nationalism in Austria see McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 201–06.

<sup>18</sup> Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 112, 85, 69. Emphasizing German cultural superiority, Steiner wrote: "the non-German peoples of Austria must absorb into themselves that which German spirit and German work have created, if they are to reach the level of education which is a necessary prerequisite of the modern era [...] if the peoples of Austria want to compete with the Germans, they will above all have to make up for the developmental process which the Germans have gone through; they will have to learn the German culture in the German language" (112).

insufficiently nationalist ethnic German parties, calling them “un-German,” and blamed the Austro-German Liberals for timidity in the face of “the Slavic enemy.”<sup>19</sup> In the young Steiner’s view, non-German peoples were marked by an “empty national ego” and “spiritual barrenness” which threatened to “annihilate the achievements of our European culture.”<sup>20</sup> In order to ward off this threat, Steiner demanded that the Habsburg empire’s political agenda be set by “the exclusively national elements of the German people in Austria.”<sup>21</sup>

In emphasizing a sharp contrast between German national capacities and those of other ethnic groups, Steiner’s early essays developed a cardinal distinction which strongly shaped his later works on the spiritual significance of race and nation: Germanness represented a universal cultural ideal, while non-German national aspirations were merely forms of chauvinism. While

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<sup>19</sup> Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 117 and 119. He called for every German to “depend completely on his Germanness, and solely on his Germanness.” (113) Steiner repeatedly denounced the German Liberals for betraying their people: “If we must be ruled in an un-German fashion, at least our tribal brothers ought not to take care of this business. Our hands should remain clean.” (143) Contrary to Steiner’s claims, Austro-German liberalism had become thoroughly nationalist by the late 1880s; see Pieter Judson, “‘Whether Race or Conviction Should Be the Standard’: National Identity and Liberal Politics in Nineteenth-Century Austria” *Austrian History Yearbook* 22 (1991), 76–95.

<sup>20</sup> Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 117. Thus Steiner declared: “The Slavs will have to live a very long time before they understand the tasks which are the duty of the German people, and it is an outrageous offense against civilization to throw down the gauntlet at every opportunity to a people [the Germans] from whom one receives the spiritual light, a light without which European culture and education must remain a closed book.” (142) Comparable passages can be found in Steiner’s later works as well; see e.g. his 1920 complaint that the “German character” of Vienna was ruined by a “Slavic invasion” which turned it into an “international” and “cosmopolitan” city: Rudolf Steiner, *Soziale Ideen—Soziale Wirklichkeit—Soziale Praxis* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1999), 240–41. His students followed suit; two years later anthroposophist Hans Erhard Lauer complained that “Vienna is being overrun by Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, and Italians.” Lauer, “Lebensempfindungen in Wien und Österreich” *Anthroposophie* July 27, 1922, 2–3.

<sup>21</sup> Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 143. Such arguments did not disappear with the end of Steiner’s Vienna period. In Berlin in 1897 Steiner repeated the same refrain: “The Slavs and the Magyars are a danger to the mission of the Germans; they are forcing German culture to retreat.” (ibid., 214) The same 1897 article rails against the “non-German elements” in Austria and regrets the Austro-Germans’ ostensible loss of their “privileged position within the monarchy” while looking forward to the day when “the Germans of Austria regain the position of power which corresponds to their cultural level.” (215–16) In an 1898 essay Steiner described for his Berlin readership “the essence of the German national soul from the viewpoint of the German national-minded Austrian.” (Rudolf Steiner, “Über deutschnationale Kampfdichter in Österreich,” originally in *Magazin für Litteratur* 1898, vol. 67, no. 34, reprinted in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur*, 448–49)

extolling “the world-historical mission of the Germans,” Steiner underscored “the deep contrast” between “the national idea of the Germans and that of the non-German nationalities”: “The Germans are fighting for a cultural obligation which has been granted them by virtue of their national development, and their opponent in this struggle is national chauvinism.”<sup>22</sup> This position, grounded in a late nineteenth-century Austrian context, reflects the distinctive Habsburg ethnic-political crucible in which Steiner’s national views were formed. Within this multinational landscape, with various ethnic groups vying for influence, the Austro-Germans enjoyed overwhelming hegemony during Steiner’s era. Despite widespread perceptions among ethnic Germans of an imminent peril from non-German peoples, Germans constituted the administrative, economic, and cultural elite throughout the Austrian half of the far-flung multiethnic empire.<sup>23</sup> Their predominance under the monarchy gave Germans a notably privileged position within the Habsburg system, and by the late 1880s virtually all German political parties and social organizations, with the partial exception of the clerical parties that Steiner despised, had gone through a process of intense nationalist radicalization such that figures who a decade earlier had counted as strident nationalists were now seen as ineffectual moderates.<sup>24</sup>

This shifting situation in Austria-Hungary, which unsettled inherited notions of German superiority while giving rise to rival national movements among non-German communities, provided the impetus for Steiner’s early

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<sup>22</sup> Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 116. This background helps account for the virulence of Steiner’s later denunciations of the doctrine of national self-determination; in the context of Habsburg-dominated Eastern Europe, national self-determination spelled the end of German hegemony.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Emil Franzel, *Der Donaauraum im Zeitalter des Nationalitätenprinzips (1789–1918)* (Bern: Francke, 1958); Robert Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); William Jenks, *Austria under the Iron Ring, 1879–1893* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965); Andrew Whiteside, “The Germans as an Integrative Force in Imperial Austria: The Dilemma of Dominance” *Austrian History Yearbook* 3 (1967), 157–200; John Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire 1867–1918* (London: Longman, 1997); Jörg Kirchhoff, *Die Deutschen in der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* (Berlin: Logos, 2001); Arnold Suppan, “‘Germans’ in the Habsburg Empire” in Charles Ingrao and Franz Szabo, eds., *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), 147–90.

<sup>24</sup> For a penetrating study of the dynamics of increasing nationalist radicalization among Austro-Germans see the chapter “From Liberalism to Nationalism: Inventing a German Community, 1880–85” in Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 193–222.

nationalism. For many Austro-Germans, an originally universalist vision of Germanness—seemingly embattled and undoubtedly embittered by non-German resistance to their assumed right to cultural pre-eminence—gave way to increasingly intolerant variants of nationalist defensiveness. Out of this historical setting emerged Steiner's understanding of national dynamics and his commitment to a German cultural mission, conjoining elements of cosmopolitanism with avowals of ethnic superiority. Much of the momentum behind the middle-class variety of nationalism which Steiner adopted came from a deep sense of cultural ascendancy and entitlement: Germans in Austria often perceived themselves as the bearers of civilization to their supposedly backward neighbors.<sup>25</sup>

With its Habsburg roots, Steiner's conception of Germanness represents an instance of what Michael Steinberg terms "nationalist cosmopolitanism," an outlook based on "the principle that enlightenment and even more specifically cosmopolitanism are German virtues."<sup>26</sup> Nationalist cosmopolitanism "assumed the cultural superiority of the Austro-Germans" and was intimately bound up with the conception of a "German mission" in Austria, in Europe, and in the world at large. "German culture," in this view, "is superior to other European cultures precisely because it is the only national culture to be possessed of a true spirit of cosmopolitanism."<sup>27</sup> Steinberg's diagnosis coincides with Pieter Judson's examination of the "universalist rhetoric of German nationalism" which came to the fore among Germans in Austria in the 1880s.

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<sup>25</sup> On the notion of a civilizing mission as an abiding aspect of Austro-German identity see Heinrich Lutz and Helmut Rumpler, eds., *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Probleme der politisch-staatlichen und soziokulturellen Differenzierung im deutschen Mitteleuropa* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982); for comparative context cf. Pieter Judson, "When is a Diaspora not a Diaspora? Rethinking Nation-centered Narratives about Germans in Habsburg East Central Europe" in Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagan, eds., *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2005), 219–47; Eric Kurlander, "Völkisch-Nationalism and Universalism on the Margins of the Reich: A Comparison of Majority and Minority Liberalism in Germany, 1898–1933" in Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman, eds., *German History from the Margins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 84–103; Matthew Fitzpatrick, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany: Expansionism and Nationalism, 1848–1884* (New York: Berghahn, 2008); Julia Schmid, *Kampf um das Deutschtum: Radikaler Nationalismus in Österreich und dem Deutschen Reich 1890–1914* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Michael P. Steinberg, *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theater and Ideology, 1890–1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 86.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 108, 113. For an astute analysis of the roots of such ideas by a contemporary of Steiner see John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York: Holt, 1915), 81–82, 87–89, 99–107.

Judson observes that German nationalists in Austria demanded “a strict assimilation to cosmopolitan German values” by other ethnic communities within the empire.<sup>28</sup>

Such analyses can help account for the contradictory aspects of anthroposophical thinking on ethnic and national questions, contradictions which were already manifest in Steiner’s early works. Steiner’s espousal of a unique cultural mission for the German people, a central thread running throughout his mature anthroposophical teachings, was a prominent presence in his public career from its beginnings. This is the intellectual backdrop against which his later anthroposophical followers cast him as Germany’s would-be savior. In moving from his pre-esoteric phase to his full-blown anthroposophist program, however, Steiner’s conception of the German destiny underwent a crucial transformation, infused with new spiritual meaning and re-articulated within a comprehensive racial theory of the evolution of humankind.

Just as Steiner’s turn-of-the-century conversion to theosophy resists facile explanation, so too does his simultaneous adoption of the esoteric race doctrines elaborated by his theosophical forebears. One of the chief connecting threads between Steiner’s pre-theosophical intellectual orientation and his mature race theories was the polyvalent theme of evolution, which Steiner came to understand in physical, spiritual, and cosmic terms. The influence of Haeckel’s Monism played a significant role in this process.<sup>29</sup> Incorporating

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<sup>28</sup> Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, 269–70. For additional context on the nuances of national identity in German-speaking Europe see Pieter Judson, “Changing Meanings of ‘German’ in Habsburg Central Europe” in Ingrao and Szabo, eds., *The Germans and the East*, 109–28; Reinhart Koselleck, “Volk, Nation, Nationalismus” in Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 141–431; Hermann Glaser, *Bildungsbürgertum und Nationalismus: Politik und Kultur im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Munich: DTV, 1993); Christian Jansen, “‘Deutsches Wesen’—‘Deutsche Seele’—‘Deutscher Geist’: Nationale Identifikationsmuster im Gelehrtenmilieu” in Reinhard Blomert, Helmut Kuzmics, and Annette Treibel, eds., *Transformationen des Wir-Gefühls: Studien zum nationalen Habitus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 199–278; Jost Hermand and James Steakley, eds., *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging* (New York: Lang, 1996); Rüdiger vom Bruch, “Culture as an expression of nationalist values in Germany” in Hartmut Lehmann and Hermann Wellenreuther, eds., *German and American Nationalism: A Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 165–83; Eric Kurlander, *The Price of Exclusion: Ethnicity, National Identity, and the Decline of German Liberalism, 1898–1933* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); Pieter Judson, “Nationalism in the Era of the Nation State, 1870–1945” in Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 499–526; Jost Hermand, *Verlorene Illusionen: Eine Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> The conjunction of evolutionary and esoteric themes can be seen in Steiner’s pamphlets *Haeckel, die Welträtsel und die Theosophie* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1909)

social Darwinist, Lamarckian, and Goethean elements, Haeckel's theory offered an evolutionary interpretation for a vast array of social and cultural phenomena. The particular variety of evolutionary thought that Steiner embraced was part of a broad stream of non-Darwinian evolutionary ideas common at the turn of the century. Indebted to his early studies of Goethe's naturalist writings as well as to Romantic nature philosophy, Steiner's conception of evolution was firmly progressivist and teleological, positing a succession of ever-higher developmental stages advancing toward an eventual goal of evolutionary perfection.<sup>30</sup>

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and *The Occult Significance of Blood* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1912). For a variety of viewpoints in the thorny historiographical debate surrounding Haeckel and the Monist movement see Heiner Fangerau, "Monism, Racial Hygiene, and National Socialism" in Weir, ed., *Monism*, 223–47; Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League* (New York: Elsevier, 1971); Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860–1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Jürgen Sandmann, *Der Bruch mit der humanitären Tradition: die Biologisierung der Ethik bei Ernst Haeckel und anderen Darwinisten seiner Zeit* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer, 1990); Richard Weikart, "The Origins of Social Darwinism in Germany, 1859–1895" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993), 469–88; Richard Evans, "In Search of German Social Darwinism" in Evans, *Rereading German History: From Unification to Reunification 1800–1996* (London: Routledge, 1997), 119–44; Paul Weindling, "Dissecting German Social Darwinism: Historicizing the Biology of the Organic State" *Science in Context* 11 (1998), 619–37; Daniel Gasman, *Haeckel's Monism and the Birth of Fascist Ideology* (New York: Lang, 1998); Uwe Hoßfeld, "Haeckelrezeption im Spannungsfeld von Monismus, Sozialdarwinismus und Nationalsozialismus" *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 21 (1999), 195–213; Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave, 2004); Uwe Hoßfeld and Heiko Weber, "Rassenkunde, Rassenhygiene und Eugenik im Deutschen Monistenbund" *Jahrbuch für Europäische Wissenschaftskultur* 3 (2007), 257–71; Robert Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> Compare Peter Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); John Haller, "Race and the Concept of Progress in Nineteenth-Century Ethnology" in Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority 1859–1900* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 95–120; Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Patrick Dassen and Mary Kemperink, *The Many Faces of Evolution in Europe, c. 1860–1914* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005); Thomas Junker, "The Eclipse and Renaissance of Darwinism in German Biology (1900–1950)" in Eve-Marie Engels and Thomas Glick, eds., *The Reception of Charles Darwin in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2008), 482–503. Like other theosophists, Steiner frequently polemicized against Darwin, as in this passage from 1906: "Darwinism has made many errors in regard to the differentiation expressed by the races actually existing on the Earth. The higher races have not descended from the lower races;



Steiner's vision of racial and ethnic evolution owed as much to esoteric thought as it did to the biological science of his day. Similar schemes of evolutionary progress abounded within the broader occult literature, and were particularly prominent in the theosophical tradition.<sup>31</sup> The development of Steiner's racial theories can be viewed as a convergence of two contemporaneous strands within German cultural history, the turn of the century occult revival and the widespread attempts to popularize natural science for middle class audiences. The hallmark of anthroposophical race doctrines is an esoteric synthesis of physical and spiritual discourses. For anthroposophy, race is an essential part of what connects the higher worlds to the physical plane: racial categories are a reflection of divine workings and of the cosmic plan, and race itself is not merely a biological attribute but a primary vehicle of spiritual progress. This spiritual re-interpretation of race aligned readily with other developments in European racial thought around 1900. By the turn of the century, purely physical accounts of race had become increasingly untenable due to an accumulation of contradictory evidence emerging from disparate disciplines. A reliable and internally cogent theory seemed elusive as the "scientific project of racial classification became marked by disarray."<sup>32</sup> With a prolifera-

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on the contrary, the latter represent the degeneration of the higher races which have preceded them. Suppose there are two brothers—one of whom is handsome and intelligent, the other ugly and dull-witted. Both proceed from the same father. What should we think of a man who believed that the intelligent brother descends from the idiot? That is the kind of error made by Darwinism in regard to the races." Rudolf Steiner, *An Esoteric Cosmology* (Blauvelt: Spiritual Science Library, 1987), 23. Steiner also rejected theories of "materialistic evolution" which "deny such beings as Folk-souls and Race-souls." Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucian* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1966), 116.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 256–60; Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 470–82; Egil Asprem, "Theosophical Attitudes towards Science: Past and Present" in Hammer and Rothstein, eds., *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 405–27; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, "The Coming of the Masters: The Evolutionary Reformulation of Spiritual Intermediaries in Modern Theosophy" in Kilcher, ed., *Constructing Tradition*, 113–60; Julia Iwersen, "Epistemological Foundations of Esoteric Thought and Practice" *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies* 3 (2007), 3–44. For theosophical perspectives from Steiner's contemporaries see Lilian Edger, "Evolution" *Theosophist* March 1897, 341–45; Annie Besant, "The Secret of Evolution" *Theosophical Review* October 1900, 131–44; Florence Richardson, "Evolution and Related Matters from a Theosophical Point of View" *Theosophical Review* June 1905, 326–35.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 157. Geoffrey Field writes that "skepticism about finding exact physical criteria brought forth more extravagant claims for racial psychology and more abstruse notions of racial *Gestalt* or 'race souls.'" Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 217. The

tion of competing racial taxonomies, and with no consistent physical categories available, several strands of race thinking turned to non-physical aspects of racial differentiation and explored the possibility of augmenting biological terminology with spiritual foundations. A similar process can be traced in the work of some of the most influential race theorists of the time, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain.<sup>33</sup>

Developing in this fertile context, Steiner's esoteric racial doctrines combined a wide variety of incongruous elements. His voluminous but unsystematic writings on race cover the full panoply of purported biological racial traits, from the classic focus on skin color to ostensible differences in blood, the hereditary nature of racial attributes and the possibility of racial contamination, to bone structure, facial features, and differences in bodily constitution as markers of racial difference. For Steiner, such physical distinctions had little significance in themselves; what was important about racial characteristics was that they reflected and embodied spiritual characteristics. Within the theosophical framework, it was the esoteric meaning of ethnicity and race, what they revealed about spiritual and cosmic evolution, which accounted for the central place racial categories came to occupy in Steiner's thought.<sup>34</sup>

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bewildering array of incompatible race theories was a prominent theme for critical observers at the time; see e.g. Jean Finot, *Race Prejudice* (London: Constable, 1906), and W. J. Roberts, "The Racial Interpretation of History and Politics" *International Journal of Ethics* 18 (1908), 475–92.

<sup>33</sup> On Chamberlain, popularizer of the notion of a "racial soul," see Donald Thomas, "Esoteric Religion and Racism in the Thought of Houston Chamberlain" *Journal of Popular Culture* 5 (1971), 69–81, and Hildegard Chatellier, "Rasse und Religion bei Houston Stewart Chamberlain" in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne*, 184–207. A spiritual complement to physical race attributes already played a notable role in the mid-nineteenth century racial theories of Gobineau; cf. Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), and Michael Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970).

<sup>34</sup> A more thorough analysis of Steiner's racial doctrines can be found in Peter Staudenmaier, "Race and Redemption: Racial and Ethnic Evolution in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy" *Nova Religio* 11 (2008), 4–36. Historically informed treatments include Georg Schmid, "Die Anthroposophie und die Rassenlehre Rudolf Steiners zwischen Universalismus, Eurozentrik und Germanophilie" in Joachim Müller, ed., *Anthroposophie und Christentum: Eine kritisch-konstruktive Auseinandersetzung* (Freiburg: Paulus, 1995), 138–94; Helmut Zander, "Sozialdarwinistische Rassentheorien aus dem okkulten Untergrund des Kaiserreichs" in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 224–51; Zander, "Anthroposophische Rassentheorie: Der Geist auf dem Weg durch die Rassengeschichte" in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, eds., *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne*, 292–341; Zander, "Rudolf Steiners Rassenlehre: Plädoyer, über die Regeln der Deutung von Steiners Werk zu reden" in Uwe Puschner and Ulrich Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national: Zur Aktualität alter*



For the most part, these components of anthroposophy did not receive extended attention until the closing years of the twentieth century. While numerous critiques of theosophy and anthroposophy from a wide variety of perspectives were published in Germany during the first several decades of the twentieth century, these critical treatments did not usually address anthroposophy's racial and ethnic tenets, much less analyze them in detail.<sup>35</sup> Nazi and Fascist assessments of anthroposophy, whether positive or negative, rarely engaged with anthroposophical race thinking—if this facet of anthroposophy was mentioned at all—in anything other than a cursory and caricatured fashion. Though the theme loomed large in anthroposophist literature of the era, it was not generally subject to external scrutiny. This has changed in recent years, as renewed interest in the topic has been accompanied by heated controversy, exacerbated by the inconsistent and contradictory nature of anthroposophical race doctrines. These factors inevitably bedevil any effort to characterize anthroposophist ideas about race and ethnicity as a whole.<sup>36</sup> Much of the dis-

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*Denkmuster im 21. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 145–55; Jana Husmann, *Schwarz-Weiß-Symbolik: Dualistische Denktraditionen und die Imagination von 'Rasse': Religion—Wissenschaft—Anthroposophie* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010); Ansgar Martins, *Rassismus und Geschichtsmetaphysik: Esoterischer Darwinismus und Freiheitsphilosophie bei Rudolf Steiner* (Frankfurt: Info3, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. the very brief reference to Steiner's racial teachings in the critical appraisal of anthroposophy by Wilhelm Michel, *Der abendländische Zeus* (Hannover: Paul Steegemann, 1923), 42, or the slightly more thorough critical discussion of Steiner's race doctrines in Friedrich Traub, *Rudolf Steiner als Philosoph und Theosoph* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921), 19, 29–30, 33. Ernst Bloch's 1935 critique of anthroposophy refers in passing to Steiner's root-race theory: Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 174. Other critical assessments of anthroposophy do not address Steiner's racial views; cf. Hans Freimark, *Die okkultistische Bewegung: Eine Aufklärungsschrift* (Leipzig: Heims, 1912), 58–72; R. H. Grützmacher, *Kritiker und Neuschöpfer der Religion* (Leipzig: Deichertsche, 1921), 59–72; Adolf Faut, *Romantik oder Reformation? Eine Wertung der religiösen Kräfte der Gegenwart* (Gotha: Perthes, 1925), 63–83. Some of the more aggressively racist occult thinkers of the time, including the ariosophist Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, were dismissive of Steiner; cf. Hermann Wilhelm, *Dichter, Denker, Fememörder: Rechtsradikalismus und Antisemitismus in München von der Jahrhundertwende bis 1921* (Berlin: Transit, 1989), 37. Steiner in turn criticized ariosophical race thinking as excessively materialistic; see Rudolf Steiner, *Luzifer-Gnosis* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1960), 500–04.

<sup>36</sup> With the rise in the 1990s of public scrutiny toward anthroposophical teachings on race, a variety of apologetic anthroposophist accounts have appeared, including Wolfgang Weirauch, "Über die Menschenrassen in der Darstellung Rudolf Steiners" *Flensburger Hefte* 41 (Sonderheft "Anthroposophie und Rassismus" 1993), 54–106; Christof Lindenau, "Wie und in welcher Absicht Rudolf Steiner über die Verschiedenheit menschlicher Rassen gesprochen hat" *Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland* (Sonderheft "Anthroposophie in der Diskussion

cussion of Steiner's teachings has been marked by a lack of historical perspective and a failure to take into account other forms of racial thought circulating within German culture at the time.<sup>37</sup>

Viewing Steiner's theories in their original historical context makes it easier to discern continuities and discontinuities with standard racial assumptions of the day. Beginning in 1903, soon after his ascension to the leadership of the theosophical movement in Germany, Steiner elaborated a hierarchically structured occult cosmology based on an evolutionary progression of racial groups, relying initially on the traditional theosophical terminology of "root races" and "sub-races" to designate these groups.<sup>38</sup> The basic outlines of this

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um das Rassenverständnis" 1995), 71–86; Michael Klußmann, "Zu Rudolf Steiners Verständnis der negriden Rasse und des Negriden; Das Problem der Dekadenz" *Das Goetheanum* November 1996, 355–79; Reinhard Falter, "Rassen und Volksseelen in Theosophie und Anthroposophie" *Jahrbuch für anthroposophische Kritik* 1997, 131–60; Stefan Leber, "Anthroposophie und die Verschiedenheit des Menschengeschlechts" *Die Drei* 68 (1998), 36–44; Thomas Meyer, "Einige Bemerkungen zur 'Rassismus'-Kampagne gegen Rudolf Steiner und sein Werk" *Der Europäer* March 2000, 10–14; *Anthroposophie und die Frage der Rassen* (Frankfurt: Info3, 2000); Marcelo da Veiga, "Sprachliche und historische Kriterien zum Rassismusbewertung" *Anthroposophie* December 2007, 305–14; Ramon Brüll and Jens Heisterkamp, "Rudolf Steiner und das Thema Rassismus" *Info3* September 2008.

<sup>37</sup> For background see Günther Deschner, *Gobineau und Deutschland* (Erlangen: Hogl, 1967); Geoffrey Field, "Nordic Racism" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977), 523–40; Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Rassenideologien: Geschichte und Hintergründe* (Bonn: Dietz, 1979); Werner Conze, "Rasse" in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 135–78; Robert Proctor, "From Anthropologie to Rassenkunde in the German Anthropological Tradition" in George Stocking, ed., *Bones, Bodies, Behavior* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 138–79; Ruth Römer, *Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland* (Munich: Fink, 1989); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Benoit Massin, "From Virchow to Fischer: Physical Anthropology and 'Modern Race Theories' in Wilhelmine Germany" in George Stocking, ed., *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 79–154; Christian Geulen, *Wahlverwandte: Rassendiskurs und Nationalismus im späten 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2004); Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore, eds., *The German Invention of Race* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Peter Walkenhorst, *Nation—Volk—Rasse: Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Maurice Olender, *Race and Erudition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Suzanne Marchand, "The Passions and the Races" in Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 292–329.

<sup>38</sup> Steiner first employed the 'root race' terminology in theosophical lectures in 1903; see Rudolf Steiner, *Über die astrale Welt und das Devachan* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1999). In 1904

racial mythology were adapted from standard theosophical works, above all Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, which Steiner began reading in late 1902 at the recommendation of Marie von Sivers, his later wife.<sup>39</sup> In the course of increasing organizational and ideological tensions with the rest of the theosophical leadership, Steiner came to reject much of the theosophical vocabulary and its emphasis on the cyclical nature of racial evolution, while retaining theosophical ideas about karma and reincarnation as central elements of his racial theory. In place of theosophy's conception of recurring racial cycles, Steiner proposed a more forthrightly progressive model in which racial evolution displays both a clearly advancing trajectory as well as regressive trends; according to anthroposophy, higher racial forms move forward evolutionarily by overcoming and outpacing lower racial forms.<sup>40</sup> As the culmination of this process, Steiner foretold the eventual disappearance of racial and ethnic identity as such and its subsumption under the "Universal Human," his term for the future condition of a more spiritualized humanity that has transcended race entirely.<sup>41</sup>

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Steiner published a detailed exposition of his racial cosmology in a series of articles in his theosophical journal *Lucifer-Gnosis*, available in English as Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*. Another early presentation of Steiner's racial views appears in a theosophical lecture he gave in Berlin in 1904; see Rudolf Steiner, "Ueber die Wanderungen der Rassen" in Guenther Wachsmuth, ed., *Gäa-Sophia: Jahrbuch der Naturwissenschaftlichen Sektion der Freien Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft am Goetheanum Dornach*, volume III: *Völkerkunde* (Stuttgart: Orient-Occident Verlag, 1929), 19–27. In 1905 Steiner presented a fuller version of his racial teachings in a public lecture titled "Die Grundbegriffe der Theosophie. Menschenrassen" (Basic concepts of Theosophy: The races of humankind), published in Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*, 132–54.

<sup>39</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Briefe* vol. II (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1953), 281.

<sup>40</sup> Steiner provides a detailed account in *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1993), original edition: Rudolf Steiner, *Die Apokalypse des Johannes* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1911). Here he explains that "after the War of All against All" humankind will divide into a "race of good" and a "race of evil" (142) so that "that might be destroyed which is not worthy to take part in the ascent of mankind" (87). "Thus man rises by throwing out the lower forms in order to purify himself and he will rise still higher by separating another kingdom of nature, the kingdom of the evil race. Thus mankind rises upward." (82)

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Rudolf Steiner, *The Universal Human* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1990), and Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucian*, 130: "It will come about that all connections of race and family stock will cease to exist, men will become more and more different from one another, interconnection will no longer depend on the common blood, but on what binds soul to soul. That is the course of human evolution. In the first Atlantean races there still existed a strong bond of union and the first sub-races grouped themselves according to their colouring. This group-soul element we have still in the races of different colour. These differences will increasingly disappear as the individualising element gains the upper hand. A time will come when

The end-point of racial evolution was thus meant to signify the conclusive overcoming of materialism as well as the advent of authentic individuality. Steiner's conception of progressive racial evolution is succinctly captured in this passage from his fundamental 1905 work on attaining "knowledge of the higher worlds":

For peoples and races are but steps leading to pure humanity. A race or a nation stands so much the higher, the more perfectly its members express the pure, ideal human type, the further they have worked their way from the physical and perishable to the supersensible and imperishable. The evolution of man through the incarnations in ever higher national and racial forms is thus a process of liberation. Man must finally appear in harmonious perfection.<sup>42</sup>

Steiner gave widely differing indications about when this evolutionary process of outgrowing racial and ethnic particularity would be completed, from thousands to millions of years in the future.<sup>43</sup> At times he suggested that the existence of racial diversity was itself a deviation from the proper path of human development. The simultaneous existence of different racial groups was the result of the untimely interference of Lucifer and Ahriman, who disrupted the divinely ordained course of evolution, which was supposed to produce a succession of single races rather than a side by side co-existence of multiple races. Had this original evolutionary trajectory been fulfilled, it would have resulted in the unproblematic emergence of a non-racial Universal Human.<sup>44</sup> Since

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there will no longer be races of different colour; the difference between the races will have disappeared, but on the other hand there will be the greatest differences between individuals."

<sup>42</sup> Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, 252.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Steiner, *The Universal Human*, 12–13; Steiner, *Die tieferen Geheimnisse des Menschheitswerdens im Lichte der Evangelien* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 152; Steiner, *Rosicrucian Wisdom: An Introduction* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2001), 145, 171; Steiner, *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls in Relation to Teutonic Mythology* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005), 76.

<sup>44</sup> Steiner, *The Universal Human*, 73–77. Steiner held that if cosmic evolution had proceeded according to the divine plan, "there would have been one united type of human being spread over the whole face of the earth. However, Lucifer and Ahriman interfered and thwarted the original design." (76) "This development did not occur because Lucifer and Ahriman preserved older racial forms that had developed, so that there was a coexistence of races rather than a succession." Whereas evolution "should really lead to a human type with perfect physical development," a racially uniform ideal type, "Lucifer and Ahriman had caused races to live side by side instead of one after the other." (77) "Thus, forms that should have disappeared remained.

the divine plan was unable to unfold in this way, the simultaneous existence of different racial groups—occupying “different stages of development” and displaying different “physical and mental characteristics”—necessitated a new approach to racial evolution.<sup>45</sup>

Instead of a mere succession of varying races one after another, Steiner’s racial theory centers on a process of individual development through a series of incarnations in progressively higher racial forms. From an anthroposophist perspective, “we are to acquire new capacities through repeated incarnations in the successive races,” a process governed by Steiner’s conception of karma.<sup>46</sup> This racialized version of reincarnation bears important similarities to other varieties of Western esotericism, though it differs significantly from many non-

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Instead of racial diversities developing consecutively, older racial forms remained unchanged and newer ones began to evolve at the same time.” (75) Such views continue to be advanced by Steiner’s followers. Prominent American anthroposophist Stephen Usher writes that according to Steiner, “the interference of the evil gods created racial diversity,” which was contrary to “the normal course of evolution,” and concludes: “Rudolf Steiner explains that had the interference not occurred, then human beings would all be incarnated in uniformly beautiful bodies. As a consequence, love would exist among people because of natural beauty and lack of differences.” Usher, “Race—The Tapestry of Love,” 60–63.

<sup>45</sup> Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 46. In this sense, Steiner’s doctrines anticipated the later shift in mainstream German anthropology, which for the most part did not link race to psychological, intellectual, or cultural traits until the First World War; see H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds., *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), and Andrew Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), but cf. Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 231. For context on the anthroposophical understanding of reincarnation see Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 455–94; J. S. Speyer, *Die indische Theosophie* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1914), 302–27; Helmuth von Glasenapp, “Theosophie und Anthroposophie” in Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker* (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1960), 186–218; Jörg Wichmann, “Das theosophische Menschenbild und seine indischen Wurzeln” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 35 (1983), 12–33; Friedrich Huber, “Die Reinkarnationsvorstellungen in den asiatischen Religionen und im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 44 (1992), 15–32; Helmut Zander, *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europa: alternative religiöse Traditionen von der Antike bis heute* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999); Joscelyn Godwin, “The Survival of the Personality, according to Modern Esoteric Teachings” in Richard Caron, ed., *Ésotérisme, gnosés & imaginaire symbolique: Mélanges offerts à Antoine Faivre* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 403–13; C. Mackenzie Brown, “The Western Roots of Avatatic Evolutionism in Colonial India” *Zygon* 42 (2007), 423–47. An anthroposophical perspective can be found in Emil Bock, *Wiederholte Erdenleben: Die Wiederverkörperungsidee in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1932).

western models of reincarnation. Within Steiner's system, racial evolution and the evolution of individual souls are intimately intertwined.<sup>47</sup> In Steiner's terms:

Human souls proceed through the different races. In this way the variety of races becomes sensible and reasonable. Thus we see that one is not condemned to live only in a primitive race while another stands at the highly developed stages of racial existence. Each of us passes through the different racial stages, and the passage signifies a progressive development for the individual soul.<sup>48</sup>

The entwinement of racial evolution and spiritual progress represents a central pillar of Steiner's esoteric cosmology. Its principal features include a hierarchical scheme of higher and lower racial forms, a contrast between advancing races and declining races, and the crucial notion that individual souls are responsible for their own racial-spiritual progress or degeneration.<sup>49</sup> Physical

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<sup>47</sup> See Adolf Arenson, *Leitfaden durch 50 Vortragszyklen Rudolf Steiners* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1961), 779–82, 812.

<sup>48</sup> Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*, 133. Steiner emphasized that regressive racial groups must “fall into decadence” and “degenerate” while “only the progressing race is able to develop itself upward in the appropriate way.” (143) Note that “the progressing race” is singular, not plural; according to anthroposophical doctrine, only one racial group serves as the vehicle of spiritual progress in a given era. For Steiner “the Caucasian race” was “the truly civilized race” (144). The contrast is essential to his overall racial scheme: “But if you contemplate the past from the perspective of spiritual science, you will gain a very different view. You will find that our white civilized humankind originated because certain elements segregated themselves from the Atlanteans and developed themselves higher here, under different climatic conditions. Certain elements of the Atlantean population remained behind, at earlier levels; thus we can see that the peoples of Asia and America are remnants of the various Atlantean races.” (145)

<sup>49</sup> Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 80: “You might now be inclined to say: Is it not an extremely bitter thought that whole bodies of peoples remain immature and do not develop their capacities; that only a small group becomes capable of providing the germ for the next civilization? This thought will no longer disquiet you if you distinguish between race-development and individual soul-development, for no soul is condemned to remain in one particular race. The race may fall behind; the community of people may remain backward, but the souls progress beyond the several races. If we wish to form a true conception of this we must say that all the souls now living in bodies in civilized countries were formerly incarnated in Atlantean bodies. A few developed there in the requisite manner, and did not remain in Atlantean bodies. As they had developed further they could become the souls of the bodies which had also progressed further. Only the souls which as souls had remained backward had to take bodies which as bodies had remained at a lower stage. If all the souls had progressed, the backward

aspects of race, according to Steiner, reflect the underlying spiritual realities of race: "For our soul-spiritual nature is physically expressed by the colour of our skin."<sup>50</sup> The emphasis on racial difference as a corollary to spiritual progress sometimes led Steiner to question notions of racial equality:

The most characteristic sign of the time is the belief that when a group of individuals have set up some trashy proposition as a general program—such as the unity of all men regardless of race, nation or color, and so forth—something has been accomplished. Nothing has been accomplished except to throw sand into people's eyes. Something real is attained only when we note the differences and realize what world conditions are.<sup>51</sup>

Through the process of racial and ethnic karma and the correlation between spiritual qualities and racial traits, the physical variety and diversity within the human species were invested with powerful esoteric significance under the rubric of progressive evolution. As the incarnating souls "became steadily better and better," Steiner explained,

the souls eventually passed over into higher races, such that souls which had earlier been incarnated in completely subordinate races developed themselves upwards onto a higher level and were able to incarnate later into the physical descendants of the leading population of Europe. [...] That is the reason why there were fewer and fewer descendants in the subordinate races and more and more descendants in the higher races. Thus the lowest strata of the European population gradually died out. This is a very definite process which we must understand. The souls evolve further, the bodies die away. We must therefore carefully distinguish between soul development and race development. The souls then appear in bodies that descend from higher races.<sup>52</sup>

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racess would either have decreased very much in population, or the bodies would be occupied by newly incoming souls at a low stage of development. For there are always souls which can inhabit backward bodies. No soul is bound to a backward body if it does not bind itself to it."

<sup>50</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Riddle of Humanity: The Spiritual Background of Human History* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1990), 219.

<sup>51</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Science as a Foundation for Social Forms* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1986), 122.

<sup>52</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Christus und die menschliche Seele* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1997), 93. Published versions of Steiner's lecture transcripts have been a source of acrimonious intra-



The advance of racial-spiritual progress, according to this doctrine, depends on the willingness of each individual to embrace the esoteric version of Christianity that Steiner preached. Failure to do so leads to racial decadence:

People who listen to the great leaders of humankind, and preserve their soul with its eternal essence, reincarnate in an advanced race; in the same way he who ignores the great teacher, who rejects the great leader of humankind, will always reincarnate in the same race, because he was only able to develop the one form. This is the deeper meaning of Ahasver, who must always reappear in the same form because he rejected the hand of the greatest leader, Christ. Thus each person has the opportunity to become caught up in the essence of one incarnation, to push away the leader of humankind, or instead to undergo the transformation into higher races, toward ever higher perfection. Races would never become decadent, never decline, if there weren't souls that are unable to move up and unwilling to move up to a higher racial form. Look at the races that have survived from earlier eras: they only exist because some souls could not climb higher.<sup>53</sup>

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anthroposophical controversy, including law suits between rival anthroposophist publishers, but Steiner's followers generally consider their content reliable. As Steiner's widow commented in a representative instance: "These lectures from the year 1908 we possess in an unfortunately quite incomplete copy. They have been so often asked for and copies have been made in so many places, that we do not wish to withhold them any longer because of their incompleteness. The subject matter will triumph over the incomplete renderings." Marie Steiner, "Introduction" to Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John*, 13–14.

<sup>53</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Das Hereinwirken geistiger Wesenheiten in den Menschen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2001), 174. Further detailed statements of Steiner's racial doctrines include "The Manifestation of the Ego in the Different Races of Men" in Steiner, *The Being of Man and His Future Evolution* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1981), 110–26; Steiner, *At the Gates of Spiritual Science* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1970), 65–74, 96–108; Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1973), 160–66; Steiner, *The Christian Mystery* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1998), 176–83; Steiner, *Aus den Inhalten der esoterischen Stunden* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1995), 115–16, 124–25, 169–70, 217–27; Steiner, *Das Johannes-Evangelium* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1995), 139–45, 157–61; Steiner, *Die okkulten Wahrheiten alter Mythen und Sagen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1999), 37–39, 138–39; Steiner, *Kosmogonie* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1979), 86–87, 119–24, 164–69, 246–48, 263–74; Steiner, *Aus der Bilderschrift der Apokalypse des Johannes* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1991), 38–39, 46–47; Steiner, *Grundelemente der Esoterik* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1972), 182–91, 228–31, 240–62, 283–85; Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1993), 132–33, 152–53; Steiner, *Gegensätze in der Menschheitsentwicklung* (Dornach: Rudolf



This vision of racial evolution was filled out with an array of concrete claims about specific racial and ethnic groups. Steiner taught that black people are marked by a powerful instinctual life, yellow and brown people by a potent emotional life, and white people by a highly developed intellectual life.<sup>54</sup> He characterized indigenous peoples as decadent, stunted, and degenerate.<sup>55</sup> Jews and Chinese served as paradigmatic examples of racial stagnation.<sup>56</sup> In anthroposophy's stratified model of spiritual evolution, Africans were portrayed as physical creatures lacking a relationship to the higher realms. "Negroes," Steiner taught, "cut themselves off completely from the spiritual world."<sup>57</sup> According to Steiner, "younger souls—the majority at any rate—incarnate in the coloured races, so that it is the coloured races, especially the Negro race,

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Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1967), 26–39, 151–65; Steiner, *Der irdische und der kosmische Mensch* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1964), 149–65.

<sup>54</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1993), 56. These teachings reflect both standard esoteric paradigms and common scientific beliefs of the time. For an example of the scientific literature Steiner relied on in forming his racial views see Alexander Pilcz, *Beitrag zur vergleichenden Rassen-Psychiatrie* (Wien: Deuticke, 1906), which Steiner owned (cf. Werner, *Rudolf Steiner zu Individuum und Rasse*, 17). The opening pages of Pilcz's pamphlet highlight the "extreme differences" in the "cultural level" of the various groups examined, including "Germans," "Jews," "Chinese," and "Hottentots" (iv). Pilcz also discusses "Aryans," "Semites," "Negroes," and various "lower races" (44), offering a biological explanation for the ostensible disparities between racial groups. Among the findings is "the especially strong disposition of the Jewish race toward hysteria" (18) and a "greater disposition of the Jewish race to mental disorders as such." (28)

<sup>55</sup> See among others Rudolf Steiner, *Welt, Erde und Mensch* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1983), 106; Steiner, *The Evolution of the Earth and Man and the Influence of the Stars* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1987), 126; Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1981), 244. Steiner described Native Americans as a "decadent side branch" of evolution, located evolutionarily between Europeans and apes: Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis*, 245.

<sup>56</sup> Jews, in Steiner's eyes, were closely associated with atavistic "blood ties" and a "group-soul" rather than true individuality; for a detailed analysis see Peter Staudenmaier, "Rudolf Steiner and the Jewish Question" *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 50 (2005), 127–47. On the Chinese as evolutionary "stragglers" see e.g. Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis*, 186, and Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 140. For markedly similar claims compare Annie Besant, *Uralte Weisheit: Die Lehren der Theosophie* (Leipzig: Grieben, 1905), 5. Houston Stewart Chamberlain also depicted Chinese and Jews as exemplars of racial sterility: Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1977), 248–57.

<sup>57</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Vergangenheits- und Zukunftsimpulse im sozialen Geschehen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1980), 149.

which mainly brings younger souls to incarnation.”<sup>58</sup> In contrast to the spiritually mature Europeans, “The black or Negro race is substantially determined by these childhood characteristics.”<sup>59</sup> Steiner offered extended and graphic descriptions of the Negro’s powerful physical drives and their cosmic origins.<sup>60</sup> He criticized the presence of black people in Europe and its degrading spiritual effects, decrying the stationing of French colonial troops on German soil during the occupation of the Rhineland after World War One. In a February 1923 discussion with the original group of Waldorf teachers Steiner declared:

The French are committing the terrible brutality of moving black people to Europe, but it works, in an even worse way, back on France. It has an enormous effect on the blood and the race and contributes considerably toward French decadence. The French as a race are reverting.<sup>61</sup>

Other lectures amid the Rhineland occupation, at the height of German outrage against the deployment of African soldiers in Germany, invoked the same theme. Surveying the various racial groups on the earth in a March 1923 talk in Dornach, Steiner offered definite instruction about which races belong where:

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<sup>58</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Occult History*, 33; the following sentence characterizes the “coloured races” as “uncivilised races.” In Steiner’s theory, “Each person proceeds through race after race. Those that are young souls incarnate in the races that have remained behind on earlier racial levels.” (Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*, 153)

<sup>59</sup> Steiner, *The Mission of the Folk Souls*, 75. Such passages bear comparison with Hegel’s account of “Negroes” as a “race of children”; see the excerpts in Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott, eds., *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 38–44. An earlier and milder version of these ideas can be found in Herder’s work. Other facets of Steiner’s racial theories echo themes from Kant; for context cf. Mark Larrimore, “Antinomies of race: diversity and destiny in Kant” *Patterns of Prejudice* 42 (2008), 341–63.

<sup>60</sup> Steiner’s 1923 lecture on “Color and the Races of Humankind” includes a detailed depiction of “the blacks in Africa” and the “peculiar characteristic” of their bodily constitution, explaining that the “rear-brain” is “especially developed in the Negro.” Thus “the Negro has a powerful instinctual life.” Indeed “the Negro is constantly cooking inside, and what feeds this fire is his rear-brain.” Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 55, with accompanying illustration on 56. Steiner goes on to assert that the “yellow race” is distinguished by the “mid-brain” while the “white race” features a highly developed “fore-brain.” These claims mirror those of French anatomist Louis Pierre Gratiolet (1815–1865); cf. Anne Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 41–42, and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1996), 129–30.

<sup>61</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1998), 558–59.

When we ask which race belongs to which part of the earth, we must say: the yellow race, the Mongols, the Mongolian race belongs to Asia, the white race or the Caucasian race belongs to Europe, and the black race or the Negro race belongs to Africa. The Negro race does not belong to Europe, and the fact that this race is now playing such a large role in Europe is of course nothing but a nuisance.<sup>62</sup>

A December 1922 lecture in Dornach provides a forceful instance of the anthroposophical conjoining of physical and spiritual aspects of racial difference:

Recently I went into a bookstore in Basel and found an example of the latest publishing agenda: a Negro novel, just as the Negroes in general are entering into European civilization step by step! Everywhere Negro dances are being performed, Negro dances are being hopped. But we

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<sup>62</sup> Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 52–53. On German reactions to the deployment of African troops in the Rhineland occupation cf. Robert Reinders, “Racialism on the Left: E. D. Morel and the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’” *International Review of Social History* 13 (1968), 1–28; Keith Nelson, “The ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’: Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy” *Journal of Modern History* 42 (1970), 606–27; Sally Marks, “Black Watch on the Rhine: A Study in Propaganda, Prejudice, and Prurience” *European Studies Review* 13 (1983), 297–333; Gisela Lebzelter, “Die ‘Schwarze Schmach’: Vourteile—Propaganda—Mythos” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11 (1985), 37–58; Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, “‘Tirailleurs Sénégalais’ und ‘Schwarze Schande’—Verlaufsformen und Konsequenzen einer deutsch-französischen Auseinandersetzung (1910–1926)” in Janos Riesz and Joachim Schultz, eds., *Tirailleurs Sénégalais: Zur bildlichen und literarischen Darstellung afrikanischer Soldaten im Dienste Frankreichs* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1989), 57–73; Joachim Schultz, “Die ‘Utschebabbes’ am Rhein—Zur Darstellung schwarzer Soldaten während der französischen Rheinlandbesetzung (1918–1930)” in *ibid.*, 75–100; Peter Martin, “Die Kampagne gegen die ‘Schwarze Schmach’ als Ausdruck konservativer Visionen vom Untergang des Abendlandes” in Gerhard Höpp, ed., *Fremde Erfahrungen: Asiaten und Afrikaner in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz bis 1945* (Berlin: Zentrum Moderner Orient, 1996), 211–24; Iris Wigger, “‘Against the Laws of Civilization’: Race, Gender, and Nation in the International Racist Campaign Against the ‘Black Shame’” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 46 (2002), 113–31; Jean-Ives Naour, *La honte noire: L’Allemagne et les troupes coloniales françaises, 1914–1945* (Paris: Hachette, 2003); Christian Koller, “Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt”: *Die Diskussion um die Verwendung von Kolonialtruppen in Europa zwischen Rassismus, Kolonial- und Militärpolitik (1914–1930)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2001); Iris Wigger, *Die “Schwarze Schmach am Rhein”: Rassistische Diskriminierung zwischen Geschlecht, Klasse, Nation und Rasse* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2007); Julia Roos, “Women’s Rights, Nationalist Anxiety, and the ‘Moral’ Agenda in the Early Weimar Republic: Revisiting the ‘Black Horror’ Campaign against France’s African Occupation Troops” *Central European History* 42 (2009), 473–508; Julia Roos, “Nationalism, Racism and Propaganda in Early Weimar Germany: Contradictions in the Campaign against the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’” *German History* 30 (2012), 45–74.

even have this Negro novel already. It is utterly boring, dreadfully boring, but people devour it. I am personally convinced that if we get more Negro novels, and give these Negro novels to pregnant women to read during the first phase of pregnancy, when as you know they can sometimes develop such cravings, if we give these Negro novels to pregnant women to read, then it won't even be necessary for Negroes to come to Europe in order for mulattoes to appear. Simply through the spiritual effects of reading Negro novels, a multitude of children will be born in Europe that are completely gray, that have mulatto hair, that look like mulattoes!<sup>63</sup>

Passages like these convey palpable apprehension about both the spiritual and bodily impact of black cultural influence in European life. Steiner's followers expressed such concerns as a fear of the "negroification" of German culture and of Europe as a whole.<sup>64</sup> In anthroposophy's vision of spiritual evolution, the appearance of the 'wrong' racial and ethnic groups in the wrong place and time was not simply an affront to cultural propriety but a potential cosmic calamity.

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<sup>63</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Über Gesundheit und Krankheit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1994), 189. For further comments on the "crude and primitive" nature of "Negro dances" see Marie Steiner's 1927 introduction to Rudolf Steiner, *Eurythmy as Visible Speech* (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Company, 1944), vii. On German images of black people in Steiner's day compare Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche: Der Diskurs um "Rasse" und nationale Identität 1890–1933* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001); Michael Schubert, *Der schwarze Fremde: Das Bild des Schwarzafrikaners in der parlamentarischen und publizistischen Kolonialdiskussion in Deutschland von den 1870er bis in die 1930er Jahre* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2003); Patricia Mazon and Reinhild Steingröver, *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890–2000* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009); David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 213–324; Michael Schubert, "The 'German nation' and the 'black Other': Social Darwinism and the cultural mission in German colonial discourse" *Patterns of Prejudice* 45 (2011), 399–416.

<sup>64</sup> Even the more prominent cultural figures within anthroposophical ranks displayed occasional affinities with this sort of racial discourse. Andrej Belyj, *Im Reich der Schatten: Berlin 1921 bis 1923* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1987) includes chapters from the early 1920s such as "Der Neger in Berlin" and "Vom 'Neger' in Europa"; these pieces combine an aestheticized awe toward black people's supposedly superior physicality with open revulsion at their increasing presence in Europe, viewing this as part of a shadowy international conspiracy. Belyj decried the "barbaric" sight of blacks on European streets (64) and "the 'negroification' of our culture" (55), with its black "poison" spreading "corrosion and debasement" (48), above all from France, where the rising tide of "black blood" threatened to engulf Europe: "black blood will suddenly flood toward Paris in a torrent of millions of Negroes and mulattoes . . ." (58, ellipsis in original). Belyj also lamented that Berlin was becoming "eine Negerstadt." (67)

These premises left ample room for ambiguities within the anthroposophist conception of racial-ethnic progress. Two examples reveal these ambiguities in sharp relief: Steiner's philosemitic articles from his transitional period in 1901, and his remarks about the "occult significance" of "the race question" in the midst of Germany's military campaign in South-West Africa in 1906. Steiner's brief series of philosemitic articles was published in the *Mittheilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* between September and December 1901.<sup>65</sup> These articles rejected organized antisemitism from a firmly German national standpoint; Steiner disparaged antisemitic agitation as "un-German" and called on assimilationist German Jews to prove themselves more German than their detractors. His analysis emphasized the "great cultural mission" of the German people and argued that fully Germanized Jews could contribute to this all-important mission by committing themselves to the "German spirit." While some of Steiner's conclusions amounted to an apologia for less vulgar forms of antisemitism and caused the editors of the journal to distance themselves from his claims, his insistence on radical assimilation, through which Jewishness itself would dissolve into Germanness, contrasted distinctly with the increasingly aggressive versions of racial antisemitism which came to mark the era.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The full text of all seven articles is reprinted in Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte*, 382–420. A comparison with the original publication is nonetheless instructive; the first brief article appeared in volume 11, number 37 of the *Mittheilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* on September 11, 1901, and the last in the December 26, 1901 issue under the telling title "Idealismus gegen Antisemitismus." In a footnote appended to Steiner's article in the October 2, 1901 issue (*Mittheilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* vol. 11 no. 40), 331, the editors of the journal expressed clear disagreement with his argument. Steiner's essays for the journal consistently displayed a German nationalist tone; what aroused his ire was the effort by plebian antisemites to lay claim to German high culture in support of their cause. He attempted to defend the dignity of German literary and philosophical traditions and guard the legacy of German Idealism from cooptation by antisemitic demagogues. Steiner's series of philosemitic articles came to an end just as he was turning toward theosophy. For background on the organization see Barbara Suchy, "The Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus" *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 28 (1983), 205–39 and *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 30 (1985), 67–103, and Auguste Zeiß-Horbach, *Der Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus: Zum Verhältnis von Protestantismus und Judentum im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> On the profound differences between Jewish and gentile conceptions of assimilation see Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics, and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Marion Kaplan, "Tradition and Transition: The Acculturation, Assimilation and Integration of Jews in Imperial Germany" *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 27 (1982), 3–35; David Sorkin, "Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their

Five years later, in a changed historical setting, Steiner's disquisition on "The Occult Significance of Blood" reinforced prevalent German assumptions about race in colonial contexts. Originally presented as a public lecture in Berlin in October 1906, Steiner published the text a few months later in 1907.<sup>67</sup> The timing is significant: Steiner's remarks were delivered during the final phase of the genocidal campaign against the Herero and Nama peoples in the German colony of South-West Africa and the run-up to the so-called "Hottentot election" of January 1907, in which imperialism and colonialism were central issues.<sup>68</sup> A key passage early in the text reads:

But all such questions are illuminated as soon as we recognize the nature of the spiritual essence which lies at the back of our blood. Who can deny that this question is closely linked to that of race, which at the present time is once more coming markedly to the front? Yet this question of race is one that we can never understand until we understand the mysteries of the blood and of the results accruing from the mingling of the blood of different races. And finally, there is yet one other question, the importance of which is becoming more and more acute as we endeavor to extricate ourselves from the hitherto aimless methods of dealing with it, and seek to approach it in its more comprehensive bearings. This problem is

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Application to German-Jewish history" *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 35 (1990), 17–33; Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>67</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Blut ist ein ganz besonderer Saft* (Berlin: Theosophische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1907); translated as Steiner, *Occult Significance of Blood*. The original title is a famous quotation from Goethe's *Faust*. The German edition, published by Steiner's own theosophical publishing house, went through five printings by 1922, for a total of fifteen thousand copies.

<sup>68</sup> For details on the campaign in South-West Africa see Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 5–90; on the "Hottentot election" see Ulrich van der Heyden, "Die 'Hottentottenwahlen' von 1907" in Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller, eds., *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika: Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen* (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2003), 97–102, and John Phillip Short, "The Hottentot Elections" in Short, *Magic Lantern Empire: Colonialism and Society in Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 132–47; for the overall context see Gesine Krüger, *Kriegsbewältigung und Geschichtsbewußtsein: Realität, Deutung und Verarbeitung des deutschen Kolonialkriegs in Namibia 1904 bis 1907* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999). In 1906 German audiences could readily link Steiner's references to colonialism, "Negroes" and "savages" to the Herero and Nama, as well as to the concurrent Maji Maji war in German East Africa. Steiner's occasional references to "Hottentots" in other works draw on the same shared cultural background. For an insightful analysis see Nicholas Hudson, "'Hottentots' and the evolution of European racism" *Journal of European Studies* 34 (2004), 308–32.



that of colonisation, which crops up wherever civilised races come into contact with the uncivilised: namely—To what extent are uncivilised peoples capable of becoming civilised? How can a Negro or an utterly barbaric savage become civilised? And in what way ought we to deal with them? And here we have to consider not only the feelings due to a vague morality, but we are also confronted by great, serious, and vital problems of existence itself. Those who are not aware of the conditions governing a people—whether it be on the up- or down-grade of its evolution, and whether the one or the other is a matter conditioned by its blood—such people as these will, indeed, be unlikely to hit on the right mode of introducing civilisation to an alien race. These are all matters which arise as soon as the Blood Question is touched upon.<sup>69</sup>

Near the conclusion of the text, after a discussion of the relationship between “the mixing of blood” and clairvoyance, Steiner returns to this theme:

When two groups of people come into contact, as in the case of colonisation, then those who are acquainted with the conditions of evolution are able to foretell whether or not an alien form of civilisation can be assimilated by the others. Take, for example, a people that is the product of its environment, into whose blood this environment has built itself, and try to graft upon such a people a new form of civilisation. The thing is impossible. This is why certain aboriginal peoples had to go under, as soon as colonists came to their particular parts of the world. It is from this point of view that the question will have to be considered, and the idea that changes are capable of being forced upon all and sundry will in time cease to be upheld, for it is useless to demand from blood more than it can endure.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Steiner, *Occult Significance of Blood*, 13–14. Compare these remarks from 1921: “Wenn irgendwo zwei Rassen, zwei Völkerschaften durcheinander sich mischten, dann hatten sie verschiedenes Blut. Die einen blieben unten, versklavten mehr, die andere Bevölkerung hob sich gewissermaßen nach oben, bildete die oberen Zehntausend. Sowohl diese sozialen Unterschiede, wie auch dasjenige, was in der Erkenntnis, in den Seelen der Menschen lebte, das war durchaus ein Ergebnis des Rassigen, des Blutes.” Rudolf Steiner, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die weltgeschichtliche Entwicklung der Menschheit* (Dornach: Naturwissenschaftliche Sektion am Goetheanum, 1939), 95.

<sup>70</sup> Steiner, *Occult Significance of Blood*, 43–44. In the original, the term rendered here as “go under” reads “zugrunde gehen,” to perish. Steiner’s ambivalent attitude toward “blood mixing” and interracial procreation is comparable to Gobineau’s ambivalent stance regarding the same question. At times, Steiner’s position tacitly condoned genocide, as in this passage from 1910:



Steiner thus distinguished between 'uncivilized' peoples that are advancing evolutionarily and those that are regressing evolutionarily. This was a pivotal motif in Steiner's racial and ethnic theories: The assimilable elements of ostensibly backward and archaic racial groups are taken up into forward-moving groups, while the stragglers die out. This basic dichotomy informs Steiner's observations about the necessity of 'blood mixture' for spiritual progress. The logic Steiner invoked in such contexts coupled standard theosophical notions about the karmically inevitable extinction of evolutionarily obsolete racial groups with contemporary German anxieties and expectations about colonial encounters with 'primitive' peoples.<sup>71</sup> According to Steiner, the mere arrival of colonists is sufficient to trigger the automatic extinction of those indigenous communities that are on the "down-grade" of evolution, whose blood is not suited to contact with the "civilized," while other "savage" peoples may be on the "up-grade" of evolution and thus capable of assimilation through contact with colonizers. In the heyday of race-thinking and colonialism, Steiner gave these ideas about blood, race, and civilization an esoteric interpretation, but did not alter the basic terms at stake.

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"The forces which determine man's racial character follow this cosmic pattern. The American Indians died out, not because of European persecutions, but because they were destined to succumb to those forces which hastened their extinction." (Steiner, *Mission of the Folk Souls*, 76)

<sup>71</sup> For context compare Short, *Magic Lantern Empire*, 70–74; Franz-Josef Schulte-Althoff, "Rassenmischung im kolonialen System: Zur deutschen Kolonialpolitik im letzten Jahrzehnt vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg" *Historisches Jahrbuch* 105 (1995), 52–94; Helmut Walser Smith, "The Talk of Genocide, the Rhetoric of Miscegenation: Notes on Debates in the German Reichstag concerning Southwest Africa, 1904–1914" in Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 107–23; Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1850–1918* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000), 96–192; Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races 1800–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Richard Weikart, "Progress through Racial Extermination: Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Pacifism in Germany, 1860–1918" *German Studies Review* 26 (2003), 273–94; Jan Henning Böttger, "Zivilisierung der 'Vernichtung': 'Hererokrieg', 'Eingeborene' und 'Eingeborenerecht' im Kolonialdiskurs" *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 4 (2003), 22–63; Frank Becker, ed., *Rassenmischehen—Mischlinge—Rassentrennung: Zur Politik der Rasse im deutschen Kolonialreich* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004); Boris Barth, "Die Grenzen der Zivilisierungsmission: Rassenvorstellungen in europäischen Siedlungskolonien" in Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Zivilisierungsmissionen: Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Konstanz: UVK, 2005), 201–28; Robbie Aitken, *Exclusion and Inclusion: Gradations of Whiteness and Socio-economic Engineering in German Southwest Africa, 1884–1914* (New York: Lang, 2007).

To the end of his life, Steiner continued to elaborate this complex of racial doctrines as a decisive component of his broader esoteric teachings. In a 1923 lecture on “Color and the Races of Humankind” he declared:

One can only understand history and all of social life, including today’s social life, if one pays attention to people’s racial characteristics. And one can only understand all that is spiritual in the correct sense if one first examines how this spiritual element operates within people precisely through the color of their skin.<sup>72</sup>

Steiner maintained that “profound differences of spiritual culture” are “tied to external skin color” and that the special destiny of the “Germanic peoples” is to integrate the spiritual and the physical through a “carrying down of the spiritual impulses” onto the material plane and into the human body. This integration of the physical and the spiritual constituted “the mission of white humankind” and was the origin of white skin.<sup>73</sup> Non-white skin, in contrast, indicated a “demonic character” and a lack of spiritual harmony. These fundamental differences would ultimately lead to “a violent battle of white humankind with colored humankind” before the next evolutionary epoch could commence.<sup>74</sup> Notwithstanding Steiner’s statements about the eventual disappearance of race as such, the future belonged to whites. In 1920 Steiner proclaimed that “the new dawn of the white race” would come if Europeans chose spirituality over materialism, and in 1923 he declared: “The white race is the race of

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<sup>72</sup> Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1974), 35–37, lecture from 1915. “This carrying down, this thorough impregnation of the flesh by the spirit, this is the characteristic of the mission of white humanity, the whole mission of white humankind. People have white skin color because the spirit works within the skin when it wants to descend to the physical plane. [...] But where the spirit is held back, where it takes on a demonic character and does not fully penetrate the flesh, then white skin color does not appear, because atavistic powers are present that do not allow the spirit to achieve complete harmony with the flesh.” (37)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 38: “But these things will never take place in the world without the most violent struggle. White humankind is still on the path of absorbing the spirit deeper and deeper into its own essence. [...] The transition from the fifth cultural epoch to the sixth cultural epoch cannot happen in any other way than as a violent battle of white humankind with colored humankind in myriad areas.”

the future, the spiritually creative race.”<sup>75</sup> On other occasions Steiner endorsed Gobineau’s arguments about the superiority of the white race.<sup>76</sup>

These teachings are intertwined with Steiner’s esoteric version of the Aryan myth. Following the standard theosophical model, Steiner held that the “Aryan race” is the currently predominant “root race” in an evolutionary succession of racial groups, each with a distinct character and cosmic mission. The five root races to have appeared so far are the Polarian, Hyperborean, Lemurian, Atlantean, and Aryan, with two more root races to emerge in the distant future. Each root race comprises various “sub-races” and peoples, which are also at different stages of development. According to anthroposophy, at present the Aryan peoples share the earth with remnants of the previous two root races, descendants of the Lemurians and Atlanteans, both of which originally lived on continents now lost under the sea.<sup>77</sup> The Aryan race, in theosophical and anthroposophical doctrine, arose on Atlantis and escaped the great flood that submerged the fabled island; under the guidance of higher spiritual beings, the Aryans continued to evolve while the leftover Atlantean and Lemurian races devolved. The Aryans went on to colonize the rest of the world.

The anthroposophical variant of the Aryan myth, integrally tied to the Atlantis myth, is a paradigmatic example of the conjunction of ancient and modern elements within Steiner’s worldview.<sup>78</sup> The Atlantis myth has existed

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<sup>75</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Wahrspruchworte* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 293; Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 67. The latter lecture, on “Color and the Races of Humankind,” claims: “The whites are the ones who actually develop humanity in themselves.” (62)

<sup>76</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Das christliche Mysterium* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1998), 251–56 and 268, endorses both Gobineau’s and Wagner’s ideas about blood and race. In a 1912 lecture on “Darwin and Supernatural Research” Steiner praised Gobineau’s seminal racist tract *The Inequality of Human Races* at length; see Rudolf Steiner, *Menschengeschichte im Lichte der Geistesforschung* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1962), 480–87. Steiner also faulted Gobineau’s work for giving insufficient attention to the soul-spiritual forces underlying race; see *ibid.* 503–10. Despite their similarly ambivalent attitudes toward ‘race mixing,’ Steiner did not share Gobineau’s racial pessimism; in anthroposophical race theory, progress takes precedence over regression and decline, the opposite of the trajectory posited by Gobineau. What they held in common was a basic postulate of racial inequality as an evolutionary fact.

<sup>77</sup> On the Atlantis and Lemuria myths see Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Atlantis and the Nations” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992), 300–26; Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Klaus von See, “Nord-Glaube und Atlantis-Sehnsucht” in von See, *Ideologie und Philologie: Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), 91–117; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Atlantis Story: A Short History of Plato’s Myth* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> For background on the Aryan myth see Colin Kidd, “The Aryan Moment: Racialising Religion in the Nineteenth Century” in Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, 168–202; Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan*

at least since Plato, while the Aryan myth is a modern invention in the West, emerging initially at the end of the eighteenth century through a conflation of philology and ethnology, though the myth's proponents typically project Aryan origins back to ancient Asia or Thule or Atlantis. Racial versions of the Atlantis myth have a lengthy history within Western esotericism, from early nineteenth century French occultist Antoine Fabre d'Olivet to the late nineteenth century Atlantis revival and its theosophical elaborations. The Atlantis myth was a popular theme among ariosophist authors as well. At the turn of the twentieth century, an occult synthesis of the Atlantis and Aryan myths appeared in the popular work of French theosophist Edouard Schuré, an initial influence on Steiner who became one of his devotees.<sup>79</sup>

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*Myth* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Klaus von See, *Barbar, Germane, Arier: Die Suche nach der Identität der Deutschen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1994); Dorothy Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 27–88; Thomas Trautmann, ed., *The Aryan Debate* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). On the related myths of Atlantis and Aryans in esoteric contexts see Roberto Pinotti, "Continenti perduti ed esoterismo: prospettive tradizionali oltre il mito" in Pinotti, *I continenti perduti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), 306–56; for the influence of these myths on Nazi thinkers see Joscelyn Godwin, *Arktos: The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993); Franz Wegener, *Das atlantidische Weltbild: Nationalsozialismus und Neue Rechte auf der Suche nach der versunkenen Atlantis* (Gladbeck: Kulturförderverein Ruhrgebiet, 2001); Arn Strohmeier, *Von Hyperborea nach Auschwitz* (Cologne: PapyRossa, 2005); Dan Edelstein, "Hyperborean Atlantis: Jean-Sylvain Bailly, Madame Blavatsky, and the Nazi Myth" *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 35 (2006), 267–91. On theosophical and occult contributions to the Aryan race concept see Joan Leopold, "The Aryan Theory of Race" *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 7 (1970), 271–97; Romila Thapar, "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics" *Social Scientist* 24 (1996), 3–29; Peter Pels, "Occult Truths: Race, Conjecture, and Theosophy in Victorian Anthropology" in Richard Handler, ed., *Excluded Ancestors, Inventible Traditions* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 11–41; Peter van der Veer, "Aryan Origins" in van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 134–57; Douglas McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2009), 132–38, 153–77.

<sup>79</sup> See Edouard Schuré, *The Great Initiates* (London: Rider, 1913), particularly section I on "The Aryan Cycle" and the first chapter, "The Human Races and the Origins of Religion." The current English edition is published by the Anthroposophic Press; it was originally published in French in 1889, translated into German by Marie von Sivers, and published by a major theosophical publishing house: Schuré, *Die großen Eingeweihten: Skizze einer Geheimlehre der Religionen* (Leipzig: Altmann, 1907). Alongside Schuré and Blavatsky, the chief theosophical popularizer of

Steiner endorsed a spiritual rendering of the Aryan myth, a central trope in the racial theories of his followers in Germany, Italy, and elsewhere. Sometimes Steiner spoke of “the great Aryan Race”:

We are within the great Root Race of humanity that has peopled the earth since the land on which we now live rose up out of the inundations of the ocean. Ever since the Atlantean Race began slowly to disappear, the great Aryan Race has been the dominant one on earth. If we contemplate ourselves, we here in Europe are thus the fifth Sub-Race of the great Aryan Root Race.<sup>80</sup>

At other times he referred to “the Aryans, to the peoples of Asia Minor and Europe whom we regard as members of the Caucasian race.”<sup>81</sup> In line with his theory of racial missions, Steiner held that “it is the task of the Aryans to develop the faculty of thought and all that belongs to it.”<sup>82</sup> On occasion Steiner also referred to “our Nordic race,” positing a spiritual connection between intelligence and blonde hair and blue eyes.<sup>83</sup>

Teachings such as these highlight the overall structure of Steiner’s theory of racial and ethnic evolution. The basic motif is that of small, specially advanced racial groups progressing upward into the next evolutionary epoch, while the

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the Atlantis and Lemuria myths was William Scott-Elliot; see Scott-Elliot, *The Story of Atlantis* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896); Scott-Elliot, *The Lost Lemuria* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904); Scott-Elliot and A. P. Sinnett, *Atlantis nach okkulten Quellen* (Leipzig: Grieben, 1903). The locus classicus for linking the Atlantis myth and the Aryan myth is the book that sparked the Atlantis revival: Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (New York: Harper, 1882); German edition: Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis, die vorsintflutliche Welt* (Leipzig: Schnurpfeil, 1895). For an ariosophist treatment see Herbert Reichstein, *Gelöste Rätsel ältester Geschichte: Von Atlantis, Edda und der Bibel* (Berlin: Reichstein, 1934). Steiner’s own writings on the topic include Rudolf Steiner, *The Submerged Continents of Atlantis and Lemuria* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1911), the 1922 lectures in Steiner, *Über frühe Erdzustände* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1957), and the 1924 lectures in Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen*.

<sup>80</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend: Freemasonry and Related Occult Movements* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1985), 201.

<sup>81</sup> Steiner, *The Mission of the Folk Souls*, 106.

<sup>82</sup> Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 46.

<sup>83</sup> Steiner, *Aus den Inhalten der esoterischen Stunden*, 219. Steiner’s 1922 claims about color and intelligence warn that “Nordic” and “fair people” are becoming extinct: “If the blonds and blue-eyed people die out, the human race will become increasingly dense if men do not arrive at a form of intelligence that is independent of blondness. Blond hair actually bestows intelligence.” Rudolf Steiner, *Health and Illness* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1981), 86.

large mass of racially obsolete peoples declines. Steiner invoked this pattern throughout his works on race, applying it to both past and future.<sup>84</sup> The culmination of this process of racial-spiritual selection, which one anthroposophist aptly described as “cosmic eugenics,” is the eventual divergence of humanity into a future “good race” and an “evil race” which will be physiologically distinct.<sup>85</sup> Steiner indicated that the members of his own esoteric movement would form the nucleus of the next small group selected to advance into the era ahead, heralds of the new spiritual-racial dispensation in the coming evolutionary epoch.<sup>86</sup>

Steiner's theory of racial and ethnic evolution is an example of the broader “German tendency” described by George Stocking as a template based on “the progress of culture (or civilization)” and “conceived in racial terms, with the Germanic peoples as the carriers of the purest or highest manifestations of the divine spirit.”<sup>87</sup> Anthroposophists emphasized precisely this notion in the decades following Steiner's death. His mature teachings on the esoteric meaning of race and nation can be understood as a continuation of his youthful cultural nationalism, recast in a racial idiom. Its basic postulate was that Germanness can overcome ethnic and racial particularity and lead humanity toward its evolutionary destiny.<sup>88</sup> From an anthroposophist perspective,

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<sup>84</sup> See among others Steiner, *The Being of Man and His Future Evolution*, 115–17; Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucian*, 122–24; Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 78–81, 140; Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis*, 186–87; Steiner, *Aus der Bilderschrift der Apokalypse des Johannes*, 38–39.

<sup>85</sup> Sigismund von Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1939), 9; Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, 77; Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen*, 132–33; Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 82–84, 90–92, 141–45.

<sup>86</sup> See e.g. Steiner, *Grundelemente der Esoterik*, 251, and Steiner, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 133, 152, 186, 206.

<sup>87</sup> George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 25. Steiner's specific contribution to this tendency involved his combination of Austro-German national themes with theosophical concepts, a combination which was in turn one of the hallmarks of the modern German occult revival. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke ends his chapter on “The Modern German Occult Revival 1880–1910” thus: “In the context of the growth of German nationalism in Austria since 1866, we can see how theosophy, otherwise only tenuously related to *völkisch* thought by notions of race and racial development, could lend both a religious mystique and a universal rationale to the political attitudes of a small minority.” Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 31.

<sup>88</sup> Steiner presented Germanness itself as inherently cosmopolitan. In a 1915 lecture in Munich he declared: “Der Deutsche wird durch Geisteswissenschaft erkennen—er hat nötig, das in aller Objektivität und Demut aufzufassen—daß er durch das, was die Volksseele zu seinem Ich spricht, dazu prädestiniert ist, das Allgemein-Menschliche durch seine Nationalität zu



'Germany' was by no means restricted to the boundaries of the German state, but was above all a spiritual essence. The logic of Steiner's notion of a German cultural mission, with its Habsburg background, cast non-German peoples as eligible for cultural acceptance into "full humanity" via assimilation to German concepts and identities.<sup>89</sup>

Racial and ethnic designations thus took on an ambiguously fluid character within anthroposophical doctrine, without forsaking the underlying premise of German superiority. The very insistence on the centrality of Germanness reveals the limits of this esoteric approach to the question of race and nation.<sup>90</sup> Germans are not only the prototype of universal humanness; the achievement of genuine individuality, the complete transcendence of racial and ethnic specificity, and the full unfolding of the "I"—Steiner's term for the paramount realization of spiritual wholeness and individual selfhood—are special German talents and tasks. This is the esoteric basis for the redemptive mission of the

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suchen. Daß er mitbekommt, was ihn über die Nationalität hinausführt, das ist das Nationale deutschen Wesens. Darin besteht das konkret Nationale deutschen Wesens, daß es durch das Nationale über die Nation hinausgetrieben wird in das allgemeine Menschentum hinein." Rudolf Steiner, *Mitteleuropa zwischen Ost und West* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1982), 72.

<sup>89</sup> A 1920 example can be found in Steiner, *Die Brücke zwischen der Weltgeistigkeit und dem Physischen des Menschen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1980), 218, explaining that Judaism falls short of "full humanity" ("das volle Menschentum"), which can only come through the esoteric Christ. In contrast to the Germans, representatives of universalism, Steiner portrayed Jewishness as the prototype of national particularity and ethnic separatism. Individual Jews could overcome this defect by abandoning Jewishness and wholly embracing Germanness. An anthroposophist analysis is available in Ralf Sonnenberg, "'... ein Fehler der Weltgeschichte'? Rudolf Steiners Sicht des Judentums zwischen spiritueller Würdigung und Assimilationserwartung" in Sonnenberg, ed., *Anthroposophie und Judentum: Perspektiven einer Beziehung* (Frankfurt: Info 3, 2009), 29–63.

<sup>90</sup> In the words of Steiner's follower Ernst Boldt in 1923: "Every age known to history has been distinguished spiritually by the supremacy of one particular people, and the epoch now dawning will be sustained in its civilizing impulse by the German spirit." (Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, xiv). Anthroposophist summaries explain that for Steiner, the "universal human" is not to be found "scattered all over the earth, in every race and in every people," but is instead concentrated in German Europe: "It is simply an objective fact that the purely human—the completely individual and completely universal—has so far been revealed in a prototypical way predominantly in human spirits that have their basis in *Mitteleuropa*." Hence the creation of the "universal human" is the "special task of the German language, of German culture, indeed of the German national spirit." Pietro Archiati, *Die Überwindung des Rassismus durch die Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1997), 36–37. A recent recapitulation of such views can be found in Peter Selg, *Rudolf Steiner 1861–1925: Lebens- und Werkgeschichte* (Arlesheim: Verlag des Ita Wegman Institut, 2012), 964–68.



German spirit, destined to lead humanity out of the morass of materialism toward the next universal stage of cosmic evolution, when nation and race will have faded from the spiritual stage.

Though presented in occult terms, these beliefs recapitulate longstanding tendencies in German thought, drawn together in Steiner's conception of freedom and community.<sup>91</sup> Such tendencies, as examined by Steinberg, Judson, Stocking, and others, provide invaluable insight into the contradictions and tensions in Steiner's teachings, deriving originally from his Habsburg beginnings. Just as many nineteenth century Germans in Austria felt themselves a culturally advanced minority surrounded by hostile and inferior non-German groups, so did the mature Steiner view the besieged German mission in a bewildering modern world. Examined against this backdrop, anthroposophy's paradoxical combination of racist and universalist elements, of ethnocentric and individualist elements, can be accounted for in part through the specific circumstances of Steiner's intellectual itinerary.<sup>92</sup>

On its own terms, anthroposophical race theory represented a narrative of redemption, promising salvation from the bonds of blood and a path toward a harmonious future. To a world sunk in materialism, Steiner preached spiritual

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<sup>91</sup> On the history of this German rhetoric of freedom and community compare W. H. Bruford, "British and German Ideas of Freedom" *German Life and Letters* 1 (1947), 77–88; Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957); Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); Wolfgang Mommsen, "Die 'deutsche Idee der Freiheit'" in Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und politische Ordnung: Künstler. Schriftsteller und Intellektuelle in der deutschen Geschichte 1830–1933* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2000), 133–57; Klaus von See, *Freiheit und Gemeinschaft: Völkisch-nationales Denken in Deutschland zwischen Französischer Revolution und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2001).

<sup>92</sup> This conclusion highlights the central failing of anthroposophist attempts to come to terms with Steiner's contradictory racial legacy. Whether adhering to an orthodox line or exploring alternative interpretations, these readings of Steiner endeavor to relativize the racist components in his thought through simple textual comparison, contrasting his universal message and downplaying of racial difference to the pronounced racial judgements spread throughout his work. That static procedure neglects the historical factors at work and misses the dynamic character of Steiner's evolving ideas about race and nation. An adequate assessment of Steiner's teachings requires understanding those teachings within their historical context rather than measuring them against twenty-first century standards or making them more palatable to contemporary sensibilities. Instead of mere disavowal or denial, a more substantive response for those concerned about Steiner's ideological inheritance might be to enlist the universalist aspects of anthroposophy's conceptual framework toward an internal critique of esoteric racism. Such possibilities go beyond the boundaries of historical study; they are a matter for Steiner's followers themselves to take up.

renewal and rebirth. To Germans in particular, anthroposophy offered deliverance from the indignities and uncertainties of the early twentieth century and a regeneration of Germany's rightful spiritual and cultural status. In the wake of the catastrophic war of 1914–1918, this message took on a powerful appeal. As Wilhelmine Germany gave way to the Weimar era, Steiner's vision of German redemption, in its racial, national, and spiritual registers, aroused millenarian hopes in his followers and cast him as Germany's savior, the one who would restore the German people to its proper place in the evolution of humankind. In its juxtaposition of racist and non-racist elements and its fundamental rejection of materialism, the blight from which Germany needed to be saved, Steiner's racial program presented an enigma to his contemporaries, compelling to some and repellent to others. Conceiving of the Germans as the spiritual vanguard of European culture, a crucial legacy of his Austrian origins, Steiner assumed the role of esoteric harbinger of the unique German mission to redeem the world.

## The Politics of the Unpolitical: German Anthroposophy in Theory and Practice Before 1933

With the formal separation from the Theosophical Society and the establishment of the Anthroposophical Society in early 1913, Rudolf Steiner and his followers embarked on an independent path toward an organized occultism that could meet the demands of the era. In the course of the next two decades anthroposophists developed a distinctive version of esoteric thought and practice in which racial and national themes played a substantial role. Throughout this period anthroposophy continued to portray itself as quintessentially ‘unpolitical’: politics represented a superficial and materialist way of understanding reality, an obstruction to perceiving the real spiritual forces at work behind the veil of everyday consciousness. Anthroposophists feared that involvement in politics would sully their noble ideals and detract from their higher mission. This unpolitical self-image went hand in hand with a broader tradition in German thought of denigrating the merely political as unworthy of the elevated tasks of *Geist* or spirit. From this point of view, politics and democracy were lowly and un-German.<sup>1</sup>

The initial years of Steiner’s career as an independent esotericist provide several illuminating examples of anthroposophy in theory and in practice, beginning with Steiner’s response to the First World War. Although he had established the center of the anthroposophical movement in the Swiss village of Dornach in 1913, Steiner spent as much time in Germany and Austria during World War One as in neutral Switzerland. During the early years of the conflict he was a fervent supporter of the Central Powers, blaming the war on the English, French, and Russians and insisting that Germany and Austria were merely defending themselves against the machinations of their enemies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The classic instance of such arguments is Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1918), which rejects democracy, politics, and liberal values as aspects of superficial *Zivilisation* rather than *Kultur*. Mann eventually changed his views and became a supporter of the Weimar republic. For historical context on ‘unpolitical’ invocations of the German spirit see Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 9–26; on the widespread “aversion to politics” in Weimar Germany see Peter Gay, “The Hunger for Wholeness: Trials of Modernity” in Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 70–101, quote on 71.

<sup>2</sup> For an anthology of Steiner’s war-related texts see Roman Boos, ed., *Rudolf Steiner während des Weltkrieges* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1933). Important

Steiner offered a supernatural interpretation of the war's causes. In a lecture to German anthroposophists at the end of September 1914 he described the war as a spiritual mentor, a "teacher" and "master" that taught people to fight materialism and engendered "love for humanity." He declared the war cosmically necessary, a conflict "anchored in the karma of the nations" which "must happen for the salvation of humankind."<sup>3</sup> In a February 1915 lecture, Steiner acknowledged that the war had caused "enormous rivers of blood to flow," but explained that this was required by "the eternal necessities of earthly evolution." He depicted the war as the earthly manifestation of processes playing out among "the beings of the spirit worlds," a "world of demons and spirits which works through humankind when nations battle one another." This was not just a military struggle but a clash of national spirits, a cosmic confrontation between "Germanism" and the spiritually immature East as well as the spiritually obsolete West. Steiner warned that it would be an evolutionary tragedy if the German element were to be defeated by the Romanic element or the Slavic element. By understanding the war's spiritual dimension, the conflict appeared as preparation for "the future evolution of humanity."<sup>4</sup> Steiner's

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context is available in Herman de Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National, and Women's Movements in Indonesia and South Asia, 1875–1947* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Katholieke Universiteit, 1996), 156–60; Ulrich Linse, "'Universale Bruderschaft' oder nationaler Rassenkrieg—die deutschen Theosophen im Ersten Weltkrieg" in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche, eds., *Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001), 602–45; Klaus Vondung, "Deutsche Apokalypse 1914" in Vondung, ed., *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, 153–71; **Roland Stromberg**, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 24–25. Other important wartime texts include Rudolf Steiner, *Gedanken während der Zeit des Krieges* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1915); Steiner, *Vom Menschenrätsel* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1916); and the lectures in Steiner, *Aus schicksalstragender Zeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1959), Steiner, *Aus dem mitteleuropäischen Geistesleben* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1962), and Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen: Das Karma der Unwahrhaftigkeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1983). The latter volume was recently re-issued in a heavily revised version: Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2011); for a highly critical review of the new edition see Helmut Zander, "Anthroposophische Aufarbeitungen der anthroposophischen Geschichte" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 64 (2012), 66–69. Some of Steiner's wartime lectures were later published as a pamphlet series; see e.g. Steiner, *Die germanische Seele und der deutsche Geist* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1934).

<sup>4</sup> Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 32–33, 42–43, 53. Most of Steiner's lectures from the first year of the war have not been published; see editorial note in the 2011 edition of Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, vol. I, 449.

followers publically welcomed the war as a prerequisite for “the re-birth of our German people.”<sup>5</sup>

Anthroposophists believed that the World War would bring Germany the stature it deserved. In early 1916 they described the war as a “turning point in history which will give Germany and the German people leadership in the entire realm of human spiritual culture.”<sup>6</sup> Three months later Steiner sought to establish a press office in Switzerland to promote the German and Austrian cause, but was turned down by the German high command.<sup>7</sup> By the end of 1916, with the receding likelihood of victory by the Central Powers and the failure of German plans for a negotiated peace on the basis of continental predominance, his tone began to shift toward a more critical assessment of Germany’s civilian leadership. This shift was related to the death in June 1916 of Helmuth von Moltke the younger, chief of the German general staff at the outbreak of the war. Moltke’s wife was a committed anthroposophist, and Steiner maintained a friendly relationship with Moltke himself both before and during the war.

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<sup>5</sup> A classic instance is the series of wartime sermons in Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Christ und Krieg* (Munich: Kaiser, 1916). Rittelmeyer also published a sequence of pamphlets distributed to the German troops, with titles like “Kraft zum Kampf”; by early 1916 three million copies had been disseminated. For details on Rittelmeyer’s stance during the war see Claudia Becker, “Versuche religiöser Erneuerung in der Moderne am Beispiel des evangelischen Theologen Friedrich Rittelmeyer (1872–1938)” (doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2001), 66–71. For his own retrospective account see Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Ein Nachwort zu unsrer Friedenserklärung” *Christliche Welt*, March 28, 1918, 135–40.

<sup>6</sup> From the declaration of “Absichten und Ziele” opening the premier issue of the anthroposophist journal *Das Reich*, April 1916. See also Karl Heise, “Der Krieg und seine Folgen” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* November 1914, 213–16; Heise, “Kriegs-Visionen” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus*, August 1917, 72–76; Karl Heinz, *Der Krieg im Lichte der okkulten Lehren: Ein Wort an die weiße Rasse* (Breslau: Faßhauer, 1915).

<sup>7</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus?* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1986), 232–33; Zander, *Rudolf Steiner*, 345–46; Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner*, 574–78. For context see Heinz Gollwitzer, “Die Sympathisanten der Mittelmächte im Lager der europäischen Neutralen” in Gollwitzer, *Weltpolitik und deutsche Geschichte: Gesammelte Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 115–36, and Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 180–99. Ringer notes that with the outbreak of the war, “the mandarin intellectuals rejoiced at the apparent rebirth of ‘idealism’ in Germany. They celebrated the death of politics, the triumph of ultimate, apolitical objectives over short-range interests, and the resurgence of those moral and irrational sources of social cohesion that had been threatened by the ‘materialistic’ calculation of Wilhelmian modernity.” (180)

Moltke had long harbored an interest in esoteric thought, and several of his pronouncements about the war displayed substantial parallels to Steiner's teachings. Like Steiner, Moltke viewed the war as "a necessity anchored in world evolution" so that Germany could fulfill its "cultural mission." A German defeat would mean a severe setback for the evolution of humankind as a whole, Moltke declared in late 1914:

The further spiritual development of humanity is only possible through Germany. That is why Germany will not be defeated in this war; it is the only nation that is currently capable of taking over the leadership of humankind toward higher goals.<sup>8</sup>

In another text from late 1914, Moltke proclaimed that Germany was fighting a "holy war" in defense of "ideal goals."<sup>9</sup> Statements like these, from one of the major figures responsible for the catastrophic war, shed a revealing light on the impact of Steiner's teachings in the context of their time. Following Moltke's death, Steiner claimed to be in communication with his departed spirit and channeled Moltke's pronouncements from the other world. After the final German defeat, Steiner channeled Moltke blaming the war on "Ahrimanic spirits" in the West and "oriental demons" in the East.<sup>10</sup> Steiner consistently denied that Moltke bore responsibility for the war.

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<sup>8</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente 1877–1916*, edited by Eliza von Moltke (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1922), 13–14. Steiner played a critical role in the preparation of the volume, which was published by an anthroposophist press. Isabel Hull, *The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 366, notes that the extensive editing of Moltke's memoirs by Steiner and Eliza von Moltke casts doubt on the reliability of the text, particularly regarding Moltke's continued personal interest in and pursuit of esoteric topics after his 1906 appointment to head the General Staff.

<sup>9</sup> Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente*, 390–91. For details on Moltke's relationship to Steiner see Hull, *The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 233, 240–41; Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning* (Oxford: Berg, 1991), 217–22, 271–73; Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51–54, 261–64; Jochen Thies, *Die Moltkes: Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte* (Munich: Piper, 2010) 158–61; Olaf Jessen, *Die Moltkes: Biographie einer Familie* (Munich: Beck, 2010), 250–52, 307–11. The most thorough study is Helmut Zander, "Der Generalstabschef Helmuth von Moltke d.J. und das theosophische Milieu um Rudolf Steiner" *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 62 (2003), 423–58.

<sup>10</sup> Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner*, 586; Thomas Meyer, ed., *Light for the New Millennium: Rudolf Steiner's Association with Helmuth and Eliza von Moltke; Letters, Documents and After-Death Communications* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1997). For Steiner's full-scale defense of Moltke see among others his May 1919 essay "Die 'Schuld' am Kriege" in Rudolf

The First World War did not conclude with the German victory its advocates expected, and the far-reaching social changes that swept Germany in the wake of the defeat spurred a re-assessment of anthroposophical priorities. Steiner's association with Moltke became a liability after the war, when some blamed Steiner's supposed occult influence over Moltke for the German loss at the battle of the Marne. Similar accusations continued to animate right-wing hostility toward anthroposophy in the years to come. Anthroposophist responses to such hostility reveal a complex pattern of affinity and confrontation between Steiner's esoteric vision and the politics of the interwar right, particularly the multifaceted *völkisch* movement.

Anthroposophy shifted emphasis during this period from cultivating an occult worldview to implementing practical projects. This led to the emergence of Waldorf schools, biodynamic agriculture, the religious renewal movement known as the Christian Community, and the distinctive anthroposophist approach to economics and politics that Steiner called "social threefolding." The roots of all these endeavors can be traced to anthroposophist reactions to the war and subsequent disillusionment, centering on the notion that the unblemished German spirit had been failed by an inadequate array of social institutions which needed to be revitalized through spiritual and national regeneration.

After the German defeat in 1918, Steiner and his followers insisted that Germany was not responsible for the war. This claim became a central component of anthroposophy's public profile during the Weimar republic, coupled with conspiracy theories about longstanding Western plans to destroy the German and Austrian empires. Steiner declared already in 1914 that "this war is a conspiracy against German spiritual life."<sup>11</sup> According to his account,

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Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus und zur Zeitlage* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1961), 376–87. Eliza von Moltke's 1922 "Vorwort" to Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente*, vii–xv, offers a similarly telling anthroposophist perspective on the war. More research is needed on the influence of Steiner's teachings among German military leaders. On Werner von Blomberg's "Vorliebe für die Anthroposophie und Theosophie," for example, see Kirstin Schäfer, *Werner von Blomberg: Hitlers erster Feldmarschall* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), 46 and 127.

<sup>11</sup> Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 27. Further instances of the conspiracist interpretation of the war include Rudolf Steiner, *Secret Brotherhoods and the Mystery of the Human Double* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004); Steiner, *The Karma of Untruthfulness: Secret Societies, the Media, and Preparations for the Great War* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005); Steiner, *What Is Necessary in These Urgent Times* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2010). Similar stances are maintained today by a range of anthroposophist authors such as Markus Osterrieder and Thomas Meyer. For critical analyses



occultist secret societies in the Entente countries had planned the war decades ahead of time:

I have drawn your attention to the demonstrable fact that in the 1890s certain occult brotherhoods in the West discussed the current world war, and that moreover the disciples of these occult brotherhoods were instructed with maps which showed how Europe was to be changed by this war. English occult brotherhoods in particular pointed to a war that had to come, that they positively steered toward, that they set the stage for.<sup>12</sup>

Germany was thus forced to defend itself: "The Germans could foresee that this war would one day be fought against them. It was their duty to arm themselves for it."<sup>13</sup> Steiner and his followers adamantly maintained that the German people and the German spirit bore no responsibility for the war.<sup>14</sup> Steiner's polemics against the Versailles treaty and his invective against Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations, the English, French, Russians, and Americans, represent an esoteric version of resentments that were widespread in Germany.<sup>15</sup>

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of Steiner's conspiracist worldview see Heiner Barz, "Der Geist und die Geschichte. Oder: Die unsanfte Verschwörung" *Neue Sammlung* 29 (1989), 395–402, and Asbjørn Dyrendal, "Hidden Knowledge, Hidden Powers: Esotericism and Conspiracy Culture" in Asprem and Granholm, eds., *Contemporary Esotericism*, 200–25.

<sup>12</sup> Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 321.

<sup>14</sup> For a representative example see Sigismund von Gleich, *Wahrheit gegen Unwahrheit über Rudolf Steiner* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921). Long after the end of the conflict, anthroposophists have continued to insist that Germany bore no responsibility for the First World War; see e.g. Jürgen von Grone, "Zum Kriegsausbruch 1914" *Die Drei* January 1964, 1–10; Thomas Meyer, ed., *Helmuth von Moltke, 1848–1916: Dokumente zu seinem Leben und Wirken* (Basel: Perseus, 1993); Karl Buchleitner, *Das Schicksal der anthroposophischen Bewegung und die Katastrophe Mitteleuropas* (Schaffhausen: Novalis, 1997); Thomas Meyer, "Moltke, Steiner—und welche deutsche 'Schuld'?" *Der Europäer*, May 2001, 9–10; Andreas Bracher, ed., *Der Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges: Zum Verständnis der Vorgänge bei Kriegsausbruch 1914 und der Haltung Rudolf Steiners* (Basel: Perseus, 2005); Fritz Frey, *Europa zwischen Ost und West: Individualität und Egoismus im alten und im neuen Europa* (Basel: Informationslücke-Verlag, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Compare Klaus Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral: Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1969); Ulrich Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage: Politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 76–94; Helmut Fries, *Die große Katharsis: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der Sicht deutscher Dichter und Gelehrter*

Steiner's stance toward the war and its aftermath was based on his vision of *Mitteleuropa* or central Europe, a term which in anthroposophist usage generally referred to lands where German cultural and spiritual life was seen as rightfully predominant, with the German-speaking territories of Austria, Switzerland and Germany at their core.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, the post-war interference of the Western powers in what should have been Germany's proper sphere of influence appeared as an affront to the spiritual mission of *Mitteleuropa* as a whole. Wilson's doctrine of national self-determination was "opposed to the divinely ordered course of evolution."<sup>17</sup> Steiner's teachings were part of a broader German discourse of *Mitteleuropa* built around the assumption of German hegemony on the continent, whether cast in politi-

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(Konstanz: Verlag am Hockgraben, 1995); Wolfgang Mommsen, "Die deutschen kulturellen Eliten im Ersten Weltkrieg" in Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), 1–15; Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung: Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Fest, 2000); Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003); Jeffrey Smith, "The First World War and the Public Sphere in Germany" in Michael Mays, ed., *World War I and the Cultures of Modernity* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 68–80.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *Wesen und Bedeutung Mitteleuropas und die europäischen Volksgeister* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1980); Steiner, *Nordische und mitteleuropäische Geistsimpulse* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1982); Steiner, *Die Forderungen der Gegenwart an Mitteleuropa* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1951). Subsequent anthroposophist treatments include Klaus Petersen, *Rudolf Steiner und der mitteleuropäische Kulturauftrag* (Berlin: Dionysos-Verlag, 1961); Hans Colsman, ed., *Mitteleuropa im Spannungsfeld der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1986); Markus Osterrieder, "Mitteleuropa zwischen Ost und West: Rudolf Steiners Entwurf von Mitteleuropa als zu schaffenden Ausgleichsraum" *Jahrbuch für anthroposophische Kritik* 2001, 194–207; Renate Riemeck, *Mitteleuropa: Bilanz eines Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1965). Riemeck's book claims that World War I was planned by the Western powers from the 1870s onward and holds the French, Russians, the Pope and the Rothschilds responsible for the war, placing chief blame on English financiers who conspired via Masonic lodges to attack Germany. Her account focuses on "secret societies" and blames "dark powers" for the "destruction of Mitteleuropa." (83)

<sup>17</sup> Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, 12; cf. Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, 187. In June 1919 Steiner declared that the task of *Mitteleuropa* was to erect a "Reich des Geistes," an empire of the spirit, in contraposition to both West and East: Steiner, *Geisteswissenschaftliche Behandlung sozialer und pädagogischer Fragen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1991), 242. Spiritual interpretations of the world war were common among German thinkers. Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, notes that "Germans regarded the war as a spiritual conflict" (118) and viewed the prospect of victory as "primarily spiritual and life-enhancing and only secondarily territorial and material." (155)

cal, economic, or cultural terms.<sup>18</sup> This concept, in Steiner's worldview, was in turn closely related to the anthroposophical notion of *Volksseelen* or "national souls," often referred to as "folk souls" in English-language anthroposophist publications. Steiner taught that each *Volk* or people has its own collective soul and guiding spirit (*Volksgeist*), spiritual entities which oversee the process of ethnic evolution; the task of the national soul is to help guide each people toward its true spiritual mission. For anthroposophy, "whole nationalities and races" are "guided by higher and lower Spirits of Fire": "From hoary antiquity to the present day our earth has been led and guided from people to people, from race to race, by the Spirits of Fire whose bodies are the Folk-Souls and who are in charge of the course of earthly evolution."<sup>19</sup> The mission of the German people, in Steiner's eyes, had been wrongly thwarted by the outcome of the war and the post-war order imposed by the West.

Anthroposophy shared several of the chief preoccupations of the nationalist right in post-World War One Germany: war guilt, Germany's honor, the fate of the eastern territories, the Allied occupation in the west, the status of the

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<sup>18</sup> For background see Henry Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German thought and action 1815–1945* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955); Peter Theiner: "'Mitteleuropa'-Pläne im Wilhelminischen Deutschland" in Helmut Berding, ed., *Wirtschaftliche und politische Integration in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 128–48; Richard Plaschka, ed., *Mitteleuropa-Konzeptionen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995); Jörg Brechtefeld, *Mitteleuropa and German Politics: 1848 to the Present* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Jürgen Elvert, *Mitteleuropa! Deutsche Pläne zur europäischen Neuordnung (1918–1945)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999); Wolfgang Mommsen, "Die Mitteleuropaidee und die Mitteleuropapläne im Deutschen Reich" in Mommsen, *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2004), 94–117.

<sup>19</sup> Steiner, *Universe, Earth and Man*, 48–49. Cf. Steiner, *Die Seelen der Völker geisteswissenschaftlich betrachtet* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1929); Steiner, *The Destinies of Individuals and Nations* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1986); Ernst Boldt, "The German National Soul" in Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 30–36; Karl Heyer, "Vom Wesen der Völker und ihren Kulturmissionen" in Heyer, *Menschheitsfragen der Gegenwart im Lichte anthroposophischer Welterkenntnis* (Basel: Geering, 1927), 71–95; Sigismund von Gleich, "Zur Erkenntnis der Völkerseelen" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* April 1935, 19–22; Hans Erhard Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas: Grundzüge einer Völkerpsychologie auf geisteswissenschaftlicher Basis* (Vienna, 1937); George Adams Kaufmann, *Souls of the Nations* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1938); Herbert Hahn, *Vom Genius Europas: Skizze einer anthroposophischen Völkerpsychologie* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1964); Heinz Eckhoff, ed., *Europa und sein Genius: Die Volksseelenkunde der Anthroposophie* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986); Gerard Klockenbring, *Auf der Suche nach dem deutschen Volksgeist* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1989); Karl Heyer, *Wer ist der deutsche Volksgeist?* (Basel: Perseus, 1990).

German people within Europe and its mission in the world.<sup>20</sup> The thematic overlap between anthroposophy and the *völkisch* milieu gave rise to organizational as well as ideological rivalry. Some far-right figures, endeavoring to portray themselves as Germany's rightful redeemers, viewed Steiner and his followers as antagonists rather than allies, a perception reinforced by anthroposophy's claim to deeper esoteric understanding of the German crisis. In the contest for leadership of this millennial mood, anthroposophy became a target of disgruntled attacks by Germany's other would-be saviors.

This dynamic accelerated with the establishment of anthroposophy's public institutions: the Waldorf school movement, founded in 1919; anthroposophical medicine, beginning in 1920; biodynamic agriculture, initiated in 1924; and the religious arm of the anthroposophist movement, the Christian Community, starting in 1922. The intellectual context for this rapid ferment of organized occultism in anthroposophical form was the theory of 'social threefolding' that Steiner began developing in 1917. The full name Steiner gave to this doctrine was "the three-fold arrangement of the social organism," a formulation which highlights the organicist conception of society underlying the theory.<sup>21</sup> Steiner

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<sup>20</sup> In some cases anthroposophist views on these topics were expressed in racial terms; see e.g. Karl Heyer's racially tinged reminiscence of the Rhineland occupation: Heyer, "Erinnerung an die Besetzung der Rheinlande" *Anthroposophie* July 13, 1930, 218–19, describing his "adverse feelings at the sight of the colored troops, the Negroes, Annamites, Moroccans, etc. etc." Similar views on the 'black horror' were presented even more strongly in Richard Karutz, "Über Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 11, 1931, 13–14.

<sup>21</sup> The primary text is Rudolf Steiner, *Die Kernpunkte der sozialen Frage in den Lebensnotwendigkeiten der Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Greiner und Pfeiffer, 1919), in English as Steiner, *The Three-fold Commonwealth* (London: Threefold Commonwealth Publishing Association, 1922). For context see Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, 249–52; Francis Coker, *Organismic Theories of the State: Nineteenth Century Interpretations of the State as Organism or as Person* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910); Ralph Bowen, *German Theories of the Corporative State* (New York: Whittlesey, 1947); Paul Weindling, "The State as an Organism" in Weindling, *Darwinism and Social Darwinism in Imperial Germany* (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1991), 288–303; Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 56–62; Paul Nolte, "Ständische Ordnung im Mitteleuropa der Zwischenkriegszeit: Zur Ideengeschichte einer sozialen Utopie" in Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Utopie und politische Herrschaft im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 233–55. In addition to its corporatist and organicist strands, Steiner's vision of a threefold society parallels the hierarchical system of 'synarchy' promoted by nineteenth century French occultist Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre. A detailed analysis and critique of "social threefolding" is available in Ilas Körner-Wellershaus, *Sozialer Heilsweg Anthroposophie: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der sozialen Dreigliederung Rudolf Steiners unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der anthroposophischen Geisteswissenschaft* (Alfter:

held that society consists of three autonomous branches, the economic sphere, the political sphere, and the spiritual or cultural sphere; the three realms are to be kept separate from one another, and each is subject to a different overarching principle: equality in the political realm, fraternity in the economic realm, and liberty in the cultural realm. Of these three, the cultural or spiritual sphere was paramount, and encompassed many of the activities more commonly associated with the political sphere.

In a 'threefold social order' neither the economic realm nor the cultural realm was to be organized democratically; democratic forms were permissible only in the somewhat attenuated political realm. Even in the political sphere, however, Steiner's attitude toward democracy was often firmly negative. In October 1917 he ridiculed "democratic institutions" as mere tools of the "powers of darkness" who are always "pulling the strings" from behind the scenes.<sup>22</sup> Another 1917 text denounced "Western 'democracy'" as "a syndicate for the suppression of true freedom."<sup>23</sup> In the words of an admiring visitor from abroad: "It was the time when democratic systems, copied from more advanced Western communities, were celebrating their victory in Germany and in other Central European countries. Steiner was resolute in his strong disapproval of them."<sup>24</sup>

This skepticism toward democracy was accompanied by a variety of authoritarian assumptions, but was not focused primarily on the state. In a threefold society, the economic, political, and cultural spheres would operate independently of one another rather than being united under the framework of a modern nation-state. The free unfolding of cultural and spiritual talent was to remain unfettered by political requirements or economic demands. These proposals reflected a longing for community and discontent with democracy

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VDG, 1993); see also the thorough examination in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1286–1356.

<sup>22</sup> Steiner, *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, 223.

<sup>23</sup> Previously unpublished manuscript in Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (2011) vol. III, 267. Steiner's skepticism toward liberal democracy as a Western imposition on German traditions pre-dated his esoteric turn. In 1889 he wrote: "It is simply foolish to believe that all states could be governed according to the model that prevails in France and England. The leader of the state must find the deep unique characteristics of his people, and the constitution must provide the direction that corresponds to the tendencies slumbering within the people. Sometimes the majority of the people wants to move in a direction that goes against the people's own nature, and in that case the statesman must be led by the nature of the people and not by the random demands of the majority. The statesman must stand for the nation against the people." Steiner, *Goethes Werke: Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, volume II (Berlin: Spemann, 1889), li–lii.

<sup>24</sup> Landau, *God is my Adventure*, 76.

typical of the Weimar era.<sup>25</sup> Steiner's followers shared his dim view of democracy. An October 1920 pamphlet written by anthroposophist university students condemned "formal democracy and abstract liberalism" as "alien to our people" and called for a "Führer" to lead Germany out of "materialism." They insisted that such a leader "can today only be found in Rudolf Steiner."<sup>26</sup>

Threefolding doctrines inspired a short-lived social movement between 1919 and the onset of hyperinflation in 1922, one of the few organized anthroposophist forays into politics. But the path from theory to practice took several noteworthy turns.<sup>27</sup> The rise and fall of the threefolding movement traces the arc of anthroposophy's early flirtation with political engagement and reveals the hopes and anxieties underlying Steiner's spiritual teachings. The earliest efforts to propagate a threefolding program came from mid-1917 to mid-1918, when German and Austrian forces controlled large swathes of territory in Eastern Europe. Steiner addressed his initial threefolding proposals to high-level German and Austrian leaders, including the Austrian Kaiser and the last chancellor of Imperial Germany.<sup>28</sup> After these efforts failed and the unforeseen

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gérard Raulet, "Unfall der Republik oder strukturelles Problem? Überlegungen zum antiparlamentarischen Denken in der Weimarer Republik" in Wolfgang Bialas and Manfred Gangl, eds., *Intellektuelle im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2000), 50–67; Rüdiger Graf, "Optimismus und Pessimismus in der Krise—der politisch-kulturelle Diskurs in der Weimarer Republik" in Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Ordnungen in der Krise: Zur politischen Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands 1900–1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 115–40.

<sup>26</sup> 1920 pamphlet from the *Bund für anthroposophische Hochschularbeit* in BA R8088/414.

<sup>27</sup> For anthroposophist accounts see Hella Wiesberger, "Rudolf Steiners öffentliches Wirken für die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus: Von der Dreigliederungs-Idee des Jahres 1917 zur Dreigliederungs-Bewegung des Jahres 1919—Eine Chronik" *Nachrichten der Rudolf Steiner-Nachlassverwaltung* 24 (1969), 6–31; Hans Kühn, *Dreigliederungs-Zeit: Rudolf Steiners Kampf für die Gesellschaftsordnung der Zukunft* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1978); Albert Schmelzer, *Die Dreigliederungsbewegung 1919* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> Steiner's 1917 'threefolding' memoranda, originally prepared for the Austrian Kaiser, are reprinted in Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 329–75, and Boos, ed., *Rudolf Steiner während des Weltkrieges*, 60–90. They denounce "Western" ideals of self-determination and democracy as the hegemony of the "Anglo-American race." For further details see Graf Otto Lerchenfeld, "Zeitgemäße Erinnerungen aus dem Jahre 1917" *Anthroposophie* July 1933, 305–11, and Ludwig Graf Polzer-Hoditz, "Eine historische Bemerkung" *Anthroposophie* March 1934, 165–73. According to Friedrich Rittelmeyer, Steiner viewed his 1917 memoranda as an attempt to counter covert occult-masonic machinations against Germany emanating from the Western powers; see Rittelmeyer's November 1934 letter to Erhard Bartsch, GSAPK I. HA



outcome of the war dashed anthroposophist hopes for realizing the threefold model in the territories of the East, Steiner's attention shifted. With social and economic unrest agitating Germany in the wake of the defeat, Steiner began to portray social threefolding as an alternative to the various proposals for collectivization and socialization that abounded in the early stages of the fledgling Weimar democracy.

Positioning his own scheme as a 'third way' between capitalism and communism, Steiner devoted much of 1919 to promoting social threefolding both to industrialists and business leaders as well as to proletarian audiences in the newly formed workers councils. While courting mass support from workers, Steiner rejected democratization of the factories and maintained that the economy was not to be run by the "hand-workers" but rather by "the spiritual workers, who direct production."<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the social threefolding movement claimed to represent the harmonization of workers' interests and owners' interests. This approach yielded a contradictory catalogue of measures under the threefolding banner, with denunciations of "Anglo-American capital" vying for attention alongside condemnations of "socialist illusions," while Steiner's ideas were presented as "the path to the salvation of the German nation."<sup>30</sup> The resulting *mélange* of proposals resembled other organicist and corporatist models current at the time. What anthroposophists envisioned under the rubric of social threefolding ranged from vague utopias of an

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Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 311–16. By early 1920 Steiner declared: "Either Bolshevism over the entire world or threefolding!" Steiner, *Geistige und soziale Wandlungen in der Menschheitsentwicklung* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1966), 133.

<sup>29</sup> Steiner, *Threefold Commonwealth*, xxxii. In December 1918 anthroposophist Roman Boos declared that threefolding would save Germany from its two gravest threats: "from the outside, the armies of the Allies, and from within, the workers in revolt." *Nachrichten der Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung* 24 (1969), 17. Cf. Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Steiner, Krieg und Revolution" *Christentum und Gegenwart* September 1919, 136–39; Emil Leinhas, "Kapitalverwaltung im dreigliedrigen sozialen Organismus" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* February 1920; Oskar Hermann, "Wirtschaftsdemokratie: Ein Zerrbild der Dreigliederung" *Anthroposophie* March 30, 1930, 98–100. The early issues of the journal *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* do not carry specific dates and are unpaginated. The journal was founded in July 1919 and published in Stuttgart; in 1922 it became *Anthroposophie*.

<sup>30</sup> Steiner's December 1919 essay "Der Weg zur Rettung des deutschen Volkes" is reprinted in Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 113–16, and in English as "The Way to Save the German Nation" in Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1985), 149–51. Cf. Ernst Uehli, *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* (Stuttgart: Bund für Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus, 1920); Moritz Bartsch, *Der dreigliedrige soziale Organismus: Eine Einführung* (Breslau: Preuß & Jünger, 1921); Roman Boos, *Die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus und der Staat* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921).



organic national community to straightforward demands for a *völkisch* state as a bulwark against Western democracy. In a pamphlet published in December 1918, at the downfall of the Wilhelmine empire and the birth of the Weimar republic, anthroposophist Ernst August Karl Stockmeyer called for erecting a “völkisch state” in Germany rather than submitting to “the democracy imposed on us by the West.”<sup>31</sup>

The social threefolding movement reached its highest degree of public notoriety in the course of the acrimonious controversy over Upper Silesia in 1921. As part of the post-war settlement ordained by the Versailles treaty, the Interallied Commission organized a plebiscite in the ethnically mixed province to determine whether it should belong to Germany or Poland. Upper Silesia was an important industrial area and a Prussian possession before the war. Steiner rejected the Allied-sponsored vote as an illegitimate interference of foreign powers in the affairs of *Mittleuropa*.<sup>32</sup> Instead of a plebiscite, Steiner and his followers proposed applying the principles of threefolding, with their separation of economic from cultural and political functions, to Upper Silesia. This seemingly quixotic notion was one of many proposals floated in advance of the referendum, competing with separatist efforts, claims for provincial autonomy, and intensive nationalist propaganda on both German and Polish sides.<sup>33</sup> In

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<sup>31</sup> E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, *Vom deutschen Volksstaat und von der deutschen Erziehung* (Mannheim, 1918), 14. Stockmeyer, a central figure in founding the Waldorf movement, was a follower of Steiner from 1907 onward, when he joined both the Theosophical Society and Steiner's Esoteric School.

<sup>32</sup> For context see F. Gregory Campbell, “The Struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919–1922” *Journal of Modern History* 42 (1970), 361–85; T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918–1922* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Kai Struve, ed., *Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Studien zum nationalen Konflikt und seiner Erinnerung* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2003); Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919–1933* (Oxford University Press, 2005) 50–54 and 356–57; Andrzej Michalczyk, “Deutsche und polnische Nationalisierungspolitiken in Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen” in Dieter Bingen, Peter Oliver Loew, and Kazimierz Wóycicki, eds., *Die Destruktion des Dialogs* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 66–82; Annemarie Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914–1922* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Günther Doose, *Die separatistische Bewegung in Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987); T. Hunt Tooley, “German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919–1921” *Central European History* 21 (1988), 56–98; Waldemar Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien 1919–1921* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 2002); Brendan Karch, “Nationalism on the Margins: Silesians between Germany and Poland, 1848–1945” (PhD dissertation, Department of History, Harvard University, 2010).

January 1921 Steiner wrote a "Call to Save Upper Silesia" on behalf of the League for Social Threefolding. The text declared that the province should provisionally remain unaffiliated with either Germany or Poland, in the interest of "true German convictions," until more auspicious conditions obtained. As Steiner explained, the aim was "to establish Upper Silesia as an integral territory that is inwardly united with the German spiritual essence."<sup>34</sup>

This proposal initially received a sympathetic hearing among German communities in Silesia, while reactions from Polish Silesians were generally hostile.<sup>35</sup> In private sessions with Silesian anthroposophists in January 1921, Steiner emphasized that the very idea of a Polish state was "impossible" and "an illusion." Soon after, anthroposophist Karl Heyer argued that "the threefold solution to the Upper Silesian problem is better suited than any other to protecting Germany's true interests in economic terms as well as in national terms and in state-political terms."<sup>36</sup> In the weeks before the plebiscite, the League for Social Threefolding declared that threefolding was the only way "for Germany to escape from being strangled by the West, and to regain Germany's historical prestige."<sup>37</sup> The threefolding campaign in Upper Silesia nonetheless sparked bitter criticism from other Germans, including charges of treason.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Steiner, "Aufruf zur Rettung Oberschlesiens" in Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 461–66; Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*, 328.

<sup>35</sup> See the press reports reproduced in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 93 (1986), 20–32. There was little anthroposophist presence in Upper Silesia itself, and the threefolding campaign was largely waged from Breslau, in Lower Silesia. Virtually none of the Silesian anthroposophists appears to have known Polish, and threefolding proponents had neither printed materials in Polish nor Polish speakers (*ibid.* 18). Anthroposophist statements on Upper Silesia were consistently condescending toward the Polish population even before the threefolding campaign got underway; see e.g. Ernst Umlauff, "Oberschlesien" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 10 (September 1920), 2–3, and Rudolf von Koschützki, "Zur oberschlesischen Frage" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 11 (September 1920), 3–4.

<sup>36</sup> Steiner, *Wie wirkt man für den Impuls der Dreigliederung*, 213; Karl Heyer, "Der Weg zur Lösung der oberschlesischen Frage" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* vol. 2 no. 31 (January 1921), 3–4.

<sup>37</sup> Bund für Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus, "Die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus und die oberschlesische Frage" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* March 8, 1921, 4: "In the current situation, the Upper Silesian economy with its raw materials that are essential to the German economy can only be saved for German economic life if they are separated from political factors and made autonomous."

<sup>38</sup> See the unsigned article titled "Verräter am Deutschtum," published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on March 4, 1921, reproduced in *Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe* 93 (1986), 38–39. The League for Social Threefolding published an announcement in the same newspaper on March 12 under the title "Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus und Oberschlesien,"

As a result, anthroposophists were branded as insufficiently committed to German national integrity. These charges were wide of the mark; the League for Social Threefolding emphatically endorsed voting for Germany once the plebiscite took place, a stance which Steiner firmly supported.<sup>39</sup>

When accusations of betraying Germany first surfaced in March 1921, anthroposophists retorted that critics of threefolding efforts in Upper Silesia were simply tools of the Entente promoting the anti-German spirit of the Versailles treaty.<sup>40</sup> After the League of Nations partitioned the province, the threefolding movement fiercely attacked the partition agreement and lamented the loss of German territory to the Poles: "Instead of threefolding, which would have meant saving Upper Silesia for Germany, the opposite is now taking place."<sup>41</sup> Anthroposophists blamed the loss of Upper Silesia on a deliberate plan by the Western powers to dismantle Germany. They assumed a natural German right to the province, and even long after partition were still bemoaning the absorption of part of the territory by Poland.<sup>42</sup> Several figures who went on to become prominent anthroposophists fought in German paramilitary units in the Upper Silesian conflict.<sup>43</sup> From Steiner's perspective, the unfortunate

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stating that their position was to vote for Germany in the event of a plebiscite. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* retracted the charge of treason on March 15. An editorial note to Rudolf Steiner, *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für die Weltentwicklung durch seinen geistigen Zusammenhang mit dem Erdplaneten und der Sternenwelt* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1989), 337, observes: "Silesian friends of Rudolf Steiner's threefolding idea had tried to advocate social threefolding to a broad audience as a solution to the problem, in order to save Upper Silesia from the disastrous consequences of the plebiscite they had been forced into in 1921, but with the additional recommendation that in case the plebiscite occurred, the only possible vote was a vote for Germany."

<sup>39</sup> In the midst of the plebiscite the editors of *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* insisted that "there can be no other position than to vote for Germany." (vol. 2 no. 38, 3) The 1921 reporting on Upper Silesia in *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* constantly ridiculed Polish claims in the territory and condemned German politicians for failing to take a hard line in the negotiations over the province.

<sup>40</sup> Roman Boos, "Wer verrät das Deutschtum?" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* March 22, 1921, 2–3; Friedrich Engelmann, *Ist die Dreigliederung undeutsch?* (Stuttgart, Der Kommende Tag, 1921).

<sup>41</sup> Ernst Uehli, "Ereignisse der Woche" *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* June 7, 1921, 2. Uehli was the journal's editor.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Kühn, *Dreigliederungs-Zeit*, 125–27; Ernst von Hippel, *Oberschlesien* (Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1931); Walter Kühne, "Ostprogramm und deutscher Geist" *Anthroposophie* May 25, 1930, 163–65.

<sup>43</sup> Both Max Karl Schwarz and Gottfried Richter fought in *Freikorps* units in Upper Silesia in 1921; see BA R58/6189/2: 579 and BA RK/I475: 2674. Erhard Bartsch served as a volunteer in a

outcome of the Upper Silesian campaign meant that the German mission had once again been obstructed, and Germany still had not been saved.

The charge of national unreliability nonetheless continued to haunt anthroposophists throughout the Weimar period. The controversy over Upper Silesia provided the context for Adolf Hitler's derisive mention of Steiner in March 1921, the sole reference to anthroposophy in the Nazi leader's works.<sup>44</sup> While Steiner remained the outstanding representative of the true German spirit in the eyes of his epigones, the perception that anthroposophists were not fully dedicated to German national interests motivated *völkisch* enmity toward his movement. Despite these conflicting views, anthroposophy had notably positive ties to *völkisch* cultural politics from an early stage. Steiner was a member of a *völkisch* Wagner club, and anthroposophist authors endorsed Wagner's views on race.<sup>45</sup> Steiner's Theosophical Society served as a way-station for leading cultural figures in the *völkisch* movement, including the artist Fidus.<sup>46</sup>

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German *Grenzschutz* regiment in Upper Silesia after World War I (BA R58/6223/1: 299).

<sup>44</sup> Adolf Hitler, "Staatsmänner oder Nationalverbrecher?" *Völkischer Beobachter* March 15, 1921, reprinted in Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980), 348–53. Hitler's article was directed against the German foreign minister and mentioned Steiner in passing. A more detailed attack on Steiner appeared in the anonymous article "Steiner, der neue Messias" *Völkischer Beobachter* May 27, 1922. Hitler's remark, in the context of his usual diatribes against the political representatives of the Weimar republic, reflected his general hostility toward would-be spiritual reformers.

<sup>45</sup> Steiner belonged to the *Richard Wagner Gesellschaft für germanische Kunst und Kultur*, founded in Berlin in 1903; cf. Hildegard Chatellier, "Wagnerismus in der Kaiserzeit" in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 608. Anthroposophist endorsements of Wagner's racial views can be found in Sigismund von Gleich, "Richard Wagner über Blut und Geist" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 17–18; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1933), 86–87; Johannes Bertram, *Goethes Faust im Blickfeld des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Hamburger Kulturverlag, 1949), 117–18. See also Max Seiling, *Richard Wagner, der Künstler und Mensch, der Denker und Kulturträger* (Munich: Kuhn, 1911); Ernst Uehli, *Die Geburt der Individualität aus dem Mythos als künstlerisches Erlebnis Richard Wagners* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921; second edition Dresden, 1937); Karl Heise, *Parsifal: Ein Bühnenweih-Festspiel Richard Wagners in okkult-esoterischer Beleuchtung* (Berlin: Linser, 1924); Hermann Beckh, *Richard Wagner und das Christentum* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1937); Johannes Bertram, *Der Seher von Bayreuth: Deutung des Lebens und Werkes Richard Wagners* (Berlin: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1943).

<sup>46</sup> On Fidus (Hugo Höppener) see Marina Schuster, "Fidus—ein Gesinnungskünstler der völkischen Kulturbewegung" in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung'*, 634–50; Claudia Bibo, *Naturalismus als Weltanschauung? Biologistische, the-*

Prominent *völkisch* authorities such as Hans Hahne were significantly influenced by anthroposophy.<sup>47</sup> Steiner and his followers held *völkisch* predecessors such as Paul de Lagarde in high esteem.<sup>48</sup>

A particularly eminent figure in the synthesis of anthroposophical and *völkisch* cultural ideals was the writer Friedrich Lienhard (1865–1929), who was both an anthroposophist and a leading representative of “idealistic antisemitism” within *völkisch* ranks.<sup>49</sup> He initially encountered Steiner’s teachings in 1905 and joined the Anthroposophical Society at its founding in 1913. Steiner was an enthusiastic supporter of Lienhard and singled out his World War One text *Deutschlands europäische Sendung* (Germany’s European mission) for

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*osophische und deutsch-völkische Bildlichkeit in der von Fidus illustrierten Lyrik* (1893–1902) (Frankfurt: Lang, 1995); Janos Freccot, Johann Friedrich Geist, and Diethart Kerbs, *Fidus, 1868–1948: Zur ästhetischen Praxis bürgerlicher Fluchtbewegungen* (Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard, 1997); Eva Kaffanke, *Der deutsche Heiland: Christusdarstellungen um 1900 im Kontext der völkischen Bewegung* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2001), 337–60. Fidus sided with Steiner’s adversaries in the 1912/1913 split from the Theosophical Society; on the relationship between Steiner and Fidus see Freccot et al., *Fidus*, 131–46, and Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871–1918* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 195–97.

<sup>47</sup> See Irene Ziehe, *Hans Hahne: Biographie eines völkischen Wissenschaftlers* (Halle: Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, 1996), 38–42, 17, 59, 73, 100, and Ziehe, “Hans Hahne (1875–1935), Protagonist eines völkischen Weltbildes” in Achim Leube, ed., *Prähistorie und Nationalsozialismus: Die mittel- und osteuropäische Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung in den Jahren 1933–1945* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2002), 419–27.

<sup>48</sup> Steiner, *Aus schicksalstragender Zeit*, 224–26; Steiner, *Unsere Toten: Ansprachen, Gedenkworte und Meditationssprüche* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1984), 82–92; Ernst Surkamp, “Geistes-Lichtgedanken” *Anthroposophie* August 7, 1924, 1–3; Karl Heyer, *Das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes und seine Not* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1932), 15–17; Eduard Schulz, “Paul de Lagarde als Wegbereiter eines neuen Christentums” *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1939, 291–94.

<sup>49</sup> Compare Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*, 27, 87, 99, 118; Levy, *Rudolf Steiners Weltanschauung*, 317–21; Hildegard Chatellier, “Friedrich Lienhard” in Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, *Handbuch zur ‘Völkischen Bewegung’*, 114–30; Wilhelm Kunze, “Friedrich Lienhard und der Idealismus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts” *Anthroposophie* October 11, 1925, 170; Guy Stern, “Towards Fascism: A Study of Unpublished Letters of Friedrich Lienhard” *Studies in Modern European History and Culture* 2 (1976), 193–210; Roderick Stackelberg, *Idealism Debased: From völkisch Ideology to National Socialism* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1981), 63–101; Wolfgang Vögele, “Friedrich Lienhard” in Bodo von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert: Ein Kulturimpuls in biografischen Porträts* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2003), 458–59. Toward the end of his life Lienhard distanced himself from anthroposophy; cf. Friedrich Lienhard, “Steiners Anthroposophie” in Lienhard, *Der Meister der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1926), 121–34.

special praise.<sup>50</sup> This tract gave eloquent expression to anthroposophist attitudes toward the war, portraying the German troops as carriers of spiritual transformation to Europe as a whole and calling for “the body of the Reich” to be complemented by a rejuvenated “soul of the Reich.” According to Lienhard, “the vocation of the German spirit is to lead Europe.”<sup>51</sup> His antisemitism was couched in virtuously idealist terms, and his racial writings can be seen as a microcosm of both the conflict and the convergence between esoteric and *völkisch* modes of thought. While Lienhard rejected strict biological determinism, “he had no difficulty in accepting racist assumptions and findings once he had translated them into ‘idealist’ terms.”<sup>52</sup>

Similarly complex dynamics marked the interactions between anthroposophy and the circle around the publisher Eugen Diederichs (1867–1930), a key figure in life reform efforts. His publishing house was an early institutional factor in the spread of theosophical ideas in Wilhelmine Germany and a central component in the broad stream of *völkisch* cultural activities.<sup>53</sup> Diederichs

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<sup>50</sup> Steiner, *Aus schicksaltragender Zeit*, 288; Steiner, *Gegenwärtiges und Vergangenes im Menschengeste*, 10; Steiner, *Occult History*, 97; Steiner, *Briefe* vol. II, 596.

<sup>51</sup> Friedrich Lienhard, *Deutschlands europäische Sendung* (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1915), 11. Lienhard also warned: “Vermehrt sich in Deutschland der östliche Zudrang einer polnisch-galizischen Unterschicht, die nach und nach in unser Volkstum hineinwächst, so werden Mächte über Deutschland die Oberhand bekommen, die den deutschen Charakter zum Unguten verändern werden.” (16) For further details on Lienhard’s antisemitism see Stefan Breuer, “Das ‘Zwanzigste Jahrhundert’ und die Brüder Mann” in Manfred Dierks and Ruprecht Wimmer, eds., *Thomas Mann und das Judentum* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2004), 75–95.

<sup>52</sup> Stackelberg, *Idealism Debased*, 100. Stackelberg characterizes Lienhard’s racial beliefs as a mixture of idealism and elitism: “The goal of idealists must be to create a race based on nobility of souls, not a race based on blood. Race as a category applicable to mass populations offended Lienhard’s elitism and his desire to perpetuate class distinctions.” (90) See also Friedrich Lienhard, “Der Kern der Rassenfrage” in Lienhard, *Wege nach Weimar* vol. I (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1911), 38–50; cf. 55–63 and 255–56. On Lienhard as spokesman for “idealistic antisemitism” within the *völkisch* milieu see Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 54–57, 71–78, 143–48, 280–85.

<sup>53</sup> On Diederichs see Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 52–63; Gangolf Hübinger, “Eugen Diederichs’ Bemühungen um die Grundlegung einer neuen Geisteskultur” in Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg*, 259–74; Gary Stark, “Cultural Pessimism and National Regeneration: Eugen Diederichs and German Culture, 1896–1914” in Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 58–110; Erich Viehöfer, *Der Verleger als Organisator: Eugen Diederichs und die bürgerlichen Reformbewegungen der Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 1988); Gangolf Hübinger, “Der Verlag Eugen Diederichs in Jena: Wissenschaftskritik, Lebensreform und völkische Bewegung” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996), 31–45; Justus Ulbricht, “Durch



solicited theosophical texts from Steiner, who offered Diederichs a book manuscript in 1904 and expressed high regard for the publisher.<sup>54</sup> Anthroposophical periodicals and bookstores promoted the publisher's works, and Diederichs was on friendly terms with a variety of prominent anthroposophists. While Diederichs was interested in anthroposophical ideas, he reportedly considered Steiner "too authoritarian."<sup>55</sup>

From 1913 onward Diederichs edited and published the journal *Die Tat*, which became an important clearinghouse for right-wing intellectuals associated with the 'Conservative Revolution'.<sup>56</sup> Several substantial anthroposophist articles appeared in *Die Tat*, including a 1918 essay on Steiner's philosophy by Ernst Boldt and a 1921 article by Friedrich Rittelmeyer on "Anthroposophy and Religious Renewal."<sup>57</sup> In February 1921 the journal devoted an entire issue to anthroposophy, including both anthroposophist and non-anthroposophist

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'deutsche Religion' zu 'neuer Renaissance': Die Rückkehr der Mystiker im Verlagsprogramm von Eugen Diederichs" in Moritz Baßler and Hildegard Chatellier, eds., *Mystik, Mystizismus und Moderne in Deutschland um 1900* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 1998), 165–86; Justus Ulbricht und Meike Werner, eds., *Romantik, Revolution und Reform: Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag im Epochenkontext 1900–1949* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Steiner's 1904 letter to Diederichs is reprinted in Ulf Diederichs, ed., *Eugen Diederichs: Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen* (Düsseldorf: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1967), 145–46. Cf. Steiner, *Briefe* vol. II, 439, 592–93. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology*, 74 describes Diederichs as "energetic in championing anthroposophy." Diederichs did not in fact publish any of Steiner's works. Diederichs' own essays exhibited a number of noteworthy parallels to Steiner's ideas; see e.g. Eugen Diederichs, *Politik des Geistes* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1920).

<sup>55</sup> Irmgard Heidler, *Der Verleger Eugen Diederichs und seine Welt (1896–1930)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 307. Cf. Wilhelm Salewski, "Dreigliederung oder totaler Staat?" *Anthroposophie* August 30, 1931, 276.

<sup>56</sup> Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 97–100, 129–33; Kurt Sontheimer, "Der Tatkreis" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 7 (1959), 229–60; Klaus Fritzsche, *Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution: Das Beispiel des Tat-Kreises* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976); Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 88–100; Edith Hanke and Gangolf Hübinger, "Von der 'Tat'-Gemeinde zum 'Tat'-Kreis" in Hübinger, ed. *Versammlungsort moderner Geister: Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag—Aufbruch ins Jahrhundert der Extreme* (Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1996), 299–334; Hübinger, "Die Tat und der Tat-Kreis" in Michel Grunewald and Uwe Puschner, eds., *Das konservative Intellektuellenmilieu in Deutschland, seine Presse und seine Netzwerke (1890–1960)* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2003), 407–26.

<sup>57</sup> Ernst Boldt, "Philosophie und Theosophie" *Die Tat* November 1918, 595–610; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Zur Steinerschen Theosophie" *Die Tat* January 1919, 794–95; Richard Seebohm, "Dreigliederung des sozialen Lebens" *Die Tat* February 1921, 832–39; Seebohm, "Bücher von



authors.<sup>58</sup> Even though anthroposophist perspectives were amply represented and the critical contributors expressed sympathy for various aspects of anthroposophy, Steiner responded to *Die Tat*'s treatment of his teachings with indignation.<sup>59</sup>

Anthroposophy's ambivalent relations with the interwar German right derived in part from the heterogeneous character of *völkisch* thinking itself, a protean phenomenon encompassing a broad spectrum of ideas.<sup>60</sup> The Weimar period's palette of nationalist and anti-democratic themes was versatile and could potentially be adapted to Steiner's claims of higher wisdom regarding the German essence and the national soul.<sup>61</sup> Organizationally and

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und über Rudolf Steiner" *Die Tat* March 1921, 950–51; Rittelmeyer, "Anthroposophie und religiöse Erneuerung" *Die Tat* September 1921, 445–59.

<sup>58</sup> *Die Tat: Monatsschrift für die Zukunft deutscher Kultur*, "Anthroposophisches Sonderheft" vol. 12 no. 11 (February 1921). The lengthiest anthroposophist contribution, by Walter Johannes Stein, consists largely of extended quotations from Steiner's works, including several elaborating his theory of "racial spirits." Diederichs himself contributed a brief piece outlining his skeptical attitude toward anthroposophy. Anthroposophist Otto Julius Hartmann wrote for *Die Tat* in 1934; cf. O. J. Hartmann, "Abt und Literat" *Die Tat* October 1934, 550–53.

<sup>59</sup> Steiner, *Perspektiven der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 163–64; Steiner, *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für die Weltentwicklung*, 202–04, 212–19.

<sup>60</sup> Compare Uwe Puschner, "Strukturmerkmale der völkischen Bewegung (1900–1945)" in Grunewald and Puschner, eds., *Das konservative Intellektuellenmilieu in Deutschland*, 445–68; Stefan Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit: Die deutsche Rechte im Widerstreit ihrer Ideen 1871–1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 77–104; Christian Niemeyer, "Die 'völkische Bewegung'—Ursprünge, Ideen, Folgen" *Sozialwissenschaftliche Literatur Rundschau* 26 (2003), 53–61; Stefan Breuer, "Gescheiterte Milieubildung: Die Völkischen im Deutschen Kaiserreich" *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52 (2004), 995–1016; Walter Schmitz and Clemens Vollnhals, eds., *Völkische Bewegung—Konservative Revolution—Nationalsozialismus: Aspekte einer politisierten Kultur* (Dresden: Thelem, 2005); Uwe Puschner, "Völkisch. Plädoyer für einen 'engen' Begriff" in Paul Ciupke, Klaus Heuer, Franz-Josef Jelich, and Justus Ulbricht, eds., *"Erziehung zum deutschen Menschen": Völkische und nationalkonservative Erwachsenenbildung in der Weimarer Republik* (Essen: Klartext, 2007), 53–66.

<sup>61</sup> On the range of *völkisch* racial and ethnic tenets cf. Uwe Puschner, "Grundzüge völkischer Rassenideologie" in Leube, ed., *Prähistoire und Nationalsozialismus*, 49–72; Wolfgang Altgeld, "Volk, Rasse, Raum. Völkisches Denken und radikaler Nationalismus im Vorfeld des Nationalsozialismus" in Rudolf Lill and Heinrich Oberreuter, eds., *Machtverfall und Machtergreifung: Aufstieg und Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für Politische Bildungsarbeit, 1983), 95–119; George Kren and Rodler Morris, "Race and Spirituality: Arthur Dinter's Theosophical Antisemitism" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6 (1991), 233–52; Niels Lösch, "Zur Biologisierung rechtsintellektuellen Denkens in der Weimarer Republik" in Wolfgang Bialas and Georg Iggers, eds., *Intellektuelle in der Weimarer*

ideologically, the borders separating anthroposophy and other esoteric groups from *völkisch* tendencies and life reform associations were notably porous, with substantial overlap in both ideas and personnel. Within the occult milieu itself, the meandering trajectory of seekers after spiritual enlightenment was a conspicuous factor, indicating “how fluid the borders between theosophy, anthroposophy, and ariosophy could sometimes be.”<sup>62</sup> Ariosophist Harald Grävell was a prime example of a *völkisch* writer who borrowed from a wide range of occult works and combined theosophist, anthroposophist, and life reform themes. He invoked Steiner as one of the building blocks in his Aryan worldview.<sup>63</sup> Esoteric and *völkisch* authors drew on anthroposophical, theosophical and ariosophical sources alike, and the same individual might belong simultaneously to anthroposophist and ariosophist organizations while also being involved in *völkisch* pursuits.

German-Swiss occultist Karl Heise (1872–1839), for instance, was a member of a theosophical lodge and the ariosophist Guido von List Society as well as a leading figure in the Mazdaznan movement, an esoteric tendency emphasizing vegetarianism and Aryan supremacy. He joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1916, and his publications borrowed heavily from both Steiner’s works and List’s ariosophical writings.<sup>64</sup> In the 1920s he collaborated with

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*Republik* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996), 333–50; Bernard Mees, “The Tradition of *Völkisch* Germanism” in Mees, *The Science of the Swastika* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 11–31; Uwe Puschner and Gregor Hufenreuter, “Antisemitismus und völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich” in Klaus Holz, Heiko Kauffmann, and Jobst Paul, eds., *Die Verneinung des Judentums: Antisemitismus als religiöse und säkulare Waffe* (Münster: Unrast, 2009), 27–44.

<sup>62</sup> Sandra Franz, *Die Religion des Grals: Entwürfe arteigener Religiosität im Spektrum von völkischer Bewegung, Lebensform, Okkultismus, Neuheidentum und Jugendbewegung (1871–1945)* (Schwalbach: Wochenschau, 2009), 307. For background on *völkisch* occultism in the Weimar period see Doering-Manteuffel, *Das Okkulte*, 193–228.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Harald Grävell, *Aryavarta* (Leipzig: Akademischer Verlag, 1905), and Grävell, *Zarathustra und Christus* (Bad Schmiedeberg: Baumann, 1913). Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 55, describes Grävell (1856–1932) as one of the “leading antisemitic-völkisch agitators.” For context see Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 100–02; Franz, *Die Religion des Grals*, 247–59; Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 99–101.

<sup>64</sup> His works include Karl Heise, *Karma: Das universale Moralgesetz der Welt* (Lorch: Rohm, 1909); Heise, *Das Alter der Welt im Lichte der okkulten Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Fändrich, 1910); Heise, “Germaniens Runenkunde: Die Initiation in das Geheimnis der Ario-Germanischen Sieben Ur-Heils-Runen” *Theosophische Kultur* 3 (1911), 64–70; Heise, “Ist Deutschland in Gefahr?” *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* July 1912, 39–44; Heise, “Die Lehre von der Wiederverkörperung der menschlichen Individualität” *Prana: Zentralorgan für praktischen Okkultismus* 4 (1913), 299–303, 420–28; Heise, “Das Geheimnis des spirituellen Fortschrittes” *Psyche: Zeitschrift für den gesamten Okkultismus* 3 (1918), 13–17; Heise, *Die englisch-amerikanische Weltläuge*

Alfred Rosenberg's Nazi periodical *Der Weltkampf* while publishing widely in the theosophical and general occultist press. Heise's sometime protégé, the Russian-German esotericist Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, followed a similarly intricate path during much of the 1920s. Schwartz-Bostunitsch was a theosophist, an anthroposophist, an ariosophist, a self-described "Christian occultist," an adherent of Artur Dinter's *völkisch* religious movement, and an active Nazi, all before turning against anthroposophy at the end of the decade. His senior theosophical contemporary Max Seiling (1852–1928) was also a dedicated anthroposophist and an active ariosophist for years before his acrimonious break with Steiner. Seiling's 1913 book *Theosophy and Christianity*, for which Steiner wrote an enthusiastic Afterword, praised Guido List's foundational ariosophical work *Die Religion der Ario-Germanen* and called List a "highly esteemed investigator of Aryanism."<sup>65</sup>

At times, prominent ariosophists treated Steiner and anthroposophy very positively. Examples can be found in the Leipzig-based esoteric journal *Prana: Organ für angewandte Geisteswissenschaft* edited by ariosophist Johannes Balzli. The summer 1919 issue opened with a hagiographic obituary for List followed immediately by an article by Steiner; later in the issue was an outspokenly positive review of Steiner's book on the Threefold Commonwealth written by Balzli himself. The winter 1919 issue carried Balzli's approving review of a book by anthroposophist Ernst Uehli, praising its compatibility

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(Konstanz: Wölfing, 1919); Heise, "Die Toten leben" *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* April 1920, 433–44; Heise, *Der katholische Ansturm wider den Okkultismus* (Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1923); Heise, *Die astrale Konstitution des Menschen vom Standpunkte der okkulten Wissenschaft aus dargelegt* (Leipzig: Fändrich, 1926); Heise, *Wie aus Traum und übersinnlichen Tatsachen Weltgeschichte wurde* (Zurich: Gral-Verlag, 1931). An extended example of Heise's synthesis of theosophical, anthroposophical, and ariosophical themes in a racial context, complete with citations from Blavatsky, List, Lanz, and above all Steiner, can be found in his serial article "Ein paar Worte zum Dunkelhaar und Braunauge der Germanen" in volume 8 of the *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus*, July 1914 through November 1914. List's book *Die Ursprache der Ario-Germanen und ihre Mysteriensprache* (Vienna: Guido von List Gesellschaft, 1914) draws on Heise's work. For an anthroposophist defense of Heise and his views see Lorenzo Ravagli, *Unter Hammer und Hakenkreuz: Der völkisch-nationalsozialistische Kampf gegen die Anthroposophie* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2004), 127–36 and 196–212.

<sup>65</sup> Max Seiling, *Theosophy and Christianity* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1913), 31. For an anthroposophist view of Seiling see Heyer, *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft*, 51–59. A further example of theosophical-anthroposophical-ariosophical crossover is Max Heindel, *Die Esoterik in Wagners 'Tannhäuser'* (Leipzig: Theosophisches Verlagshaus, 1918), which cites Steiner, Schuré, Lienhard, and Uehli alongside lengthy quotations from List's *Armanenschaft der Ario-Germanen*. For positive references to ariosophist works in an anthroposophist publication see Richard Karutz, "Einbein und Einaug" *Das Goetheanum* July 5, 1925, 212–14.

with List's work. The 1917–19 issues of *Prana* contained an ongoing series titled “Seelen-Kalender nach Dr. R. Steiner” adapted by Balzli from Steiner's works, along with articles by Steiner and by anthroposophist Ernst Boldt.<sup>66</sup>

Early anthroposophy was thus a point of crossover and contact among various esoteric and *völkisch* streams, and the intense shared focus on a cluster of related themes gave rise to animosity and competition. James Webb has argued that for all of the invective traded back and forth between anthroposophy and right-wing groups, the hostilities were due not to fundamental differences between them, but on the contrary to their ideological proximity—indeed it was these basic ideological affinities which made them rivals in the first place. “Steiner was not really alien to *völkisch* thought,” Webb concludes: “the *völkisch* reaction was an admission that both camps were operating on the same level. And a proportion of the *völkisch* rage came from the realization that here was another vision of the universe which claimed to be ‘spiritual.’”<sup>67</sup> From the perspective of contemporary critics of the *völkisch* scene, Steiner's faction sometimes seemed to be cut from the same cloth as the emerging Hitler movement.<sup>68</sup> The theoretical similarities were realized in practice as well; a number

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<sup>66</sup> See volumes 8 (1917–1918) and 9 (1918–1919) of *Prana: Organ für angewandte Geisteswissenschaft*. The journal also carried articles by *völkisch* luminaries like Harald Grävell and Philipp Stauff as well as leading theosophists Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, Franz Hartmann, and Hugo Vollrath.

<sup>67</sup> Webb, *The Occult Establishment*, 290. The constant intermingling of right-wing and esoteric groups is a major theme of Webb's study, and the book includes a thoughtful exploration of both the overlaps and the mutual hostilities between Steiner and his followers and the militant *völkisch* forces; see especially 285–90. Zander, “Sozialdarwinistische Rassentheorien aus dem okkulten Untergrund des Kaiserreichs” is a similarly pioneering attempt to sort out theosophical, anthroposophical, and *völkisch* discourses on race in the early decades of the twentieth century. For another nuanced discussion of the affinities and differences between Steiner and *völkisch* figures see Franz, *Die Religion des Grals*, 277–99.

<sup>68</sup> In a prescient November 1922 essay on the rise of Hitler within the far-right Munich milieu, Carl Christian Bry compared Hitler to Steiner and other would-be saviors of Germany; see Carl Christian Bry, *Der Hitler-Putsch* (Nördlingen: Greno, 1987), 64. For Bry's critical assessment of anthroposophy see Carl Christian Bry, *Verkappte Religionen* (Gotha: Klotz, 1925), 231–36. Bry (1892–1926), whose real name was Carl Decke, joined the Nazi party in January 1921 and worked briefly at the *Völkischer Beobachter* before becoming a fierce critic of Nazism. For details see Derek Hastings, *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 163, 243–44.

of anthroposophists were members of nationalist paramilitary organizations like the Stahlhelm and Freikorps units.<sup>69</sup>

Shifting allegiances and strange bedfellows were the norm rather than the exception within the diffuse and contentious context of *völkisch* religiosity in Wilhelmine and Weimar culture.<sup>70</sup> But more than spiritual tenets were at issue. The development and elaboration of Steiner's racial and ethnic doctrines in the early anthroposophist movement framed many of the concrete claims at stake in the ongoing rivalry between different occult and *völkisch* tendencies. Both before and after Steiner's death in 1925, his followers produced a prodigious series of publications on racial themes, including books, articles, pamphlets, and treatises devoted to questions of race and nation from an esoteric perspective. Many of these works centered on the meaning of Germanness in a time of national uncertainty and upheaval, while others promoted a revival of Teutonic mythology in an occult mold or explored the spiritual significance of racial evolution. The authors of these works, the first generation of anthroposophical race theorists, included several of the most active members of Steiner's movement.

Anthroposophist treatments of the 'race question' presented themselves as alternatives to materialist conceptions of race, highlighting the connections between 'blood' and 'spirit' while assigning the German spirit a special status

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<sup>69</sup> Anthroposophist Kurt Wiegand belonged to the Stahlhelm (BA R58/5709c: 1077), as did Otto Feyh, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Schweinfurt (BA PK/C174: 2658), while Wilhelm zur Linden was a Freikorps officer, according to his autobiographical account, Wilhelm zur Linden, *Blick durchs Prisma: Lebensbericht eines Arztes* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1965). Gottfried Richter, who went on to become a Christian Community pastor, fought in one of the paramilitary units that suppressed the Munich council republic in 1919 (BA RK/I475: 2674).

<sup>70</sup> On *völkisch* religion cf. Ulrich Nanko, "Das Spektrum völkisch-religiöser Organisationen von der Jahrhundertwende bis ins 'Dritte Reich'" in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, eds., *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne*, 208–26; Ekkehard Hieronimus, "Zur Religiosität der völkischen Bewegung" in Hubert Cancik, ed., *Religions- und Geistesgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1981), 159–75; Rainer Flasche, "Vom deutschen Kaiserreich zum Dritten Reich: Nationalreligiöse Bewegungen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland" *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 1 (1993), 28–49; Justus Ulbricht, "Deutsche Wiedergeburt als völkisch-religiöses Projekt" in Richard Faber, ed., *Politische Religion—Religiöse Politik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997), 161–72; Frank Schnoor, *Mathilde Ludendorff und das Christentum: Eine radikale völkische Position in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik und des NS-Staates* (Egelsbach: Verlag der Deutschen Hochschulschriften, 2001); Uwe Puschner, "Weltanschauung und Religion—Religion und Weltanschauung: Ideologie und Formen völkischer Religion" *zeitenblicke* 5 (2006), 1–22.

as the herald of cosmic progress.<sup>71</sup> These arguments extended Steiner's teachings on "race spirits" and "folk souls." An early book by Elise Wolfram, a long-time theosophist and co-founder of the Anthroposophical Society, portrayed Teutonic sagas as a narrative of racial evolution.<sup>72</sup> Wolfram extolled the "Aryan race" and its ancient Germanic and Nordic myths, inspired by "the genius of the race."<sup>73</sup> The Aryans, in her portrait, were the race that united the physical with the spiritual, in sharp contrast to indigenous peoples, which she characterized as "the debased remnants of the peoples of the past." According to Wolfram, "Racial differences are evolutionary differences, and every race has the religion that is best suited to its physical body."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Wilhelm Dörfler, "Geist oder Blut als Grundlage der neuen Gemeinschaft" *Der Pfad* December 1924, 21–23; Dörfler, "Die Erziehung des Germanen zum Kulturträger" *Der Pfad* December 1926, 6–12; Alfred Heidenreich, "Menschheit, Volk, Kirche" *Der Pfad* January 1925, 39–41; Karl Heyer, "Blut und Rasse" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* October 1932, 18–23; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Die Entdeckung des Menschen: Volk und Blut" in Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 69–90. On "race psychology" and the "souls of races" see Guenther Wachsmuth, "The Face of the Earth and the Destiny of Mankind" *Anthroposophy: A Quarterly Review of Spiritual Science* 2 (1927), 208–25.

<sup>72</sup> The first edition was published by Max Altmann's theosophical publishing house: Elise Wolfram, *Die germanischen Heldensagen als Entwicklungsgeschichte der Rasse* (Leipzig: Altmann, 1910); a later edition was published by the anthroposophist publisher *Der Kommende Tag*: Wolfram, *Die germanischen Heldensagen als Entwicklungsgeschichte der Rasse* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1922); citations from the latter. Wolfram (1868–1942) became a member of Steiner's Esoteric School in 1906 and joined the Board of Directors of the German Section of the Theosophical Society in 1908. She remained the leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Leipzig until 1935 (BA R58/6193/2: 547).

<sup>73</sup> Wolfram, *Die germanischen Heldensagen*, 62. A representative passage reads: "Und wenn wir schließlich finden, daß die Menschengruppenseele zerfällt in Rassen, in Völker, in Stämme, so bedeutet dies wiederum nur, daß nicht alle astralischen Bildner gleiche Fähigkeiten haben, und nur ein Teil derselben vermag ihre Erdenformen bis zur Höchsentwicklung, dem arischen Menschen, zu bringen." (86–87) For related anthroposophist texts prior to 1933 see Wolfgang Moldenhauer, "Menschheitsgruppen vor und neben den grossen Kulturen" *Das Goetheanum* June 7, 1931, 180–81, and Harry Köhler, "Menschheits-Entwicklung und Völkerschicksale im Spiegel der Historie" *Das Goetheanum* August 21, 1932, 273–74.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 140. Other anthroposophist treatments of Germanic mythology offer similar themes; cf. Alfred Heidenreich, "Der Nibelungen-Mythos, eine deutsche Schicksalskunde vom Sinn des Bösen" in Heidenreich, *Im Angesicht des Schicksals*, 70–85; Johannes Werner Klein, *Baldur und Christus* (Munich: Michael Verlag, 1923); Friedrich Doldinger, *Christus bei den Germanen* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1933); Sigismund von Gleich, "Die Externsteine—Hauptheiligtum der alten Germanen" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 11–14; Gottfried Richter, *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines*



The anthroposophical fascination with ancient Teutonic tribes as embodiments of the German spirit represented an esoteric variant of the revived interest in Germanic prehistory, a phenomenon which extended well beyond the *völkisch* milieu.<sup>75</sup> After Steiner's death, the major anthroposophist statement on the topic was Ernst Uehli's 1926 book on Nordic-Germanic mythology. Amidst lengthy passages about Thule and Atlantis, Uehli's book underscored the evolutionary differences between "the Semitic and Aryan peoples." While "the early Germans were a people of nature," Uehli explained, "the Jews succumbed to Ahriman and could not recognize Christ in the flesh."<sup>76</sup> His book on the mystery of the Holy Grail featured a similar contrast between Germans and Jews, arguing that the task of the Christian era was to overcome the bonds of blood and strive toward Universal Humanity; the Jews were the one people to refuse this evolutionary trend.<sup>77</sup>

Like other anthroposophists, Uehli engaged extensively with racial theorists of his time, above all *völkisch* author Herman Wirth. In 1935 Wirth co-founded Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*, the SS agency devoted to the supposed prehistoric origins of the Aryan and Nordic peoples. His magnum opus was a sprawling 1928 volume on Atlantis as the origin of the Aryan race.<sup>78</sup> Uehli referred

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*kosmischen Christentums* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1936); Adolf Müller, "Der Heliand: Altgermanische Evangeliendichtung" *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1940, 209–13.

<sup>75</sup> See Kipper, *Der Germanenmythos im deutschen Kaiserreich*; Julia Zernack, "Germanische Restauration und Edda-Frömmigkeit" in Faber, ed., *Politische Religion—Religiöse Politik*, 143–60; Ekkehard Hieronimus, "Von der Germanen-Forschung zum Germanen-Glauben: Zur Religionsgeschichte des Präfaschismus" in Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier, eds., *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1986), 241–57; Klaus von See, "Kulturkritik und Germanenforschung zwischen den Weltkriegen" *Historische Zeitschrift* 245 (1987), 343–62; Ingo Wiwjorra, *Der Germanenmythos: Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumsforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006).

<sup>76</sup> Ernst Uehli, *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie als Mysteriengeschichte* (Basel: Geering, 1926), 139, 142. The book was re-published in 1984; a heavily abridged English version is available as Uehli, *Norse Mythology and the Modern Human Being* (Fair Oaks: Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, 1999). An anthroposophist biography of Uehli (1875–1959), one of the foremost figures in the early history of Steiner's movement, is available in Hans Reinhart and Jakob Hugentobler, *Ernst Uehli: Leben und Gestalt* (Bern: Francke, 1945).

<sup>77</sup> Ernst Uehli, *Eine neue Gralsuche* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1921), 141.

<sup>78</sup> Herman Wirth, *Der Aufgang der Menschheit: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Religion, Symbolik und Schrift der atlantisch-nordischen Rasse* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1928). For background on Wirth (1885–1981) see Ingo Wiwjorra, "Herman Wirth—Ein gescheiterter Ideologe zwischen 'Ahnenerbe' und Atlantis" in Barbara Danckwortt, ed., *Historische Rassismusforschung* (Hamburg: Argument, 1995), 91–112; Luitgard Löw, "Völkische Deutungen prähistorischer



frequently to Wirth's work, portraying it as an "ample material confirmation of Dr. Steiner's anthroposophical research on Atlantis."<sup>79</sup> Uehli's books were widely acclaimed in the anthroposophist press and cited approvingly in *völkisch* works.<sup>80</sup> His younger contemporary Sigismund von Gleich expanded these teachings, describing "lower races" as degenerated versions of the human form who stood evolutionarily between apes and humans, while the most advanced racial group was "Aryan-Nordic mankind."<sup>81</sup>

While authors like Uehli and Gleich produced a plethora of esoteric works on race in the 1920s and 1930s, the most prolific anthroposophist racial theorist during the interwar period was Richard Karutz. With a background in ethnology, Karutz embraced anthroposophy in the wake of World War I and devoted many of his subsequent publications to developing and extending Steiner's racial teachings. He forcefully rejected "materialist" approaches to anthropology as incapable of grasping the meaning of race. Painting a complex panorama of "lower races" and "higher races," Karutz depicted the various racial groups as rungs on the ladder of spiritual progress, with white people at the

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Sinnbilder: Herman Wirth und sein Umfeld" in Puschner and Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national*, 214–32; Hunger, *Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich*, 180–203; Franz Winter, "Die Urmonotheismustheorie im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Rassenkunde: Herman Wirth im Kontext der religionswissenschaftlichen und ethnologischen Diskussion seiner Zeit" *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 62 (2010), 157–74.

<sup>79</sup> Ernst Uehli, "Atlantis-Forschung II" *Das Goetheanum* May 4, 1930, 141. See also Uehli, "Atlantis-Forschung" *Das Goetheanum* April 27, 1930, 132–34; Uehli, "Die heilige Urschrift der Menschheit" *Das Goetheanum* July 16, 1933, 226–29; Uehli, "Ein Beitrag zu den Mysterien des Zeichens" *Das Goetheanum* July 23, 1933, 233–35; Gerhard Hardorp, "Zu Herman Wirths 'Aufgang der Menschheit'" *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1931, 338–41; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Atlantische Urweissagung" *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1933, 257–64; Arnold Wadler, "Die geistige Geburt Europas" *Das Goetheanum* August 30, 1936, 274–76.

<sup>80</sup> See e.g. Rudolf John Gorsleben, *Hoch-Zeit der Menschheit* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1930), 125, citing Uehli's *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie* positively alongside Wirth's *Aufgang der Menschheit*. Gorsleben (1883–1930) was an ariosophically inclined rune mystic, founder of the *Edda-Gesellschaft*, and publisher of the journal *Deutsche Freiheit: Monatsschrift für Arische Gottes- und Welterkenntnis*. For extremely positive reviews of Uehli's books see among others *Anthroposophie* January 16, 1927, 10–11, and *Das Goetheanum* August 9, 1936, 252–54.

<sup>81</sup> Sigismund von Gleich, "Der Ursprung des Menschen" *Waldorf-Nachrichten* October 1920, 453–56; Hans Heinrich Frei, "Noah und seine Söhne" *Anthroposophie* May 13, 1928, 156–57. "Hans Heinrich Frei" was a pseudonym for Sigismund von Gleich (1896–1953). See also Hans Heinrich Frei, "In Vererbung wiederholte Menschenleibes-Form und in Schicksalsgestaltung wiederholte Geisteswesens-Form" *Anthroposophie* August 14, 1927, 129–30, and Sigismund von Gleich, "Kosmisch-geistige Impulse in weltgeschichtlichen Perioden" *Anthroposophie* June 28, 1931, 201–02.

top. According to Karutz, light skin indicated spiritual development and dark skin indicated spiritual debility:

A constant struggle is at work in racial color, a conflict between external spiritual light and internal spiritual light. As much as the materialistic and mechanistic worldview may scoff and spurn it, the fact remains that colored people are colored because their soul-spiritual structure is too weak in relation to their bodily structure.<sup>82</sup>

Karutz took a particular interest in Africans, whose impoverished souls could be led toward higher development by spiritually aware Europeans.<sup>83</sup> Turning his attention toward Germany, he discussed *völkisch* proposals in detail, writing in early 1932:

Within *völkisch* circles there are many promising seeds for a spiritual future; it is as if the ancient Germanic spirituality were rising again within them, truly transformed. But the suffering of the homeland diverts their attention to the superficial realm of politics, and they become fixated on external appearances.<sup>84</sup>

In Karutz's view, *völkisch* thinkers were distracted by the merely political surface of Germany's crisis and did not fully appreciate its spiritual roots. But Steiner's teachings provided the synthesis that would bring all of these strands together; under the benevolent guidance of anthroposophical ideals, the promising seeds in *völkisch* thought could be brought to fruition.

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<sup>82</sup> Richard Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1929), 117. For apologetic biographies of Karutz (1867–1945) see Matthias Karutz, "Richard Karutz" in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 348–49, and Brigitte Templin, *O Mensch, erkenne dich selbst: Richard Karutz (1867–1945) und sein Beitrag zur Ethnologie* (Lübeck: Schmidt-Römhild, 2010). His works include Richard Karutz, *Die Völker Europas* (Stuttgart: Franckh, 1926); Karutz, *Atlas der Völkerkunde* (Stuttgart: Franckh, 1927); Karutz, *Das Wiederverkörperungs-Erlebnis der frühen Völker* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1933); Karutz, *Die Ursprache der Kunst* (Stuttgart: Strecker & Schröder, 1934).

<sup>83</sup> Richard Karutz, *Des schwarzen Menschen Märchenweisheit* (Stuttgart: Orient-Occident Verlag, 1929); Karutz, *Die afrikanische Seele: Erster Versuch einer afrikanischen Geistesgeschichte* (Basel: Geering, 1938). See also Guenther Wachsmuth, "Afrika als Organ der Erde: Kindheitsstadien der Menschheit" in Wachsmuth, ed., *Gäa-Sophia* vol. III: *Völkerkunde*, 39–58; Ernst von Hippel, *Afrika als Erlebnis des Menschen* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1938).

<sup>84</sup> Richard Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 3, 1932, 3–6, quote at 4; cf. Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* August 23, 1931, 268–70.

Karutz's major statement on racial themes was the prodigious series of "lectures on moral ethnology" he published from 1930 onward, culminating in a volume on "Racial Questions" in 1934. These lectures were published with the imprimatur of the anthroposophical leadership in Dornach.<sup>85</sup> Emphasizing the profound spiritual superiority of Europeans, he explained that "colored peoples" were unable to participate in the development of civilization because of their "spiritual-bodily constitution" and were destined to stagnate or die out.<sup>86</sup> Karutz focused much of his attention on the spiritually degrading impact of non-European influences on contemporary Germany. Noting the increased presence of "Mongoloid, Egyptoid, Negroid and Australoid types" on European streets, he characterized these peoples as the physical reincarnation of souls with too weak a sense of individuality, voicing the suspicion that their influx into German lands was part of a hidden plot against the spiritual center of *Mitteleuropa*. He warned against 'Negro' influences in particular, which caused Europeans to "sink lower to an earlier stage of development of the soul."<sup>87</sup> To combat such tendencies, Karutz called for an "inner racial struggle" (*innerer Rassenkampf*), declaring that "the community of blood is the community of spirit."<sup>88</sup> By 1933, Karutz greeted the rise of Nazism as the fulfillment of this racial-spiritual program.

Anthroposophists were not always of one mind in delineating the relationship between physical and spiritual aspects of race. Some argued that biological approaches were too materialist and failed to capture the true spiritual essence underlying race.<sup>89</sup> Others rejected "race mixing" as detrimental to

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1930–1934), co-published by the Goetheanum in Dornach. The series comprised fifty installments of varying size, generally between 40 and 80 pages each. For an extremely enthusiastic review see Hermann Poppelbaum, "Hinweis auf die Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde von Richard Karutz" *Anthroposophie* July 1932, 489–90; excerpts from the series were also published in *Die Christengemeinschaft* in August and December 1935. The final three installments appeared combined in one volume in 1934 under the title *Rassenfragen*; I examine this work in detail in chapter 4.

<sup>86</sup> Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 7, "Die Kultur" (1930), 21.

<sup>87</sup> Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 3, "Die frühen Völker und wir" (1930), 27, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Karutz, "Die frühen Völker und wir," 28; Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 38, "Gesellschaftliches Leben" (1934), 12.

<sup>89</sup> See e.g. Arnold Wadler, *Germanische Urzeit: Quellen zur Vorgeschichte der deutschen Sprache* (Basel: Geering, 1936), 12–28; but cf. "Rudolf Steiner und die arische Kulturepoche" in Wadler, *Das Rätsel der Indogermanen* (Basel: Geering, 1937), 79–100.

spiritual progress.<sup>90</sup> The common denominator among these viewpoints was the conviction that a merely physical emphasis on racial identity was a regression to the past, and that the way of the future lay in the *spiritual* mission of Germanness. This postulate was accompanied by a focus on spiritual conceptions of 'blood' and a concomitant rejection of materialism, intellectualism, liberalism, rationalism, and other traits ostensibly unsuited to the German character. What anthroposophists shared with their *völkisch* contemporaries was an insistence on the Germanic essence as the highest expression of human ideals.

On the basis of these principles, anthroposophists engaged in a series of critical debates with *völkisch* positions in the early 1930s. Their appraisals of nationalist politics sometimes involved Christian themes, which were central to Steiner's teachings but contested within *völkisch* ranks.<sup>91</sup> Critically reviewing the doctrines of figures such as Dinter, Ludendorff, and Rosenberg, these analyses sympathized with the "national will" such movements evinced, but found them too beholden to "the masses" and too compromised by materialism.<sup>92</sup> *Völkisch* authors, in anthroposophist eyes, had reversed the cause and

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<sup>90</sup> Heise, "Ein paar Worte zum Dunkelhaar und Braunauge der Germanen" *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* vol. 8 (1914), provides an instructive example; in the October issue he firmly rejected "das Rassengemisch von heute" (186), repudiating racial mixing and intermarriage, and in the September issue he wrote: "Und so zeigt sich eben gerade die germanische Rasse als die zukünftigste Menschenrasse und als die endlose Befruchterin der ganzen großen Menschheit, was Grund genug ist, rassisch-ethische Hochzucht nunmehr bewußt durch sie zu entwickeln. Dr. Steiner gehört das Verdienst, die hohe Bedeutung der neugermanischen Entwicklung in seinen Werken in der verschiedensten Weise dargestellt zu haben." (136)

<sup>91</sup> Examples include August Pauli, *Blut und Geist: Völkischer Glaube und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1932); Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Die Externsteine—Ein Erlebnis von Deutschtum und Christentum" *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1932, 225–31; Robert Goebel, "Christentum und deutsches Wesen" *Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1933, 11–12.

<sup>92</sup> Pauli's pamphlet *Blut und Geist* concludes: "Wenn das deutsche Wesen also erst sich selbst gefunden hat, am wahren Geistchristentum selbst genesen ist und seine Bestimmung begriffen hat, dann kann am Ende auch das Dichterwort noch wahr werden, das bis heute nur eine allzu kühne Prophetie geblieben ist, daß am deutschen Wesen noch einmal die Welt genesen solle. In dieser Richtung liegt für uns die Verbindung von völkischem Glauben und Christentum." (36) Cf. August Pauli, "'Sünde' und 'Selbstschöpfung': Aus Anlaß von Alfred Rosenberg's Schrift 'Protestantische Rompilger'" *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1937, 239–42. Before turning to anthroposophy and becoming a leading pastor in the Christian Community, Pauli (1869–1959) worked as secretary to Protestant luminary Johannes Müller, who had strong *völkisch* inclinations; for background see Harald Haury, *Von Riesa nach Schloß Elmau: Johannes Müller (1864–1949) als Prophet, Unternehmer und Seelenführer eines völkisch naturfrommen Protestantismus* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005).

effect relationship between spiritual decline and racial-ethnic degeneration.<sup>93</sup> A conspicuously ambivalent attitude toward antisemitism marked these anthroposophist treatments. One 1932 text disapproved of “the ugly excesses of the antisemitic movement” while holding Jews responsible for the “destructive effects of intellectualism and materialism.” Thus “it is understandable that a *völkisch* movement defending itself against this disintegration regards contemporary Jewry as a corrosive element.”

If we overcome the materialism to which we have fallen prey, we will soon no longer have reason to complain about the harmful influence of Jewry. That would be a more just and more effective antisemitism than fomenting hateful instincts.

The same text then asked “whether mixed marriages between Germans and Jews, which in recent years have become rather numerous, are desirable.” Many of these marriages, the author concluded, are “a sin against nature” and “must be restricted as much as possible.”<sup>94</sup>

Thematic commonalities like these allowed detailed deliberation over the best way to redeem Germany. In a series of laudatory exchanges in 1931 with the right-wing circle around the journal *Die Tat*, anthroposophists argued that the latter’s diagnosis of the political situation was accurate, but the proposed cure was inadequate to confront the underlying spiritual causes of Germany’s crisis. The *Tat* circle, according to their anthroposophist interlocutors, failed to realize that Steiner had already pointed the way to salvation.<sup>95</sup> Some anthroposophists endorsed militant nationalist organizations. From 1928 to 1930 Karl Heyer promoted Artur Mahraun’s corporatist *Jungdeutscher Orden* and its affiliate, the *Volksnationale Reichsvereinigung*, as potential partners for anthroposophist objectives, praising them for attempting to transcend mass politics and parliamentary democracy through an “organic community.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See e.g. Hannes Razum, “Das völkische Problem” *Das Goetheanum* July 6, 1930, 212–14: “Das völkische Problem ist heute ein geistiges Problem und nur aus geistigen Erkenntnissen heraus zu lösen.” (213)

<sup>94</sup> Pauli, *Blut und Geist*, 24, 29–30.

<sup>95</sup> Wilhelm Salewski, “Zur Weltlage” *Anthroposophie* August 2, 1931, 241–43; Salewski, “Dreigliederung oder totaler Staat? Offener Brief an den Kreis der ‘Tat’” *Anthroposophie* August 30, 1931, 275–77; Karl Heyer, “Weltwirtschaftskrise” *Anthroposophie* July 19, 1931, 226–27; Heyer, “Kapitalistische Weltwirtschaft oder staatswirtschaftliche nationale Autarkie?” *Anthroposophie* September 6, 1931, 283–85.

<sup>96</sup> Karl Heyer, “Das ‘Jungdeutsche Manifest’: Ein Streben nach sozialer Erneuerung” *Anthroposophie* June 10, 1928, 189–90; Heyer, “Erneuerungsbestrebungen im inneren poli-

When anthroposophists made their own political pronouncements during the Weimar era, it was generally in the context of occult conspiracy theories. Steiner's close associate Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz was a chief proponent of such theories, centered on the hidden maneuverings of evil forces plotting against Germany.<sup>97</sup> This theme was especially common in discussions of the World War, which anthroposophists continued to depict as a conspiratorial effort to "destroy the Germanic race."<sup>98</sup> Some of Steiner's followers placed the blame for these behind-the-scenes intrigues not just on the English, French, Russians,

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tischen Leben Deutschlands" *Anthroposophie* June 1, 1930, 171–73; see also the positive references to the *Jungdeutscher Orden* in *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1930. For background on the *Jungdeutscher Orden* see Ernst Posse, *Die politischen Kampfbinde Deutschlands* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1931), 51–59; Klaus Hornung, *Der Jungdeutsche Orden* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1958); James Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 97–100, 222–27, 269–76; Larry Jones, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, 1918–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 329–40.

<sup>97</sup> Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz, *Die Notwendigkeit der Erhaltung und Weiterentwicklung des deutschen Geisteslebens für die europäische Kultur* (Vienna: Manzsch, 1919); Polzer-Hoditz, *Politische Betrachtungen auf Grundlage der Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1920); Polzer-Hoditz, *Der Kampf gegen den Geist und das Testament Peters des Grossen* (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag, 1922); Polzer-Hoditz, *Das Mysterium der europäischen Mitte: Eine welthistorische Schicksalsbetrachtung* (Stuttgart: Orient-Occident Verlag, 1928). Polzer-Hoditz (1869–1945) was one of the few leading anthroposophists who were personally close to Steiner. For a celebratory anthroposophist view see Thomas Meyer, *Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz—Ein Europäer* (Basel: Perseus, 1994). Steiner praised Polzer-Hoditz's conspiracist texts (Steiner, *Soziale Ideen, Soziale Wirklichkeit, Soziale Praxis*, 241). Conspiracy theories formed an important part of Steiner's own work; examples include Steiner, *Mitteleuropa zwischen Ost und West*, 109–18; Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 22, 147, 162–66, 377–78; Steiner, *Die soziale Grundforderung unserer Zeit*, 64–65, 255, 320. The ample latter-day anthroposophist conspiracy literature includes Erdmuth Grosse, *Das Wirken der okkulten Logen und die Aufgabe der Mitte zwischen Ost und West* (Basel: Die Pforte, 1987); Sergei Prokofieff, *The Spiritual Origins of Eastern Europe and the Future Mysteries of the Holy Grail* (London: Temple Lodge, 1993); Terry Boardman, *Mapping the Millennium: Behind the Plans of the New World Order* (London: Temple Lodge, 1998); Dieter Rüggeberg, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie im Licht der Hermetik* (Wuppertal: Rüggeberg, 1999); Thomas Meyer, *Reality, Truth and Evil: Facts, Questions and Perspectives on September 11, 2001* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge, 2005).

<sup>98</sup> Fritz Kipp, "Zum Gedenktag für die Opfer des Weltkrieges" *Anthroposophie* September 4, 1924, 1–3; see also Hermann Heisler, *KriegoderFrieden* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1929); Jürgen von Grone, "Zum Tage von Versailles" *Anthroposophie* July 7, 1929, 218–20; Grone, "Wie heute über den Kriegsausbruch gedacht wird" *Anthroposophie* December 1, 1929, 389–91; Grone, "Nachwort zu Versailles" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1933, 15–16; Franz Krause, "Rudolf Steiner während des Weltkrieges" *Das Goetheanum*



or Americans, but on the Jews. Conjoining esoteric tropes with antisemitic assumptions, these texts expressed widespread anthroposophical anxieties over Jewishness and its relation to Germanness. One tract blamed the powerful influence of “intellectual Jewry” on “Anglo-American freemasons” for causing the war.<sup>99</sup> For other anthroposophists, the threat that Germany faced was not specifically Jewish but a vague ensemble of secretive “financial powers” and their anti-German ploys.<sup>100</sup>

The foremost example of a full-fledged antisemitic conspiracy theory based squarely on anthroposophist premises was Karl Heise’s 1919 tome blaming the World War on a cabal of freemasons and Jews. Heise wrote the book with Steiner’s encouragement and founded its argument on Steiner’s own teachings, while Steiner himself wrote the foreword and contributed a substantial sum toward publication costs.<sup>101</sup> The book offered a cornucopia of conspiratorial claims about the occult scheming of foreign powers against Germany, identifying many of the culprits as Jews, from bankers to Bolsheviks. Heise warned against “Jewish capitalists” and their communist minions while praising Steiner as the alternative to “Jewish thinking.”<sup>102</sup> His book made a crucial contribution to the burgeoning revival of antisemitic and anti-Masonic conspiracy

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November 26, 1933, 379–80; Jürgen von Grone, “Generaloberst von Moltke im Kriegsausbruch” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* July 1934, 3–5.

<sup>99</sup> Wilhelm von Heydebrand, “Die schwarz-rot-gelbe Internationale und ihr Gegensatz” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 9 (1919); cf. Heydebrand, “Ausführungen über gewisse Grundlagen der Politik” *Das Reich* April 1919, 112–16; Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes*, 12–15, 35–45; Doldinger, *Christus bei den Germanen*, 66–67; Wachsmuth, *Mysterien- und Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit*, 115–28.

<sup>100</sup> See e.g. Karl Heyer, “Ueber die Wirksamkeit der retardierenden geistigen Mächte in den Kulturströmungen der Gegenwart” *Anthroposophie* April 14, 1929, 123–25, and Jürgen von Grone, “Tatsachen, Bewegungen, Fragen” *Anthroposophie* August 16, 1931, 262–63.

<sup>101</sup> Karl Heise, *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg* (Basel: Finckh, 1919); the text initially appeared in October 1918 with a publication date of 1919. On Steiner’s role see Steiner, *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Gegner*, 568–70, and Steiner, *Zur Geschichte und aus den Inhalten der erkenntniskultischen Abteilung der Esoterischen Schule 1904 bis 1914* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1987), 55–60. Heise recounted further details of Steiner’s involvement in the book’s inception in a March 24, 1937 letter to fellow anthroposophist Elisabeth Klein (BA NS15/302: 58025). See also the extremely positive reviews of Heise’s book in *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 47 (1920) and *Das Reich* January 1919, 474.

<sup>102</sup> Heise, *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg*, 297; cf. 32–33, 84, 253, 262, 285–86, 295, 306, etc. For background see Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos in der Weimarer Republik und im NS-Staat* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1993); Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *The Politics of Sociability: Freemasonry and German Civil Society*,



theories in the Weimar era, a genre which provided additional impetus to the 'stab-in-the-back' myth and related resentments against the young republic.

In the Weimar context, anthroposophy's professed unpolitical stance readily took on a conservative cast. A number of anthroposophists were actively involved in right-wing parties such as the German National People's Party or DVNP, while others harked back to earlier authoritarian traditions.<sup>103</sup> Richard Karutz described his political outlook prior to 1933 as "conservative and German nationalist."<sup>104</sup> A common anthroposophist response to Weimar's experiment in democracy was to deride the republican state for its "un-mystical and thoroughly rationalist character" which destroyed the "organic bonds of the Middle Ages" and turned individuals into "atomized" entities pressed

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1840–1918 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 282–90; Aaron Kamis-Müller, *Antisemitismus in der Schweiz, 1900–1930* (Zürich: Chronos, 1990), 123, 407.

<sup>103</sup> The head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in the city of Weimar, Horst von Henning auf Schönhoff, was active in the DVNP during the Weimar republic (BA R58/6188/1: 323). A member of Steiner's Esoteric School from 1904 onward, Henning was one of the "Vertrauenspersönlichkeiten der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland" in 1923. Three of the seven leading anthroposophists from Thüringen profiled in BA R58/6188/1: 316–35 belonged to the DVNP as well. Many other anthroposophists evidently had no political affiliation. A large majority of the anthroposophist authors who submitted standard forms to the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* after 1933 claimed no previous party memberships of any kind: this was the response given by eighteen of the twenty-six anthroposophists whose files I examined. Four others (Hanns Rascher, Alfred Köhler, Eugen Link, Clara Remer) were members of the NSDAP prior to 1933. In only one case did an anthroposophist belong to a left-wing party; Franz Dreidax was by his own account a member of the USPD for a few months in 1919 (BA RK/I85: 1992).

<sup>104</sup> BA RK/I268: 2894. Wilhelm zur Linden's memoir *Blick durchs Prisma* indicates an authoritarian conservative political disposition and a yearning for the pre-Weimar Prussian status quo. Similar tendencies may have obtained outside of Germany as well. According to anthroposophist George Adams, much of the founding generation of English anthroposophy was made up of "well-to-do ladies and gentlemen" who were "mostly conservative in social outlook": George Adams, "Rudolf Steiner in England" in Arnold Freeman and Charles Waterman, eds., *Rudolf Steiner: Recollections by Some of his Pupils* (London: Golden Blade, 1958), 9. A December 1935 report from the German embassy in Oslo noted that the membership of the Norwegian Anthroposophical Society "predominantly associates with conservative circles." (BA R58/6188/1: 25) For background see Herman Lebovics, *Social Conservatism and the Middle Classes in Germany, 1914–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); Raimund von dem Bussche, *Konservatismus in der Weimarer Republik: Die Politisierung des Unpolitischen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998); James Retallack, *The German Right, 1860–1920: Political Limits of the Authoritarian Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

together into a “mechanistic and abstract unity.”<sup>105</sup> Anthroposophists rejected “West European democracy in its liberal form” and argued that even Imperial Germany was marred by its imitation of “the Western liberal democratic state form.”<sup>106</sup> Many anthroposophists simply avoided the political sphere, seeing it as a demeaning and corrupt distraction inevitably at odds with their conception of a spiritual aristocracy.

Rather than political change, anthroposophy sought a “spiritual revolution” in Germany for the sake of the whole world.<sup>107</sup> Such a revolution could not be reached through merely political means, particularly under the conditions of the Weimar republic. Anthroposophist public statements consequently revolved around an emphatic but politically undefined affirmation of the mission of the German spirit.<sup>108</sup> This indistinct political outlook, couched in spiritual terms, made anthroposophy difficult to classify. Critics of Steiner’s

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<sup>105</sup> Karl Heyer, “Staatsentwicklung und Ichentwicklung” *Anthroposophie* April 26, 1931, 132–34; cf. Jürgen von Grone, “Ich und Nation” *Anthroposophie* December 28, 1930, 409–11; Folkert Wilken, *Grundwahrheiten einer organischen Wirtschaft* (Zurich: Organisator, 1934).

<sup>106</sup> Karl Heyer, “Der Staat als Befreier der menschlichen Individualität” *Anthroposophie* May 3, 1931, 137–38; Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas*, 156. Anthroposophist rejection of democracy pre-dated the Weimar republic; in 1911 Max Seiling unequivocally repudiated “undeutsche demokratische Gleichmacherei” (Seiling, *Richard Wagner, der Künstler und Mensch, der Denker und Kulturträger*, 211).

<sup>107</sup> See Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 122, and 184: “The ‘mobilizing’ of Spirit and intellect that has been going forward in Germany, under Rudolf Steiner, ever since 1900 is now almost complete; at the given moment the ‘troops’ standing in readiness will carry out their appointed parts in the operations and strike a blow for German Idealism, for the German Spirit, and for German Culture, doing so against the pseudo- and un-German barbarism, as exemplified by Russian Bolshevism, Roman Catholicism, and Jesuitry, against Roman Law and against Anglo-American Materialism and Imperialism, all of which have sought to make their homes on our soil.”

<sup>108</sup> Ernst Uehli, “Die deutsche Weltmission” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, no. 15 (1919); Uehli, “Zur Mobilisierung des deutschen Geistes” *Das Reich* April 1919, 7–10; Hans Erhard Lauer, “Deutschlands Wiedergeburt aus dem Geiste Goethes” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* no. 30 (1920); Lauer, “Rudolf Steiner und unsere deutsche Lage” *Das Reich* July 1920, 191–96; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum* (Munich: Kaiser, 1921); Ernst Boldt, *Christentum und Sozialismus (Anthroposophie und Dreigliederung): Ein Weckruf an den deutschen Geist* (Munich: Rösl, 1923); Felix Kersten, “Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum” *Die Drei* December 1925, 669–73; Roman Boos, “Idee und Ideal des Deutschtums” *Anthroposophie* December 5, 1926, 193–94; Walter Kühne, “Deutschtum und Christentum” *Anthroposophie* April 10, 1927, 59; Roman Boos, “Krise des deutschen Geistes” *Das Goetheanum* November 16, 1930, 364–65; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Der Deutsche in seiner Weltaufgabe zwischen Rußland und Amerika* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1932); Rudolf Steiner, “Die verjüngenden Kräfte der deutschen Volksseele” *Anthroposophie* January 1932, 121–40; Steiner, “Die tra-

movement sometimes presented it as a reactionary current in progressive garb.<sup>109</sup> Its proclaimed apolitical character constituted an obstacle to potential drift in a *völkisch* direction, as did the differing social makeup of the anthroposophist and *völkisch* milieus; the populist resentment which characterized *völkisch* politics did not often arise among comparatively well-off anthroposophists.<sup>110</sup> But in cultivating an unpolitical ideal, anthroposophists failed to recognize the political contours of the era. Thinking themselves above politics, Steiner's followers epitomized "the high-minded but disastrous indifference to politics" which helped doom German democracy.<sup>111</sup> The 'unpolitical' nature of anthroposophy was a double-edged sword.

In its simultaneous yearning for a "spiritual revolution" and disdain for concrete political action, the early anthroposophist movement revealed an unstable dynamic beneath the genteel veneer of esoteric enlightenment. Anthroposophy's occult underpinnings hampered its practical effectiveness

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gende Kraft des deutschen Geistes" *Anthroposophie* June 1934, 195–219; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1934).

<sup>109</sup> See Freimark, *Die okkultistische Bewegung*, 62: "Und die von Steiner und seiner Gesellschaft verkörperte Sorte von Theosophie ist nicht die erlösende Lebenslehre, für die sie ausgegeben wird, sondern eine jeden wahren Kulturfortschritt lähmende Ausgeburt reaktionärer Gesinnung."

<sup>110</sup> While *völkisch* adherents often came from the *Mittelstand*, anthroposophy drew on a more upscale clientele, including a significant number of nobles, wealthy industrialists, and academically trained professionals from the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Aside from aristocrats and entrepreneurs, a May 1941 report from the SD office in Heidelberg noted that the local anthroposophist community consisted of "Beamten, Angestellten und Kaufleuten" (BA R58/5660: 12). For broader data on the social composition of the anthroposophist movement see the 1935 membership lists of the Nuremberg and Breslau branches of the Anthroposophical Society, including occupations, in BA R58/5660: 52–55, BA R58/6189/1: 5–14, and BA R58/6194/2: 368–76.

<sup>111</sup> W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 207. Bruford's study, originally published in 1975, traces the impact of the German ideal of "inwardness" and the "Romantic disdain for politics" grounded in "the cultivation of the private rather than the public virtues" (ix, 239). For equally perceptive analyses see Hajo Holborn, "Der deutsche Idealismus in sozialgeschichtlicher Bedeutung" *Historische Zeitschrift* 174 (1952), 359–84; Fritz Stern, "The Political Consequences of the Unpolitical German" *History* 3 (1960), 104–34; Ralf Dahrendorf, "The Unpolitical German" in Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 314–27; Hermann Glaser, "Mythos against Logos" in Glaser, *The Cultural Roots of National Socialism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 97–176; Alice Gallin, *Midwives to Nazism: University Professors in Weimar Germany, 1925–1933* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986); George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

and impeded candid self-reflection. Tentative efforts to influence political events between 1917 and 1921, which garnered opprobrium from non-anthroposophists, led in turn to a re-assertion of apolitical principles. The disappointment at not being allowed to take a leading role in healing the German crisis and guiding *Mitteleuropa* to its proper destiny presented anthroposophists with a painful setback. When this attempt failed and sparked a backlash against Steiner and his followers, it spurred them to pull back from open political involvement and focus instead on building up Waldorf schools and Christian Community congregations and biodynamic projects as the most promising route to realizing their esoteric ambitions. The outline of these ambitions was left unclear. Before the arrival of the Nazi regime, Steiner's followers propounded a spiritual re-birth of Germany, a vision which remained elusive and nebulous.<sup>112</sup>

The convoluted details of anthroposophy's early history do not yield a clear political profile in the waning years of the Weimar republic. The fractious nature of the occult milieu and the constant rivalries within the right-wing spectrum in interwar Germany generated alliances as well as animosities under continually shifting conditions. Many National Socialists, for their part, were intensely skeptical of *völkisch* tendencies, spiritual movements, and competing visions of regeneration. Committed to an unpolitical self-conception as a vehicle for spiritual renewal, anthroposophy abjured open political engagement even while passing judgement on various counterparts and contemporaries. Emphasizing spiritual transformation over democratic action, the anthroposophist movement simultaneously alienated militant nationalist and racist organizations while leaving itself open to potential appropriation once such organizations achieved state power.

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<sup>112</sup> For context see Justus Ulbricht, "‘Deutsche Renaissance’: Weimar und die Hoffnung auf die kulturelle Regeneration Deutschlands zwischen 1900 und 1933" in Jürgen John and Volker Wahl, eds., *Zwischen Konvention und Avantgarde: Doppelstadt Jena—Weimar* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), 191–208; August Wiedmann, "The Apocalyptic-Chiliastic Vision" in Wiedmann, *The German Quest for Primal Origins in Art, Culture, and Politics 1900–1933* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1995), 299–348; Rüdiger Graf, "Die 'Krise' im intellektuellen Zukunftsdiskurs der Weimarer Republik" in Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf, eds., *Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2005), 77–106; Thomas Rohkrämer, "Visions of a Spiritual Unification in the German Empire" in in Rohkrämer, *A Single Communal Faith? The German Right from Conservatism to National Socialism* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), 84–120.

## Accommodation, Collaboration, Persecution: Anthroposophy in the Shadow of National Socialism, 1933–1945

The regime that came to power in Germany in 1933 exercised a potent appeal and sparked extreme trepidation in roughly equal measure. Hailed by its supporters as the salvation of Germany and reviled by its opponents as a ruinous tyranny, the new government sought broad popular approval even as it narrowed the boundaries of public life. National Socialism presented a conundrum to the world: Simultaneously a movement, a party, and a state, with all of the contradictions this entailed; externally totalitarian but internally riven with disagreements, divisions, rivalries; both intransigent and strategically flexible, committed to a reactionary utopianism and to a modernizing pragmatism; brandishing truncheons, barbed wire, and panzers while championing social harmony and natural conciliation; preaching community yet enforcing exclusion. Divided perceptions of Nazism contributed to the confused initial response to the ‘New Germany’ within mainstream society and among small esoteric groups. At the same time, different Nazi agencies reacted in very different ways to those who viewed their own spiritual science as the true salvation of Germany. These circumstances produced a volatile environment for anthroposophist aspirations in the early stages of the Third Reich.

In the years immediately preceding Hitler’s rise to power, private anthroposophical correspondence revealed a range of anxieties and hopes about the possibility of a Nazi government or another authoritarian regime. An October 1931 letter observed worriedly that “for more than a year the danger of a right-wing dictatorship has been hanging over all of our heads. In such an unquiet time as this, heaven knows what persecutions, prohibitions and so forth could come from that.” Three months later, the same anthroposophist was hard at work trying to get anthroposophical literature into the hands of right-wing activists, in the expectation that people “who belong to the political right” would be especially interested in the theme of “Steiner and Germanness.” One point of concern was the perceived “prominence of the Israelite element” within anthroposophical ranks; the few anthroposophists from Jewish backgrounds could unnecessarily alienate Nazi observers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Heyer to Moritz Bartsch, October 11, 1931, BA R58/7408; Heyer to Helene Röchling, January 29, 1932, BA R58/7408; Heyer to Oskar Franz Wienert, December 16, 1931 (BA R58/5946:

Anthroposophists devoted considerable effort between 1930 and 1932 to persuading Hitler and other leading Nazis of the virtues of anthroposophy, on the assumption that the Nazi leadership would surely recognize anthroposophy's merits if exposed to the proper information.<sup>2</sup> A Nuremberg anthroposophist with "personal connections to Hitler" was asked to intercede on behalf of anthroposophy in a meeting with the Nazi leader in November 1930.<sup>3</sup> In 1931 anthroposophists endeavored to promote positive coverage of their movement in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the chief Nazi newspaper, and in 1932 tried to provide materials on Steiner to Nazi Reichstag member Hans Frank.<sup>4</sup> Steiner's followers foresaw the potential for constructive cooperation with the Nazis if given the opportunity to present anthroposophical ideas on their own terms, but feared dire consequences if misconceptions about anthroposophy persisted.

The combination of apprehension and anticipation continued after Hitler's ascension to power in January 1933. For some anthroposophists, the Nazi regime presented new obstacles to the unfolding of Germany's destiny; for others, the advent of the Third Reich signaled the fulfillment of Germany's spiritual purpose. Several anthroposophists belonged to the Nazi movement

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1435): "Ihre Besorgnis wegen des Hervortretens des israelitischen Elements—das an sich ja zahlenmässig bei uns *schwach* vertreten ist—teile ich seit langem sehr." See also the November 7, 1932 letter to the membership from Hermann Poppelbaum, head of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany (BA R58/619: 24), denying rumors among the membership that he was Jewish and hence unfit to represent the Society. Even before the Nazis came to power, antisemitic perspectives were prevalent enough among anthroposophists that Poppelbaum found it necessary to reiterate his 'Aryan' credentials.

<sup>2</sup> See the 1930–1932 correspondence of Karl Heyer, Oskar Franz Wienert, Georg Klenk and Baron Tucher in BA R58/5946: 1429–71. Wienert to Heyer, December 1, 1931 (R58/5946: 1436–38) emphasizes Wienert's good connections within the Nazi party and mentions that several anthroposophists have applied to become party members. Wienert, an active anthroposophist since the 1920s, joined the SS in April 1944 (BA SM/U11: 1099).

<sup>3</sup> Heyer to Wienert, February 6, 1932 (BA R58/5946: 1433); Heyer to Tucher, November 15, 1930 (BA R58/5946: 1472). Tucher replied on November 27: "Wenn ich mit Herrn Hitler und anderen Herren aus seiner Umgebung zusammen komme werde ich mich bemühen ihnen eine richtigere Ansicht über Herrn Dr. Steiner zu vermitteln und ich glaube, dass Herr Hitler selbst dafür vielleicht mehr Verständnis als seine Anhänger aufbringen wird." (BA R58/5946: 1471) Swiss anthroposophist Karl Heise sent a copy of his book *Entente-Freimaurerei und Weltkrieg* to Hitler when he became Chancellor; see Heise to Elisabeth Klein, March 24, 1937 (BA NS15/302: 58025).

<sup>4</sup> Heyer to Wienert, May 14, 1932, BA R58/5946: 1429. Frank was Hitler's legal advisor; in 1934 he became a Reich Minister and in 1939 Governor General of occupied Poland. He was executed at Nuremberg in 1946. The memoir of anthroposophist physician Wilhelm zur Linden, who treated Frank's children, provides a remarkably positive retrospective portrait of Frank; cf. Wilhelm zur Linden, *Blick durchs Prisma*, 109–10.



before 1933, such as Hanns Rascher, a follower of Steiner since 1908 and one of the founders of anthroposophical medicine, who joined the NSDAP in 1931. From 1933 to 1935 Rascher acted as liaison between the Anthroposophical Society and the Nazi party. A number of local anthroposophist officials joined the party after the Nazis came to power.<sup>5</sup> Other anthroposophists were less sanguine about the new rulers, finding Nazism insufficiently spiritual despite affinities with Steiner's teachings. A week after Hitler took office, an anthroposophist expressed unease: "Precisely because Hitler has borrowed some elements from Rudolf Steiner, I see a danger in his rise, because true spiritualization is missing."<sup>6</sup>

Anthroposophist officials nonetheless exhibited a remarkably positive perspective. In June 1933 Guenther Wachsmuth gave a revealing interview to a Danish newspaper during a visit to Copenhagen, emphasizing his sympathy for the Nazi regime.<sup>7</sup> Wachsmuth, Secretary of the General Anthroposophical Society at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, was one of the three members of the Society's board of directors, alongside its President, Albert Steffen, and Steiner's widow, Marie Steiner. The interview indicated a decidedly friendly stance toward the Nazi state. In response to a question about the new government's attitude to anthroposophy, Wachsmuth replied: "We can't complain. We've been treated with the utmost consideration and have complete freedom to promote our doctrine." Speaking for anthroposophists generally, Wachsmuth went on to express his "sympathy" and "admiration" for National Socialism:

I am reluctant to discuss politics, but it is no secret that we look with sympathy on the events currently taking place in Germany. [...] Stagnation is the death of all spiritual life. There must be movement, and in my view, the steadfast and courageous manner in which the leaders of the new

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<sup>5</sup> See Rascher's party correspondence file, BA PK/O19: 1471–78. Hans Krauch, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Giessen, became an NSDAP member in April 1933 (BA R58/6188/1: 300); Max Babl, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Erfurt, and Hermann Pöschel, leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Plauen, joined the party in May 1933 (BA R58/6191/2: 544; BA R58/6188/1: 107; BA R58/6193/2: 549).

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Günther Schubart, February 7, 1933 (BA R58/6193/1: 39).

<sup>7</sup> The interview appeared in the newspaper *Ekstrabladet* on June 6, 1933, under the headline "Anthroposophists and Nazis Arm in Arm" with the subtitle: "Dr. Guenther Wachsmuth from the 'Goetheanum' in Switzerland declares his sympathy for Hitler." The text is reproduced in German in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. I, 40–41.



Germany are taking control of the problems can only induce admiration. It will surely produce good results.<sup>8</sup>

Outspokenly positive evaluations of the Third Reich were accompanied by precautionary measures. Two weeks before Wachsmuth's interview, his colleague Steffen sent a letter on behalf of the General Anthroposophical Society to all the *Gauleiter* or regional Nazi leaders in Germany, emphasizing Rudolf Steiner's "pure Aryan heritage" and his pro-German stance in the First World War.<sup>9</sup> Dwelling at length on anthroposophy's vigorous opposition to Marxism, Steffen assured the Nazi officials that anthroposophy was not a political movement and rejected "superstition" and "English oriented theosophy." His misgivings about the new regime's possible consequences for Steiner's followers were shared by other anthroposophists who took a critical view of Nazism.<sup>10</sup> In numerical terms, however, the early years of the Third Reich proved to be a boon to the Anthroposophical Society in Germany; its membership increased 25% between the end of 1932 and September 1935.<sup>11</sup>

If anthroposophists were divided in their views of National Socialism, Nazi officials were equally split in their approach to Steiner's movement. Depending on their position within the polycratic party-state apparatus and their attitude toward esoteric precepts, Nazi agencies could be a source of support and encouragement for anthroposophical endeavors or a tenacious scourge intent on pursuing occultists as enemies of the nation. An array of anthroposophist projects, from Waldorf schools to biodynamic farming to anthroposophical medicine, found crucial backing from high-level Nazi representatives. The most important of these was Rudolf Hess, Deputy of the Führer, as well as two of his chief lieutenants, Ernst Schulte-Strathaus and Alfred Leitgen, who actively intervened on behalf of anthroposophical efforts. A high official in the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>9</sup> Albert Steffen, General Anthroposophical Society, Dornach, to all *Gauleiter*, May 20, 1933, in ibid., 33–39. Steffen enclosed a copy of Karl Heyer's 1932 pamphlet *Wie man gegen Rudolf Steiner kämpft*.

<sup>10</sup> Han Büchenbacher's memoirs portray anthroposophists Heinrich Leiste, Alfred Usteri, Oswald Dubach, Hugo Reimann, and Willy Schmitt as opponents of National Socialism. In contrast, he identifies a range of prominent anthroposophists as pro-Nazi; aside from Wachsmuth and Marie Steiner, these include C. S. Picht, Roman Boos, Friedrich Kempter, Alfred Meebold, Edwin Froböse, and Herbert Hahn. (Büchenbacher, "Erinnerungen")

<sup>11</sup> The Society counted 5280 members at the end of 1932, increasing to 6413 by June 1934 and 6920 by September 1935; *Mitteilungen für die Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland* June 1934, 1–2; *Mitteilungen für die Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland* September 1935, 11.

Interior Ministry, Lotar Eickhoff, worked with Hess's staff to promote and protect anthroposophist undertakings. Nazi philosopher Alfred Baeumler used his position as head of the Office of Science in the *Amt Rosenberg*, the agency overseeing ideological education within the Nazi party, to help sustain anthroposophist publishing and other enterprises. ss general Otto Ohlendorf was a consistent advocate for anthroposophical interests from his position as department head within the SD or *Sicherheitsdienst*, the Nazi 'security service' and intelligence agency.<sup>12</sup> Without endorsing Steiner's doctrines as a whole, these Nazi leaders considered ideological as well as practical aspects of anthroposophy to be compatible with and complementary to National Socialist principles.

Despite such powerful supporters—and, in an important sense, because of them—anthroposophy faced formidable opponents within the Nazi hierarchy, above all the anti-occult faction within the SD and Gestapo. Led by SD chief Reinhard Heydrich, antagonists of the occult in the Nazi security services had influential allies in other agencies, including Martin Bormann and Joseph Goebbels. In their eyes, anthroposophy was a menacing sect unfit for the new Germany, an elite and suspiciously foreign belief system committed to its own dubious dogma. For Heydrich, anthroposophy was "not a worldview for the whole people, but a special doctrine for a narrow and limited circle of individuals, a doctrine which endangers National Socialism." He found its ostentatiously German character particularly suspect:

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<sup>12</sup> Ohlendorf (1907–1951), an ss *Gruppenführer*, was a specialist for economic matters in the SD and head of the SD-Inland (Amt III in the RSHA), the SD's interior department. In 1941 he was named commander of Einsatzgruppe D, a mobile killing squad in the Ukraine and Crimea, where he was responsible for the deaths of 90,000 Jews and other victims of the first phase of the 'final solution.' He was the chief defendant at the 1947–48 Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen trial, was convicted of crimes against humanity, and executed in June 1951. Ohlendorf's older brother joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1929, and Ohlendorf himself chose an anthroposophical doctor, Wilhelm zur Linden, as his personal physician. During his post-war imprisonment Ohlendorf wrote a sworn affidavit recounting his relationship to anthroposophy. Excerpts are reprinted in Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 246–48. Werner summarizes: "In 1937 there were two aspects of anthroposophy that drew Ohlendorf's attention: on the one hand anthroposophy fulfilled tasks which he expected from National Socialism as a movement for spiritual renewal, but which National Socialism had so far not fulfilled; and on the other hand the representatives of anthroposophy struggled with perseverance and a willingness to sacrifice. This impressed Ohlendorf and motivated him to campaign on behalf of the anthroposophists to the extent possible." (247) For an anthroposophist admirer's first-hand reminiscence of Ohlendorf's abiding interest in and support for anthroposophical endeavors see Rudolf Hauschka, *At the Dawn of a New Age* (Vancouver: Steiner Book Centre, 1985), 69–74.

It is part of the entire attitude of anthroposophy to present itself as very nationalist and German-centered, and to give the external impression of political irreproachability, but in its fundamental essence it represents a dangerous form of Oriental corruption of our Germanic ethnic group.<sup>13</sup>

Beginning in 1934, Heydrich and other adversaries of Steiner's movement developed a concerted campaign to suppress anthroposophical activities and eliminate anthroposophist organizational life from the Third Reich. These efforts in turn spurred a variety of anthroposophical strategies for accommodation to the strictures of the Nazi state, often through appeals to supporters in Nazi quarters.

In this process, the lines between accommodation and collaboration became blurred as anthroposophists attempted to demonstrate their loyalty to Nazi goals. While such tactics failed to placate confirmed anti-occultists, they did impress Nazi officials unfamiliar with or undecided about anthroposophical projects. The resulting conflict between rival Nazi approaches to anthroposophy generated an extended confrontation pitting Hess against Heydrich, with a host of lesser agencies playing occasionally ambiguous roles. Anthroposophy's enemies eventually gained the upper hand in this internal struggle and succeeded in dismantling anthroposophist organizations in a series of stages between 1935 and 1941. For much of that time, however, German anthroposophy saw remarkable achievements in cooperation with various Nazi sponsors. In several cases these achievements continued in the face of setbacks imposed by the SD or Gestapo, reversing the restrictions ordained by Heydrich and his allies.

### Between Accommodation and Collaboration

As early as May 1934 preparations began in Heydrich's stronghold, the Bavarian political police, for a comprehensive ban on anthroposophist activities. Internal police records described anthroposophy as a sect "under Jewish leadership." A month later the political police rescinded the plans because their investigations produced no evidence that anthroposophy was hostile to the Nazi state.<sup>14</sup> Undeterred, in August the Gestapo sought material linking the

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<sup>13</sup> Heydrich to Darré, October 18, 1941, BA R16/1272.

<sup>14</sup> Bayerische Politische Polizei, May 24, 1934, "Betreff: Verbot der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft" (BA R58/6188/1: 271); Bayerische Politische Polizei to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, June 26, 1934 (BA R58/6193/2: 370).

Anthroposophical Society to freemasonry, while the central political police office in Berlin requested reports on anthroposophy from its regional affiliates. The responses to this request turned up a wide range of assessments, with some police agencies characterizing the anthroposophists in their area as politically reliable, while others portrayed the Anthroposophical Society as “superfluous” in the new Germany.<sup>15</sup> The state police in Hamburg reported that anthroposophist conceptions of “blood and race” stood “in contradiction to the foundation of the National Socialist worldview.” In Mecklenburg, however, the political police discerned no danger to the state in the refined circles of the Anthroposophical Society.<sup>16</sup> In Karlsruhe, where the secretariat of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany was located, the Gestapo found no reason for any police action and described anthroposophists in the area as “completely irreproachable.” Indeed, they reported, “most members are rather right-wing, or even belong to the NSDAP.”<sup>17</sup>

Similar findings were submitted by other local and regional agencies. A November 1934 SD report from Erfurt noted that four of the five leaders of the two anthroposophist groups in the city were Nazi party members.<sup>18</sup> An October 1934 Gestapo report for the province of Thuringia classified most of the leading anthroposophists in the region on the right. The leader of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Gotha, Otto Thorwirth, was an NSDAP member, while the leader of the Weimar branch, Horst von Henning, was not a party member but supported the Nazi government. Another local head of the Anthroposophical Society was described as “a National Socialist, though he does not belong to the party.”<sup>19</sup> These evaluations indicated significant support for the Nazi regime among prominent anthroposophists. In May 1935 the Bavarian political police

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<sup>15</sup> Hessisches Staatspolizeiamt, September 8, 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 300; Gestapa Bremen to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, July 30, 1934, BA R58/6193/2: 374.

<sup>16</sup> Staatspolizei Hamburg to Zentralbüro des Politischen Polizeikommandeurs, August 3, 1934, BA R58/6193/2: 380; Mecklenburgische Politische Polizei, Betrifft: Anthroposophische Gesellschaft, August 23, 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 260: “Ihre Anhänger findet die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft fast ausschließlich in den Reihen der sogenannten Gebildeten, besonders in den Gebildeten weiblichen Geschlechts. Eine Gefahr für den Bestand von Volk und Staat dürfte die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft wohl kaum bedeuten.”

<sup>17</sup> Gestapa Karlsruhe to Ministry of the Interior, March 21, 1934 (BA R58/6193/2: 372).

<sup>18</sup> SD memorandum “Anthroposophen und Theosophen, Erfurt” November 15, 1934, BA R58/6191/2: 544. The four party members were Georg Neumann, Max Babl, Max Theile, and August Wegfraß.

<sup>19</sup> Thüringisches Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt, Weimar, to Gestapa Berlin, October 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 316–35.

reiterated that the political stance of Anthroposophical Society members did not justify a ban.<sup>20</sup>

Anti-occultists within the Nazi hierarchy were not appeased by such reports. Seeking ways to obstruct anthroposophical activities, they encouraged rumors that Steiner was Jewish and the movement under Jewish control. The anthroposophist leadership responded by applying for a retroactive 'Aryan certificate' for Steiner, which they duly received in October 1933.<sup>21</sup> Anthroposophist representatives constantly stressed Steiner's Aryan ancestry. In September 1933 Marie Steiner wrote to Rudolf Hess asking him to forbid the German press from claiming that Rudolf Steiner was Jewish. She insisted on Steiner's "pure Aryan heritage" and characterized him as a devoted advocate of German interests.<sup>22</sup> A May 1934 declaration by Elisabeth Klein, a leader of the Waldorf school federation, claimed that Steiner was the first to combat the "lie of German war guilt" after World War I, and complained that "Rudolf Steiner has been slandered by Jewish lies in the press."<sup>23</sup>

Nazi opponents of anthroposophy, for their part, repeatedly invoked the supposedly Jewish nature of anthroposophy in order to bolster their case for prohibiting it. SD agents played up the standing of Jewish members in the anthroposophical leadership, pointing to two figures in particular, Hans Büchenbacher and Alexander Strakosch, who had served on a coordinating committee for the Anthroposophical Society in 1933 and 1934.<sup>24</sup> Both men were considered Jews according to Nazi criteria and were eventually forced to emigrate to Switzerland. Büchenbacher, who counted as "half-Jewish" under the Nuremberg laws because his father was of Jewish origin, had a Catholic upbringing and fought for Germany as an officer on the front in WWI. Such

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<sup>20</sup> Telegram from Bayerische Politische Polizei to Gestapo Berlin, May 9, 1935, BA R58/6188/1: 367.

<sup>21</sup> Steiner's *Ariernachweis*, issued by Der Sachverständige für Rasseforschung beim Reichsministerium des Innern, is dated October 24, 1933 (BA NS15/302: 58018). It was requested in July 1933 by Martin Münch, head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Berlin.

<sup>22</sup> Marie Steiner to Rudolf Hess, September 25, 1933, BA R58/6191/2: 663.

<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth Klein, "Einiges Wesentliche über die Waldorfschulen" May 14, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 46–47).

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. SD Oberabschnitt Südwest, Stuttgart, March 25, 1936, BA R58/6191/2: 449. In 1934 Büchenbacher resigned from the executive committee of the Anthroposophical Society under pressure from his gentile colleagues, and left Germany in 1936. For his anthroposophist publications cf. Hans Büchenbacher, *Der Christus-Impuls und das Ich: Eine erkenntnistheoretische Betrachtung* (Breslau: Manuskript, 1935), and Büchenbacher, *Natur und Geist: Grundzüge einer christlichen Philosophie* (Bern: Haupt, 1946). Strakosch moved to Dornach in 1938.

niceties were lost on anthroposophy's adversaries, who saw Jews in anthroposophist ranks even when they weren't there. In May 1934 the SD alleged that the head of the Munich branch of the Anthroposophical Society, Heinrich Leiste, was Jewish. The Bavarian political police replied a few weeks later, explaining that Leiste was in fact 'Aryan.'<sup>25</sup> Misinformed assertions like these were common. An SD memorandum from October 1934 claimed that Guenther Wachsmuth and Hermann Poppelbaum, head of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, were both Jews.<sup>26</sup> Such claims persisted in SD documents for years, purporting to reveal the "Jewish influence in anthroposophy."

The underlying logic of these claims was to associate anthroposophy with 'foreign' incursions into German culture, a perception reinforced by the relocation of the movement's headquarters to Switzerland in 1913. The charges led to an internal debate among anthroposophists concerning members from Jewish backgrounds. In an October 1934 letter to the Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, anthroposophist Alice Fels explained that while she was classified as "non-Aryan" according to current government standards, "I have never considered myself a Jew."<sup>27</sup> She expressed concern that her non-Aryan status could cause consternation among other anthroposophists. Her concern was warranted; in a July 1935 letter, an anthroposophist from Wuppertal proposed that all 'non-Aryans' be stricken from the Anthroposophical Society membership rolls. The proposal was taken up a month later by Ernst Stegemann, an influential anthroposophist who recommended that every branch of the Society identify its 'non-Aryan' members, who would then be asked to leave the Society and instead affiliate directly with the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach.<sup>28</sup> The head of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, Poppelbaum, explained that only gentiles could represent the organization in official positions, and that a number of 'non-Aryan' members had left the Society so as not to be a burden on it. In September 1935 Poppelbaum assured

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<sup>25</sup> May 1934 correspondence between Sicherheitsamt, Berlin, and Bayerische Politische Polizei, Munich, BA R58/6191/2: 635–37.

<sup>26</sup> SD memorandum, October 13, 1934, "Betr: Anthroposophen in Stuttgart" (BA R58/6191/2: 576); the memorandum also reported that both men lived in Stuttgart, a center of anthroposophical activity. In reality, Wachsmuth lived in Dornach while Poppelbaum lived in Hamburg.

<sup>27</sup> Alice Fels to Alfred Reebstein, October 1, 1934, BA R58/6191: 12.

<sup>28</sup> Anton Deutzmann to Alfred Reebstein, July 29, 1935, BA R58/6189/2: 319; Ernst Stegemann to Alfred Reebstein, August 28, 1935, BA R58/6189/2: 323.

the Gestapo that the entire leadership of the Anthroposophical Society was of “completely Aryan descent.”<sup>29</sup>

In addition to repudiating any “Jewish influence” on anthroposophy, the movement’s spokespeople vigorously denied its international character and boasted of its commitment to German spiritual life. A May 1934 letter from Poppelbaum to ss chief Heinrich Himmler depicted Steiner as a pioneering opponent of the Versailles treaty, freemasonry, and socialism, and presented anthroposophist spiritual science as an alternative to “crude occultism.” “Rudolf Steiner defended Germandom against foreign spiritual powers,” he wrote, warning that restrictions on anthroposophy would hinder loyal Germans from their work on “rebuilding the Reich.”<sup>30</sup> A month later Poppelbaum reiterated to Himmler that the notion of a Jewish influence on anthroposophy was “absolutely absurd.”<sup>31</sup> The Anthroposophical Society in Germany released a pamphlet emphasizing the movement’s opposition to Bolshevism and its rejection of “vulgar occult practices.” The pamphlet insisted that anthroposophy was not exotic but practical, pointing to Waldorf schools, anthroposophical medicine, and biodynamic agriculture as concrete achievements on behalf of Germany.<sup>32</sup>

In attempting to clarify the movement’s public profile and negotiate the erratic landscape of Nazi ministries, the anthroposophical leadership walked an uneven line, trying simultaneously to maintain a measure of autonomy and oblige party and state officials. In August 1935 Poppelbaum told Nazi functionaries that Steiner’s teachings on social threefolding were “strikingly reminiscent of many of today’s endeavors.”<sup>33</sup> Nazi allies of anthroposophy supported these claims. In March 1935 Hess’s delegate Schulte-Strathaus asked the Minister of

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<sup>29</sup> Hermann Poppelbaum to Franz Bintig, November 4, 1935, BA R58/6191: 23; Poppelbaum to Gestapo Berlin, September 9, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 437. He made the same claim fifteen months earlier in a June 9, 1934 letter to Himmler on Anthroposophical Society letterhead, BA R58/6188/1: 267.

<sup>30</sup> Poppelbaum to Himmler, May 9, 1934, on letterhead of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, BA R58/6188/1: 276–77; see also the May 1934 document “Ist die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft ‘international’?” signed “Die Leitung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland” (BA R58/6188/1: 256).

<sup>31</sup> Poppelbaum to Himmler, June 9, 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 267. The letter underscored anthroposophy’s “affinities with *völkisch* ideas,” pointing out that Karl Heise’s antisemitic book on the dangers of freemasonry and Western secret societies was written on the basis of Steiner’s own teachings.

<sup>32</sup> *Dr. Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie*, signed by Hermann Poppelbaum and Martin Münch “für die Leitung der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland” (BA R58/6188/1: 252).

<sup>33</sup> Poppelbaum, August 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 423.



Education to make an exception for Waldorf schools and not treat them as other private schools, because of their special value to National Socialism.<sup>34</sup> Poppelbaum and his colleagues called attention to the prominence of Nazi party members within the Anthroposophical Society, pointing to “a large number” of such members on several occasions. Writing to Hess’s staff in May 1935, Poppelbaum noted that “some of our members are esteemed party members.”<sup>35</sup>

Steiner’s followers argued that treating anthroposophical commitment and Nazi participation as incompatible would damage both the Nazi party and the Anthroposophical Society. Some were ostentatious in linking their anthroposophist and Nazi credentials. Hanns Rascher proclaimed himself “just as much an anthroposophist as a National Socialist.” Otto Julius Hartmann wore his Nazi party badge at an anthroposophical course he gave in annexed Austria in January 1939.<sup>36</sup> Nazi officials wary of occult subversion were alarmed by the influx of anthroposophists into the party, the SA, and the SS, and tried to coordinate counter-measures. The SD and Gestapo moved cautiously, telling their agents in April 1935 not to take action against the Anthroposophical Society but to keep it under surveillance. In October 1935 the Gestapo notified the Ministry of the Interior that they were preparing to ban anthroposophist organizations as dangerous propagators of occultism.<sup>37</sup>

### The 1935 Ban on the Anthroposophical Society in Germany

On November 15, 1935, the Gestapo banned both of the principal anthroposophist organizations in the Third Reich, the Anthroposophical Society in Germany and the Anthroposophical Working Groups. Heydrich’s order dissolving the groups, dated November 1, was carried out with a two week delay in somewhat uncoordinated fashion. The order declared anthroposophy a danger to the state, charging Steiner’s followers with internationalism and connections

<sup>34</sup> Schulte-Strathaus to Bernhard Rust, March 8, 1935, BA R4901/2519: 238–40.

<sup>35</sup> Poppelbaum to Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers, May 22, 1935, BA R58/6193: 426–27.

<sup>36</sup> Hanns Rascher to Amt Rosenberg, April 18, 1935, BA NS15/304: 57136; SD report, February 10, 1939, BA R58/6190: 251. Hartmann (1895–1989), a member of the Anthroposophical Society from 1926 onward, joined the Nazi party in January 1934. His works from the Nazi era include Otto Julius Hartmann, *Der Kampf um den Menschen in Natur, Mythos, Geschichte: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Weltaufgabe* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1934); Hartmann, *Erde und Kosmos im Leben des Menschen* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1938); Hartmann, *Der Mensch als Selbstgestalter seines Schicksals: Lebenslauf und Wiederverkörperung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1940).

<sup>37</sup> Telegram from SD-Hauptamt to SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, Stuttgart, April 30, 1935, BA R58/6191/2: 512; Gestapo Berlin to Ministry of Interior, October 14, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 181.

to Jews, freemasons, and pacifists. It claimed that Waldorf schools propagated an individualist pedagogy and that anthroposophy as a whole stood in opposition to National Socialist principles.<sup>38</sup> While Heydrich secured Bormann's agreement to the ban, regional Nazi officials frustrated the Gestapo's efforts. The Interior Minister of the province of Württemberg, an anthroposophical stronghold, expressed reservations about the ban and ordered the police not to proceed with it, continuing to resist even after emphatic instructions from Berlin.<sup>39</sup> But Heydrich prevailed and the ban was carried out across the Reich, putting an abrupt end to the primary organizational forum for public anthroposophist activity in Germany.

Anthroposophist reactions to the ban were revealing. Jürgen von Grone, leader of the Anthroposophical Working Groups, wrote to Rudolf Hess and Hermann Göring protesting that the ban was bound to damage Germany. He noted that Steiner rejected "western constitutional democracy" as a "catastrophe for the German people" while fearlessly battling Bolshevism and calling for its "elimination through war." Moreover, "Rudolf Steiner was not a pacifist, nor was he a protector of the Jewish race." Grone declared that "Germany's destiny" was endangered because of the ban.<sup>40</sup> A letter to Hitler from the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, signed by Wachsmuth, Steffen, and Marie Steiner, emphasized Rudolf Steiner's "Aryan origins" and his dedication to Germany and rebuffed the notion that anthroposophy was "international," calling this "completely inaccurate." They insisted that the Anthroposophical Society "has never had any connections or any contacts of any kind with any freemasonic, Jewish, or pacifist circles."<sup>41</sup> The Anthroposophical Society in America wrote to the Foreign Minister of Germany protesting the dissolution of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany: "This Society by its very nature and constitution has absolutely nothing to do with 'Jewry, Masonry and Pacifism,' reported in the press to be the cause of this decree."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The text of Heydrich's order can be found in BA R58/6193/2: 524.

<sup>39</sup> Telegrams from Württembergisches Politisches Landespolizeiamt to Gestapa Berlin, November 16 to 18, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 448–53. The Württemberg Interior Minister demanded materials substantiating the charges against anthroposophist groups.

<sup>40</sup> Jürgen von Grone to Hermann Göring, November 25, 1935, BA R58/6188/1: 8–10; Grone to Hess, November 25, 1935, BA R58/6195/1: 393.

<sup>41</sup> General Anthroposophical Society, Dornach, to Adolf Hitler, November 17, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 192. On December 5, 1935 the three sent another official letter to Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick asking that ban be reversed (BA R58/6194/1: 207).

<sup>42</sup> Anthroposophical Society in America to Foreign Minister of Germany, December 6, 1935, BA R58/6189/2: 175. The letter also said that the American branch of the Society continually championed "the great German nation" and "the spiritual and cultural greatness of Germany."

Less prominent anthroposophists protested the ban as well, expressing incredulity that Nazi officials could fail to recognize the kindred spirit of anthroposophy. One anthroposophist warned that the suppression of Steiner's followers played into the hands of the Russians, who viewed anthroposophy as their greatest challenger. "Dr. Steiner recognized from his spiritual vision that the Teutonic peoples and especially Germany are the hegemonic people in the current epoch, the leading people of the earth."<sup>43</sup> An anthroposophical industrialist complained that Nazi leaders had fallen prey to lies about Steiner spread by the "Jewish and Masonic influenced press" of the Weimar era.<sup>44</sup> He pointed out that anthroposophy and Nazism shared the same enemies, and declared his enthusiasm for the achievements of National Socialism as a realization of Steiner's own teachings. A Leipzig anthroposophist wrote to Hitler objecting that anthroposophy represented the salvation of Germany and that a ban on the Anthroposophical Society brought shame to the nation. He added: "Steiner himself showed that the Jews are a people given over to decadence of the soul."<sup>45</sup>

In February 1936 a member of the Hamburg branch of the Anthroposophical Society, Max Pusch, submitted a nine page typed letter to Wilhelm Frick, Nazi Minister of the Interior, protesting the ban on the Anthroposophical Society and emphasizing the pro-Nazi character of anthroposophy. Pusch described himself as a "sincere supporter" of National Socialism. He remarked that many

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<sup>43</sup> Karl Jordan to the Reich Chancellery, November 25, 1935, two page handwritten letter; Jordan asked that it be delivered to "our Führer" (BA R58/6194/1: 191).

<sup>44</sup> Hanns Voith, "Gesuch um Nachprüfung der Begründung des Verbots der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland" November 23, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 201-06: "Nach der nationalsozialistischen Revolution habe ich mit Begeisterung den Angriff des Führers auf den politischen Katholizismus, auf den Bolschewismus und Marxismus und auf Genf und den Versailler Vertrag verfolgt, musste ich doch sehen, dass diese Angriffe gegen die gleichen Feinde gingen, die auch die Anthroposophische Gesellschaft hatte. [...] In die grosszügigen sozialen Reformen der nationalsozialistischen Regierung stellte ich mich mit vollem Herzen und rückhaltlos ein, sah ich doch so vieles darin verwirklicht von dem, was wir im Jahre 1919 in der Dreigliederbewegung vertraten." Voith (1885-1971) owned a machine factory in Swabia as well as several biodynamic estates, was active in social threefolding circles, and joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1919. For his post-war memoir see Hanns Voith, *Im Gang der Zeiten* (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1960).

<sup>45</sup> Georg Bauer to Adolf Hitler, November 16, 1935, BA R58/6194/1: 186-87; three page handwritten letter beginning "Mein Führer!" Bauer wrote: "Wenn man nun von der Regierung aus die Tätigkeit dieser Anthroposophen verbietet, so tut man nichts anderes als das was die Juden mit dem Heiland taten, indem man ihn abermals ans Kreuz schlägt. Und daß dies von deutscher Seite aus geschieht, das treibt einem die Schamröte ins Gesicht. [...] Steiner selbst hat die Juden hingestellt als ein seelisch dem Verfall preisgegebenes Volk."

anthroposophists greeted the rise of the Nazis with enthusiasm, and assured Frick that anthroposophy “fully endorses the present German state.” Pusch relayed a first-hand anecdote about Steiner’s presumed influence on Hitler: In 1933 he visited an anthroposophist family who had a large picture of Hitler displayed in their home with a quote from Steiner attached to it, underneath which was written: “This quote hangs above the desk of the Führer.”<sup>46</sup> Swiss anthroposophist Anni Müller-Link, a Nazi activist, wrote to Hess that the ban was based on misunderstanding of Steiner’s true precepts. She included a copy of Steiner’s pamphlet on “The Germanic Soul and the German Spirit” and requested that it be delivered to Hitler.<sup>47</sup>

A November 1935 letter from a Breslau anthroposophist explored the relation between anthroposophy and National Socialism at length. In the course of European history, he wrote, the “Germanic spiritual approach” had been overwhelmed by the “Semitic scientific intellect” and diluted through “blood mixing” with other peoples. To overcome this debased spirituality, Germans must replace “abstract Semitic thinking” with “organic living thinking.” Steiner’s “spiritual science” was the most promising route toward such renewal. The letter combined anthroposophist tenets with Nazi slogans. Noting the various ways in which anthroposophical ideas and practices complemented Nazi aims, he concluded: “I remain convinced that National Socialism, in order to achieve its legitimate goals from the spiritual side, needs anthroposophy.”<sup>48</sup>

These remonstrations did not overturn the ban on the Anthroposophical Society. But they did reflect the views of anthroposophy’s patrons within the Nazi hierarchy. In the words of Lotar Eickhoff, anthroposophy did not have “the slightest questionable features” and was not “in any way detrimental to the

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<sup>46</sup> Max Pusch to Wilhelm Frick, February 29, 1936, BA R58/6194/1: 270–78: “So ist mein Herz erfüllt von Dankbarkeit und Verehrung für unseren Führer und Reichskanzler, der in so kurzer Zeit so Gewaltiges geleistet hat. Und wenn ich auch noch nicht Mitglied der NSDAP bin, so bin ich doch ihr aufrichtiger Anhänger.” Pusch was a longtime member of the Anthroposophical Society and oversaw the library of the Hamburg branch.

<sup>47</sup> Anni Müller-Link to Rudolf Hess, December 24, 1935, BA R58/6188/1: 136, enclosing copy of Rudolf Steiner, *Die germanische Seele und der deutsche Geist*. Müller-Link, a member of the Anthroposophical Society since 1920, joined the *Auslands-Organisation* of the NSDAP in 1936 and was named head of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Frau im Ausland der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Kreuzlingen* (Schweiz): BA PK/1216: 405–28.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Dürich to Gestapo Berlin, November 28, 1935, BA R58/6193/2: 558–60. For examples of his anthroposophist publications see Richard Dürich, “Ringens um esoterisches Denken” *Die Drei* March 1929, 945–53, and Dürich, “Mensch, Anthroposophie und Sozialwissenschaft” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* July 1933, 13–15.

National Socialist state and its ideas." Indeed an engagement with anthroposophy could have definite "advantages for National Socialism."<sup>49</sup> The Deputy of the Führer's perspective was described as follows: "Hess takes the position that no matter what we think of Steiner's anthroposophical doctrine, we should try as far as possible to fulfill the practical usefulness of this doctrine and its working results."<sup>50</sup> Anthroposophists seeking to repeal the ban received support from officials who deemed the Gestapo order unjustified. A permanent secretary in the Prussian ministry of state, one of Göring's high-level aides, held several meetings with Jürgen von Grone in January 1936 to explore the possibility of annulling or ameliorating Heydrich's order.<sup>51</sup> Even the Nazi Minister for Church Affairs, Hanns Kerrl, complained that the Anthroposophical Society had been dissolved without his consent.<sup>52</sup>

During the six months following the ban, anthroposophists and their allies succeeded in establishing fairly lenient parameters within which anthroposophical activities could continue without interference. Some of these successes involved support from unexpected sources. In December 1935 Himmler forbade any action against the biodynamic farmers' league. In March 1936 Kerrl voiced forceful opposition to the idea of dissolving the Christian Community, and was backed by the Foreign Ministry and the Interior Ministry. Two weeks later Heydrich ordered the Gestapo to desist from actions against the Christian Community, declaring that it was not to be dissolved but merely subjected

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<sup>49</sup> Eickhoff to Karl Haselbacher, December 19, 1936, BA R58/6195/1: 421. Eickhoff was a Nazi specialist in the struggle against freemasonry. His official position was *Ministerialrat* in the Ministry of the Interior, though he often worked under Hess's patronage. Except for his intervention on behalf of Steiner's followers, his party file reflects the typical profile of an antisemitic and anti-masonic Nazi bureaucrat; see OPGA/C89: 1819–38. Eickhoff joined the Anthroposophical Society after 1945.

<sup>50</sup> Karl Wolff to Heydrich, February 15, 1937, BA R58/6195/2: 585, relaying a statement from Hess's adjutant Leitgen. Wolff was Himmler's chief of staff.

<sup>51</sup> See the series of memoranda by *Ministerialrat* Marotzke in the Prussian Ministry of State from January through July 1936 in GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 321–82. Jürgen von Grone (1887–1978), head of the Anthroposophical Working Groups in Germany, was one of Steiner's closest personal students and editor of various anthroposophist periodicals. The son of a Prussian general, he served as an officer in WWI and was awarded the *Pour le Mérite* in October 1918.

<sup>52</sup> Kerrl to Frick, January 31, 1936, BA R58/6194/1: 239. While not otherwise a sympathizer of esotericism, Kerrl was outspoken in supporting anthroposophist Friedrich Rittelmeyer, head of the Christian Community; see e.g. Kerrl to Reichsschrifttumskammer, May 18, 1937, BA RK/B174: 1636.

to surveillance.<sup>53</sup> An important turning point came at a May 1936 meeting of anthroposophist representatives with officials from the SD and the Interior Ministry at Gestapo headquarters, which approved the formation of a new group, the Study Circle for Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Science. The anthroposophist spokespeople agreed not to admit Jews or freemasons to the group, to abjure occultist elements, and to allow Gestapo oversight of their activities.<sup>54</sup>

Tensions continued for five more years as Heydrich's underlings gradually resigned themselves to the likelihood that organized anthroposophy would persist as long as it had prominent protectors in the party and state leadership. Internal SD memoranda called for "uncompromising severity" toward all efforts to revive public forms of the movement.<sup>55</sup> Their strictures had little effect. In March 1936 Heydrich tried to have all eurythmy programs shut down but encountered stiff resistance from the Nazi theater bureau, the *Reichstheaterkammer*, which interceded repeatedly on behalf of eurythmists, directly challenging the Gestapo. By August 1936 the *Reichstheaterkammer* declared that eurythmy was officially sanctioned, and Heydrich eventually backed down.<sup>56</sup> In 1938 restrictions on anthroposophist publishing were relaxed through the combined efforts of Alfred Baeumler and staff members of the Propaganda Ministry.<sup>57</sup> Some rank and file anthroposophists continued to believe that the Anthroposophical Society was dissolved only because Heydrich promulgated the ban in Himmler's absence, and that Himmler, Hess, and Hitler did not support the ban.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Himmler's December 4, 1935 order, BA R58/6195/2: 519; Kerrl to Gestapo Berlin, March 14, 1936, BA R58/5737b: 553; Heydrich's March 28, 1936 order, BA R58/405: 23.

<sup>54</sup> The anthroposophist representatives at the May 5, 1936 meeting were Elisabeth Klein of the Waldorf school federation, Alfred Heidenreich of the Christian Community, and Erhard Bartsch of the biodynamic farmers' league. The Interior Ministry was represented by Eickhoff. See the May 1936 Interior Ministry memorandum in BA R58/6194/1: 308–09; the SD report on the meeting in BA R58/6195/1: 350–51; and Werner Best to Marotzke, July 8, 1936, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 381.

<sup>55</sup> September 12, 1936 SD memorandum, BA R58/6191: 312.

<sup>56</sup> 1936 correspondence between the Reichstheaterkammer and the Gestapo Berlin in BA R58/6190: 155–233.

<sup>57</sup> "Verzeichnis der zur Freigabe vorgeschlagenen Werke Rudolf Steiners" BA NS15/303: 58331–34; SD file of "Freigegebene anthrop. Schriften," R58/6192: 5–18; Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, "Betrifft: Schriften von Rudolf Steiner" 16 January 1939, R 9349/3/R.

<sup>58</sup> April 24, 1936 report from Stuttgart Gestapo, BA R58/6193/1: 59.



The SD prevailed on a significant organizational question: whether former members of the Anthroposophical Society could join the Nazi party or receive civil service appointments. Nazi opponents of occultism argued for treating anthroposophists like freemasons and thus barring them from party membership. Both Hess and Alfred Rosenberg supported less stringent regulations for anthroposophists. Bormann settled the matter by going directly to Hitler, and the policy remained that individuals who previously belonged to the Anthroposophical Society could not join the party.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of this decision, a series of anthroposophists who applied for party membership after 1935 were turned down despite otherwise positive political evaluations.<sup>60</sup> There were notable exceptions; in January 1943, Hitler himself declared that Otto Thorwirth, former leader of the Gotha branch of the Anthroposophical Society, could remain a full member of the NSDAP.<sup>61</sup> But the rule equating

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<sup>59</sup> "Richtlinien der NSDAP für die Behandlung ehemaliger Angehöriger von Logen und logenähnlichen Organisationen" BA R58/6144/1: 5–6; Rosenberg to Hess, November 1, 1938, BA R58/6189/1: 17; Bormann to SD, February 1, 1939, BA R58/6193/1: 217. For a helpful guide through labyrinthine NSDAP membership procedures see Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Wie wurde man Parteigenosse? Die NSDAP und ihre Mitglieder* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> The former head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in the town of Schorndorf near Stuttgart, Gotthilf Ackermann, applied to join the party in October 1939, paid party dues for a year and a half, and was then rejected in April 1941 (BA PK/A4: 2205–30). The former head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Pforzheim, Max Rodi, applied to join the NSDAP in May 1939 and was rejected in March 1940 (BA PK/O224: 578). Friedrich Böhnlein applied three times to join the NSDAP, in 1937, 1941, and 1943, and was turned down each time because he had belonged to the Anthroposophical Society. (BA PK/A417: 487–502) Ernst Blümel, a member of the Anthroposophical Society since its founding in 1913, attempted to join the NSDAP in September 1939 and was rejected in November 1941. (BA PK/A381: 2139–54) Anthroposophist author Wolfgang Schuchhardt, a teacher at the Hannover Waldorf school, applied to join the party in September 1940 and was finally turned down in March 1943. (BA PK/L71: 2727–82) Hamburg anthroposophist Johannes Bertram-Pingel applied to join the party in November 1939 and was denied in May 1940. (BA PK/A315: 677–88) Nuremberg anthroposophist Paul Reiss applied to join the party in October 1939 and was turned down in January 1940. (BA PK/O105: 25–32) Herman Weideler applied to join the party in 1938 and was rejected because of his previous membership in the Anthroposophical Society. (BA PK/N73: 2613–18) Erhard Bartsch tried repeatedly to join the party, without success, despite support from Hess (BA R58/6223/1: 303).

<sup>61</sup> BA PK/R14: 2786. Thorwirth belonged to the party since at least 1934, while serving as head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Gotha: R 58/6188/1: 318. Similarly, the former head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Schweinfurt, Otto Feyh, joined the party in March 1940 and received positive evaluations from his superiors (BA PK/C174: 2651–84); an October 1941



anthroposophist groups with Masonic organizations prevented committed anthroposophist Nazis from remaining in the party. August Wegfraß, an active member of the Anthroposophical Society from 1913 onward and one of the leading anthroposophists in Erfurt in the 1930s, applied to join the NSDAP in May 1937. He quickly became an energetic participant in local party affairs, occupying several minor offices and giving lectures for the party. In February 1939 his party membership was revoked because of his previous involvement in the Anthroposophical Society. He re-applied in June 1939 and again in January 1942. Despite emphatic support from the local and regional party leadership and even the *Gauleiter* of Thuringia, Fritz Sauckel, Wegfraß was definitively rejected in October 1942.<sup>62</sup>

Expulsions from the party reflected the precarious state of occult tendencies aspiring to partake in the National Socialist cause. As Hitler announced at the 1938 Nuremberg rally: "The creeping entry into our movement of mystically inclined occult investigators of the hereafter must not be tolerated. They are not National Socialists; they have nothing to do with us."<sup>63</sup> Anthroposophists responded to this inhospitable atmosphere by downplaying the esoteric facets of their doctrine, advertising their scientific and philosophical credentials, and presenting their practical activities as contributions to the national community. To the chagrin of Nazi officials dedicated to rooting out covert occultism, this strategy met with considerable success. By 1940 the anti-esoteric faction within the SD and Gestapo considered itself outmaneuvered by anthroposophy's allies. They noted with resignation that Steiner's books could still be sold and that Hess had allowed Waldorf schools, biodynamic agriculture, and the Study Circle for Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Science to continue. There was, in their view, "no occasion for any measures" against anthroposophy, even if they were dissatisfied with this situation.<sup>64</sup> In spite of serious setbacks, anthroposophists had managed to accommodate themselves to the Third Reich. The pros-

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evaluation from the Schweinfurt *Kreisleiter* remarked on Feyh's active interest in party affairs and his generous contributions to party causes.

<sup>62</sup> Wegfraß was made a *Blockhelfer* in August 1938 and then *Blockleiter*. He received very positive political evaluations from his Ortsgruppe, the Kreisleitung, and the Gaugericht Thüringen. Even the SD-Abschnitt Weimar wrote in January 1940: "Er ist ein eifriger Besucher der Veranstaltungen der Bewegung und zeigt sich stets einsatzbereit und opferwillig." (BA OPGA/J105: 240) His party correspondence file is in BA PK/N64: 1539–70. For a chronology of the dispute surrounding his party membership see BA OPGA/J105: 232–34.

<sup>63</sup> Hitler's September 6, 1938 speech on culture at the NSDAP Reichsparteitag, quoted in BA R58/6197/1: 19.

<sup>64</sup> SD dispatch to Walter Buch, Chief Justice of the Nazi Party Court, July 24, 1940, BA R58/6189/1: 115.

pect of unmitigated persecution was held at bay for years in a tenuous truce between pro-anthroposophical and anti-anthroposophical Nazi factions.

### The Christian Community and the Dilemmas of Compromise

After the dissolution of the Anthroposophical Society the most visible grouping of Steiner's followers in Germany was the Christian Community, with roughly 6000 members in 1935. Initiated in 1922 as a "movement for religious renewal," the group aimed to bridge confessional divides through anthroposophy's esoteric understanding of Christianity. Under the leadership of Friedrich Rittelmeyer, within a decade the Christian Community had congregations in several dozen cities and towns, and its seminary was established in Stuttgart in 1933. Through its priests and sacraments the group offered a formal religious expression of anthroposophical spirituality, its teachings incorporating a blend of Western esoteric and biblical influences.<sup>65</sup> While the background of the founders was overwhelmingly Protestant, the Christian Community borrowed heavily from Catholic ritual and maintained organizational independence from both the mainstream churches and the Anthroposophical Society. This left the group in an ambiguous position during the Nazi era.

From the point of view of Heydrich's men, the Christian Community represented the major remaining vehicle for anthroposophist ideas after 1935 and was slated for eventual elimination.<sup>66</sup> Rittelmeyer and his colleagues gave them little opportunity. Police reports on Christian Community gatherings in 1936 observed nothing objectionable and concluded that there were no grounds for

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<sup>65</sup> For an overview see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1611–76; internal accounts include Hans-Werner Schroeder, *Die Christengemeinschaft—Entstehung, Entwicklung, Zielsetzung* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 2001); Rudolf Gädeke, *Die Gründer der Christengemeinschaft* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag am Goetheanum, 1992); Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Was will die Christengemeinschaft?* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1928).

<sup>66</sup> In the words of a 1939 SD report: "Die Christengemeinschaft ist das Sammelbecken eines großen Teiles der ehemaligen Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft geworden. Die Christengemeinschaft ist heute die alleinige Trägerin und Vertreterin der Anthroposophie, der Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners, die heute im deutschen Volke leider viel mehr verbreitet ist, als allgemein angenommen wird. Durch die Christengemeinschaft wird damit einer Anschauung Gestalt verliehen, die sich dem deutschen ganzheitlichen und rassischen Denken in jeder Weise entgegenstellt." (BA R58/5959: 118)

concern.<sup>67</sup> A faction within the Christian Community led by Gertrud Spörri, one of four members of its governing board, pushed for a more forthrightly pro-Nazi course, but the majority held to a policy of compromise and cooperation.<sup>68</sup> Rittelmeyer, who had been a nationally respected Protestant minister before becoming an anthroposophist, was able to parlay his personal and political reliability into a measure of protection for the group until his death in 1938.<sup>69</sup>

The Christian Community fared well compared to other small religious groups in Nazi Germany and endured for the first eight and a half years of Hitler's twelve year reign. In some respects the group prospered during the Nazi period, experiencing a growth in membership and building its first church in Dresden in 1936.<sup>70</sup> More Christian Community churches followed in Cologne in 1938 and Stuttgart in 1939. By June 1939 there were 79 congregations throughout the expanded Reich.<sup>71</sup> Christian Community leaders readily announced their

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<sup>67</sup> See the detailed 1936 reports in BA R58/5709c: 1092–1107. An October 1935 Gestapo report summarized the perspective of Christian Community members: "An sich stände man nicht gegen den NS. Ja, man erkenne durchaus das Gute, das er geleistet, an, aber: man habe hier eben etwas anderes zu tun! Man beschäftige sich hier mit geistigen Dingen, die mit Politik nichts zu tun haben. Das sollen die tun, die es interessiert. Das heisst: man steht intellektuell geistig über allem und sieht auf alle anderen von oben herab mit einem gewissen Mitleid, in der Gewissheit: wir befinden uns auf dem Wege zur menschlichen und geistigen Höherentwicklung, vom Menschlichen zum Göttlichen, von dem ihr nichts versteht. Soweit bis jetzt diese Leute beurteilt werden können, ist eine ausgesprochene Gefahr für das dritte Reich von dieser Seite auf keinem Fall zu befürchten." (BA R58/6193/1: 114)

<sup>68</sup> Another of the Christian Community's founders, Johannes Werner Klein, eventually broke with Steiner's followers and became a zealous Nazi. Born in 1898, Klein was one of the three original 'Oberlenker' of the Christian Community. He first encountered anthroposophy in 1919, while a member of a *Freikorps* unit, and met Steiner in 1920; he joined the Anthroposophical Society, became active in the Goetheanum, and co-founded the Christian Community in 1922. In 1929 he left the Christian Community and all other anthroposophist involvements, joining the NSDAP in November 1932; he eventually became a *Gauredner* for the party. (BA RK/B95: 1043–1115)

<sup>69</sup> Few works address Rittelmeyer's career during the Third Reich in detail; the best is the chapter "Zwischen Annäherung und Distanz: Friedrich Rittelmeyer und das 'Dritte Reich'" in Becker, "Versuche religiöser Erneuerung," 250–70. For a sympathetic biography see Gerhard Wehr, *Friedrich Rittelmeyer: Sein Leben. Religiöse Erneuerung als Brückenschlag* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1998), particularly 216–43 on the Nazi era.

<sup>70</sup> See Gerhard Klein, "Von der Dresdener Gemeinde und ihrem Bau" *Mitteilungen aus der Christengemeinschaft* March 1937, 2–3. Gerhard Klein was pastor of the Christian Community congregation in Dresden and husband of Elisabeth Klein, leader of the Dresden Waldorf school.

<sup>71</sup> "Verzeichnis der Gemeinden und Stützpunkte der Christengemeinschaft," supplement to *Mitteilungen aus der Christengemeinschaft*, June 1939.

acceptance of the Nazi regime, stating repeatedly: "The Christian Community recognizes the National Socialist state." They also noted that "there are many party members in our membership."<sup>72</sup> These claims reflected more than tactful acknowledgement of the political climate. The group's beliefs regarding Germany's mission and the deleterious effects of Judaism were evident for years before Hitler came to power.

Christian Community spokespeople had long placed a central emphasis on overcoming Jewish elements within German spiritual life, though their proposed 'solution' differed fundamentally from Nazi attitudes. For Steiner's followers, "the Jews must become Christians!"<sup>73</sup> In 1929 Rittelmeyer noted that "conspicuously few Jews" were members of the Anthroposophical Society. In a 1932 book he disdained the "Jewish spirit" behind such un-German phenomena as "internationalism and pacifism."<sup>74</sup> Linking the Jews to "the egoistic-intellectual-materialist spirit," he taught that it was the special task of the Germanic peoples to surmount this anachronistic Jewish influence.<sup>75</sup> The theme of eliminating purportedly Jewish aspects of Christianity ran throughout Christian Community publications from the Nazi era.

Representatives of the Christian Community welcomed the Nazi axiom of "positive Christianity" as a significant advance in German religious and political life. With this achievement, Nazism had made it possible to be both a German patriot and a Christian. The group celebrated the return of Germany to its rightful "stature and honor" under National Socialism. One prominent Christian Community leader, Alfred Heidenreich, argued that Nazism would not be able to overcome materialism unless it availed itself of anthroposophy's

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<sup>72</sup> See BA R58/5709c:1071 and BA R58/6189/2:147.

<sup>73</sup> Walter Gradenwitz quoted in Gädeke, *Die Gründer der Christengemeinschaft*, 353. Gradenwitz was the only founding member of the Christian Community with any Jewish background. He was born and raised Protestant, as his family had converted a generation earlier.

<sup>74</sup> Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Der Mord an dem Anthroposophen Dr. Unger" *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1929, 347; Rittelmeyer, *Der Deutsche in seiner Weltaufgabe zwischen Rußland und Amerika*, 4, rejecting "Einheitsbestrebungen wie Internationalismus und Pazifismus, in denen sich der jüdische Geist wohl fühlt." See also the remarks on "Semitic" and "Aryan" types in Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Meine Lebensbegegnung mit Rudolf Steiner* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1928), 74–75.

<sup>75</sup> Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 84–85. For background on efforts to 'de-Judaize' Christianity in the Nazi period see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

assistance.<sup>76</sup> The Nazi regime seemed compatible, in anthroposophist eyes, with Germany's status as the leading spiritual power of the age. The Christian Community journal reprinted lengthy excerpts from the *Völkischer Beobachter* and shared passages from Houston Stewart Chamberlain with its readers. It endorsed Nazi invective against Russian Communism and labeled Bolsheviks "sub-human." On occasion the periodical praised fascist and antisemitic movements in other parts of Europe.<sup>77</sup>

After the 1935 suppression of the Anthroposophical Society, Christian Community leaders took particular pains to demonstrate their amicable attitude toward the Nazi government. A December 1935 document submitted to top party agencies explained that the Christian Community arose in the wake of the world war, when Germany was threatened by Bolshevism in the East and materialism in the West and required renewed values to persevere in a hostile world. The aim in founding the group was to make Germany strong, and its abiding premise was that "the time has come for the German spirit to claim its world-historical role, for the salvation not only of Germany but of all humankind."<sup>78</sup> Mainstream Christian confessions still had too many "Jewish" characteristics, which Steiner's followers repudiated. The document hailed "the new German state" for embracing "positive Christianity" and sharply criticized "all forms of inscrutable occultism." Insisting that the entire leadership of the movement had always been "purely Aryan," the document ridiculed the notion of any "Jewish influence" on the Christian Community.<sup>79</sup> It denounced "individualist and liberal tendencies" for corroding the German national com-

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<sup>76</sup> *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1936, 346; Alfred Heidenreich, March 27, 1936, in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Hermann Heisler, "Antibolschewistische Schau" *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1936, 287–88; Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Heidentum und Christentum" *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1935, 227–32; Kurt von Wistinghausen, "Legion des Erzengel Michael" *Die Christengemeinschaft* February 1941, 174–75, a decidedly sympathetic posthumous portrait of Romanian fascist leader Corneliu Codreanu and his political organizations, the violently antisemitic Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Iron Guard.

<sup>78</sup> "Denkschrift über die Christengemeinschaft" dated Stuttgart, December 1935, an 11 page typescript signed by Friedrich Rittelmeyer "on behalf of the Christian Community," BA R58/5737b: 564–74. Rittelmeyer submitted a copy to the Gestapo in January 1936 with a cover letter explaining that it had been sent to "the highest echelons of the state and the party"; see Rittelmeyer to Gestapo Berlin, January 8, 1936, BA R58/5737b: 360.

<sup>79</sup> "Die gesamte Leitung ist durch alle Jahre rein arisch gewesen. Von einem 'jüdischen Einfluss' irgendwelcher Art kann keine Rede sein." *Denkschrift über die Christengemeinschaft*, 7.

munity while boasting of the group's own longstanding service in the battle against Bolshevism. The document depicted anthroposophist spirituality as "a new culture emerging wholly from German blood." The Nazi state, it concluded, needed the Christian Community in order to create a genuine positive Christianity.

Try as they might to present themselves as heralds of a new spiritual outlook aligned with Nazism's new order, Steiner's followers proved unable to sway the group of Nazi officials most concerned about their activities and most attentive to their plans. The more Christian Community representatives stressed their compatibility with National Socialism, the more suspicious they became in the eyes of anti-occult Nazis. The ultimate blow against the group did not come until the June 1941 campaign against occultism launched in the aftermath of Hess's unexpected flight to Britain. The Christian Community was dissolved by Gestapo order in July 1941.<sup>80</sup> Implacable foes in the security services eventually won out over anthroposophy's allies in the Third Reich, indicating both the promise and the peril that seemed to derive from esoteric ideas put into practice under the aegis of Nazism. The re-organization of anthroposophist medicine after 1933 reveals the complicated dynamics at work.

### Anthroposophical Medicine and the 'New German Art of Healing'

In August 1933 Rudolf Hess established a department of public health in the *Reichsleitung* of the NSDAP, the nominal leadership body of the Nazi party. The new division was charged with overseeing the "people's health," with responsibility for both "natural healing" and "racial hygiene." Hess named longtime party member Hanns Georg Müller, a prominent life reform advocate and a strong backer of biodynamics, to coordinate "reform movements" within health care.<sup>81</sup> In 1934 the Rudolf Hess Hospital opened in Dresden as a center for alternative medical practices. Hess and Müller were avid supporters of natural medicine and used their positions to encourage a variety of unorthodox approaches in holistic health care, including anthroposophical medicine

<sup>80</sup> The July 25, 1941 order dissolving the Christian Community is in BA R58/405: 62.

<sup>81</sup> On Müller see Detlef Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde 1933–1945* (Husum: Matthiesen, 1991), 217–27; Fritzen, *Gesünder Leben*, 64–77 and 93–103; and Müller's 1975 affidavit in Gilbhard, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft*, 243–47. For the 1933 creation of the Sachverständigenbeirat für Volksgesundheit see Hess's order in BA NS6/215: 56–58.

and nutrition.<sup>82</sup> The entwinement of anthroposophist healing with Nazi initiatives in alternative medicine constitutes a largely unexplored chapter in the history of Steiner's movement during the Third Reich.<sup>83</sup>

Organized anthroposophical medicine began in the early 1920s and by 1933 represented a small but highly motivated tendency within the broad array of alternative health practices popular in Germany. The medical approach outlined by Steiner was founded on his teachings about "occult physiology" and the karmic origins of disease; it frowned on vaccination and standard therapies which did not address the spiritual sources of health and illness.<sup>84</sup> Anthroposophist treatments formed a type of complementary medicine, a combination of conventional and alternative practices, with an emphasis on homeopathic remedies. Weleda medications and pharmaceutical products

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<sup>82</sup> See Walter Wuttke-Groneberg, "Nationalsozialistische Medizin: Volks- und Naturheilkunde auf 'neuen Wegen'" in Heinz Abholz, ed., *Alternative Medizin* (Berlin: Argument, 1983), 27–50; Alfred Haug, "Das Rudolf-Heß-Krankenhaus in Dresden" in Fridolf Kudlien, ed., *Ärzte im Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1985), 138–45; Lars Sievert, *Naturheilkunde und Medizinethik im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Mabuse-Verlag, 1996); Michael Kenny, "A Darker Shade of Green: Medical Botany, Homeopathy, and Cultural Politics in Interwar Germany" *Social History of Medicine* 15 (2002), 481–504; Doris Kratz, *Die Heilkunde in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik—Die 'angepaßte' Medizin in der Zeit der NS-Diktatur* (Berlin: Trafo, 2004); Daniela Angetter, "Alternativmedizin kontra Schulmedizin im Nationalsozialismus" in Judith Hahn, ed., *Medizin im Nationalsozialismus und das System der Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt: Mabuse-Verlag, 2005), 91–107; Wolfgang Uwe Eckart, *Medizin in der NS-Diktatur: Ideologie, Praxis, Folgen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2012), 164–71.

<sup>83</sup> The lack of any systematic study of the topic may be due in part to the paucity of primary sources; cf. Alfred Haug, *Die Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für eine Neue Deutsche Heilkunde (1935/36): Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Schulmedizin, Naturheilkunde und Nationalsozialismus* (Husum: Matthiesen, 1985), 11, 104, 170. A promising start toward a fuller account is available in Volker van der Locht, *Anthroposophische Heilinstitute im Dritten Reich: Erste Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojektes zur Geschichte des Heil- und Erziehungsinstitutes für seelenpflegebedürftige Kinder Lauenstein* (Neubrandenburg: Hochschule Neubrandenburg, 2008). For an anthroposophist treatment see Bente Edlund, "Anthroposophical Curative Education in the Third Reich: The Advantages of an Outsider" *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 7 (2005), 176–93.

<sup>84</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *An Occult Physiology* (London: Collison, 1932); Steiner, *The Anthroposophical Approach to Medicine* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1951); Rudolf Steiner and Ita Wegman, *Fundamentals of Therapy: An Extension of the Art of Healing through Spiritual Knowledge* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1925); Elise Wolfram, *Die okkulten Ursachen der Krankheiten* (Leipzig: Altmann, 1912). For an anthroposophist account from the Nazi era see Friedrich Husemann, "Goethes Erkenntnisweg und seine Vollendung durch Rudolf Steiner" in Husemann, *Goethe und die Heilkunst* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1936), 151–59. Overviews of anthroposophical medicine are available in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1455–1578, and Robert Jütte, *Geschichte der alternativen Medizin* (Munich: Beck, 1996), 237–61.



were based on this framework. Anthroposophist doctors in the 1920s and 1930s frequently recommended biodynamic methods and materials as part of a holistic orientation. Their non-invasive therapeutic approach and their critique of the 'materialist' assumptions of mainstream health care brought them together with other practitioners of natural medicine under Nazi sponsorship after 1933.

With the assistance of Hess, Müller, and other Nazi officials, anthroposophist medicine became one of the central constituents of the *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*, a Nazi umbrella category for alternative medical practices. Enthusiasts of the 'New German Art of Healing' declared it "a truly National Socialist creation" and acclaimed Hitler as "the healer and purifier of Aryan humankind."<sup>85</sup> Its main institutional framework, the Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing, was founded in Nuremberg in May 1935. It comprised seven corporate members, including the chief associations of homeopathic and naturopathic physicians as well as the League of Anthroposophist Doctors, whose leader was Dr. Friedrich Husemann.<sup>86</sup> The anthroposophical doctors' association changed its name to the League for Biodynamic Healing after the dissolution of the Anthroposophical Society in November 1935 and remained a member of the Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing throughout its existence.

Within the framework of the 'New German Healing' anthroposophist doctors participated in the campaign to make alternative medicine a vital part of Nazi health policy. They received extensive support from Müller's department

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<sup>85</sup> Ministerialrat Dr. Stähle, "Zur Erneuerung der deutschen Heilkunde" *Hippokrates* July 7, 1936, 541–44; Dr. Wilhelm Spengler, "Wesen und Ziele einer Neuen Deutschen Heilkunde" *Naturärztliche Rundschau* March 1936, 77–79. For background see Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 82–83, 164–66, 230–35; Walter Wuttke, "Zum Verhältnis von Natur- und Volksheilkunde und Schulmedizin im Nationalsozialismus" in Hendrik van den Bussche, ed., *Anfälligkeit und Resistenz: Zur medizinischen Wissenschaft und politischen Opposition im 'Dritten Reich'* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990), 23–54, and Uwe Heyll, *Wasser, Fasten, Luft und Licht: Die Geschichte der Naturheilkunde in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), 229–69.

<sup>86</sup> Friedrich Husemann (1887–1959), a follower of Steiner since 1909, was one of the primary figures in anthroposophical medicine. His major work is Friedrich Husemann, *Das Bild des Menschen als Grundlage der Heilkunst: Entwurf einer geisteswissenschaftlich orientierten Medizin* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1941). In addition to the Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing, Nazi life reform advocates established a *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für naturgemäße Lebens- und Heilweise*, and in February 1938 an "Akademie für Neue Deutsche Heilkunde" was created in partnership with the Rudolf Hess Hospital in Dresden (BA R4901/14025). See also the August 1942 ss list of homeopathic and naturopathic physicians in NS19/578.

in the *Reichsleitung* of the party. Müller's colleagues Dr. Bernhard Hörmann and Dr. Franz Wirz supplied steady encouragement for biodynamic approaches, advertising their healing virtues to other Nazi agencies.<sup>87</sup> Anthroposophical medicine also had the backing of Julius Streicher, *Gauleiter* of Franconia and propagandist of radical antisemitism. Streicher was a proponent of alternative health tendencies and a fervent opponent of immunization. His publication *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* provided abundant coverage of anthroposophist health efforts. Reporting on a meeting of naturopathic physicians in June 1934, the periodical gave special attention to Husemann's presentation on "the threefold nature of the human organism" as well as the final presentation of the meeting, by Dr. Wilhelm Pelikan, on "anthroposophical medicine."<sup>88</sup> Reports on the November 1934 meeting of naturopathic doctors at the Rudolf Hess Hospital in Dresden highlighted the role of biodynamics and praised the presentation on Demeter products by anthroposophist physician Dr. Josef Schulz.<sup>89</sup> Anthroposophist contributions to the 'New German Healing' garnered favorable attention in mainstream medical journals as well.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See the very extensive 1934–1940 correspondence from Hanns Georg Müller and the Sachverständigenbeirat für Volksgesundheit bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP in BA R9349/1. Bernhard Hörmann, an NSDAP member since 1920 who held the position of *Reichsamtseiter im Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit*, was also the "Sachbearbeiter für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" and worked with Hess's staff as well. Hörmann's superiors described him as "a model National Socialist." (BA PK/E282: 404) For his eager and assertive support of biodynamics and anthroposophical medicine see his 1935–39 correspondence in BA R9349/1. Bartsch to Hörmann, April 6, 1935, thanks him profusely for his "repeated successful efforts" on behalf of anthroposophist endeavors.

<sup>88</sup> "Tagung der Naturärzte in Würzburg am 2. und 3. Juni 1934" *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* June 1934, 18. Wilhelm Pelikan (1893–1981) became a personal student of Steiner's in 1918 and oversaw medicinal production at the Weleda complex in Schwäbisch-Gmünd. *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* was the most aggressively antisemitic of the Nazi alternative health journals, and did not shy away from attacking other Nazis for failing to support alternative medicine. It ceased publication in October 1935.

<sup>89</sup> "Tagungsbericht der Hauptversammlung der Naturärzte im Rudolf-Heß-Krankenhaus, Dresden, am 24./25. November" *Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden* December 1934, 20–21; "Die Tagung der deutschen Naturärzte" *Der Heilpraktiker* December 15, 1934, 12. Schulz, the leader of the Anthroposophical Working Group in Gotha, applied to join the NSDAP in 1938, with both the local party caucus and the regional party court endorsing his application, but was rejected by provincial authorities. (BA PK/L106: 2679–86)

<sup>90</sup> Karl Haedenkamp, "Der Weg zu einer neuen deutschen Heilkunde" *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 66 (1936), 440–01.

The Reich Committee for a New German Art of Healing was disbanded in 1937 after pressure by the medical establishment, but this did not spell the end of anthroposophy's involvement in National Socialist health measures. One of the primary sessions at a July 1938 conference sponsored by Nazi public health authorities was a presentation by leading anthroposophist Franz Dreidax, described as a "high point" of the entire event.<sup>91</sup> A number of anthroposophist doctors were members of the Nazi party, the SS, or the SA. Dr. Ernst Harmstorf, an important representative of anthroposophist medicine since its beginnings, joined the NSDAP in March 1933 and the SA in May 1933.<sup>92</sup> Anthroposophist medical student Gotthold Hegele was an SA member and a successful Nazi student leader.<sup>93</sup> Dr. Werner Voigt, senior physician at the municipal hospital of Stettin, joined the SA in November 1933 and the SS in May 1936.<sup>94</sup> Other anthroposophist physicians received outspokenly positive political evaluations even when they were not party members. Dr. Walter Bopp, staff physician for the Stuttgart police, member of the National Socialist Doctors' League, and a committed anthroposophist since 1918, pleased both the regional party

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<sup>91</sup> Karl Haedenkamp, "Volksgesundheit und Lebensführung" *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 68 (1938), 509–12. A third of the article is devoted to Dreidax's presentation "Boden und Volk" on the final day of the conference, and offers an enthusiastic recounting of Dreidax's ideas on the healing powers of nature and on biodynamics as the route back to a proper German relationship with the natural world. Dreidax's presentation decried "the restriction of German *Lebensraum*" and hailed the "racially selected" German peasantry as guarantor of the nation's health.

<sup>92</sup> BA PK/D392: 289–320. For biographical details on Harmstorf, with no mention of his Nazi involvement, see Peter Selg, *Anthroposophische Ärzte: Lebens- und Arbeitswege im 20. Jahrhundert* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2000), 297–300.

<sup>93</sup> Hegele, a medical student in Tübingen, Fachgruppe Volksgesundheit, joined the SA in May 1933; in 1937–38 he was *Kameradschaftsführer* of the National Socialist Student League group in Tübingen; in May 1937 he was an NSDAP-Anwärter, and by June 1938 he was Leiter des Amtes Politische Erziehung for the National Socialist Student League in Tübingen: BA PK/E65: 1473–1506. According to Selg, *Anthroposophische Ärzte*, 472, Hegele was an active anthroposophist during this time.

<sup>94</sup> BA RS/G466: 2865–3004. Additional examples include Dr. Ernst Charrois, member of the Nuremberg branch of the Anthroposophical Society, who joined the NSDAP in May 1933 (BA PK B187: 1768; BA R58/5660: 54); Dr. Eduard Meyer, leader of an anthroposophist group in the town of Lübbecke in Westphalia, who joined the NSDAP in May 1933 and was an SS Untersturmführer in 1941 (BA R58/5563: 37); and Dr. Hugo Kalbe, member of the Anthroposophical Society and SA officer (BA R58/5709c: 1065 and 1079). German doctors in general were disproportionately represented in the Nazi party.

apparatus and Nazi medical officials. According to an August 1943 evaluation, Bopp “wholeheartedly supports the National Socialist state at all times.”<sup>95</sup>

Ideological overlap aided this practical convergence. Overviews of anthroposophist medicine emphasized its German character and argued that applying Steiner’s esoteric insights to health care would facilitate “the breakthrough of the German idea in medicine” by rejecting “Western concepts” as “poison.” Anthroposophical medicine was “firmly rooted in the German essence and in the German mission.”<sup>96</sup> A focus on holistic concepts and natural approaches provided common ground for Nazi interest in alternative health frameworks, as did the privileging of spiritual dimensions over merely physical causes. Anthroposophy’s key part in the development of a ‘New German Art of Healing’ illuminates the multivalent links among life reform values, back-to-nature aspirations, and unconventional visions of spiritual renewal. Their appropriation by the Nazi movement illustrates the ways in which “fascist ideals fostered research directions and lifestyle fashions that look strikingly like those we today might embrace.”<sup>97</sup>

Holistic and natural approaches to healing experienced a notable resurgence during the Third Reich. National Socialism provided these pursuits with enhanced ideological stature and institutional support and oversaw a material expansion of many varieties of alternative health care, combined simultaneously with targeted prohibition and control in the process of *Gleichschaltung*, the integration or coordination of societal organizations into conformity with the regime. The career of anthroposophical medicine during the Nazi era reflected these contradictory poles, as the practical incorporation of anthroposophist organizations into Nazi structures and the collegial treatment of anthroposophists leaders went hand in hand with ideological hostility from Nazi opponents of occultism. In the controversy over anthroposophy’s contri-

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<sup>95</sup> BA DS/ORP/A3: 779–882; quote on 783. A March 1941 evaluation of Dr. Karl Hugo Zinck similarly affirmed: “Politisch steht er durchaus auf dem Boden der nationalen Weltanschauung.” Der Reichsdozentenführer, Reichsleitung der NSDAP, March 24, 1941, BA DS/B44: 1704. The same is true for Dr. Viktor Wehrle, former head of the Anthroposophical Society branch in Salzburg; a May 1940 SD appraisal observed: “Sein Verhalten dem nationalsozialistischen Staat gegenüber kann als positiv bezeichnet werden.” (SD-Abschnitt Salzburg to RSHA, May 30, 1941, BA R58/5660: 175)

<sup>96</sup> Walter Bopp, “Die Anthroposophie in den Gegenwartsfragen der Medizin” *Das Goetheanum* March 25, 1934, 93–94. See also Erhard Bartsch, “Kurze Betrachtung landwirtschaftlich-medizinischer Zusammenhänge” *Demeter* April 1935, 55–56, and Wilhelm zur Linden, “Das Blut als Spiegel von Krankheitsvorgängen” *Leib und Leben* November 1938, 242–43.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 5.

bution to the New Germany, the potential fusion of life reform and National Socialist currents reached its limit and its fulfillment at the same time.

### **Biodynamic Agriculture and the Politics of Blood and Soil**

The history of biodynamic farming in the Third Reich demonstrates just how much potential there was for such a hybrid of life reform and Nazi ideals. Of all anthroposophist initiatives in Nazi Germany, the one that met with greatest approval from party and state institutions was biodynamic agriculture. Despite ongoing opposition, the biodynamic movement flourished between 1933 and 1941, earning praise from an extraordinary range of leading Nazis and winning supporters in several branches of the regime. The number of biodynamic growers increased substantially across the Reich and the movement's influence was felt in environmental projects, food policy, and other areas. For a time biodynamic farming had the support of the Nazi minister of agriculture and was promoted by members of his staff. Even after its official suppression in 1941, biodynamic representatives continued to work with the SS, taking part in 'settlement' activities in the occupied lands of Eastern Europe and overseeing a network of biodynamic plantations at concentration camps. This unusually close association between Steiner's followers and the Nazi movement has given rise to provocative historical debates over the role of organic agriculture and environmentalist inclinations in the Third Reich.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> A more detailed analysis can be found in Peter Staudenmaier, "Organic Farming in Nazi Germany: The Politics of Biodynamic Agriculture, 1933–1945" *Environmental History* 18 (2013), 383–411. Much of the initial debate stemmed from sympathetic works on Nazi Minister of Agriculture R. W. Darré by British historian Anna Bramwell, whose apologetic portrait emphasized Darré's support for biodynamic farming and his amicable relationship with anthroposophists; cf. Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's 'Green Party'* (Bourne End: Kensal Press, 1985), and "The Steiner Connection" in Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 195–208. Subsequent studies have controverted many of her claims; compare Gustavo Corni and Herbert Gies, *Blut und Boden: Rassenideologie und Agrarpolitik im Staat Hitlers* (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner Verlag, 1994); Piers Stephens, "Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of 'Hitler's Green Party'" *Organization & Environment* 14 (2001), 173–87; Gesine Gerhard, "Richard Walther Darré—Naturschützer oder 'Rassenzüchter'?" in Joachim Radkau and Frank Uekötter, eds., *Naturschutz und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2003), 257–71; Gesine Gerhard, "Breeding Pigs and People for the Third Reich: Richard Walther Darré's Agrarian Ideology" in Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, eds., *How Green were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 129–46. The reaction against Bramwell has even led some historians to

Biodynamic agriculture developed out of one of Steiner's last series of lectures in 1924 and soon generated a dedicated movement among his followers. Its basic features centered on a holistic view of the farm or garden as a "closed organism" comprising soil, plants, animals, and various cosmic forces, with sowing and harvesting based on astrological principles. Biodynamic growers rejected monoculture and abjured artificial fertilizers and pesticides, relying instead on manure, compost, and homeopathic preparations meant to channel etheric and celestial energies.<sup>99</sup> Their emphasis on spiritual influences rather than 'materialist' techniques aimed to maintain healthier soil, produce higher quality food, and promote harmonious interaction with the natural environment. The result was an innovative form of organic agriculture whose core practices were anchored firmly in esoteric principles. Biodynamic producers founded a cooperative in 1927 with the help of Georg Michaelis, former chancellor of the German Reich, and by 1932 the Demeter line of organic food products and Weleda cosmetics and pharmaceuticals were established outlets for biodynamic marketing.<sup>100</sup>

In July 1933 the leader of the biodynamic movement in Germany, anthroposophist Erhard Bartsch, founded the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture with headquarters at his estate in Bad Saarow near Berlin. The new organiza-

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deny that Darré supported organic farming at all; see e.g. Frank Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 203.

<sup>99</sup> The primary text is Rudolf Steiner, *Agriculture: A Course of Eight Lectures* (London: Biodynamic Agricultural Association, 1974). For an anthroposophist history of the movement see Herbert Koepf and Bodo von Plato, *Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise im 20. Jahrhundert: Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der biologisch-dynamischen Landwirtschaft* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 2001). Scholarly accounts are available in Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1579–1607; Holger Kirchmann, "Biological Dynamic Farming—An Occult Form of Alternative Agriculture?" *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 7 (1994), 173–87; Gunter Vogt, *Entstehung und Entwicklung des ökologischen Landbaus im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Bad Dürkheim: Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau, 2000), 98–192.

<sup>100</sup> Michaelis (1857–1936), who had been Chancellor of Imperial Germany in 1917 and served in high-level agricultural posts in the Imperial era, played a crucial role in the development of the biodynamic movement during the last decade of his life. Michaelis belonged to the DNVP and joined the NSDAP in 1933; he continued to advocate for the biodynamic movement in negotiations with Hess and Darré in 1934. He also supported the Waldorf school in Kassel, which his daughter co-founded. For details see Bert Becker, *Georg Michaelis: Preußischer Beamter, Reichskanzler, Christlicher Reformator 1857–1936. Eine Biographie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007), 644–73.



tion united the chief biodynamic institutions under one formal leadership.<sup>101</sup> The movement initially viewed Nazism's agrarian policy as a vindication of their approach. During the first year of the Nazi regime, however, biodynamic representatives faced intense opposition from the chemical industry and regional Nazi leaders. The movement was temporarily banned in Thuringia in November 1933.<sup>102</sup> Such setbacks did little to halt the growth of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, which soon added a remarkable array of Nazi luminaries to its roster of supporters. In April 1934 Interior Minister Frick visited Bartsch's estate and expressed his encouragement for the organization. He was followed by a parade of high-profile figures, from Hess, Ohlendorf, Baeumler, and Rosenberg to Rudi Peuckert, head of the Reich Office for Agricultural Policy, and Reich Commissar Robert Ley, leader of the German Labor Front. These and other Nazi leaders were guests at the Reich League's headquarters in Bad Saarow and voiced their support for the undertaking.<sup>103</sup>

The biodynamic movement received extensive praise in the Nazi press, including the *Völkischer Beobachter*, rural newspapers, and health periodicals. Anthroposophist authors returned the favor in their journal *Demeter*.<sup>104</sup> The front cover of the May 1939 issue featured a bucolic picture of Adolf Hitler in an

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Erhard Bartsch, *Die Not der Landwirtschaft* (Bad Saarow: Demeter, 1927); Bartsch, *Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise: Kerngedanken und Grundtatsachen, Überwindung des Materialismus in Landwirtschaft und Gartenbau* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1934); Bartsch, "Was ist biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise?" *Natur und Kultur* April 1938, 117–18. Bartsch edited the movement's journal, *Demeter: Monatsschrift für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise*.

<sup>102</sup> The 1933 ban was rescinded a year later by order of Minister of the Interior Frick; see the December 20, 1934 "Verordnung über die Aufhebung der Landespolizeiverordnung über die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise vom 15. November 1933" in *Gesetzsammlung für Thüringen* no. 43, December 1934, 151, and Frick to Gestapo Berlin, December 17, 1935, BA R58/6195/2: 534. Much of the chemical industry fiercely opposed the organic methods of biodynamic farming and attempted to discredit the movement as occultist charlatany; see e.g. the negative appraisal sponsored by the chemical conglomerate IG Farben: Alfred Steven, "Stellungnahme zur Frage: Biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" BA R3602/2609.

<sup>103</sup> On the growth of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture and the degree of Nazi support for the group see the "Geschäftsbericht 1935/36 des Reichsverbandes für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" and the "Geschäftsbericht 1939/40" BA R58/6197/1: 107–09 and 141–43, as well as the November 1939 audit of the organization, BA R58/6197/1: 40–43.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Oskar Krüger, "Neue Wege des Landbaues" *Völkischer Beobachter* August 28, 1940, 7; Wolfgang Clauß, "Lebensgesetzliche Landbauweise: Eindrücke von einer Besichtigung des Erbhofes Marienhöhe bei Bad Saarow" *Nationalsozialistische Landpost* July 26, 1940, 3–4; Edmund Sala, "Die Natur als Erzieher" *Die Grüne Post* November 24, 1940, 6; Käthe Wietfeld, "Volkskraft und Volksgesundheit" *Gesundes Leben* March 1940, 60; Erhard Bartsch, "Zurück zum



alpine landscape in honor of the Führer's fiftieth birthday. *Demeter* celebrated the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, the German attack on Poland, the fall of France, and other German military victories. Biodynamic practices were commended by the Reich Inspector for the Battle of Production, the Nazi program for agricultural autarky. Even the Wehrmacht high command supported biodynamics.<sup>105</sup>

A crucial source of institutional backing for the biodynamic movement came from Nazi life reform officials led by Hanns Georg Müller. Müller published a series of biodynamic books and pamphlets in his publishing house and promoted biodynamics in the journal he edited, *Leib und Leben*.<sup>106</sup> Invoking *Lebensraum* and blood and soil terminology, biodynamic practitioners were presented as pioneers of the natural German method of cultivation that had finally come into its own under the leadership of the Third Reich. From his position in the party directorate, Müller repeatedly interceded on behalf of biodynamic growers. In 1938 he intervened with the national potato producers' guild to obtain favorable treatment for Demeter products.<sup>107</sup> Müller also intervened successfully with the national association of grain producers and the Reich Commissar for Price Regulation. Biodynamic planters reaped economic benefits from their association with Nazi agencies.

In 1935 the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture became a corporate member of Müller's *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform*, the Nazi umbrella organization for life reform groups. Anthroposophists Franz Dreidax and Erhard Bartsch joined the organization's leadership council. Dreidax and Bartsch served as active leaders of the organization for years, promoting its combination of Nazi values and alternative cultural initiatives. The group's first principle declared: "The worldview of the German life reform movement

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Agrarstaat" *Demeter* September 1933, 163–64; Franz Dreidax, "Heimatspflege und Landwirtschaft" *Demeter* September 1933, 187–92.

<sup>105</sup> Hermann Schneider, *Schicksalsgemeinschaft Europa: Leben und Nahrung aus der europäischen Scholle* (Breslau: Gutsmann, 1941), 89–102; Wehrwirtschaftsstab beim Oberkommando der Wehrmacht to Reichshauptamtsleiter Rauber, Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers, October 7, 1939, BA R58/6223/1: 331.

<sup>106</sup> Franz Dreidax, *Das Bauen im Lebendigen: Eine Einführung in die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise* (Dresden: Müller, 1939); Max Karl Schwarz, *Obstbau unter Berücksichtigung der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise* (Dresden: Müller, 1939); Nicolaus Remer, *Gesundheit und Leistung bei Haustieren* (Dresden: Müller, 1940); Hellmut Bartsch and Franz Dreidax, *Der lebendige Dünger* (Planegg: Müller, 1941).

<sup>107</sup> 1937–38 correspondence between Müller and the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture in BA R9349/1.

is National Socialism." Nazi official Herman Polzer, a supporter of biodynamics since 1927, described the group thus:

Our Society is not a bourgeois association but a working group of active National Socialists. The bedrock on which we build is the National Socialist worldview. Every one of us recognizes its laws of life as our foundation and our binding duty, not only politically but in our entire personal and daily life.<sup>108</sup>

Other members of the biodynamic movement represented the organization at the local and regional level. At the same time, biodynamic officials spurned efforts toward cooperation with non-anthroposophist variants of organic agriculture.<sup>109</sup>

Beyond farming and life reform ventures, proponents of biodynamic cultivation were centrally involved in implementing environmental standards on major building projects, most famously the construction of the Autobahn system. This work was overseen by a cadre of "landscape advocates" under the direction of Alwin Seifert, whose title was Reich Advocate for the Landscape. Their task was to preserve wetlands, ensure that public works projects were ecologically sustainable, and embed the new roadways harmoniously into the surrounding landscape. Seifert, who joined the Nazi party in 1938, has been described as "the most prominent environmentalist in the Third Reich."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Polzer in *Leib und Leben* May 1941, 72. The organization encompassed groups dedicated to alternative health, nutrition, farming, and other life reform tendencies as part of the Nazi project. Cf. Herman Polzer, "Reichstagung für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" *Leib und Leben* January 1936, 18–19, and Franz Dreidax, "Jahrestagung der Lebensreform in Innsbruck August 1938" *Demeter* October 1938, 178–79.

<sup>109</sup> The July 1938 organizational diagram of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Lebensreform* in BA R9349/1 lists seventeen biodynamic representatives in regions throughout Germany. The head of the *Forschungsinstitut für natürlichen Landbau* in Nuremberg, Wilhelm Büsselberg, repeatedly sought cooperation with biodynamic advocates but was rebuffed. Büsselberg's work was sponsored by Julius Streicher. See Dreidax to Gruschke, November 3, 1937, BA R9349/2/G; Müller to Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, May 12, 1937, BA R9349/1.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Zeller, "Molding the Landscape of Nazi Environmentalism: Alwin Seifert and the Third Reich" in Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, eds., *How Green were the Nazis*, 147–70, quote on 148. Cf. Zeller, "Ganz Deutschland sein Garten': Alwin Seifert und die Landschaft des Nationalsozialismus" in Radkau and Uekötter, eds., *Naturschutz und Nationalsozialismus*, 273–307; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Biodynamischer Gartenbau, Landschaftsarchitektur und Nationalsozialismus" *Das Gartenamt* September 1993, 590–95, and October 1993, 638–42; William Rollins, "Whose Landscape? Technology, Fascism, and Environmentalism on the National Socialist Autobahn" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995),

Emphasizing organic ideals, he characterized his own stance as “National Socialist through and through.”<sup>111</sup> A fervent promoter of biodynamic methods from 1930 onward, Seifert used his position to further the goals of the biodynamic movement. In spite of reservations about Steiner’s esoteric worldview, he acknowledged anthroposophy’s influence within Nazi circles in a 1937 letter to Hess: “An astonishing amount of spiritual material has been borrowed from the anthroposophist movement without identifying the source.”<sup>112</sup>

Several anthroposophists worked as “advocates for the landscape” under Seifert, bringing Steiner’s principles to bear on building the New Germany.<sup>113</sup>

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494–520; Dietmar Klenke, “Autobahnbau und Naturschutz in Deutschland,” in Matthias Frese and Michael Prinz, eds., *Politische Zäsuren und gesellschaftlicher Wandel im 20. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996), 465–98; Charlotte Reitsam, *Das Konzept der ‘bodenständigen Gartenkunst’ Alwin Seiferts* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2001); Thomas Zeller, *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn, 1930–1970* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007); Axel Zutz, “Wege grüner Moderne: Praxis und Erfahrung der Landschaftsanwälte des NS-Staates zwischen 1930 und 1960” in Heinrich Mäding and Wendelin Strubelt, eds., *Vom Dritten Reich zur Bundesrepublik* (Hannover: Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung, 2009), 107–48; Charlotte Reitsam, *Reichsautobahn-Landschaften im Spannungsfeld von Natur und Technik* (Saarbrücken: Müller, 2009).

<sup>111</sup> Alwin Seifert, “Natur und Technik im deutschen Straßenbau,” *Leib und Leben*, July 1937, 129. Seifert’s vision of combining National Socialism and biodynamic agriculture is spelled out in his May 1941 manifesto “Die bäuerlich-unabhängige Landbauweise,” BAK N1094/II/1. Cf. Alwin Seifert, “Natur als harmonisches Ganzes” *Leib und Leben* May 1937, 115–17; Seifert, “Von der Muttererde” *Der Schulungsbrief: Das zentrale Monatsblatt der NSDAP* November 1938, 373–77; Seifert, “Die Zukunft der ostdeutschen Landschaft” *Die Strasse* December 1939, 633–36; Seifert, “Die lebensgesetzliche Landbauweise” *Die Strasse* August 1940, 350; Seifert, *Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen: Natur, Heimat, Technik* (Planegg: Müller, 1941); Seifert, “Über naturnahen Gartenbau” *Leib und Leben* August 1942, 67–69; Seifert, “Hat der Wald Einfluss auf das Klima?” *Nationalsozialistischer Gaudienst* July 24, 1944, 1–2. For a celebration of his work see Walter Horn, “Im Zeitalter des Lebendigen: Naturgebundenes Denken überwindet die lebensfremde Zivilisation” *Nationalsozialistische Landpost* May 30, 1941.

<sup>112</sup> Seifert to Hess, May 10, 1937, Institut für Zeitgeschichte ED 32/422/1952: 101. Because of his commitment to biodynamics, Seifert is sometimes considered an anthroposophist. Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown*, 45, describes Seifert as “perhaps the most influential anthroposophist in Nazi Germany”; for anthroposophical viewpoints see von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 751–52, and Reinhard Falter, “Ein Leben für die Landschaft” *Novalis* March 1995, 38–42. In my view, Seifert is more accurately seen as a non-anthroposophist activist on behalf of biodynamics.

<sup>113</sup> See Zeller, *Driving Germany*, 87–88, on anthroposophists among the landscape advocates. For concrete description of the work of the landscape advocates on the Autobahn see Seifert’s 1933–1935 correspondence in BA R4601/1487; the November 1940 “Richtlinien für die Landschaftsgestaltung,” BA N2520/25: 12; Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen, “Autobahn

Prominent landscape advocates included Hinrich Meyer-Jungclaussen, member of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, and anthroposophist Max Karl Schwarz, an important publicist for the biodynamic cause. Schwarz, who introduced Seifert to biodynamics in 1930, was “a dedicated proponent of National Socialist blood and soil ideology.”<sup>114</sup> In 1939 he reported with pride that “the tools of biodynamic cultivation” were a decisive factor in securing conservation measures on the Autobahn project.<sup>115</sup> Biodynamic representatives were also active in the Nazi party. Albert Friehe, functionary of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture, was an NSDAP candidate for the Reichstag in 1932 and worked as a party expert on agricultural policy and racial policy.<sup>116</sup>

The lead article in the September 1940 issue of *Demeter* declared that the task of the biodynamic movement was to “awaken love for the soil and love for the homeland. This must be our goal and our lofty mission, to fight together with our Führer Adolf Hitler for the liberation of our beloved German fatherland!”<sup>117</sup> For most of the 1930s, however, biodynamic practitioners failed to win the coveted support of the Nazi minister of agriculture, Richard Walther

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und Landschaftsbild: Grundsätzliches über die heimatliche Gestaltung der deutschen Autobahnlandschaft” *Die Reichsautobahn* December 1933, 5–8; Max Karl Schwarz, “Mutterbodenpflege und Kompostbereitung beim Bau der Reichsautobahnen” *Demeter* December 1935, 212–16; Alwin Seifert, “Erfahrungen der Landschaftsanwälte in den letzten 4 Jahren” *Die Straße* June 1939, 407–08; Max Karl Schwarz, “Aus dem Aufgabengebiet des Landschaftsanwaltes beim Bau der Reichsautobahnen” *Gartenkunst* February 1942, 18–23.

<sup>114</sup> Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Grüne Biographien: Biographisches Handbuch zur Landschaftsarchitektur des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Berlin: Patzer, 1997), 358. A 1937 Gestapo evaluation of Schwarz noted: “He does not belong to the party, but he supports the National Socialist movement.” (BA R58/6195/1: 439) See Max Karl Schwarz, “Biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise” *Gartenkunst* October 1930, 167–70; Schwarz, *Ein Weg zum praktischen Siedeln* (Düsseldorf: Pflugschar-Verlag, 1933); Schwarz, *Zur landschaftlichen Ausgestaltung der Straßen in Norddeutschland* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1940); Schwarz, “Zum Grünaufbau im ostdeutschen Raum,” *Die Strasse*, April 1940, 150–54; Schwarz, “Zeitgemäße Gedanken über Garten- und Landschaftsgestaltung,” *Gartenbau im Reich*, June 1942, 94–95.

<sup>115</sup> Max Karl Schwarz, “Bildekräfte im Lebensraum der Landschaft” *Demeter* April 1939, 59–66.

<sup>116</sup> Friehe joined the NSDAP in 1925 and was a candidate for the party in both of the 1932 Reichstag elections. In January 1932 he was appointed “Fachreferent für bäuerliches Bildungswesen bei der Reichsleitung der NSDAP” and from February 1934 onward he was a staff member of the party’s Office of Race Policy. See BA PK/C313: 1119–78; BA PK/A199: 2718; BA R9349/2/F; BA NS22/1212.

<sup>117</sup> Bruno Bauch, “Betriebsbericht aus Sachsen” *Demeter* September 1940, 84. Cf. Erhard Bartsch, “Haltet den Boden gesund!” *Demeter* January 1938, 1; Franz Dreidax, “Lebendiger Boden—ewiges Volk” *Leib und Leben* October 1938, 199–205; Kurt Willmann, “Vom Wesen des deutschen Bauerntums” *Demeter* August 1939, 147.

Darré. In addition to his ministerial duties, Darré headed the NSDAP's agrarian apparatus and the Reich Food Estate; he was also Reich Peasant Leader and co-founder of the SS Office of Race and Settlement as well. His policies were meant to strengthen a Germanic unity of blood and soil embodied in racially healthy peasant stock, aims which served to underwrite the push for *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe.<sup>118</sup> Darré's effective power diminished in the course of the 1930s, and he was de facto replaced by his subordinate, Herbert Backe, in May 1942.

Although biodynamic tenets converged with several of his core ideas, Darré was initially skeptical toward biodynamic farming and its anthroposophical underpinnings. While Hess deterred him from interfering with Steiner's followers, he looked askance at their claims of efficiency, fertility, and food quality and was decidedly unsympathetic toward biodynamic efforts to curry favor within his network of agricultural institutions. His attitude began to shift in early 1939, due in part to the patient and persistent work of anthroposophist members of his staff.<sup>119</sup> But Backe and other powerful figures remained obdurately opposed to organic techniques, and for a time in the late 1930s biodynamic growers feared their methods would be forbidden. Darré came to their aid with an announcement in January 1940 that biodynamic cultivation deserved careful consideration as an equal partner with conventional farming in "maintaining and enhancing the productive capacity of the German soil." In June 1940 the minister of agriculture was guest of honor at Bartsch's estate.

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<sup>118</sup> Clifford Lovin, "Blut und Boden: The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Agricultural Program" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (1967), 279–88; Mathias Eidenbenz, "Blut und Boden": *Zu Funktion und Genese der Metaphern des Agrarismus und Biologismus in der nationalsozialistischen Bauernpropaganda R. W. Darrés* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1993); Margrit Bensch, *Die 'Blut und Boden'-Ideologie: Ein dritter Weg der Moderne* (Munich: Technische Universität, 1995); Andrea D'Onofrio, "Rassenzucht und Lebensraum: Zwei Grundlagen im Blut- und Boden- Gedanken von Richard Walther Darré" *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 49 (2001), 141–57; Uwe Mai, *Rasse und Raum: Agrarpolitik, Sozial- und Raumplanung im NS-Staat* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); Isabel Heinemann, "Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut": *Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Andrea D'Onofrio, *Razza, sangue e suolo: Utopie della razza e progetti eugenetici nel ruralismo nazista* (Naples: Cliopress, 2007); Andreas Dornheim, *Rasse, Raum und Autarkie: Sachverständigengutachten zur Rolle des Reichsministeriums für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft in der NS-Zeit* (Berlin: Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> A first-hand account of the steps leading toward the reversal in Darré's views on biodynamic farming can be found in Georg Halbe, "Bericht über die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen dem Stabsamt des Reichsbauernführers und dem Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise" (BAK N1094/II/1).

Within a year he declared that biodynamic farming was the only route to “the biological salvation of Europe.”<sup>120</sup>

From 1940 onward Darré attempted to provide concrete support for biodynamic producers in Germany’s wartime economy and arranged to have Bartsch, Dreidax, and other biodynamic leaders exempted from military service.<sup>121</sup> As his institutional power dwindled, he went to elaborate lengths to circumvent Backe and other anti-biodynamic officials in the agriculture ministry and the Reich Food Estate. Biodynamic supporters on Darré’s staff set up a series of semi-private associations to help sustain the initiatives of Steiner’s followers, with personnel chosen for their loyalty to Darré and their sympathy for biodynamics.<sup>122</sup> They adopted the phrase ‘farming according to the laws of life’ as a euphemism for biodynamics; the terms were often used interchangeably. In June 1941 Darré noted with satisfaction that “several circles within the highest leadership of the Nazi party have come to endorse biodynamic agriculture.”<sup>123</sup>

But plans for large-scale sponsorship of biodynamic farming eventually came to naught; in the midst of the war and Darré’s waning influence, even the concerted efforts of a Reich Minister were of little use. Whatever their effectiveness may have been, the actions of Nazi authorities on behalf of organic agriculture are an important instance of environmental sentiment in the context of Nazism.<sup>124</sup> The shift in official attitudes toward the biodynamic movement

<sup>120</sup> “Um die biologisch-dynamische Düngungsweise: Eine Erklärung des Reichsernährungsministers” *Die Landware* January 20, 1940, 2; Darré to Seifert, May 28, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1.

<sup>121</sup> BA R58/6223/1: 320; BA RK/118: 11914; BA RK/185: 1990; Bartsch to Willmann, BA R9349/3/W.

<sup>122</sup> The *Verein für Bauerntumskunde* was re-named *Gesellschaft der Freunde des deutschen Bauerntums* in October 1940. In 1939 Darré established an “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Lebensgesetzlicher Landbau: Die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise” with stalwart biodynamic supporter Hermann Reischle as its leader. Anthroposophist members included Bartsch, Dreidax, Carl Grund, Hans Merkel, and Ernst Stegemann. For details see Rust to Seifert, June 16, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1: “Zu den Hauptaufgaben der Gesellschaft gehört u. a. die Förderung des lebensgesetzlichen Landbaues auf der Basis der biologisch-dynamischen Wirtschaftsweise.” Further biodynamic supporters on Darré’s staff included Rudi Peuckert, Karl August Rust, Wilhelm Rauber, Günther Pacyna, Reinhard Ohnesorge, and Wilhelm Driehaus.

<sup>123</sup> Darré, “Anordnung für den persönlichen Stab,” June 7, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1d. SD opponents of anthroposophy viewed Darré as “a dedicated adherent of biodynamic methods.” (SD Vermerk, June 20, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 218)

<sup>124</sup> Compare Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke, “Naturschutz und Ökologie im Nationalsozialismus” *Die alte Stadt* 10 (1983), 1–17; Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, “Politics, planning and the protection of nature: Political abuse of early ecological ideas in Germany, 1933–1945” *Planning Perspectives* 2 (1987), 127–48; Raymond Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 81–115; Peter Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology: The ‘Green Wing’ of the Nazi Party and its Historical



points to a partial synthesis between anthroposophist precepts and National Socialist ambitions. The contours of this encounter can be traced in the careers of Georg Halbe and Hans Merkel.

Halbe and Merkel were both members of the Anthroposophical Society and served on Darré's personal staff in the office of the Reich Peasant Leader. Halbe worked from 1935 to 1942 at Darré's journal *Odal* and as manager of the 'Blood and Soil' publishing house. He wrote dozens of articles for Nazi publications, including essays on biodynamic agriculture, and planned to publish a book on the topic in Hanns Georg Müller's publishing house, though it did not appear in print.<sup>125</sup> His writings combined esoteric themes with an emphatic commitment to National Socialism. When Darré was replaced by Backe in 1942, Halbe

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Antecedents" in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995), 4–30; Burkhardt Riechers, "Nature Protection during National Socialism" *Historical Social Research* 21 (1996), 34–56; John Alexander Williams, "The Chords of the German Soul are Tuned to Nature": The Movement to Preserve the Natural Heimat from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich" *Central European History* 29 (1996), 339–84; Gunter Vogt, "Ökologischer Landbau im Dritten Reich" *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 48 (2000), 161–80; Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity 1885–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Willi Oberkrome, "Bemerkungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Naturschutzes im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland" in Hans-Werner Frohn and Friedemann Schmoll, eds., *Natur und Staat: Staatlicher Naturschutz in Deutschland 1906–2006* (Bonn: Bundesamt für Naturschutz, 2006), 315–41; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Naturschutz und Nationalsozialismus—Darstellungen im Spannungsfeld von Verdrängung, Verharmlosung und Interpretation" in Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, eds., *Naturschutz und Demokratie* (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2006), 91–114; Frank Uekötter, "Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany" *German Studies Review* 30 (2007), 267–87; Corinna Treitel, "Nature and the Nazi Diet" *Food and Foodways* 17 (2009), 139–58; Peter Staudenmaier, "Right-wing Ecology in Germany: Assessing the Historical Legacy" in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited* (Porsgrunn: New Compass Press, 2011), 89–132; Boaz Neumann, "National Socialism, Holocaust, and Ecology" in Dan Stone, ed., *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), 101–23.

<sup>125</sup> Georg Halbe, "Lebensgesetzlicher Landbau" *Westermanns Monatshefte* November 1940, 128–30; cf. Halbe's August 1942 *Lebenslauf* and his "Verzeichnis umfangreicherer Aufsätze" (BA DS/A97: 660–64). His other publications include Halbe, *Die Edda* (Goslar: Blut und Boden Verlag, 1934); Halbe, "Odal, das Lebensgesetz eines ewigen Deutschland" *Odal* October 1935, 301–06; Halbe, "Goethes Naturanschauung und lebensgesetzlicher Landbau" *Demeter* December 1940, 116–18; Halbe, "Die Reichsidee" *Leib und Leben* November 1942, 89–91. Halbe also published in the *Nationalsozialistische Landpost* and the SS journal *Das schwarze Korps*. For a fine study of *Odal* see Andrea D'Onofrio, *Ruralismo e storia nel Terzo Reich: Il caso "Odal"* (Naples: Liguori, 1997).



left the agricultural apparatus and moved to the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, then in March 1944 to the Propaganda Ministry.<sup>126</sup>

Halbe's colleague Hans Merkel was a leading figure in the SS Office of Race and Settlement, the institutional embodiment of Nazi blood and soil doctrines. He joined Darré's staff in 1934 and wrote regularly for *Odal*, linking organic metaphors with calls for expanded German *Lebensraum*. Merkel was made an SS officer in 1936 on special orders from Himmler and became a primary proponent of biodynamic cultivation within the Nazi agricultural apparatus.<sup>127</sup> After the war he was Darré's defense attorney at Nuremberg, portraying the former Reich Minister as an idealistic protector of a revitalized peasantry. Merkel continued to work with Darré and other veterans of the Nazi agrarian bureaucracy in promoting biodynamics after 1945.

Merkel and Halbe cooperated closely with Darré's assistant Hermann Reischle, who hired both anthroposophists onto the Reich Peasant Leader's staff. Reischle coordinated the pro-biodynamic faction from his position in the Reich Office for Agrarian Policy. An early member of the NSDAP and the SS, he worked on the party's rural campaigns before Hitler came to power and was the founding head of the Race Bureau in the SS Office of Race and Settlement.<sup>128</sup> Much of his work focused on the racial advantages of rural re-settlement programs, and he played a major part in planning the "Germanization" of

<sup>126</sup> Personalakte Georg Halbe, BA R1501/206985.

<sup>127</sup> See Merkel's SS file, BA SSO/310A: 74–114; his SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt file, BA RS/D5477: 303–500; his Reichsbauernrat file, BA R16/I92; and his Reichsnährstand file, BA DS/G179: 2735–62. The voluminous post-war correspondence between Merkel and Darré can be found in BAK N1094 I/2. His publications include Hans Merkel, *Nationalsozialistische Wirtschaftsgestaltung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936); Merkel, *Agrarpolitik* (Leipzig: Kohlhammer, 1942); Merkel, *Deutsches Bauernrecht* (Leipzig: Kohlhammer, 1944). In an unpublished post-war memoir titled "Mein Lebensgang," Merkel recounted his career during the Third Reich and emphasized his commitment to anthroposophy throughout the Nazi era while downplaying his own involvement in Nazi activities. I am indebted to Ute Merkel for providing a copy of this document.

<sup>128</sup> Details on Reischle's career can be found in his SS file, BA SSO/21B: 1020–1137, and his Reichsnährstand file, BA DS/G131: 2475–92; cf. Hermann Reischle, *Reichsbauernführer Darré: Der Kämpfer um Blut und Boden* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1933); Reischle, "Kapitalismus als Nährboden des Judentums" *Odal* January 1937, 530–41; Reischle, *Nationalsozialistische Agrarpolitik* (Münster: Coppenrath, 1941).

territories to be conquered in the East. With Reischle's assistance, biodynamic representatives were able to publicize their views amply in the Nazi press.<sup>129</sup>

Even with the backing of Darré, Reischle and his cohort could not overcome the combined resistance of opponents of biodynamic farming within the agricultural apparatus and opponents of anthroposophy within the security services. Heydrich's SD agents considered biodynamic methods occult quackery, a pointless encumbrance on traditional farming techniques. In their eyes, the biodynamic movement attempted "to spread the false international doctrine of anthroposophy disguised as National Socialism."<sup>130</sup> In June 1941, as part of the anti-occultist campaign unleashed after Hess's flight to Britain, the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture was dissolved and Bartsch was temporarily imprisoned.

If Heydrich and his men believed this was the final blow against biodynamic efforts in the Third Reich, they were mistaken. The June 1941 actions removed Steiner's version of organic farming from public view, but scarcely eliminated it. Biodynamic initiatives continued apace under the unlikely protection of Himmler and the SS. Since the beginning of the war anthroposophist growers had been collaborating with the SS on 'settlement' plans in the occupied East. These plans envisioned the displacement of Slavic populations by ethnic German farmers in an agrarian empire under Nazi rule. Biodynamic leaders saw the war as a long-awaited opportunity to re-shape Eastern lands along biodynamic lines.<sup>131</sup>

As early as October 1939, a month after the invasion of Poland, the SS requisitioned a large estate in the occupied province of Posen as an agricultural training facility based on biodynamic principles, with the active cooperation

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<sup>129</sup> See e.g. Erhard Bartsch, "Vom Wesen des Betriebsorganismus" *Odal* April 1940, 287–90; Bartsch, "Der Erbhof Marienhöhe: Ein Beispiel lebensgesetzlicher Landbauweise" *Odal* September 1940, 695–701; Fritz Hoffmann, "Lebensgesetzliche Grundlagen" *Leib und Leben* November 1940, 109–10; Wilhelm Rauber, "Bauern 'kraft Gesetzes' oder wesenhaftes Bauerntum? Gedanken über die Notwendigkeit eines lebensgesetzlichen Landbaus" *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* November 1940, 676–82.

<sup>130</sup> July 6, 1941 SD report on the Reichsverband für biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise, BA R58/6223/1: 242.

<sup>131</sup> December 1939 memorandum by Nicolaus Remer, BA R9349/3/S; May 1940 report by Heinrich Vogel, BA NS3/1175; September 16, 1939 "Entwurf eines Briefes an Generalfeldmarschall Göring" in BA R9349/2/G; Bartsch to Hess, November 9, 1940, BA R58/6223/1: 310. In March 1940 Bartsch wrote to Hess's wife Ilse: "Since the war began there has been a rapid increase in recognition and understanding for our work." (Bartsch to Ilse Hess, March 12, 1940, BA R9349/2/H). Ilse Hess was a member of the Society for the Promotion of Biodynamic Agriculture.

of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture.<sup>132</sup> Himmler's attitude toward biodynamic farming remained ambivalent; he rejected its anthroposophical foundations but appreciated its practical potential. After the June 1941 crack-down on occultism he ordered the agricultural sections of the SS to continue working with biodynamic methods, in cooperation with Bartsch, Dreidax, and their colleagues, but to keep these activities unobtrusive.<sup>133</sup>

Two of Himmler's lieutenants, Günther Pancke and Oswald Pohl, administered the SS biodynamic programs. Pancke replaced Darré as head of the SS Office of Race and Settlement in 1938 and enlisted the agency in the effort to alter conquered lands in the East according to Himmler's Germanic model. One of Pancke's goals was the establishment of agricultural estates in the Eastern territories governed by "soldier-farmers." He considered biodynamic cultivation the only suitable cultivation method for this would-be vanguard, pioneers of a racially dependable armed peasantry in the ethnically cleansed East. In 1940 Pancke tried to make Bartsch an SS officer to help realize these plans, but was blocked by Heydrich.<sup>134</sup> Pancke's colleague Pohl was the administrator of the concentration camp system. A friend of Alwin Seifert, Pohl was an active supporter of biodynamic agriculture and had his own estate farmed biodynamically. He sent Himmler biodynamic literature to demonstrate its value to the SS.<sup>135</sup>

In January 1939 Himmler created a new SS corporation under Pohl's supervision, the German Research Facility for Food and Nutrition, known by its German initials as the DVA. It eventually oversaw a network of biodynamic plantations located at concentration camps such as Dachau and Ravensbrück, as well as estates in occupied Eastern Europe growing organic crops for the SS and the German military. Production was monitored by the Reich League for

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<sup>132</sup> Pancke to Himmler, November 20, 1939, BA NS2/60: 51–59. Pancke reported that the Reich Food Estate recommended biodynamic cultivation for the annexed Eastern territories because it required no artificial fertilizers, noting that the "racially inferior" Polish population of the new "settlement" areas was to be evacuated as soon as possible. For Bartsch's views on a properly Germanic peasantry see Erhard Bartsch, "Der bäuerliche Erziehungsweg des deutschen Menschen" September 23, 1940, BA NS15/304: 57101–08.

<sup>133</sup> Himmler to Pohl, June 18, 1941, BA NS19/3122: 83; Brandt to Vogel, March 2, 1942, BA NS19/3122: 38.

<sup>134</sup> Pancke to Pohl, February 29, 1940, and Pancke to Heydrich, January 8, 1940, BA PK/A199: 2778–80.

<sup>135</sup> Pohl to Himmler, June 17, 1940, BA NS19/3122: 80. Pohl first visited Bartsch's estate in December 1939. He was convicted of crimes against humanity at Nuremberg and executed in 1951.

Biodynamic Agriculture.<sup>136</sup> The DVA marketed Demeter products, cooperated with Weleda, and contributed financially to the Reich League. Pohl recruited anthroposophists Max Karl Schwarz and Nicolaus Remer to work on biodynamic enterprises at Auschwitz, though Bormann and Heydrich protested the employment of anthroposophists in SS ventures.<sup>137</sup>

The centerpiece of the DVA biodynamic operations was the sizeable plantation at Dachau, which produced medicinal herbs and other goods for the SS. As at Ravensbrück, the labor on the Dachau biodynamic plantation was performed by camp inmates. From 1941 onward the Dachau operation was overseen by anthroposophist Franz Lippert, head gardener at Weleda from 1924 to 1940. Lippert joined the SS and in 1944 received a “performance premium” for his work at the Dachau plantation. He published a book for the SS in 1943 and consulted on a variety of projects for the party leadership.<sup>138</sup>

One of the tasks of the Dachau plantation was to train German settlers for the Eastern territories, part of SS plans to use biodynamic cultivation in the environmental and ethnic re-ordering of the East. Biodynamic leaders participated actively in these efforts, obtaining preferential treatment from the DVA

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<sup>136</sup> Further information on the SS biodynamic plantations is available in Enno Georg, *Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen der SS* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1963), 62–66; Wolfgang Jacobeit and Christoph Kopke, *Die Biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise im KZ: Die Güter der 'Deutschen Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung' der SS von 1939 bis 1945* (Berlin: Trafo, 1999); Hermann Kaienburg, *Die Wirtschaft der SS* (Berlin: Metropol, 2003), 771–855.

<sup>137</sup> Heydrich to Pohl, July 4, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 203; Bormann to Heydrich, June 28, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 211; SD memorandum, June 28, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 204.

<sup>138</sup> Lippert (1901–1949) joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1922 and took part in Steiner's 1924 agriculture course. On his work at Dachau see his SS file, BA SM/L40: 623–30; BA NS3/1430: 114; Lippert to Pohl, December 2, 1943, BA NS19/208: 6. Cf. Franz Lippert, *Zur Praxis des Heilpflanzenbaus* (Dresden: Müller, 1939); Lippert, “Der Bauerngarten” *Leib und Leben* June 1941, 80–81; Lippert, *Das Wichtigste in Kürze über Kräuter und Gewürze* (Berlin: Nordland Verlag, 1943). For details on the Dachau plantation see Walter Wuttke-Groneberg, “Von Heidelberg nach Dachau” in Gerhard Baader, ed., *Medizin und Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Verlagsgesellschaft Gesundheit, 1980), 113–38; Robert Sigel, “Heilkräuterkulturen im KZ: Die Plantage in Dachau” *Dachauer Hefte* 4 (1988), 164–73; Daniella Seidl, “Zwischen Himmel und Hölle”: *Das Kommando 'Plantage' des Konzentrationslagers Dachau* (Munich: Utz, 2008); Gunther Schenk, *Heilpflanzenkunde im Nationalsozialismus: Stand, Entwicklung und Einordnung im Rahmen der Neuen Deutschen Heilkunde* (Baden-Baden: Deutscher Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2009), 226–36; Christoph Kopke, “Kompost und Konzentrationslager: Alwin Seifert und die 'Plantage' im KZ Dachau” in Annett Schulze and Thorsten Schäfer, eds., *Zur Re-Biologisierung der Gesellschaft: Menschenfeindliche Konstruktionen im Ökologischen und im Sozialen* (Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2012), 185–207.

and other ss agencies in return. Remer helped oversee agricultural production in the occupied Ukraine in 1941 and 1942. Two biodynamic estates were established in the Hegewald colony in the Ukraine, one at Zhitomir under biodynamic official Alois Stockamp and one at nearby Wertingen under anthroposophist ss officer Carl Grund.<sup>139</sup> Grund was specially commissioned to assess biodynamic farming in the conquered Russian provinces in 1943. On Himmler's orders, he was given exclusive prerogatives as an expert for "natural farming" in the East. After Heydrich's assassination in June 1942, Himmler directed that former members of the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture be engaged in the re-organization of agriculture in the Eastern territories to contribute to the "practical work of reconstruction" being carried out by German forces.<sup>140</sup> The DVA was still putting resources into its biodynamic projects as late as January 1945, and ss sponsorship of biodynamics continued until the camps were liberated.

Biodynamic cultivation found amenable partners in the Nazi hierarchy as a trustworthy method for restoring the health and fertility of the German soil and the German people. It augured the return of a balanced relationship between the nation and the landscape, a regenerated community living in harmony with nature. Through Nazi interest in organic farming, anthroposophist ideas and practices had concrete impact on the policies of the Third Reich. Initiatives in favor of environmentally sensitive public works and habitat protection were not peculiar deviations from the destructive path of the Nazi juggernaut; they were part and parcel of Nazism's project to remake the landscape of Europe, ethnically as well as ecologically. Under the banner of blood and soil, Steiner's followers played no small part in trying to bring that project to fruition.

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<sup>139</sup> BA RS/E556: 2354; Remer's December 1939 memorandum in BA R9349/3; Vogel to Brandt, October 29, 1943, BA NS19/3122: 27–28; Sonderstab Henschel, Abteilung Landwirtschaft, "Betrifft: Reichsführer Auftrag für das Staatsgut Wertingen" May 18, 1943, BA R49/764.

<sup>140</sup> Vogel to Brandt, May 15, 1943, "Betrifft: Prüfung des naturgemäßen Landbaues (früher biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise)" BA NS19/3122: 35. Grund was director of the Information Office for Biodynamic Agriculture and a member of the Association of Anthroposophist Farmers from 1929 onward. He joined the NSDAP in May 1933 and the SA in November 1933. In August 1942 he was commissioned as an ss officer and in July 1943 was promoted to *Obersturmführer*. His ss title was "specialist for agricultural questions" (BA SSO/40A: 853–71).

### Alternative Aspirations under the Shadow of National Socialism

Like other aspects of German civil society, the success and failure of anthroposophical ambitions in the Nazi era depended on the specific choices anthroposophists made and on a broad spectrum of factors beyond their control. Nazi rhetoric adapted existing tropes from German culture, a fraught process which simultaneously provided opportunities for would-be fellow travelers and presented hazards to both sides of the uneven partnership. Anthroposophist organizations and individuals reacted to this ambiguous situation in different ways. In the case of anthroposophical medicine and biodynamic farming, a move from the esoteric to the exoteric facilitated acceptance of practices founded on occult precepts as their proponents placed the concrete benefits of these practices squarely in the foreground. The perception of the Anthroposophical Society and the Christian Community as ideological organizations or “world-view groups,” on the other hand, impeded their acceptance in a state which had no room for a plurality of worldviews. Still, many anthroposophists accommodated themselves to the Nazi regime and participated in its activities, whether out of conviction, opportunism, or dedication to the survival of Steiner’s movement. Regardless of their conduct, anthroposophists faced persecution from sectors of the regime that viewed alternative spiritual groups as obstacles to National Socialism’s totalitarian aims.

When faced with unremitting opposition from anti-occult Nazis, anthroposophists did not retreat into the private world of spiritual ideals but focused instead on practical efforts, demonstrating the worth of Waldorf schools, anthroposophical medicine, and biodynamic agriculture for the New Germany. Many anthroposophists distrusted democracy and sympathized with authoritarian alternatives, and the chance to contribute concretely to the re-construction of the German national spirit held strong appeal. This made the dawn of Hitler’s regime seem as much a promise as a threat. But the available room for maneuver within the public space of the Third Reich soon narrowed and all but disappeared. Proven fidelity to the German cause was not enough to mollify Heydrich and Bormann, and the protection of figures like Hess and Darré could not outlast their fall from grace. Anthroposophists reconfigured their expectations as the Third Reich developed, with some hoping merely to endure the Nazi era and others exploiting the occasion to promote their own projects. Messianic longings were reduced to prosaic organizational politicking, and tactical coalitions with various centers of institutional power took precedence over ideological details.

The prospect of productive cooperation with esoteric adherents elicited contrary responses from Nazi authorities as well, as National Socialism shifted

from a movement into a state and settled down to the business of running the country. Internal Nazi disputes over how to respond to occult groups shaped the fate of anthroposophy in the Third Reich as much as internal disputes among Steiner's followers over how to respond to Nazism. Conceptual affinities both facilitated and interfered with the practical convergence between the two worldviews. Those Nazis who found aspects of anthroposophy appealing focused on its tangible manifestations and remained indifferent to their esoteric underpinnings. Nazi opponents of anthroposophy focused not on its practical applications but on its otherworldly ideas, highlighting its occult character. They faulted Steiner's movement for ideological autonomy and for anchoring its claims in access to Higher Powers rather than submitting to National Socialism as the only higher power.

Anthroposophist responses to Nazism revolved around differing conceptions of national renewal and Germany's destiny. While some anthroposophists saw National Socialism as a form of materialism and considered Hitler's movement a threat to their own claim to spiritual guidance, others saw National Socialism as a harbinger of spiritual regeneration and an embodiment of the German mission to redeem the world. They viewed Nazism as a potential vehicle for their higher aims, whether in the fields of pedagogy, agriculture, medicine, or religion. The shared ideological continuum linking esoteric beliefs and National Socialist principles harbored the possibility for cooperation and mutual support as well as the risk of contamination and corruption. Multivalent affiliations among life reform tendencies, alternative sub-cultures, esoteric spirituality, and holistic views of nature provided one of the unsteady stages on which the fitful and irregular development of Nazism played itself out. However inadvertently, these dignified discourses of spiritual emancipation, these efforts toward cultural transformation, toward transcendence, toward renewing and redeeming humanity, converged with deeply regressive political realities.



## The German Essence Shall Heal the World: Ideological Affinities between Anthroposophy and Nazism

The construction of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, the people's community or national community, depended on gaining the support of substantial portions of the German populace. An essential part of this process involved the 'coordination' or synchronization of public organizations under National Socialist auspices. In the cultural sphere, this meant a simultaneous dynamic of inclusion and exclusion: some groups and worldviews were deemed suitable for incorporation into Nazism's new order, while others were suppressed.<sup>1</sup> By the same token, broad sectors of German society found various aspects of Nazism attractive and other aspects objectionable. Nazism fostered allegiance to its principles not merely by repression but through a complex process of appropriating longstanding German cultural themes. The idea of the 'national community' was not a Nazi invention; the term was widely used before 1933, and often encompassed notions of blood and race as part of national belonging. In both its liberal and authoritarian variants, the imagined national community promised inclusion, equality, and unity; that its inclusiveness went hand in hand with exclusion and dispossession was not readily acknowledged.

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<sup>1</sup> See Franz Neumann, "The Synchronization of Political Life" in Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 51–56; Karl Dietrich Bracher, "Stufen totalitärer Gleichschaltung: Die Befestigung der national-sozialistischen Herrschaft 1933/34" *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte* 4 (1956), 30–42; Helmut Krausnick, "Stages of 'Co-ordination'" in Fritz Stern, ed., *The Path to Dictatorship 1918–1933* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 133–52; Maria Mitchell, "Volksgemeinschaft in the Third Reich: Concession, Conflict, Consensus" in Norbert Finzsch and Hermann Wellenreuther, eds., *Visions of the Future in Germany and America* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 375–402; Moritz Föllmer, "The Problem of National Solidarity in Interwar Germany" *German History* 23 (2005), 202–31; Norbert Götz, "Volksgemeinschaft" in Ingo Haar, ed., *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Personen, Institutionen, Forschungsprogramme, Stiftungen* (Munich: Saur, 2008), 713–21; Ian Kershaw, "Volksgemeinschaft: Potenzial und Grenzen eines neuen Forschungskonzepts" *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte* 59 (2011), 1–17; Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann, ed., *Volksgemeinschaft: Mythos, wirkungsmächtige soziale Verheißung oder soziale Realität im 'Dritten Reich'?* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012).

Anthroposophist invocations of national integrity drew on similar sources. Steiner's followers emphasized the unique importance of the "German essence," an expression which also played a notable role in Nazi rhetoric. Anthroposophist publications in the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras featured the slogan "the German essence shall heal the world" (*am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen*), proposing that German spirituality held the key to the regeneration of humanity and the cosmos. Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels used the same phrase in May 1933, inaugurating National Socialism's revival of the German spirit.<sup>2</sup> General ideological affinities between anthroposophy and Nazism assisted practical cooperation around Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, and anthroposophical medicine, but the very same affinities provoked scorn from Nazi officials skeptical of occultism.<sup>3</sup>

The range of ideological overlap linking National Socialist and anthroposophist thought went well beyond vague references to the German essence. Steiner's movement and Hitler's movement shared an array of common enemies, from intellectualism to materialism to liberalism to Bolshevism. They also shared positive goals, including a commitment to fundamental spiritual renewal and the conviction of a decisive German historical mission. Life reform tendencies offered a further bridge between Nazism and alternative milieus focused on vegetarianism, organic food, unconventional health therapies, educational reform, back-to-the-land movements and unorthodox spirituality. This supposedly softer side of Nazi political culture, often unnoticed,

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<sup>2</sup> Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 299. The phrase is generally attributed to the nineteenth century poet Emanuel Geibel. The locus classicus for the image of Germany as the source of the regeneration of the world is Fichte's 1807–1808 *Addresses to the German Nation*. For background on Nazi uses see Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches: Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1993), 86–87. Jost Hermand comments: "This brief glimpse into the workings of the 'new spirit' in Germany after 1933 shows that the national utopianism causing such a stir in the weeks and months after Hitler's installation as chancellor was extremely heterogeneous. While there were any number of noble and altruistic appeals to community and fraternity, there was also no shortage of narrow-minded and petit-bourgeois views, which, although their adherents might well have considered them truly idealistic, always seemed to culminate in a perverse faith in a fascistic cult of the elite and suspicious notions of the 'German essence.' And yet such tendencies, mixed as they were, represent the best that intellectuals sympathizing with National Socialism could come up with." Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich*, 165.

<sup>3</sup> A harshly negative SD report on "Die Grundlagen der Theosophie" quoted the phrase "Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen" as an example of devious theosophical attempts to appropriate German nationalist themes (BA R58/6199/3: 381). These themes had been vital to anthroposophy from the beginning.

helps account for the intermittent interest in esoteric teachings and their practical application.

Steiner's followers saw their ideals endangered by alien forces from the West and East, un-German influences which corroded both soul and society. To counter such tendencies, a vindication of German values was necessary. The German people had been appointed "to fulfill the very highest world tasks," a leading anthroposophist declared in 1934, against the menacing potential of Russia, France, and the "world-dominating Anglo-Saxons."<sup>4</sup> The next stage in spiritual development, anthroposophists maintained, "can only be born from the German essence, or else it will be withheld from the world."<sup>5</sup> Indeed anthroposophy itself was a bastion of Germandom holding fast against "anti-German tendencies" which threatened to undermine the achievements of National Socialism.<sup>6</sup> From this perspective the rise of Nazism seemed promising, and anthroposophist publications in 1933 expressed emphatic enthusiasm for the New Germany.<sup>7</sup> Peter Fritzsche observes that "many of the achievements of the 'national revolution' in 1933 were cherished by citizens who did not necessarily identify with National Socialism. The legitimacy that Hitler and his regime enjoyed rested on a wider basis of goodwill."<sup>8</sup>

Works by well-known anthroposophists illustrated the range of ideological overlap with Nazism. Hans Erhard Lauer (1899–1979), a leading Austrian anthroposophist, offered an esoteric critique of national chauvinism in his 1937 book on "folk souls" even while condemning internationalism and cosmopolitanism. According to Lauer, Germany must take on the role of "spiritual teacher" for the world, and he warned that the "Nordic peoples" would die out if they did not recognize this German role. Since the mid-nineteenth century, he

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<sup>4</sup> Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*, 7, 20. See also Rittelmeyer, "Vom inneren Werdegang eines Deutschen" *Die Christengemeinschaft* July 1933, 97–102, and Jürgen von Grone, "Rudolf Steiner und das Deutschtum" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* April 1933, 18–19.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Goebel, "Eine deutsche Zukunftsaufgabe" *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1933, 68–70, quote on 70.

<sup>6</sup> "Das Wesentliche über die Geisteswissenschaft Rudolf Steiners" (BA NS15/301: 58198–204).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Powell Spring, "Ein Amerikaner spricht" *Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1933, 32, and the accompanying notice from the editor, Friedrich Rittelmeyer.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 38. Cf. Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London: Batsford, 1987), 244: "A study of everyday life under National Socialism, then, provides basic insights into the ambivalence of political activity, and shows how pervasively elements of inadvertent conformity or conscious approval entered into calculations about opposition and compromise."

explained, inferior western influences had overwhelmed and ruined German culture. Anthroposophy was needed in order to revive it. Writing from Vienna, Lauer went on to laud the current German regime for its energetic efforts to strengthen the German character.<sup>9</sup>

Lauer's German colleague Franz Löffler (1895–1956) was outspokenly patriotic in his dealings with Nazi officials and fellow anthroposophists alike. Löffler served as a public face of anthroposophist initiatives, overseeing an anthroposophical institute for curative education in a rural town north of Berlin. In a collegial letter to a local party official in June 1940, with the German army advancing on Paris, Löffler praised Hitler's fulfillment of the German mission in a remarkable combination of anthroposophist and National Socialist vocabularies.<sup>10</sup> He emphasized that Steiner's esoteric doctrine opposed internationalism, liberalism, pacifism, clericalism, the League of Nations, Marxism, Jesuitism, and freemasonry, and had always fought against the "spiritual encirclement of Germany" by these hostile forces. These were not mere blandishments offered to a Nazi correspondent at a propitious moment. Löffler had been a committed participant in *völkisch* politics two decades earlier and was actively involved in pan-German organizations after WWI. By his own account he was a central figure in radical nationalist circles among the ethnic German communities in Hungarian and Romanian territory after the collapse of the Habsburg empire. He boasted of his role in the "*völkisch* rebirth" of these communities in the early 1920s, drawing a parallel to the subsequent rise of

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<sup>9</sup> Lauer, *Die Volksseelen Europas*, 149, 163, commending "the vigorous efforts being undertaken in Germany today to regulate the affairs of the *Volk* deliberately and consciously and to make contributing to this process a personal duty for each and every national comrade."

<sup>10</sup> Franz Löffler to Kreisleiter Riedel, June 5, 1940, BA R58/6190: 101–12. The twelve page letter begins: "Unser Volk erlebt jetzt seine grosse Stunde. Seine hohe Sendung nimmt in unseren Tagen unter Adolf Hitlers Führung geschichtliche Formen an, die nicht nur das Schicksal der Deutschen, sondern das von ganz Europa für die nächsten tausend Jahre besiegelt. Den Mitarbeitern des Heil- und Erziehungsinstitutes Gerswalde ist es ein Herzensbedürfnis, in diesen geschichtlichen Augenblicken ein Bekenntnis zu Volk und Führung auszusprechen. [...] Es ist uns ein Bedürfnis, gerade heute, wo der deutsche Volksgeist durch seine politische Führung aus den tiefsten Schichten der Volksseele alle Kräfte und Reserven zum Einsatz für seine Sendung aufruft, dieses Bekenntnis zu Volk und Führung auszusprechen und unseren Willen zur Einsatzbereitschaft in jeder Form des persönlichen und sozialen Strebens zu bekunden, was heute für jeden anständigen Deutschen eine Selbstverständlichkeit ist." Löffler's Gerswalde institute continued to operate throughout the Nazi era. The sources examined here contrast sharply with the portrait of Löffler in van der Locht, *Anthroposophische Heil institute im Dritten Reich*; cf. also Dreidax to Hardt, October 21, 1937, BA R9349/2/H. For an anthroposophist biography see Hermann Girke, *Franz Löffler: Ein Leben für Anthroposophie und heilende Erziehung im Zeiteinschickal* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1995).

National Socialism.<sup>11</sup> Löffler's private correspondence with other anthroposophists displayed a similar dedication to protecting the German people from "foreign ethnic infiltration" and resisting the "dominating Jewish influence."<sup>12</sup>

Such sentiments appeared in more refined terms in the work of anthroposophist author and orator Johannes Pingel, who published and performed under the name Johannes Bertram.<sup>13</sup> His public presentations during the latter half of the 1930s featured familiar anthroposophical themes framed in a national idiom. In March 1936 he gave a series of talks on "Goethe's Faust, a German legacy," with tickets available through the Nazi party cultural apparatus. These were followed by talks on "Schiller and the current spiritual revolution" and "Blood and soil, nationality, and personality." In February 1937 he gave a cycle of presentations on the "Germanic worldview in Wagner's Ring." Further lectures included "Germany's European cultural mission," "Fundamentals of Nordic divine insight," "Rosenberg's myth of the blood," and "A battle between two racial souls."<sup>14</sup> These presentations garnered extremely enthusiastic reviews from the *Völkischer Beobachter* and other Nazi newspapers. The reports noted that Bertram championed "a race principle based on the spirit and the soul."<sup>15</sup> He cultivated contacts with the Nazi hierarchy and particularly admired the work of Alfred Rosenberg. Bertram also sought close cooperation with the SS *Ahnenerbe*, portraying his literary works and performances as contributions to the National Socialist reshaping of German cultural life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Franz Löffler to Kreisleiter Riedel, June 8, 1940, BA R58/6190: 119–22. The four page letter recounts Löffler's nationalist past in detail, with particular emphasis on his engagement in *völkisch* and pan-German politics.

<sup>12</sup> Franz Löffler to Erhard Bartsch, January 22, 1941, BA NS15/304: 57069–73.

<sup>13</sup> Born Johannes Pingel in 1891, he adopted the nom de plume 'Johannes Bertram' as an adult and signed documents as Johannes Bertram-Pingel. He joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1922 and was an active participant in Hamburg anthroposophist circles. His post-war anthroposophist works include Johannes Bertram, *Die Urweisheit der alten Ägypten: Eine religionsphilosophische Studie* (Hamburg: Hamburger Kulturverlag, 1954); Bertram, *Mythos, Symbol, Idee in Richard Wagners Musik-Dramen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Kulturverlag, 1957, a new edition of his 1943 work *Der Seher von Bayreuth*); Bertram, *Die Tragödie der Menschwerdung: Eine mysterien-dramatische Dichtung* (Stuttgart: Hilfswerk Elisabeth, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Leaflets in BA RK/I33: 2311–38 and BA RK/B155: 1885–1948.

<sup>15</sup> 1936 review in the *Hamburger Anzeiger*, BA RK/I33: 2319, and 1938 review in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, BA RK/B155: 1909.

<sup>16</sup> Johannes Bertram, *Goethes Faust im Blickfeld des XX. Jahrhunderts: Eine weltanschauliche Deutung* (Hamburg: Dreizack, 1942); Bertram's November 1939 application for Nazi party membership, BA PK/A315: 686; Bertram to Generalsekretär Sievers, Deutsches Ahnenerbe, January 23, 1937, BA RK/I33: 2322.

Cultural and artistic concerns were equally central to the work of anthroposophist stage actor Bernhard Brons (1899–1985), an important figure in the theatrical ensembles founded by Steiner's followers. After five years working and performing at the Goetheanum, Brons returned to his native Germany in 1931 and continued to organize anthroposophical productions and acting troupes. In a 1937 missive to Nazi cultural authorities Brons described his artistic commitment to Steiner's spiritual science as well as his hopes for Nazism's renewal of German culture, explaining that Steiner's work had enabled him to "overcome intellectualism" and freed his creative abilities. Lamenting the animosity that Steiner and his movement had encountered during the Weimar era, Brons observed that both anthroposophy and National Socialism opposed the Weimar press, which was "Marxist infected and hostile to the spirit" and conducted "a campaign of lies against anthroposophy." Like other anthroposophists, he hoped that the advent of Nazism would put an end to these calumnies. Brons expressed his bitter disappointment that the same defamation of Steiner's teachings continued under the Third Reich. Just as disappointing was Nazism's failure to live up to its spiritual potential. Speaking for those who in 1933 "desired equally to serve the National Socialist movement and the anthroposophist movement," Brons reproached the Nazi leadership for failing to recognize anthroposophy's contribution to the struggle against materialism.<sup>17</sup> This made it more difficult for Steiner's followers to fulfill their hope of serving both the state and the spirit.

Confident optimism, rather than disappointment, was the predominant tone of Ernst von Hippel's work in the Nazi era. In 1935 Hippel (1895–1984), an anthroposophist law professor and member of the Christian Community, praised Nazi Germany's "emphasis on will, on the national spirit, on myth, on race" as the antidote to materialism. He celebrated Germany's spiritual mission and presented it as fully compatible with National Socialism, quoting Hitler to illustrate his point. According to Hippel, only "the fulfillment of Germany's true tasks and the realization of its higher essence" could heal a world ravaged by materialism.<sup>18</sup> In his 1933 book on "the university in the new state" Hippel extolled the "national revolution" for putting an end to the old

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<sup>17</sup> Bernhard Brons, "Die wesentlichen Daten aus meinem Leben," March 1937, BA RK B20: 2726–38. His works include Bernhard Brons, *Dantes Seele zwischen Tod und Geburt* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1936), and Brons, *Der soziale Organismus der Anthroposophie* (Basel: Die Pforte, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> Ernst von Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft: Die Stufen des politischen Bewußtseins und die Aufgaben der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1935), 129, 162. For an anthroposophist

materialist scholarship and inaugurating a truly German order. He particularly applauded “the expulsion of the Jews from the university” as a great achievement in eliminating the obsolete un-German system.<sup>19</sup> His 1937 book warning against the dangers of Bolshevism blamed Marxism and materialism on “the subversive powers of the Jewish intellect.”<sup>20</sup> To Hippel, National Socialism stood for “the renewal of a spiritual Germany” in an authoritarian state and converged seamlessly with Steiner’s teachings.<sup>21</sup>

The range of attitudes toward Nazism expressed by these anthroposophists reflected the differing experiences of occultists under the Nazi regime. Some practitioners of Steiner’s spiritual science primarily registered the gradual attrition of anthroposophist organizations at the hands of the anti-esoteric faction of the Nazi movement, while others highlighted ideological commonalities and practical cooperation. A focus on “intellectualism,” for example, as an un-German, Western, or Jewish influence provided grounds for agreement between anthroposophists and Nazis. Steiner’s followers posited a fundamental contrast between ‘intellect’ and ‘spirit’; along with materialism, intellectualism was one of the worst features of the contemporary world, responsible for the debasement of spiritual experience. Nazi sympathizers with anthroposophy saw this element as a potentially powerful weapon “in the National Socialist struggle against intellectualism, which is alien to our people.”<sup>22</sup>

Anthroposophists and their supporters were willing to endorse repressive measures against other esoteric groups. In a January 1936 memorandum to Hermann Göring, Jürgen von Grone condemned liberalism, Marxism, Wall Street, the League of Nations, the Jesuits, freemasonry, theosophy, and “Eastern occultism” as enemies of the German spirit. He argued that the regime’s suppression of occult societies “of foreign ethnic origin” was entirely justified, but that anthroposophy was profoundly German, combating the very same ene-

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biography claiming that Hippel “rejected National Socialism” see von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 312–13.

<sup>19</sup> Ernst von Hippel, *Die Universität im neuen Staat* (Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1933), 19. Hippel’s work is rife with antisemitic clichés about Jews as an “obsolete race” embodying rationalism, intellectualism, abstraction, and cultural corrosiveness.

<sup>20</sup> Ernst von Hippel, *Der Bolschewismus und seine Überwindung* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1937), 27.

<sup>21</sup> Hippel, *Die Universität im neuen Staat*, 5. He particularly emphasized the compatibility of social threefolding and National Socialism.

<sup>22</sup> Franz Zeno Diemer to Hermann Reischle, July 5, 1941, BAK N1094/II/1. Diemer was a Luftwaffe officer and Nazi party official and a proponent of biodynamic agriculture. For background on the concept of ‘intellectualism’ in the Nazi era see Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 315–22.



mies as National Socialism.<sup>23</sup> Grone claimed that the Nazi state's foes, France, Britain, and Russia, were ruled by "occult brotherhoods" striving to destroy Germany.<sup>24</sup>

Supporters of anthroposophy in the Nazi hierarchy adopted a similar approach, arguing for lenient treatment of anthroposophists while endorsing harsh measures against other occultists. An unsuccessful effort along these lines stemmed from an SD unit under the authority of Otto Ohlendorf. Writing in May 1941, in the midst of preparations for the upcoming "campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences," Ohlendorf and his colleagues proposed the immediate elimination of astrology, spiritualism, clairvoyance, and other ostensibly un-German forms of Oriental occultism. Anthroposophy, in contrast, called for more nuanced handling because of its estimable German qualities and its commitment to holism and connectedness to nature, all of which were of value to National Socialism.<sup>25</sup> The proposal, which Heydrich rejected, indicates anthroposophy's stature in the eyes of its Nazi admirers. In their view, Steiner's spiritual science and its German foundations decisively distinguished anthroposophy from its occult competitors and rendered it a fitting partner for National Socialist objectives.

On the basis of affinities like these, a number of anthroposophist influences can be traced in official Nazi cultural life. One of the more eminent anthroposophist figures in the Nazi cultural bureaucracy was Friedrich Mahling, who served as department head in the office of music, the *Reichsmusikkammer*, for the first two years of the Third Reich. An Anthroposophical Society member, Mahling was active in Nazi cultural politics from 1932 onward and joined the party in 1933. He was removed from his position in July 1935 after an internal intrigue by one of Goebbels' lieutenants. In a letter to Goebbels protesting his removal from office, Mahling wrote: "I have demonstrated my utmost commitment to the goals and ideals of the Third Reich."<sup>26</sup> Mahling appealed to party authorities and was exonerated in May 1936, and the next month was appointed

<sup>23</sup> Jürgen von Grone, "Denkschrift" for Göring, January 1936, BA R58/6195: 382–92.

<sup>24</sup> Jürgen von Grone, "Vom Wirken Rudolf Steiners für das Deutschtum," February 1936, BA NS15/303: 58270–74. For similar claims cf. Erhard Bartsch, "Rudolf Steiner und die Aufgaben des deutschen Volkes" July 7, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57676–97), and Friedrich Rittelmeyer's November 1934 letter to Bartsch (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 311–16).

<sup>25</sup> BA R58/6197/1: 19–27; Reichssicherheitshauptamt III, "Bericht. Betr.: Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften." For further context on Ohlendorf's stance toward anthroposophy see the December 1937 memoranda in BA R58/6187: 85–88.

<sup>26</sup> Mahling to Goebbels, July 2, 1935, BA RK/B124: 940. His position was Leiter des Presse- und Kulturamtes der Reichsmusikkammer.

Professor of Music at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. He remained a party member in good standing throughout the Nazi period, receiving glowing reports from his superiors.<sup>27</sup>

Another major figure in musical circles in the Nazi era was anthroposophist composer and music critic Walter Abendroth, who vocally supported Hitler's regime and endorsed the removal of "foreign" elements from German cultural life.<sup>28</sup> In a 1937 essay on "Music and Race" Abendroth insisted that the "Jewish problem" must be viewed through the lens of "racial investigation." "Nordic" Germans must achieve "racial self-awareness" in order to appreciate "the great and eternal music proper to our own ethnic character," music which expressed "the soul of the racial community."<sup>29</sup> Abendroth's colleague Gottfried Haaß-Berkow, a committed anthroposophist and leader of the amateur theater movement, saw the rise of Nazism as an opportunity to advance his artistic career. Praising National Socialism for combating intellectualism and forging a new national culture, he confidently flaunted his nationalist credentials and expected recognition from the new rulers of Germany.<sup>30</sup> Haaß-Berkow was

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<sup>27</sup> See Mahling's *Reichskulturkammer* file, BA RK/B124: 907–1016, and the January 1941 SD documentation of the affair, BA R58/5563: 44. For background cf. Joseph Wulf, ed., *Musik im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1963), 153, 179–80, 225–26, and Fred Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1982), 51–53, 167–68, 191–92. Mahling celebrated Hitler's great achievements in advancing "die nationalsozialistische Idee" and "die unversieglige Kraft des Deutschtums!" (Wulf, ed., *Musik im Dritten Reich*, 226). In 1940 he was still writing about "music and race" (*ibid.*, 345).

<sup>28</sup> Walter Abendroth, "Vom Lebens- und Entwicklungsrecht des jungen Musikschaffens" *Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* May 1939, 263–70; Abendroth, "Stunde der Bewährung" *Monatsschrift für das deutsche Geistesleben* October 1939, 567–70. Abendroth's 1947 denazification file emphasizes the "strongly antisemitic tendency" of his Nazi-era publications: BA RKK/2703 Box 1 File 15. See also Walter Abendroth, *Rudolf Steiner und die heutige Welt: Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um die menschliche Zukunft* (Munich: List, 1969). For context see Wulf, ed., *Musik im Dritten Reich*, 58–60, 200–02, 302–04, 461–62, and Michael Meyer, "The Nazi Musicologist as Myth Maker in the Third Reich" *Journal of Contemporary History* 10 (1975), 649–65.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Abendroth, "Musik und Rasse" *Deutsches Volkstum* April 1937, 296–301; see also Abendroth's antisemitic article "Opernideale der Rassen und Völker" *Die Musik* March 1936, 424–25. Abendroth maintained an aggressively unapologetic stance long after the war; see David Bankier and Dan Michman, eds., *Holocaust Historiography in Context* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), 183–85.

<sup>30</sup> Gottfried Haaß-Berkow to Kultusminister Rust, July 18, 1933, BA RK/H56: 432–34; Haaß-Berkow to Staatskommissar Hinkel, Berlin, April 22, 1933, BA RK/H56: 490–96. The file also contains very enthusiastic statements by Nazi figures strongly backing Haaß-Berkow, as well as glowing reviews of his troupe from the Nazi press. For further background

appointed head of the Württemberg state theater, a position he held throughout the Nazi era.

For some of Steiner's followers National Socialism had many virtues and one cardinal flaw, namely its failure to recognize the significance of anthroposophy. An August 1938 report from an undercover SD agent attending a performance of *Faust* at the Goetheanum relayed the attitudes of German anthroposophists present, who regretted that there was not more cooperation between anthroposophy and Nazism.<sup>31</sup> Others held that the more one was an anthroposophist, the more one understood that the German people needed National Socialism.<sup>32</sup> A biodynamic dairy farmer from Silesia emphasized in 1937 that both biodynamics and Nazism were based on closeness to nature.<sup>33</sup> A Munich anthroposophist who was a party member and SA officer explained that anthroposophy revealed the spiritual origins of the racial soul and indicated the path to fulfillment of the German mission.<sup>34</sup> Waldorf school leaders underlined their commonalities with Nazi doctrine, condemning "decrepit liberal individualism" and acclaiming "authority" as their pedagogical ideal, while noting that the "covert and overt enemies of the German essence" were anthroposophy's enemies as well, particularly "Jewish intellectuals" and "rootless internationalists."<sup>35</sup>

Whether invoking common foes or common goals, anthroposophists and Nazis were able to reach a degree of agreement when their overlapping agendas appeared to be in accord. For much of the Third Reich this allowed anthroposophists to navigate the unpredictable exigencies of the 'national community.' Steiner's followers were willing to re-calibrate their vision of the German essence in response to varying proposals from Nazi counterparts, but

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cf. Klaus Vondung, *Magie und Manipulation: Ideologischer Kult und politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 18–19. Haaß-Berkow (1888–1957) was an anthroposophist from 1913 onward. His post-1945 autobiographical account does not mention his Nazi connections; see Gottfried Haass-Berkow, "Experiences in the Realm of Dramatic Art" in Freeman and Waterman, eds., *Rudolf Steiner: Recollections by Some of his Pupils*, 36–49.

<sup>31</sup> August 6, 1938 report by ss-Oberscharführer Rostock, BA R58/6187: 30–34. The report quotes an anthroposophist saying "National Socialism has only one defect, its opposition to the teachings of Rudolf Steiner."

<sup>32</sup> Heinrich Langsteiner to Adolf Hitler, December 21, 1938, BA R58/6187: 25–27.

<sup>33</sup> Ernst Schaaf to Bürgermeister der Stadt Reichenbach, July 6, 1937, BA R9349/1. See also Alfred Baeumler, "Über die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise," December 1940, BA NS15/305: 57711–23.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from June 8, 1934, BA R58/6188/1: 262–66.

<sup>35</sup> "Die Leitung der Freien Waldorfschule," Stuttgart, February 20, 1934, BA R58/6220b: 70–78; cf. "Zur Frage der Beurteilung der Anthroposophie Rudolf Steiners" (1934), BA R58/6193/1: 177–83.

at the same time were able to extend established anthroposophist themes in scantily modified rhetoric meant to be compatible with Nazi expectations. One of the notable shifts in anthroposophist attitudes toward Nazism accompanied the start of the Second World War. Eric Kurlander has observed that German liberals who initially supported some aspects of National Socialism became more critical and oppositional with the outbreak of the war.<sup>36</sup> The opposite process took place among anthroposophists.

Appealing to national sentiment, the war brought out anthroposophists' latent enthusiasm for the Nazi leadership and its aim of restoring German greatness. From September 1939 onward both the journal of the biodynamic association and the journal of the Christian Community carried ample material on the war with a bellicose undertone.<sup>37</sup> Internal anthroposophist correspondence reveals an eager view of the war as an opportunity for their own projects to flourish.<sup>38</sup> In some cases anthroposophists vocally supported the war even after the tide turned against Germany. In March 1943 Georg Halbe declared the battle of Stalingrad a "spiritual victory" for Germany in her "fight against the darkness," explaining that fallen German soldiers continued to fight "on the side of the gods" in the heavenly spheres. Echoing Steiner's stance in the previous world war, Halbe maintained that the current conflict was the "outcome of spiritual battles playing themselves out on earth."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Eric Kurlander, *Living with Hitler: Liberal Democrats in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> For examples from *Die Christengemeinschaft* see the October 1940 issue, 110–11, with a positive review by Emil Bock of a pamphlet by a Wehrmacht general on 'Problems of the spirit and soul in the current war' published by the Nazi party; and Gottfried Richter, "Am Rande Europas" *Die Christengemeinschaft* April 1941, 13. The journal carried frequent advertisements for "books for our soldiers" and promotional inserts for war support drives, complete with swastikas. See also Wolfgang Schuchhardt, "Frankreich und der deutsche Geist" *Wir und die Welt* December 1940, 526–30.

<sup>38</sup> See Franz Dreidax to Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture staff member Beckmann, September 26, 1939 (BA R9349/2); Erhard Bartsch to Alwin Seifert, November 4, 1939 (BA R9349/3/S); and Hermann Schneider to Erhard Bartsch, December 8, 1940 (BA R9349/3/Sch), which praises Hitler and Mussolini for uniting Europe into one great community of destiny and posits biodynamics as the key to achieving healthy soil for the whole continent and restoring the peasantry as the lifeblood of the *Volk*. Biodynamic officials expressed gratitude to Hitler and the German military for territorial conquests which greatly enlarged the possibilities for their own work. Franz Dreidax, "Gesundes Brot aus gesundem Boden" *Leib und Leben* September 1940, 88, rejoices: "through the deeds of the Führer and the army, the foundation has been laid for a newly spacious and truly expansive area for our future activities."

<sup>39</sup> Georg Halbe, "Unsterblichkeit" *Leib und Leben* March 1943, 23.

Strong support for the German military effort and the Nazi conduct of the war was abundantly evident in a series of articles by Jürgen von Grone from May 1940 to November 1942. The 1940 articles defiantly championed Germany's world mission and derided the decadent French and the world-dominating British, combining occult conspiracy theories with an emphatically pro-Nazi stance.<sup>40</sup> Writing in the midst of the Battle of Britain, Grone blamed the war on the British, who deliberately caused the conflict and rejected the Führer's generous peace offers. Grone declared that the establishment of the Third Reich was the German people's justified response to the Versailles treaty, portraying National Socialism as the expression of German will.<sup>41</sup> With Germany and Italy fighting to free the European continent from British domination, he praised Japan's martial glory in its war against the United States and offered a ringing endorsement of Nazi Germany's military campaigns.<sup>42</sup> Esoteric conceptions of a German spiritual mission were congruent with armed expansion and conquest.

For some anthroposophists, the German essence demanded political embodiment in National Socialism. According to Steiner's student Richard Karutz, writing in 1934, the Nazi swastika represented the spiritual mission of Germany and its task of vanquishing materialism.<sup>43</sup> Anthroposophy held that

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<sup>40</sup> Jürgen von Grone, "Zeugung und Geburt der Empire-Idee" *Wir und die Welt* May 1940, 204–08; Grone, "Baumeister und Bagedanken des Empire" *Wir und die Welt* June 1940, 226–31; Grone, "In Memoriam Juli 1914" *Wir und die Welt* July 1940, 282–89. Grone traced the "British drive for domination" to a far-flung masonic conspiracy involving "the Jew Disraeli" and "secret brotherhoods" intent on stifling Germany's mission. The articles posit a plot by "aristocrats and plutocrats" working with "Masonic lodges" and "leading circles of high finance" which rely on "occult methods" in order to fulfill "Anglo-Saxon racial egoism."

<sup>41</sup> Jürgen von Grone, "Herrschaftsziele des Empire: Vom Weltkrieg bis zum deutsch-englischen Krieg der Gegenwart" *Wir und die Welt* September 1940, 377–79. Grone's claims recall Steiner's interpretation of WWI; see Steiner's 1917–1920 texts in the 2011 edition of Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, vol. III, 264–72.

<sup>42</sup> Jürgen von Grone, "Kontrolle der Meere und Kontinente" *Wir und die Welt* January 1941, 28–32; Grone, "Der Kontinent durchdringt England" *Wir und die Welt* March 1941, 110–15; Grone, "Von den geistigen Grundlagen des japanischen Einsatzes" *Wir und die Welt* June 1942, 222–24; Grone, "Britisch-amerikanische Beziehungen im Wandel der Macht" *Wir und die Welt* October 1942, 379–82; Grone, "Krise und Umschwung: Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen" *Wir und die Welt* November 1942, 414–18.

<sup>43</sup> Karutz, *Die Ursprache der Kunst*, 130: "Wenn das Hakenkreuz heute in Deutschland für die Jugend das heilige Zeichen ihrer Generation und des Dritten Reiches geworden ist und ihr die Zukunft, die erfüllte Sehnsucht, die höhere Entwicklungsstufe bedeutet, so steht es an seinem richtigen Platze, weil Deutschland, die Mitte Europas, für die ganze Welt die Aufgabe hat, die materialistisch verkrampfte Menschheit aus ihrer Starre zu lösen und zum Geiste zurückzuführen."

spiritual transformation came in concrete social form, and the Nazi revolution could appear as the realization of these expectations. For other anthroposophists the iconography invoked by Nazi leaders was auspiciously aligned with occult imagery, and the war seemed a welcome harbinger, a sign of messianic fulfillment.<sup>44</sup> Shielding the German essence from un-German influences and accomplishing the German mission to heal the world were the paramount spiritual tasks of the age.

Believers in Steiner's spiritual science considered these tasks a necessary part of the unfolding of cosmic destiny and the evolution toward 'Universal Humanity.' This framework raised a series of challenging questions when anthroposophists confronted Nazi race thinking. While both worldviews shared an attachment to the Aryan myth, their interpretations differed considerably. The syncretic character of National Socialist racial thought accommodated a range of positions but presumed the dominance of Nazi categories.<sup>45</sup>

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ren. Es mahnt am richtigen Platze, daß die Aufgabe und Sendung Deutschlands eine geistige ist. Wenn das erkannt, erlebt, gelebt wird, so kann es ein neues Deutschland und eine neue Welt heraufführen, die wir alle erhoffen und erstreben." The passage was surreptitiously excised from the post-war reprinting of the book, which purports to be a photographic reproduction of the original 1934 edition; cf. Richard Karutz, *Die Ursprache der Kunst* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1967), 130.

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Rittelmeyer, "Vor dem Standbild des Erzengels Michael" *Die Christengemeinschaft* December 1933, 287–88; Emil Bock, "An die Gemeinden der Christengemeinschaft" *Mitteilungen aus der Christengemeinschaft* October 1939, 1.

<sup>45</sup> The state of research on Nazi race thinking is surprisingly underdeveloped. Paul Weindling writes: "Nazi racial science remains scarcely examined in its theoretical or institutional contexts." Weindling in Denis Alexander and Ronald Numbers, eds., *Biology and Ideology from Descartes to Dawkins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 205. This lacuna is even more evident regarding non-biological aspects of Nazi racial theories. Horst Junginger cautions against the widespread tendency to "reduce the race concepts of National Socialism to a biological materialism." ("Introduction" to Junginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, 18) He points out that "the idea of an Aryan race relied to a great extent on the idea of an Aryan culture and religion," noting "the amalgamation of race and religion" which accompanied the rise of the Aryan myth (*ibid.*, 19). The existing literature on Nazi racial thought includes Günter Altner, *Weltanschauliche Hintergründe der Rassenlehre des Dritten Reiches* (Zürich: EVZ, 1968); Rupert Breitling, *Die nationalsozialistische Rassenlehre: Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Nutzen und Schaden einer politischen Ideologie* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1971); Johannes Zischka, *Die NS-Rassenideologie: Machttaktisches Instrument oder handlungsbestimmendes Ideal?* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1986); Gretchen Schafft, *From Racism to Genocide: Anthropology in the Third Reich* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Christopher Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich: Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Horst Junginger, *Die Verwissenschaftlichung der "Judenfrage" im Nationalsozialismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche



Biological versions of race, which were central to Nazi ideology, were by no means uniform or monolithic and co-existed with idealist and spiritual conceptions. "The racial principles of National Socialism," in the words of Nazi race expert Walter Gross, held that "races are not only physically but especially spiritually and intellectually different from each other."<sup>46</sup> The very notion of race in both popular and academic discourse was equivocal and ambivalent. Attempts by Nazi racial theorists to define the concept exposed conspicuous complications and contradictions.

These complexities formed a formidable obstacle to advocates of a consistent race theory. Efforts by Nazi officials to delineate a comprehensive framework for racial ideology wrestled with ongoing quarrels between rival Nordic and Aryan theories, anthropological and cultural and genetic approaches, amateur *völkisch* philosophers and trained biologists.<sup>47</sup> Although the guardians of ideological fidelity in the SD and elsewhere insisted that there was one proper National Socialist racial standpoint against which others could be judged, the disorderly state of Nazi racial thought belied any such claim. Far from unifying

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Buchgesellschaft, 2011); Dirk Rupnow, *Judenforschung im Dritten Reich: Wissenschaft zwischen Politik, Propaganda und Ideologie* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Walter Gross, "National Socialist Racial Thought" in Joachim von Ribbentrop, ed., *Germany Speaks* (London: Butterworth, 1938), 66–78, quote on 74. In this text meant for an English readership, Gross rejected "contempt of people of different race" and argued that Nazi racial principles "offer the very best guarantee for mutual tolerance and for the peaceful co-operation of all." (73) Gross was head of the NSDAP's *Rassenpolitisches Amt*. Cf. Walter Gross, *Rasse, Weltanschauung, Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1936); Gross, *Der Rassengedanke im neuen Geschichtsbild* (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1942); Gross, *Die rassenpolitischen Voraussetzungen zur Lösung der Judenfrage* (Munich: Hocheneichen, 1943).

<sup>47</sup> On the contradictory development of Nazi racial ideology and its conflicting strands see Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, "Barbarous utopias: racial ideologies in Germany" in Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23–43; Cornelia Essner, *Die 'Nürnberger Gesetze' oder Die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns 1933–1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002), 13–75; Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 163–220. Essner, 15, points out that within the *völkisch* milieu the ideas of "soul," 'blood' and 'race' were fused together." For a fine discussion of the role of "race mysticism" in the Nazi worldview see Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 192–99; cf. David Redles, "The Nazi Soteriology of Race" in Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich: Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 63–70, and Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, "Volk und Rasse" in Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus: Die religiösen Dimensionen der NS-Ideologie in den Schriften von Dietrich Eckart, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg und Adolf Hitler* (Munich: Fink, 2002), 192–319.



around a coherent understanding of race, Nazi treatments of the topic were remarkably heterogeneous. Religious, cultural, and spiritual factors played an important part in these variegated discussions of the nature of race. Prominent Nazi representatives of a 'spiritual' understanding of race included Alfred Rosenberg and Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, both of whom attributed much significance to the "racial soul." Their work constituted a counter-weight to the predominantly biological theories of competing Nazi authors.<sup>48</sup> Viewpoints exalting the spirit and soul provided a point of entry for anthroposophists interested in assessing Nazi perspectives on race.

Richard Karutz, the foremost anthroposophical race theorist after Steiner, devoted substantial attention to the writings of Nazi racial experts. In early 1931, two years before the Nazis came to power, Karutz recommended Hans F. K. Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* to the readers of anthroposophy's flagship journal. Günther, a principal exponent of Nazi racial theory, appreciated Karutz's review and the two authors engaged in collegial correspondence. At Günther's suggestion, Karutz reviewed the work of another major Nazi race theorist, Richard Walther Darré.<sup>49</sup> Karutz endorsed the Nazi thinkers' strictures against "race mixing" between Europeans and non-white

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Alfred Rosenberg, *Race and Race History* (London: Cape, 1970); Alfred Baeumler, *Alfred Rosenberg und Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1943), 66–72, 90–103; Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß, *Rasse und Seele* (Munich: Lehmann, 1926); Clauß, *Von Seele und Antlitz der Rassen und Völker* (Munich: Lehmann, 1929); Clauß, *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde* (Munich: Lehmann, 1934). Clauss fell out of official favor after 1942 due to conflicts with other Nazi race theorists, though he continued to work with the ss. These spiritual conceptions of race were no less lethal than their biological counterparts. In April 1943 an official in the ss Office of Race and Settlement wrote to his superior: "Ich vertrete wie Clauß die Ansicht, dass mit der völligen Vernichtung der Juden in Europa und darüber hinaus möglicherweise einmal in der ganzen Welt noch lange nicht das geistige Judentum, dem man auf Schritt und Tritt begegnet, ausgerottet ist. Aus dieser Tatsache ergibt sich die Hauptaufgabe der Rassenseelenforschung." Bruno Beger to Rudolf Brandt, Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer-ss, BA NS19/1260: 49. Otto Ohlendorf also supported Clauss's viewpoint. Clauss depicted "das Judentum" as a "Krankheit" and saw his goal as the "Entlarvung und Abwehr des Weltjudentums": Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß to Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer-SS, February 18, 1944, BA NS19/1260: 52–56. A further Nazi proponent of "Rassenseelenkunde" was Clauss's student Sigrid Hunke; see Horst Junginger, "Sigrid Hunke: Europe's New Religion and its Old Stereotypes" in Hubert Cancik and Uwe Puschner, eds., *Antisemitismus, Paganismus, Völkische Religion* (Munich: Saur, 2004), 151–62.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Karutz, "Über Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 4, 1931, 6–7; Karutz, "Über Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 11, 1931, 13–14; Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* August 23, 1931, 268–70; Karutz, "Zur Rassenkunde" *Das Goetheanum* January 3, 1932, 3–6.

peoples. He published a stark warning about “race mixing” in another leading anthroposophist periodical in 1930, employing esoteric ideas to make a forceful case against interracial marriage.<sup>50</sup>

Since profound racial differences are a spiritual fact, Karutz reasoned, interracial marriage represented a major threat to the evolutionary unfolding of humanity’s cosmic potential. Starting from the premise that “race is spiritually determined,” he explained that different races and peoples embodied different stages in the process of soul development. Karutz rejected the “materialist” principle that “there are no inferior races” because it ignored the direct spiritual correlation between physiology and the development of consciousness. The proper maturation of the ‘I’ required firm measures to resist harmful admixture with other races. Otherwise the “mish-mash of blood” would cause a regression to earlier evolutionary stages. Racial mixture brings spiritual disharmony.

Karutz offered specific examples. With the avoidance of race mixing, blacks would eventually disappear in America while whites increase. The same destiny, he declared, applied to Jews in Germany, who were bound to die out if not for continued immigration from the East. The gradual disappearance of black people and Jews represented significant evolutionary progress, whereas racial mixture damaged this progress and endangered humanity’s future. Citing Günther on the unfortunate effects of race mixing, Karutz affirmed that racial purity must be understood spiritually if it is to be effective. Rather than outlawing mixed marriages, Germans must recognize that race mixing is “contrary to evolution” and freely repudiate it on their own.<sup>51</sup> On anthroposophist grounds, Karutz decisively rejected intermarriage between whites and blacks and between gentiles and Jews.

With views like these years before 1933, Karutz found much to admire when National Socialism came to power. His racial writings during the Nazi era combined fervent commitment to anthroposophy with adulation for the new regime. An established ethnologist from the 1890s onward, Karutz moved from Lübeck to Stuttgart in 1921 to be closer to the center of anthroposophical activity in Germany, and moved again to Dresden in 1938 so that his children could continue attending Waldorf school. His chief statement on race was the 1934 book *Rassenfragen* or ‘Racial Questions,’ sponsored by the Goetheanum.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Richard Karutz, “Zur Frage von Rassebildung und Mischehe” *Die Drei* May 1930, 94–102.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 102. He maintained the same rejection of racial mixing a decade later; cf. Richard Karutz, “Mysteriens Schatten über Afrika” *Das Goetheanum* August 27, 1939, 276–77.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Karutz, *Rassenfragen* (Stuttgart: Ernst Surkamp, 1934), the culmination of his *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde*, co-published by the Goetheanum in Dornach. For an

The book began by charging that “materialist” anthropology did not take race seriously by focusing merely on cultural and psychological factors while ignoring physical ones. According to Karutz, this was a profound mistake; human beings could not be understood if racial facets were not given their due. He posited anthroposophy as the antidote to such race-blind materialism. Only racial ethnology could perceive “the true cosmic spirit” lying behind external appearances. A non-racial view was like “describing the outer shell without reaching the inner core.”<sup>53</sup>

In place of wrongheaded frameworks which failed to heed the crucial importance of race, Karutz proposed an esoteric anthropology: “Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy” was the only source for a proper understanding of race. An anthroposophical account of race combined body, soul, and spirit and gave central attention to “heredity” as “the indispensable mark of race.” Karutz argued that the new Nazi guidelines for racial instruction in schools did not go far enough in rejecting materialism and missed the special spiritual qualities of “our race.” If “the political doctrine of race” was to be effective, it must be informed by the principles of “the spiritual science of Rudolf Steiner.”<sup>54</sup> These remarks introduced a full-blown endorsement of Nazi racial policy: for Karutz, Nazism represented a synthesis of the biological and spiritual components of race, and the Nazi regime had put this synthesis into practice through its eugenic policies. He underscored this conclusion by quoting Steiner and Hitler side by side.<sup>55</sup>

Karutz considered his anthroposophist conception of the relation between soul and race confirmed by National Socialist ideology. Citing Clauss frequently, he elaborated an esoteric view of the “racial soul” and “racial destiny,” highlighting the heroic character of the “Aryans” and the “Nordic race.” Eugenic measures, he urged, must be based on spiritual insight. In an extended argument against “race mixing,” Karutz maintained that mixture is only acceptable between peoples of similar soul quality; hence intermarriage between Germans and non-Germans or between Europeans and “colored races” was highly detrimental. He went on to condemn mixture between Aryans and Jews. Jews were “racially foreign” and Jewish contact impeded the “Aryan

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informative overview of his career during the Nazi era see the section on Karutz and anthroposophical anthropology in Hans Fischer, *Völkerkunde im Nationalsozialismus: Aspekte der Anpassung, Affinität und Behauptung einer wissenschaftlichen Disziplin* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990), 91–97.

<sup>53</sup> Karutz, *Rassenfragen*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 28.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

world mission.”<sup>56</sup> Karutz quoted Hitler and Steiner again in support of a vigilant defense of the German people against foreign spiritual and physical influences. Anthroposophy’s spiritual science and the new worldview of the Third Reich complemented and mutually reinforced one another.<sup>57</sup>

For Karutz, the Nazi “revolution” was a “popular uprising” and a “*völkisch* rebirth” in which the German people followed the call of their *Volksgeist* or national spirit. He resoundingly endorsed the new regime’s race principles. But eugenic measures and racial policies were not enough; along with the “racial elements of the nation,” the “soul of the race” must also be protected.<sup>58</sup> Karutz found far-reaching common ground with Nazi racial theorists, invoking Clauss, Rosenberg, and Günther as well as Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz. He praised National Socialism as a “spiritual movement” and avowed that Hitler and Steiner offered similar racial teachings.<sup>59</sup> Karutz was not alone in his views. His works garnered appreciative reviews in the anthroposophist press and were cited by anthroposophical authors addressing racial questions.<sup>60</sup> Other anthroposophists shared his opposition to race mixing and supported Nazi efforts to maintain the physical integrity of the German people.<sup>61</sup> Anthroposophist publications provided sympathetic overviews of Nazi racial theories as late as 1936.<sup>62</sup>

Aside from Karutz, a number of anthroposophists developed Steiner’s race doctrines further in the context of the Third Reich. Wolfgang Moldenhauer argued in 1938 that only European peoples displayed genuine culture, individuality, and humanity, and that the “colored racial tribes” were not even “peoples” in the full sense, according to “anthroposophical spiritual science.” Rather than an authentic sense of self, non-European peoples partook of a “group soul”

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 49–55.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 62–64.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 68, 83. See also Karutz, “Über Mysterien der frühen Völker” in Wachsmuth, ed., *Gäa-Sophia* vol. III: *Völkerkunde*, 59–67, and Karutz, “Zum Atlantisproblem” *Anthroposophie* April 1932, 276–79.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 38, “Gesellschaftliches Leben” (1934), 4–5. For information on Karutz’s unpublished 1930s texts on race and National Socialism see Templin, *O Mensch, erkenne dich selbst*, 292–93 and 297–98.

<sup>60</sup> See *Das Goetheanum* June 5, 1938, 181–82; Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 25–26; Arnold Wadler, *Der Turm von Babel: Urgemeinschaft der Sprachen* (Basel: Geering, 1935); Guenther Wachsmuth, *Bilder und Beiträge zur Mysterien- und Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* (Dresden: Weise, 1938); Karl Heyer, *Von der Atlantis bis Rom* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1939).

<sup>61</sup> Hugo Wetzel, “Heldentum und Christentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* March 1937, 367–69.

<sup>62</sup> Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Neue Stimmen zur Rassenfrage” *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1936, 62.

correlated to lower rungs on the evolutionary ladder.<sup>63</sup> Discussing “the Negro in the United States” in September 1933, Elisabeth Dank rejected the principle of racial equality and scorned the notion of “blood mixing” between whites and blacks.<sup>64</sup> Karl Heyer glorified the “Aryan race” and the “Germanic-Nordic” peoples in 1939 as bulwarks against the “demonic” and “decadent” Eastern “racial elements” and their “Mongolization of Bolshevism.” The “higher races,” he explained, allowed “gifted souls” to advance in cosmic evolution while the “lower races” died out.<sup>65</sup> Anthroposophists characterized “primitive” racial groups as spiritually undeveloped creatures similar to animals and expressed anxieties about an assault by the “colored world” against Europe.<sup>66</sup> These esoteric treatments of racial themes featured detailed claims about physical characteristics such as skin pigmentation and bodily constitution side by side with discussions of soul qualities and spiritual forces. The contrast between Europeans and non-white races reflected markedly different levels of evolutionary development and the unfolding of consciousness.<sup>67</sup>

Two books on Atlantis from 1936, prime examples of anthroposophist texts published in Nazi Germany, explored these themes at length. Ernst Uehli’s Atlantis book highlighted the divinely ordained nature of racial evolution, explaining that the origin of racial differences lies in the spiritual realm and is expressed in the physical realm.<sup>68</sup> The members of the “Aryan race” were carefully selected by their cosmically appointed guide in order to lead the development of human individuality. Following Steiner’s model, Uehli held that the “red race” of the American Indians was “incapable of further evolution” and thus “dying out.” The “black race” was “unable to develop further,” hence its

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<sup>63</sup> Wolfgang Moldenhauer, “Erinnerungen zur Völkerkunde” *Das Goetheanum* November 6, 1938, 359–60, quoting Karutz extensively. Cf. Moldenhauer, “Die Wanderungs-Atlantier und das Gesetz des Manu” *Das Goetheanum* June 26, 1938, 203–05, and Moldenhauer, “Naturvölker und Seelenvölker” *Das Goetheanum* April 9, 1939, 115–16.

<sup>64</sup> Elisabeth Dank, “Die Neger in den Vereinigten Staaten” *Die Christengemeinschaft* September 1933, 187–89.

<sup>65</sup> Karl Heyer, *Mittelalter* (Breslau: Ullrich, 1939), 176, 224; Heyer, *Von der Atlantis bis Rom*, 25–26.

<sup>66</sup> Emil Bock, “Europa-Dämmerung?” *Die Christengemeinschaft* September 1938, 161–63.

<sup>67</sup> Franz Fuchs, “Weisse und farbige Rassen” *Das Goetheanum* April 9, 1939, 116–17; Ludwig Paul, “Die ‘Farbige Front’ ” *Das Goetheanum* April 9, 1939, 117–19; Ludwig Paul, *Zweierlei Flamme: Eine geistige Schau des West-Ost-Problems und ein Weckruf an Europa* (Basel: Geering, 1939). “Ludwig Paul” was a pseudonym for anthroposophist Paul Oldendorff (1880–1950), an important figure in the early Waldorf movement.

<sup>68</sup> Ernst Uehli, *Atlantis und das Rätsel der Eiszeitkunst: Versuch einer Mysteriengeschichte der Urzeit Europas* (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1936). The book was republished in 1957 and again in 1980.

“symptoms of racial decline.” But “the Aryan race, and with it the Germanic peoples, were born from spiritual foundations,” empowered to carry forward the “mission of the Germanic peoples in the cultural development of Europe.”<sup>69</sup>

Sigismund von Gleich's book on Atlantis, published by the Waldorf press, drew on esoteric authors as well as contemporary racial theorists to construct a spiritual framework which confirmed “the cosmic order in the arrangement of the races.”<sup>70</sup> In this extravagantly detailed account of spiritual-racial evolution, the “Aryan root race” was threatened by “violent onslaughts” from “colored races” and “the lowest racial remnants” of the Atlanteans and Lemurians.<sup>71</sup> But “the best members of the white race” bear a spiritual consciousness “which enables humanity to become a free spiritual being.”<sup>72</sup> The virtues of the Aryans are the result of a rigorous racial selection process overseen by esoteric Initiates:

A small number were led out of the general moral decline and the violent natural catastrophes by the Initiates to an isolated region, in order to be cultivated into the primary seed of future evolution. These were members of the white race from north Atlantis, whose spiritual thinking ability was the most highly developed. They were able to mature into the seed of the post-Atlantean root race, which in spiritual science is called the Aryan.<sup>73</sup>

For Gleich, “human souls develop different cultures on the basis of different racial and ethnic forces.” Dark skin is due to demonic interference.<sup>74</sup> In vivid contrast to the debased darker races, “the outstanding sensory talents and spir-

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<sup>69</sup> Uehli, *Atlantis und das Rätsel der Eiszeitkunst*, 66, 77. According to Uehli, these racial characteristics are based on “cosmically anchored laws of evolution.” (67)

<sup>70</sup> Sigismund von Gleich, *Der Mensch der Eiszeit und Atlantis* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1936), 192. The book was re-published in 1969 and 1990. For a celebratory biographical portrait see Stefan Leber, “Sigismund von Gleich” in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 226–27.

<sup>71</sup> Gleich, *Der Mensch der Eiszeit und Atlantis*, 113, 170. The legacy of these racial unfortunates persists within “the Semitic element” (153).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 88. Gleich continued: “Because the capacity for thought had been fostered in the finest way among the north Atlanteans, their highest spiritual leader, Manu, chose the best from among them and led them, as Rudolf Steiner describes, to a special location in inner Asia, in order to protect them from the harmful influences of those who were left behind or of peoples who had gone astray.” (89)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 163, 171: “People became black because of the after-effects of the Fall from grace, they became ‘black as sin,’ or ‘black as the devil,’ to whose temptations man had succumbed. Through

itual thinking power" of the "white-skinned races of Atlantis" have "reached perfection in their descendants, the Aryan-Caucasian peoples."<sup>75</sup>

As the books by Uehli and Gleich show, anthroposophical statements on race during the Nazi era brought together longstanding tropes from Steiner's work with fashionable Aryan and Nordic themes. An October 1933 article by August Pauli greeted the rise of Nordic religious movements and their emphasis on race and nation, offering a vision of spiritual eugenics fit to combat the "decadence of body and soul" stemming from neglect of the laws of heredity.<sup>76</sup> A March 1935 article by Gleich asserted that human evolution must be led by the "Aryan race." Capitulating to spiritual attacks by non-European peoples, carriers of decadence, would endanger this all-important Aryan leadership.<sup>77</sup> These debased peoples were the offspring of archaic Atlantean sub-races who practiced "black magic," and their present descendants included both Chinese and Jews. The Semites were "born financiers and clever merchants" as well as hidden promoters of Bolshevik "Asiatic barbarism." They represented an "Ahrimanic and demonic world" threatening Germany from the West and the East.

The menacing specter of Jewish influence presented both a point of contact and a point of contention between Steiner's followers and Nazi representatives. For many anthroposophists, Jewishness signified the very antithesis of spiritual progress and the epitome of modern debasement: Jews exemplified materialism, intellectualism, egoism, commodification, rootlessness, dry abstraction, soulless pedantry, critical acuity rather than creativity, and the failures of liberalism and rationalism. Traditional antisemitic motifs formed a substantial part of anthroposophist reflections on racial and ethnic questions, and the Jews were a favorite example of spiritual anachronism and evolutionary stagnation. Steiner's earliest publications were dotted with aspersions against the "un-German" nature of Jewish impact on modern culture. He declared in 1888:

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Lucifer's influence the astral body with its desires was corrupted and made more powerful than the divine spark, which was weakened and darkened."

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 174. Cf. Sigismund von Gleich, *Marksteine der Kulturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1938).

<sup>76</sup> August Pauli, "Blut und Geist" *Die Christengemeinschaft* October 1933, 215–17; cf. Pauli, "Gustav Frenssen und Ludwig Müller als Wortführer arteigenen Glaubens" *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1936, 84–89.

<sup>77</sup> Sigismund von Gleich, "Turanisch-mongolische Wesenszüge" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* March 1935, 5–12.



It certainly cannot be denied that Jewry today still behaves as a closed totality, and that it has frequently intervened in the development of our current state of affairs in a way that is anything but favorable to European ideas of culture. But Jewry as such has long since outlived its time; it has no more justification within the modern life of peoples, and the fact that it continues to exist is a mistake of world history whose consequences are unavoidable. We do not mean the forms of the Jewish religion alone, but above all the spirit of Jewry, the Jewish way of thinking.<sup>78</sup>

Steiner's mature esoteric teachings expanded this theme, offering an "occult explanation for the origin of the Semites" and the "peculiar character of the Semitic people" as paragons of "national egoism." He warned against the "corrosive" and "totally materialistic" consequences of the "continuing Semitic influence" within the "Aryan epoch."<sup>79</sup> In lectures such as "Specters of the Old Testament in the Nationalism of the Present" from 1918 and "The Essence of Jewry" from 1924, Steiner depicted Jewishness as the opposite of his ideal of universal humanity. His proposed response was the voluntary disappearance of Jews as such: "The best thing that the Jews could do would be to disappear into the rest of humankind, to blend in with the rest of humankind, so that Jewry as a people would simply cease to exist."<sup>80</sup>

Esoteric variants of antisemitic belief arose repeatedly in anthroposophist publications. They were importantly different from the predominant version of Nazi antisemitism, with its phobic cast and its exterminationist trajectory. While Nazism demanded the complete separation and expulsion of Jewish

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<sup>78</sup> Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Literatur*, 152. Cf. *ibid.*, 119, 127; Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Dramaturgie* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Nachlaßverwaltung, 1960), 36; Steiner, *Geisteswissenschaft als Lebensgut* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1988), 380; Steiner, *Der innere Aspekt des sozialen Rätsels* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1972), 56.

<sup>79</sup> Steiner, *The Mission of the Folk Souls*, 105; Steiner, *What is Necessary in these Urgent Times*, 34–35; Steiner, *Briefwechsel und Dokumente 1901–1925* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1967), 62–63; Steiner, "Specters of the Old Testament in the Nationalism of the Present" in Steiner, *The Challenge of the Times* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1941), 152–78; Steiner, "Vom Wesen des Judentums" in Steiner, *Die Geschichte der Menschheit und die Weltanschauungen der Kulturvölker* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1968), 179–96. For a fuller explication see Staudenmaier, "Rudolf Steiner and the Jewish Question."

<sup>80</sup> Steiner, *Die Geschichte der Menschheit*, 189. Cf. *ibid.*, 190: "the only proper thing would be for the Jews to blend in with the other peoples and disappear into the other peoples." See also Steiner's warmly admiring view of Heinrich von Treitschke, a towering figure in nineteenth-century antisemitism: Steiner, *Zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 109–18, and Steiner, *Aufsätze über die Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, 283–87.

elements from the German *Volk*, anthroposophy called for absorbing erst-while Jews into the spiritual community of the nation in order to neutralize and eliminate their residual Jewish characteristics. Even in arguments against intermarriage and “race mixing,” anthroposophist ‘solutions’ to the ‘Jewish problem’ centered on a radically assimilationist approach in which individuals of Jewish origin would wholly repudiate Jewishness, whether in an ethnic or religious or cultural sense, and become full-fledged ‘Germans’ without any trace of ‘un-German’ heritage. This notion conflicted fundamentally with Nazi standards of racial purity.

The extreme form of antisemitism cultivated by Hitler and his followers rested in large measure on a purportedly biological basis. Because the Nazis regarded Jews as a racial group carrying ineradicable traits, the only possibility for permanently eliminating Jewishness from the body of the *Volk* was through exclusion, deportation, or annihilation. But Nazi antisemitism contained a number of conspicuously non-biological elements as well. For some Nazis, Jews were not so much a race as a counter-race, a demonic force in human guise. The racial theories invoked by Nazi antisemites frequently featured an apocalyptic dimension and a powerfully redemptive orientation extending far beyond the idea of Jews as a threat to the purity of the nation. This ‘redemptive antisemitism’ promised to heal the world and restore it to its proper harmony by eradicating the Jewish aberration.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of the appeal of Nazi ideals, anthroposophists were convinced of the superiority of their remedy for the scourge of Jewish influence on the German spirit. In their view, Judaism stood for an atavistic obsession with the “group-soul” and its decadent effects on European cultural life. A 1925 polemic against Zionism by the editor of the journal *Anthroposophie* envisioned the “impending annihilation” of the Jews, holding Jews responsible for willfully refusing to accept their inevitable doom. Modern Jews, he wrote, represented “the unbending stubbornness of the Old Testament group-soul, mummified for thousands of years.” But a reckoning was not far off: “Jewry is getting more anxious every day” as Jews finally began to realize that “their sinister

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<sup>81</sup> See the chapter “Redemptive Anti-Semitism” in Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 73–112. A redemptive thrust can be discerned in many versions of antisemitic thought, particularly in German and Austrian contexts. The basic form of this idea is that through ridding the world of the affliction of Jewishness, humanity can be returned to a harmonious wholeness; in the absence of Jews, the evils of war, economic exploitation, and political manipulation can be abolished so that a free and hale society of honest producers can flourish and prosperity and peacefulness can reign among the peoples of the world.

role in the world is coming to an end.”<sup>82</sup> In the same year, a leading figure in the Anthroposophical Society in Norway labeled Jews “a scattered people which appears everywhere as the agent of the atomistic elements of our intellectual culture.”<sup>83</sup> Jews who obstinately remained Jews constituted a hindrance to spiritual advancement, and the ongoing reverberations of Jewish impact on the German essence posed a perilous challenge to Germany’s mission.

Such views intensified in the Nazi era. Friedrich Rittelmeyer urged his fellow anthroposophists in 1937 to work against “the repercussions of Judaism within Christianity.”<sup>84</sup> But especially worthy Jewish individuals had the capacity to “lift themselves out of the defects of their race.”<sup>85</sup> Rittelmeyer regularly contrasted “the Jews” to “the Germans,” portraying Jews as a people in decline, “decadent” and “degenerate” and out of step with spiritual evolution.<sup>86</sup> In order to cleanse Christianity of its Jewish residues, “a great act of purification” was needed. The Germans were the people best suited to carry it out.<sup>87</sup> In 1934 Rittelmeyer declared that the Jews embodied “corrosive criticism

<sup>82</sup> Kurt Piper, “Martin Buber und das Chaos” *Anthroposophie* February 22, 1925, 29–31.

<sup>83</sup> Helga Scheel-Geelmuyden, “Die Schöpfung des Menschen im Nordischen Mythos” *Die Drei: Monatsschrift für Anthroposophie* November 1925, 629. *Die Drei* was the official organ of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany. See also Hans Heinrich Frei, “Die Hebräische Geschichte in ihren Haupteinschnitten als Vorbereitung der Christus-Offenbarung” *Die Drei* June 1926, 208–22, and Ruth Pottlitzer, “Der ‘Ewige Jude’ in Mythos und Geschichte” *Die Drei* February 1931, 704–07.

<sup>84</sup> Rittelmeyer, “Über Christentum und Germanentum,” 209; cf. his 1934 disquisition “Juden und Deutsche” in Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*, 99–120. For an enlightening history of such distinctions see Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide: Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>85</sup> Rittelmeyer, *Deutschtum*, 120. Rittelmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner als Führer zu neuem Christentum*, 83, explains that “the individual Jew” can “work his way out of his race.”

<sup>86</sup> Rittelmeyer, “Die religiöse Bewegung im gegenwärtigen Deutschland” *Die Christengemeinschaft* October 1933, 224: “Wir wissen, daß im heutigen Christentum, auch im Protestantismus, noch sehr viel unüberwundenes Judentum erkannt und überwunden werden muß.” His tone was more strident by 1936: “Heute ist die Stunde da, wo wirklich im Christentum all das noch in ihm lebende Judentum überwunden werden muß. Die Zeichen der Zeit fordern es gebieterisch.” Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Christus* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1936), 46.

<sup>87</sup> Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Über Christentum und Germanentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* November 1937, 206. This act of purification was necessary for the course of history to unfold properly: “Nicht nur die deutsche Zukunft steht hier auf dem Spiel, viel mehr noch: der rechte Fortgang der Erdengeschichte selbst.” (210) For comparable esoteric variations on traditional Christian prejudices against Judaism see Gottfried Richter, “Von der Begegnung der germanischen Volksseele mit Christus” *Die Christengemeinschaft* May 1935, 48, and Richter, *Die Germanen als Wegbahner eines kosmischen Christentums*, 50.

and impotent dialectic” and above all “materialism, intellectualism, egoism.” Surmounting this malignant influence would require elevating the “race question” into a “spiritual question.”<sup>88</sup> Emil Bock, Rittelmeyer’s successor as head of the Christian Community, charged the Jews with “national egoism” while calling on Germany to fulfill its cosmic mission and bring redemption to the world.<sup>89</sup> Another Christian Community member avowed in August 1939 that it was “the sole truly German form of Christianity,” the only Christian denomination to fully “cast off the remnants of Jewish origin.”<sup>90</sup>

While holding out the possibility of assimilation into genuine Germanness and esoteric salvation, Steiner’s followers stressed that Jews who were excessively attached to Jewish characteristics would be unable to achieve redemption.<sup>91</sup> Similar arguments could be found in anthroposophist journals as late as 1943.<sup>92</sup> These concerns about Jewish influence were not confined to recognizably Jewish individuals or those with Jewish ancestry. For Karutz, “the Jew in every person is the enemy.” He condemned “the cliquish, petty, narrow-minded spirit of Jewry, rigidly tied to the past, devoted to dead conceptual knowledge, and hungry for world power.” This spirit could appear in anyone, not just in Jews themselves.<sup>93</sup> Karutz impugned Jews as the prime authors of the un-German

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<sup>88</sup> Friedrich Rittelmeyer, “Judentum und Christentum” *Die Christengemeinschaft* January 1934, 291–98, quotes on 293. The article depicted latter-day Jews as mired in legalism, pedantry, rigid tradition, dogmatism, and abstraction. A June 1936 lecture by Leipzig Christian Community pastor Peter Müller put it thus: “The Jewish law suppressed every impulse toward freedom. It created instead a strongly intellectual orientation. It also made the world lose its liveliness and color. The only path it allowed was one of commandment and prohibition.” (BA R58/5709c: 1097)

<sup>89</sup> Emil Bock, *Das Alte Testament und die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit* vol. III (Stuttgart: Verlag der Christengemeinschaft, 1936), 294.

<sup>90</sup> BA R58/5563: 136.

<sup>91</sup> Ludwig Paul, *Krankheit und Heilung des Abendlandes* (Basel: Zbinden & Hügin, 1937), 142: “Gerade auch der Jude, sofern er spezifisch jüdisch empfindet, mit überspitztem Intellekt und ohne jene innere Bildekraft, ist solcher Auferstehung sehr fern, und keine ‘Assimilation’ wird ihn vor schwerem Schicksal retten, sofern er nicht imstande ist, in Wahrheit und in der Tiefe seines Wesens jene Umwandlung, die Taufe durch Christus, zu vollziehen.”

<sup>92</sup> See e.g. Ernst Uehli, “Kosmologische Betrachtungen” *Das Goetheanum* May 23, 1943, 165; compare the 1944 remarks by Marie Steiner railing against “the financially powerful Jewish circles who control the press”: Marie Steiner, foreword to Rudolf Steiner, *Die Weihnachtstagung zur Begründung der Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag am Goetheanum, 1944), 7. The passage appears unabridged in the current edition of the book from 1994.

<sup>93</sup> Karutz, *Von Goethe zur Völkerkunde der Zukunft*, 57.

phenomena destroying spiritual life, including “atheism,” “parliamentarianism,” “the western intellect,” “Communism,” and “capitalist mercantilism.”<sup>94</sup>

A 1931 book on “the enigma of Jewry” by anthroposophist Ludwig Thieben spelled out this perspective in detail.<sup>95</sup> Thieben contrasted “the Semitic race” to “the Nordic-Germanic peoples,” emphasizing the “momentous difference between the Aryan and the true Jew.” He described modern Jews as the archetype of “rootless intellectualism” and decried the “manifold harmful influence of the Jewish essence.” Jewry was “the people which like no other resists Christianity through the very nature of its blood.” Thieben associated Jews with all of the putative evils of modernity, from “rationalism” to “modern natural science” to “capitalist economic forms as well as Communism and its materialist-intellectualistic ideas.” Jewish existence was a “tragedy,” and Jews themselves were responsible for their own persecution: “The antagonism that non-Jews feel toward Jews is entirely understandable in light of the enormous role which Jews play in banking, the stock market, commerce, modern science, medicine, law, and journalism.”<sup>96</sup> The “desert” character of the Jews and their “internationalism” had ruined their “spiritual foundations,” rendering them an imminent threat to the destiny of “European mankind.” Jewish defects had deformed all of “modern civilization” by imposing “urban” values with their “alienation from nature.” According to Thieben, “Aryans” are predisposed to develop individuality, while Jews who refuse the “cosmic power” of Christ are prevented from partaking in “the universal human mission.” The dissolution of the Jewish people was the only possible solution.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Karutz, *Vorlesungen über moralische Völkerkunde* 38, “Gesellschaftliches Leben” (1934), 6.

<sup>95</sup> Ludwig Thieben, *Das Rätsel des Judentums* (Düsseldorf: Pflugschar-Verlag, 1931). The book was reprinted unabridged by an anthroposophist press in 1991. The Austrian-born Thieben (1891–1947) came from a family of Jewish background and converted to Christianity before encountering anthroposophy at the end of World War I. He played a prominent role in the Viennese anthroposophical milieu and emigrated to the Netherlands after Austria was annexed to the Reich. See also Ludwig Thieben, “Der Lebenslauf des Menschen als Spiegel der Weltentwicklung und das Rassenproblem” *Die Drei* January 1925, 51–61, and Thieben, *Weltanschauung und soziales Leben* (Oedenburg: Röttig-Romwalter, 1933).

<sup>96</sup> Thieben, *Das Rätsel des Judentums*, 202, 142, 164, 134, 173–74. Like other anthroposophist authors, Thieben presented his remarks not as confirmation of antisemitic stereotypes but as an appreciation of the ancient Hebrews. Since the Jewish “mission” had been completed two thousand years ago, however, there was no more reason for the Jewish people to exist.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 200, 203, 207–08. Alongside lengthy quotations from Steiner, Thieben’s text relies heavily on Werner Sombart’s *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* and Otto Weininger’s *Geschlecht und Charakter*. Anthroposophists applauded Thieben’s book; see Hans Erhard Lauer’s lengthy and very positive review in *Anthroposophie* July 5, 1931, 213–15; the enthusiastic endorsement in

Near the end of the war, a 1944 pamphlet printed in Britain presented an anthroposophical analysis of the 'Jewish question' under the impact of Nazi persecution. Authored by émigré anthroposophist Norbert Glas, the text discussed the tragic "Karma of the Jewish race" and presented Steiner's esoteric Christianity as the solution to Jewish anguish. Modern Jews, Glas explained, suffered from "soul-sickness" because of their refusal to recognize Christ as their salvation.<sup>98</sup> Jews clung tenaciously to outdated traditions, isolating themselves from the rest of humankind, and were both spiritually and physically different from non-Jews. Remarking on the peculiarities of "the physical organism of the Jew," Glas adduced "the guilt of the Jewish people": Judaism "bore all the senile characteristics of the culture" which was "responsible for all our troubles." Jews represented "materialistic forces," and this was the reason for "the hatred which is directed against Judaism to-day."<sup>99</sup>

Even before the arrival of the Nazi regime, views such as these occasioned internal debates among anthroposophists about the proper response to Jewish members within their ranks. At the January 1929 general assembly of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, an anthroposophist from Stuttgart charged that Jews who declined to become Christians represented an internal threat to the anthroposophical movement. Their "corrosive effects" were destroying anthroposophy from within and impeding "the German mission." Jewishness represented "treason against Germandom." He accused crypto-Jews in anthroposophical ranks of continuing their "crucifixions" as they had done at Golgotha, citing Steiner in support of his claims.<sup>100</sup> Other anthroposo-

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Gleich, *Die Menschwerdung des Weltenwortes*, 36; and the repeated praise for the book in Hans Erhard Lauer, *Ein Leben im Frühlicht des Geistes: Erinnerungen und Gedanken eines Schülers Rudolf Steiners* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1977).

<sup>98</sup> Norbert Glas, *The Jewish Question: A Problem of Mankind* (Sheffield: Sheffield Educational Settlement, 1944), 6, 22. Glas (1897–1986) was born into a Jewish family in Vienna, became an anthroposophist in 1919, and emigrated to England in 1938. An important figure in anthroposophical medicine, he was also active in the Waldorf movement and served on the executive council of the Anthroposophical Society in Austria. He accounted for "the Ahasveric survival of the Jews" by their stubborn refusal of redemption: "While everything in the Jewish race was designed to prepare for the embodiment of the Messiah, the tragic fact remains that only a few faithful ones amongst whom these great events took place realised the mystery. Quite the contrary. They mocked, judged and crucified the Christ; the very race which had been preparing for his advent." (18)

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 34–35.

<sup>100</sup> Hermann Weinberger, "Erklärung," March 20, 1931, BA R58/6193/1: 281–84. Steiner taught that the Jews killed Christ; see Steiner, *Erdensterben und Weltenleben* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1967), 158–59.



phists, in contrast, held that Jews who became anthroposophists “cannot truly be considered Jews anymore.”<sup>101</sup>

In both private and public utterances during the Nazi era, anthroposophists emphasized that the “Jewish spirit” must be “overcome” in order to vanquish intellectualism, materialism, and egoism, the chief illnesses of the modern world.<sup>102</sup> Steiner’s followers credited him with revealing “how deeply the Jewish spirit has penetrated into all the sciences.”<sup>103</sup> Biodynamic advocates blamed profit-oriented chemical agriculture on “Jewish influence” and claimed that immunization campaigns were a plot by “Jewish doctors” to “contaminate healthy blood.”<sup>104</sup> Anthroposophy’s anti-materialist stance earned praise from Nazi antisemites inspired by life reform themes. A congratulatory 1940 text proclaimed: “We are confident that biodynamic agriculture will continue to realize the ideal goal. Ordinary materialism is digging its own grave: the cow is not a milk factory, the hen is not an egg-laying machine, the soil is not a chemical laboratory, as the Jew-professors would have us believe.”<sup>105</sup> The allegedly problematic nature of Jewishness and its contrast with Germanness resurfaced again and again in anthroposophical literature, counterposing “Semitic” and “Aryan” types.<sup>106</sup>

Despite agreement on the dangers of Jewish influence, Nazi opponents of occultism excoriated anthroposophist antisemitism for failing to acknowledge the primacy of race.<sup>107</sup> Anthroposophists of Jewish origin had to flee Nazi Germany. This contradictory record contributed to the ambivalent anthroposophist experience under the Third Reich. Unlike various neo-pagan groups, anthroposophy did not strive to become the official spiritual complement to National Socialism, nor was it persecuted as aggressively as other small

<sup>101</sup> C.S. Picht to Karl Heyer, April 22, 1931, BA R58/7408.

<sup>102</sup> Synopsis of lectures by Karl Heyer and Jürgen von Grone in *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* February 1934, 20–21.

<sup>103</sup> Wulf Rabe to Preussisches Staatsministerium, December 5, 1938, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 108: 67.

<sup>104</sup> Akten-Vermerk für Herrn Hanns Georg Müller, BA R9349/3/M.

<sup>105</sup> Armin Süßenguth, review of Ehrenfried Pfeiffer’s book *Die Fruchtbarkeit der Erde in Leib und Leben* September 1940, 93. Cf. Pfeiffer, *Die Fruchtbarkeit der Erde, ihre Erhaltung und Erneuerung: Das biologisch-dynamische Prinzip in der Natur* (Basel: Zbinden & Hügin, 1938).

<sup>106</sup> Examples include Friedrich Rittelmeyer’s 1936 book *Christus*, 108–09, 137–39; Emil Bock’s 1936 book *Das Alte Testament und die Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit*; Valentin Tomberg, *Anthroposophische Betrachtungen über das Alte Testament*, November 1933 (“Als Manuskript gedruckt—Nur für Mitglieder der Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft”), copy in BA R58/6192: 173–315.

<sup>107</sup> See e.g. Gestapostelle Düsseldorf to Gestapa Berlin, June 22, 1936, BA R58/6193/1: 326–34.



religious groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Though anthroposophists complained regularly about negative publicity, Steiner's movement received remarkably positive press coverage in the Nazi era, including outspokenly supportive pieces in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.<sup>108</sup> Anthroposophist authors generally encountered few difficulties in publishing their work.<sup>109</sup> SD specialists on occult groups made suppression of anthroposophist publications a priority, but met with relatively little success. They argued that misuse of terms such as "race, nation, community, Germanness" by non-Nazi authors, even if sincere and well-meaning, "must be regarded as an attack on the National Socialist worldview."<sup>110</sup> Criticizing "materialist misinterpretations" of Nazi racial theory, they contended that the Nazi conception of race united the biological with the spiritual, the physical with the soul, into one comprehensive synthesis. The SD was especially wary of spiritual groups claiming that Nazism had "adopted" some of their own ideas or that their teachings had all along been in concert with National Socialist precepts. Movements like anthroposophy, from this point of view, represented unwelcome competition.

This basic mistrust placed daunting limits on the potential for mutual recognition between anthroposophists and representatives of the regime. A 1937 letter from anthroposophist Erhard Bartsch to his Nazi ally Lotar Eickhoff

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<sup>108</sup> Approving articles include "Rudolf Steiner und der kulturelle Erneuerungsgedanke" reprinted in *Das Goetheanum* June 18, 1933, 199; "Deutsche Rechtlichkeit: Ein Vortrag im Goethe-Saal" *Völkischer Beobachter* January 24, 1934; articles from the *Völkischer Beobachter* reprinted in *Mitteilungen für die Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland* June 1934, 5–6; articles reprinted in *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* April 1935, 22–23. See also Elisabeth Klein to Alfred Baeumler, December 18, 1937, proudly noting reviews of anthroposophist books in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (BA NS15/301: 58127). *Die Christengemeinschaft* regularly reprinted excerpts from the *Völkischer Beobachter* and other Nazi media. For anthroposophist complaints about negative press coverage see e.g. Hanns Georg Müller to Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, March 26, 1935, BA R9349/1.

<sup>109</sup> The *Reichsschrifttumskammer* files on anthroposophist authors contain very few cases of denying permission to publish. For a rare exception see BA RK/I41: 1228, turning down Emil Bock's request for publication approval in July 1941, in the wake of the campaign against occultism. Elisabeth Klein's file shows that she continued to publish after 1941, receiving explicit authorization from the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, the Propaganda Ministry, and even the SD; see BA RK/I280: 30.

<sup>110</sup> June 1936 SD Sonderbericht "Zersetzung der nationalsozialistischen Grundwerte im deutschsprachigen Schrifttum seit 1933" (BA R58/5959: 267–353); see especially the section titled "Verfälschung der nationalsozialistischen Rassenidee durch Theosophen, Astrologen, Mazdaznan-Anhänger und sonstige Wunderapostel," 312–14. By 1939 the SD was complaining about the "Wiederzulassung fast des gesamten Steinerschen Schrifttums" (BA R58/6193/1: 198).

exposed some of the resulting frustration. Bartsch boasted, with considerable justification, of the dedication biodynamic practitioners had demonstrated in contributing to the Nazi reconstruction of German national dignity:

You know that the leading men of the Demeter movement have put themselves, their knowledge and experience wholeheartedly at the service of National Socialist Germany. The results of their work are obvious to all. Many insightful, responsible, and conscientious National Socialists, above all Reich Minister Hess, have acknowledged the significance of this work.

Why then, Bartsch asked, were Steiner's followers still subjected to "slanders" in the press? Why did other Nazi representatives denigrate their efforts?

I consider it incompatible with the honor of the Third Reich that German men and women who have shown success in matters of crucial importance to the life of the nation are called to collaborate in building the New Germany, but at the same time official agencies are allowed to drag them and their work through the mud.<sup>111</sup>

The crossover between Steiner's teachings and National Socialism did not go unnoticed among sympathetic observers. For some Nazi officials, anthroposophy still had much to offer in the effort to renew the German nation. The extensive cooperation between Nazis and anthroposophists in the fields of health care, agriculture, education, and elsewhere gave institutional expression to the ideological affinities linking the two worldviews. But these very same affinities simultaneously generated intense antagonism toward anthroposophy and other occult organizations in an intricate choreography of attraction and repulsion. Loudly as Steiner's followers might denounce "intellectualism," many Nazis viewed anthroposophists themselves as intellectuals and firmly rejected anthroposophical ideas about race and nation. National Socialist race ideology operated in different registers at once, however, conjoining instrumental rationality with deeply irrational elements. This charged context created a porous but troubled boundary between Nazi and occult variants of racial thought.

Internal controversies and doctrinal disagreements within the Nazi fold, whether about race or about other central tenets, could have paradoxical consequences. These intra-Nazi struggles "attest to the fact that the far-

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<sup>111</sup> Bartsch to Eickhoff, August 22, 1937, BA R9349/2.

reaching Nazification of German society was in both language and practice probably furthered rather than hindered by the fact that no single ideology could ever claim full authority and that allegiance could be calibrated to fit the circumstances.”<sup>112</sup> In the case of anthroposophy, this process was facilitated by a high degree of conceptual overlap between the Germanocentric elements in Steiner’s philosophy and the reservoir of nationalist assumptions upon which Nazism drew. Anthroposophists did not need to introduce or specially highlight ‘Germanic’ themes after January 1933, as these themes had been central to their worldview all along. Steiner held that the Germans were the “avant-garde” of the coming race of the future.<sup>113</sup> In addition, many Nazi theorists shared anthroposophy’s hostility to materialism and agreed that “Germany’s mission was to regenerate the world through the spirit.”<sup>114</sup> While this ideological accord provided significant openings for anthroposophists interested in tighter cooperation with Nazi representatives, it could just as easily close off such options and invite more intense scrutiny.

A popular perception of Nazism posits Hitler’s movement as a ‘revolution of nihilism’ focused solely on destruction. Among the most thoroughly studied aspects of the National Socialist regime are its terribly destructive forces: the launching of a catastrophic world war, the physical annihilation of people con-

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<sup>112</sup> Wolfgang Bialas and Anson Rabinbach, “The Humanities in Nazi Germany” in Bialas and Rabinbach, eds., *Nazi Germany and the Humanities* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), xxxix. Bialas and Rabinbach offer perceptive comments on the use of the terminology “German” and “un-German” in these contexts, noting in particular “the semantically pejorative *undeutsch*, a concept with marked anti-Semitic and nationalist overtones.” (xlii) For background on the range of non-Nazi responses to official expectations see Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*; Kurlander, *Living with Hitler*; Francis Nicosia and Lawrence Stokes, eds., *Germans Against Nazism: Nonconformity, Opposition and Resistance in the Third Reich* (New York: Berg, 1990); Martyn Housden, *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 1997); Alfons Kenkmann, “Zwischen Nonkonformität und Widerstand: Abweichendes Verhalten unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft” in Dietmar Süß and Winfried Süß, eds., *Das “Dritte Reich”: Eine Einführung* (Munich: Pantheon, 2008), 143–62.

<sup>113</sup> Steiner, *Zur Geschichte und aus den Inhalten der ersten Abteilung der Esoterischen Schule*, 85. For statements by his followers see e.g. Wolfgang Moldenhauer, “Von der anthropologisch orientierten Völkerkunde zum anthroposophischen Erkennen der Volksseelen” in Wachsmuth, ed., *Göa-Sophia* vol. III: *Völkerkunde*, 86–95; Karl Heyer, “Zur Anschlußbewegung” *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus* June 7, 1921, 3; Harry Köhler, “Wiederholte Erdenleben und Karma im Bewusstsein einzelner Völker” *Das Goetheanum* April 6, 1930, 109–10; Valentin Tomberg, “Die geistigen Gründe der osteuropäischen Tragödie” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* November 1935, 5–8.

<sup>114</sup> Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler’s Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 47. See also the section “Deutschlands ‘geistige Sendung’” in Jansen, “‘Deutsches Wesen’—‘Deutsche Seele’—‘Deutscher Geist,’” 267–70.

sidered unfit to live, and above all the attempted genocide of European Jews. To many observers, these are the factors which made Nazism distinctive and demand explanation. From the consolidation of the regime in its early phase in 1933–1934, when destruction of political opponents and barriers to total rule was the order of the day, to the euthanasia program and the horrifying unfolding of the Holocaust, the sphere of groups targeted for liquidation progressively expanded. There are excellent grounds for viewing ever-expanding destruction as the telos of the Nazi state.

Yet this view neglects the ways in which Nazism simultaneously pursued a constructive mission rooted in ‘positive’ values and the model of an ostensibly better world, a world freed of malign influences. Such visions offered a powerful motive for many Germans enticed by the dream of a national community, and provided the rationale for Nazism’s devastating crimes. The destructive and reconstructive elements of National Socialism were inextricably linked.<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, the extreme form which racial antisemitism assumed under the Third Reich can make it difficult to recognize that even Nazi racism and antisemitism were part of larger historical dynamics of exclusion, violence, and regeneration. These dynamics were not unique to Nazism, and their realization required mobilizing different dimensions of racial and national thought, bridging the gap between radicalized Nazi aspirations and the broader palette of German cultural themes which served as the backdrop for Hitler’s exhortations. Nazism was able to build on a yearning for the very kind of inclusion, equality, and unity which the ‘national community’ promised. The avowed “salvation of the fatherland,” in the words of Theodor Adorno, “bore the mark of catastrophe from the very first moment.”<sup>116</sup>

If anthroposophy was not among the more reactionary variants of occultism in early twentieth century Germany, why did it find such frequent congruence with National Socialism? Several facets of anthroposophist thinking prepared the way for this development: the emphatically German tenor of Steiner’s teachings, a legacy of his intellectual background in the late nineteenth cen-

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<sup>115</sup> Compare Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Norbert Frei, “People’s Community and War: Hitler’s Popular Support” in Hans Mommsen, ed., *The Third Reich Between Vision and Reality: New Perspectives on German History 1918–1945* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 59–77; Lothar Fritze, *Verführung und Anpassung: Zur Logik der Weltanschauungsdiktatur* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004); Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler’s Community, 1918–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Michael Wildt, *Hitler’s Volksgemeinschaft and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion* (New York: Berghahn, 2012).

<sup>116</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1951), 132.

tury as well as the trying process of distinguishing his doctrines from mainstream theosophy in the first decade of the 1900s; anthroposophy's 'unpolitical' self-understanding and aversion to critique; its millenarian, apocalyptic, and messianic components; and its underlying racial and ethnic assumptions. An assortment of mutual enemies and similar aims also eased the way. These factors help explain why Friedrich Lienhard, for example, was posthumously celebrated as a precursor of the National Socialist project of German renewal.<sup>117</sup> But they also indicate just how common many of Steiner's preoccupations were, whether the belief in racial hierarchy or the image of Germany surrounded by a hostile conspiracy. Anthroposophy's core themes grew as much out of mundane cultural contexts as out of unique spiritual insight.

The promise of German national renewal as a path to healing the world attracted both politically oriented Nazis and spiritually oriented esotericists. Much of what made Nazism appealing was the hope of communal rebirth and spiritual regeneration. The resulting exchanges were complicated by parallel and partially overlapping theories of racial evolution and national destiny. In anthroposophist dealings with the Nazi government, affinities were intertwined with hostilities: the convergence between esoteric and National Socialist ideals, and the equally intense conflict between the two, constantly interacted with and against one another. This ambiguous legacy left its mark on both anthroposophist and Nazi perceptions. But the degree of ideological correspondence and the scope of shared assumptions also created a bond connecting Steiner's professedly apolitical movement to elements of the Nazi state. Though this bond did not endure the twelve years of the Third Reich, it revealed a decisive feature of the historically unresolved relationship between occultism and Nazism.

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<sup>117</sup> Hellmuth Langenbucher, *Friedrich Lienhard und sein Anteil am Kampf um die deutsche Erneuerung* (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses, 1935). According to Langenbucher, "National Socialism is the present-day form of German Idealism." (151)

## Education for the National Community? Waldorf Schools in the Third Reich

On the 31st of January 1933, the day after Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, a Mrs. Oberstein removed her daughter from the Breslau Waldorf school. Oberstein, a Nazi party member, was upset by the presence of a temporary assistant teacher from a Jewish background, and expressed her strong disagreement with the Waldorf faculty regarding “the race question.” Her daughter’s regular teacher, Heinrich Wollborn, wrote a letter the same day defending his Jewish colleague and explaining the Waldorf attitude toward such matters:

We teachers place our complete trust in the capacity of every person for spiritual transformation, and we are firmly convinced that anthroposophy provides the possibility for an individual to outgrow his racial origin.<sup>1</sup>

Wollborn’s explanation succinctly captured the differences between the anthroposophical understanding of race and ethnicity and the attitudes represented by the new National Socialist government. For anthroposophists, Jews could overcome their “racial origin” by fully embracing the German national community and its highest spiritual expression, namely anthroposophy itself. This stance flatly contradicted Nazi racial doctrine, and in subsequent months the Breslau Waldorf school faced fierce criticism from zealous opponents in the local Nazi party organization. One anonymous denunciation charged that “Jews are behind this school.”<sup>2</sup>

Beneath the rhetoric lay a remarkably complicated reality. The visiting teacher whose presence had sparked the incident, an anthroposophist named Ernst Lehrs, came from a family whose Jewish roots were notably tenuous. Not only was Lehrs himself fervently committed to Steiner’s esoteric version of Christianity, both his parents and his grandparents belonged to the Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Wollborn to Frau Dr. Oberstein, January 31, 1933, BA NS 15/301: 58191.

<sup>2</sup> August 21, 1933 denunciation letter from an unnamed NSDAP *Ortsgruppenleiter* in Breslau, with copy of Wollborn’s January 31 letter enclosed, BA NS 15/301: 58192.

church.<sup>3</sup> The family had not been Jewish for generations, except in the ‘racial’ sense, and Lehrs exemplified the anthroposophical ideal of spiritual transformation and transcending one’s racial origins—the abandonment of Jewishness as the *sine qua non* for individuals from Jewish backgrounds hoping to become full members of the German *Volk*. In anthroposophist eyes, Lehrs had successfully joined the national community, whereas in Nazi eyes he was ineligible to do so.

This incident from January 1933 did not simply end with contrary positions on the “race question.” Both Wollborn and the administration of the Breslau Waldorf school soon distanced themselves from their initial stance. Writing to local school authorities in October 1933, Wollborn reversed his earlier standpoint, insisting that in his January 31 letter “nothing was further from my mind than taking a principled position on the race question. I therefore greatly regret formulating the letter in such an unclear manner.” Noting that he wrote the earlier letter when the Nazi government was still forming, Wollborn now declared: “I have placed my pedagogical work entirely on the basis of the government, and have fully expressed this by joining the National Socialist Teachers League in June of this year.”<sup>4</sup>

The Breslau Waldorf school, meanwhile, explained that Jews no longer worked there and that Lehrs had been only a temporary employee who left the school before the new laws regarding Jewish employees were promulgated. The school further noted that many Waldorf teachers had joined the Nazi teachers’ association and that all Waldorf schools in Germany had completed the process of *Gleichschaltung*, the Nazi term for bringing social institutions into line with the regime.<sup>5</sup> A local school inspector assigned to investigate the

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<sup>3</sup> Lehrs, 38 years old at the time of the Breslau incident, was a founding faculty member at the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart and an anthroposophist since 1920. In February 1934 he reiterated his conviction that he was a full-fledged member of the German *Volk* and should not be counted as a “non-Aryan,” invoking his military experience in WWI and quoting Hitler in support of his claim; cf. Wenzel Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie: Das Beispiel der Freien Waldorfschulen” (dissertation, University of Bielefeld, Fakultät für Pädagogik, 2001), 455. Lehrs emigrated to the Netherlands in 1935. Two other Waldorf teachers, Karl Schubert and Friedrich Hiebel, were considered “half-Jews” according to Nazi standards and left their Waldorf positions in 1934.

<sup>4</sup> Wollborn to Breslau municipal school district, October 14, 1933, BA NS 15/301: 58193. The letter emphasized that he stood up for Lehrs at the time of the January incident primarily out of “collegial duty.”

<sup>5</sup> Freie Waldorfschule Breslau to Breslau municipal school district, October 15, 1933, BA NS 15/301: 58195. On the process of *Gleichschaltung* in the educational sector see Rolf Eilers, *Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik: Eine Studie zur Funktion der Erziehung im totalitären Staat*



incident completely absolved both Wollborn and the school. His final report confirmed the Waldorf representatives' claims and declared that the Breslau Waldorf school was indeed free of "Jewish influence," observing moreover that a number of its core faculty were Nazi party members.<sup>6</sup>

This episode from the very beginning of the Nazi era reveals much about the developing attitude of the Waldorf movement toward Hitler's regime. Fleeting as it was, the incident illustrates the contending perspectives on the boundaries of the nation and the complicated dynamics involved in the Waldorf movement's efforts to establish its standing within a changed political environment. The conflicts surrounding Waldorf education between 1933 and 1941 form a case study of the controversy between anthroposophists and National Socialists over the proper meaning of race and nation in the 'new Germany.' These struggles over Waldorf education from 1933 onward can be understood as a series of conflicts about the true nature of the national community, a theme which played a conspicuous role in anthroposophical as well as Nazi contributions to the Waldorf debate.

Because this debate involved competing factions within both the Nazi movement and the anthroposophical movement, it has given rise to a variety of partial and incompatible interpretations.<sup>7</sup> According to anthroposophist treatments, Waldorf schools adopted a purely defensive posture toward Nazism, viewing the rise of National Socialism as a threat to be parried as effectively as possible, and obstinately resisted *Gleichschaltung* and other accommodations to the new regime. These accounts give little attention to pro-Nazi sympathies on the part of Waldorf advocates and depict Nazi officials as uniformly hostile

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(Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963), 66–85; Harald Scholtz, *Erziehung und Unterricht unterm Hakenkreuz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 44–70; and the regional studies by Kai Langer, *Die Gleichschaltung der Schulen in Mecklenburg 1932–34* (Weimar: Edition M, 1997) and Fritz Schäffer, *Ein Volk—Ein Reich—Eine Schule: Die Gleichschaltung der Volksschule in Bayern 1933–1945* (Munich: Utz, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Schulrat Jakob, Breslau, to Nationalsozialistischen Lehrerbund, October 18, 1933, BA NS 15/301: 58197. Among the Breslau Waldorf teachers who were Nazi party members was Werner May, who taught religion and language from 1931 to 1935. May was a prolific author of *völkisch* literature for young readers, including a book entitled *Adolf Hitler* which sold several hundred thousand copies. See his *Reichsschrifttumskammer* file, BA RK/RSK I B127: 77–230. By 1935, the acting director of the Breslau Waldorf school was a Nazi party member and SA officer: Stapo Breslau to Gestapo Berlin, November 22, 1935, BA R58/6220a: 59.

<sup>7</sup> The best account of the history of Waldorf schools in the Nazi era remains Achim Leschinsky's pioneering study "Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus," *Neue Sammlung: Zeitschrift für Erziehung und Gesellschaft* 23 (1983), 255–78. A brief overview in English is available in Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner*, 154–57.

to Waldorf education, leading inexorably to the final suppression of German Waldorf schools in 1941. In this telling, the Waldorf movement was simply a victim of Nazi persecution, and nothing more.<sup>8</sup>

More perspicacious but still sympathetic portraits focus on Waldorf efforts to adapt to Hitler's regime and cooperate with Nazi educational officials in order to maintain Steiner's pedagogical principles within the context of Nazi rule.<sup>9</sup> Others emphasize internal divisions within the Waldorf movement and directly challenge the notion that "Waldorf opposed the Nazis."<sup>10</sup> These treatments note that Germanic themes "formed a common lingua franca of Waldorf and the National Socialists."<sup>11</sup> Yet even these comparatively informed accounts claim that "Nazi education and Waldorf education were mutually exclusive and inherently opposed to one another."<sup>12</sup> While acknowledging affinities

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<sup>8</sup> A typical example is Detlef Hardorp, "Die deutsche Waldorfschulbewegung in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus" in Inge Hansen-Schaberg, ed., *Waldorf-Pädagogik* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 2002), 132–41. More historically complex anthroposophist accounts can be found in Wenzel Götte's dissertation "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie" as well as Norbert Deuchert, "Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus" and "Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus" in *Flensburger Hefte Sonderheft 8* (1991), 95–108 and 109–30. A selection of relevant documents is available in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. II.

<sup>9</sup> See the illuminating account by Karen Priestman, "Illusion of Coexistence: The Waldorf Schools in the Third Reich, 1933–1941" (PhD dissertation, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2009). Priestman writes: "This pattern of contradiction and ambiguity on the part of the Nazis and cooperation and naivety on the part of the Waldorf schools continued throughout their existence in the Third Reich and shaped the strategies the schools adopted while pursuing their illusory attempt at coexistence." These strategies were "part of a genuine effort by the Waldorf schools to find a way to coexist with the Nazi regime and to facilitate the process of Gleichschaltung. During the eight years from 1933 to 1941, the schools actively and in some cases aggressively pursued a policy of cooperation with the Nazis in order to ensure their survival, and most importantly, the survival of Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy." (111–12) Priestman is currently revising her dissertation for a book manuscript which will incorporate both the Weimar and post-war periods in addition to the Nazi era. I am grateful to her for extended discussions of our mutual research interests.

<sup>10</sup> Ida Oberman, *The Waldorf Movement in Education from European Cradle to American Crucible, 1919–2008* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2008), 78. Oberman's book is among the most thoughtful and historically informed treatments from within the Waldorf movement. See in particular part II, "Under the Shadow of National Socialism" (72–171).

<sup>11</sup> Oberman, *The Waldorf Movement*, 108.

<sup>12</sup> Priestman, "Illusion of Coexistence," 70. Priestman argues that while there were no instances of "true affinity" between Waldorf and Nazi worldviews (219), Waldorf representatives sought cooperation with Nazi officials by "pointing out to various Nazi authorities the ideals they both shared." (112)

between Nazism and the Waldorf movement, they maintain that “Nazi ideology was clearly opposite to Waldorf.”<sup>13</sup> These conclusions repeat the standard anthroposophist view that “by their very nature” Waldorf schools “could not conform to the Nazi ideas of education.”<sup>14</sup> Such claims fall short of the complex reality Waldorf proponents faced in the Nazi years.

In comparison to other alternative educational projects, Waldorf schools initially fared relatively well under the Nazi regime.<sup>15</sup> The Rudolf Steiner School in Berlin, for example, expanded twice in 1933 and 1934.<sup>16</sup> Waldorf schools in Nazi Germany were nonetheless the object of an intense and multifaceted struggle. The contours of this extended controversy reflected the fault lines running through anthroposophist attitudes toward National Socialism as a potential vehicle for spiritual renewal, as well as conflicting perspectives within the Nazi apparatus regarding anthroposophy as an occult sub-culture. These tensions help explain the contradictory evidence about the willingness of Waldorf representatives to make arrangements with the Nazi regime and the degree of practical and ideological compatibility between anthroposophist pedagogy and the needs of the Nazi state.

Waldorf schools had been a prominent public face of anthroposophy since their emergence in the wake of World War I. Founded in Stuttgart in 1919, the Waldorf movement expanded quickly within Germany and abroad, and in the course of the 1920s Waldorf schools were established throughout Europe. By 1933 there were nine Waldorf schools in Germany, with a total of more than 3000 pupils, located in Stuttgart, Berlin, Dresden, Hannover, Kassel, Breslau, Hamburg-Altona, Hamburg-Wandsbek, and Essen.<sup>17</sup> With its spiritually based

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<sup>13</sup> Oberman, *The Waldorf Movement*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> Al Laney, “Destruction and New Start of the Waldorf School” *Journal for Anthroposophy* Autumn 1969, 2–8, quote on 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ullrich, *Rudolf Steiner*, 155: “Whereas the socialist, democratic and cosmopolitan reform schools which had been founded during the 14 fledgling years of the first German democracy were immediately outlawed and disbanded by the totalitarian and racist regime of the National Socialists, the Free Waldorf Schools were initially tolerated.” For context see Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, “Erziehungsutopien zwischen Weimarer Republik und Drittem Reich” in Hardtwig, ed., *Utopie und politische Herrschaft im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, 175–98.

<sup>16</sup> Staatskommissar Berlin, Schulabteilung, to Ministry of Education, June 22, 1934, BA R4901/2519: 72.

<sup>17</sup> The school in Essen had a troubled relationship with the other Waldorf schools, and some sources thus refer to eight German Waldorf schools in 1933 rather than nine. The Essen school opened in 1923 and closed in 1936 due to internal difficulties. An additional Waldorf school was founded in Cologne in 1921 but closed in 1925. On the breadth of alternative education models in the Weimar era see Ullrich Amlung, ed., *“Die Alte Schule überwinden”: Reformpädagogische*

pedagogy and esoteric worldview, Waldorf formed a robust part of the German private educational sector as the Weimar republic gave way to the National Socialist regime. Both the curricular content and the pedagogical practice at Waldorf schools were suffused with anthroposophical assumptions, raising a series of potential obstacles to state recognition and public acceptance.<sup>18</sup> This heightened the friction between promoters and detractors of Steiner's educational model.

Many of the characteristic features of Waldorf education, from its emphasis on music, artistic activities and mythology to its downplaying of standard academic instruction, were based on Steiner's occult precepts. In assembling this new approach to schooling, Steiner borrowed from a variety of pedagogical reform movements as well as traditional educational methods, combining these with spiritual insights.<sup>19</sup> Waldorf practices such as co-education and rejection of conventional grading reflected a life reform background, while others embodied esoteric beliefs. Karma and reincarnation played a central role in Waldorf classrooms, and each child was assigned to one of the four classical temperaments and grouped accordingly.<sup>20</sup>

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*Versuchsschulen zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Dipa, 1993), and Inge Hansen-Schaberg, *Koedukation und Reformpädagogik: Untersuchung zur Unterrichts- und Erziehungsrealität in Berliner Versuchsschulen der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Weidler, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> On the esoteric underpinnings of Waldorf education cf. Schneider, *Das Menschenbild der Waldorfpädagogik*, 261–307; Siegfried Oppolzer, "Anthropologie und Pädagogik bei Rudolf Steiner" *Paedagogica Historica* 2 (1962), 287–350; Heiner Ullrich, "Erziehung als Kult" *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 65 (1989), 151–78; Sarah Whedon, "Hands, Hearts, and Heads: Childhood and Esotericism in American Waldorf Education" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007); Ehrenhard Skiera, "Die Waldorfschule: Erziehung als Einführung und Einleben in den sinnlich-übersinnlichen kosmischen Zusammenhang" in Skiera, *Reformpädagogik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Eine kritische Einführung* (München: Oldenbourg, 2010), 233–67. For a critical contemporary assessment see L. Bopp, "Anthroposophische Pädagogik" in Josef Spieler, ed., *Lexikon der Pädagogik der Gegenwart* (Freiburg: Herder, 1930), 78–84.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed historical analysis see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1357–1454. Concise accounts are available in Heiner Ullrich, "Rudolf Steiner und die Waldorfschule" in Michael Seyfarth-Stubenrauch and Ehrenhard Skiera, eds., *Reformpädagogik und Schulreform in Europa* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider, 1996), 253–67, and Eckhardt Fuchs, "Waldorf Pedagogy and the Mystification of the Child" in Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal, eds., *The Moral Authority of Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 173–75.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Heiner Ullrich, *Waldorfpädagogik und okkulte Weltanschauung* (Munich: Juventa, 1991), 145–88; Mark Grant, "Steiner and the Humours: The Survival of Ancient Greek Science" *British Journal of Educational Studies* 47 (1999), 56–70; Stephan Geuenich, *Die Waldorfpädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert: Eine kritische Diskussion* (Münster: Lit, 2009), 59–95. For an early anthroposophist

Despite the progressive components of Waldorf education, Steiner's pedagogical model was teacher-centered rather than student centered and displayed marked authoritarian tendencies.<sup>21</sup> Critical skills and independent thinking were discouraged. Waldorf pupils were to view their instructor as an "unquestioned authority."<sup>22</sup> In an early treatise on "The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science," Steiner decreed that if "critical thinking" developed prematurely, the student's "etheric body" would become "stunted, weak, and shallow." Instead of "dry intellectual concepts," anthroposophist education was to instill "awe and veneration" for "persons of authority." In contrast to other reform pedagogies, Steiner insisted: "The materialistic view that opposes authority and undervalues respect and reverence is totally wrong."<sup>23</sup> He reiterated to the Waldorf faculty in 1924 that "we cannot allow the students to undermine the authority of the teacher."<sup>24</sup>

Authoritarian assumptions aligned with nationalist ones. The co-founder of the first Waldorf school, Emil Molt, invoked "our German fatherland" at the opening of the school in 1919, while Steiner declared that the school's purpose was "to restore the position of the essential German character in the world."<sup>25</sup> The Waldorf vision received a very positive appreciation by a major *völkisch* educational theorist as early as 1921.<sup>26</sup> Another influential *völkisch* pedagogical

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view of the temperaments in occult context see Ludwig Deinhard, "Die vier Temperamente vom Standpunkt der Esoterik" *Zentralblatt für Okkultismus* September 1911, 146–50.

<sup>21</sup> On the authoritarian strands in Waldorf pedagogy compare Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1414–19; Geuenich, *Die Waldorfpädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert*, 106–15; Marguerite Wilson, "It's Not a Democracy": Adult Power, Privilege, and the Normalization of One Developmental Epistemology in a Waldorf Daycare" (MA thesis, University of California-Davis, 2008). For an anthroposophist rationale see Erich Gabert, *Autorität und Freiheit in den Entwicklungsjahren* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1930).

<sup>22</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood: Introductory Talks on Waldorf Education* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1995), 34–35, 61–63.

<sup>23</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), 24, 46, 58.

<sup>24</sup> Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner*, 729.

<sup>25</sup> Emil Molt, opening ceremonies at Stuttgart Waldorf school, September 7, 1919, in Rudolf Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School: Lectures and Addresses to Children, Parents, and Teachers* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), 14; Steiner, Address at Parents' Evening, May 9, 1922, in *ibid.*, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Philipp Hördt, "Die Waldorfschule" *Die Tat* February 1921, 872–75, praises the spiritual foundations of Waldorf schooling and its practical importance for Germany's rebirth. Hördt (1890–1933) was a student of Nazi educational theorist Ernst Kriek. His work posited a central pedagogical link between "nature" and the "national community." For background see Wilhelm Lacroix, "Philipp Hördt, ein Vorkämpfer der völkischen Schule" *Die deutsche Schule* 40 (1936),

reformer and advocate of “natural education,” Ludwig Gurlitt, became an avid supporter of Waldorf schooling in the years before his death in 1931.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to these *völkisch* endorsements, Waldorf proponents emphasized the anti-intellectual nature of anthroposophist pedagogy, an orientation bound to appeal to Nazi officials. In the words of Minister of Education Bernhard Rust, National Socialist school policy was based on the rejection of “individualism” and excessive attention to “intellectual capacities,” the chief roots of educational debasement.<sup>28</sup> But Steiner also highlighted the religious character of Waldorf education, a significant source of contention for many Nazis. Indeed Steiner held that Waldorf teachers were serving “the intentions of the gods” in fulfilling their task “to carry out the divine cosmic plan.”<sup>29</sup> Non-traditional schools of any orientation found themselves in difficult straits once the Nazi regime was in place. All of the “secular schools” in Berlin, for example, were shut down by Rust’s order in February 1933, ending a decade-long experiment in humanist education.<sup>30</sup>

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30–37, and Ulrich Baumgärtner, “Völkische Geschichtsdidaktiker in der Weimarer Republik: Philipp Hördt, Georg Adolf Otto Collischonn, Max Maurenbrecher” in Wolfgang Hasberg and Manfred Seidenfuß, eds., *Geschichtsdidaktik(er) im Griff des Nationalsozialismus?* (Münster: Lit, 2005), 107–20.

<sup>27</sup> Gurlitt, author of the bestseller *The German and his Fatherland*, was a vocal critic of standard pedagogical methods for their inadequate attention to “national consciousness,” arguing that mainstream schools were not German enough. For background see Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 273–75, and Puschner, Schmitz, and Ulbricht, eds., *Handbuch zur ‘Völkischen Bewegung’*, 706–08. His biographer reports: “Gurlitt was very interested in Rudolf Steiner’s educational philosophy. In the last years of his life he engaged more deeply with this educational approach and was highly enthusiastic about Waldorf pedagogy.” Arne Kontze, *Der Reformpädagoge Prof. Dr. Ludwig Gurlitt (1855–1931)* (Göttingen: Cuvillier, 2001), 142. Two of Gurlitt’s sons were anthroposophists, and one became a Waldorf teacher in 1930.

<sup>28</sup> Bernhard Rust, “Education in the Third Reich” in von Ribbentrop, ed., *Germany Speaks*, 97–117, quotes on 98–99. For background on Nazi campaigns against intellectualism in education see Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 13–14, and the chapter “Struggle Against the Intellect” in Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 291–320.

<sup>29</sup> Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner*, 55, faculty meeting of September 26, 1919; cf. Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness as the Basis of Pedagogical Practice* (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), 93–94.

<sup>30</sup> The “weltliche Schulen” were initiated in the early 1920s by freethinkers and socialists as non-confessional schools without religious instruction. They were co-educational and prohibited corporal punishment; the curriculum emphasized interdisciplinary learning and critical thinking. Many of their pupils came from proletarian families. There were fifty-two such “secular schools” in Berlin alone by 1932, along with schools in Hannover, Magdeburg, Düsseldorf,



Soon after the establishment of the Nazi government, German Waldorf schools banded together in the “League of Waldorf Schools” to represent their interests in negotiations with educational authorities. A May 1933 memorandum to Nazi officials written by Ernst Uehli emphasized the schools’ loyalty to the new state:

All of the schools in Germany are now united in the Reich Association of Rudolf Steiner Schools and are *gleichgeschaltet* through corporative membership in the National Socialist Teachers League.<sup>31</sup>

This direct reference to *Gleichschaltung* may have been an instance of tactical maneuvering or opportunistic rhetoric. The same text was published in the June 1933 issue of the Waldorf movement’s journal, *Erziehungskunst*, but the published version replaced the reference to *Gleichschaltung* with a euphemism.<sup>32</sup> The memorandum underlined Waldorf education’s commitment to “the German cultural mission” and firmly distanced Waldorf schools from “international pedagogical reform tendencies” while repeatedly invoking Waldorf’s deep roots within the German *Volk*.<sup>33</sup> These claims were echoed in *Erziehungskunst* throughout the 1933–36 period. If broad agreement on

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and other cities. Compare Wilfried Breyvogel and Martin Kamp, “Weltliche Schulen in Preußen und im Ruhrgebiet” in Amlung, ed., *Die Alte Schule überwinden*, 185–220; Wolfgang Wittwer, *Die sozialdemokratische Schulpolitik in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1980), 68–77, 107–28, 169–75; Heidi Behrens-Cobet, Ernst Schmidt, and Frank Bajohr, *Freie Schulen: Eine vergessene Bildungsalternative* (Essen: Klartext, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Uehli, “Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule” BA R58/6220b: 2–32; quote on 18. The “Reichsverband der Rudolf Steiner-Schulen” was founded in May 1933 and soon changed its name to “Bund der Waldorfschulen.” The Essen school was not included. On Uehli’s career as teacher at the original Waldorf school see Gisbert Husemann and Johannes Tautz, *Der Lehrerkreis um Rudolf Steiner in der ersten Waldorfschule 1919–1925* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1977), 227–40.

<sup>32</sup> Ernst Uehli, “Denkschrift der Freien Waldorfschule” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 345–72; here the passage reads “angemeldet” instead of “gleichgeschaltet” (357). Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 102 cites only the published version and claims that it contains no “political concessions” to the new regime.

<sup>33</sup> Uehli, “Denkschrift” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 346, 353, 368. On Waldorf education in the context of international pedagogical reform movements cf. Heiner Ullrich, “Freie Waldorfschulen” in Kerbs and Reulecke, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen*, 411–24; Ullrich, “Vom Außenseiter zum Anführer der reformpädagogischen Bewegung: Betrachtungen über die veränderte Stellung der Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners in der internationalen Bewegung für eine neue Erziehung” *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 71 (1995), 284–97; Jürgen Oelkers, *Reformpädagogik: Eine kritische Dogmengeschichte* (Weinheim: Juventa, 2005), 184–85, 219, 259, 330–31.



national duty and political reliability characterized the Waldorf movement as a whole, however, there were intense disagreements over details.

The outwardly unified League of Waldorf Schools comprised several competing factions. On one side stood a minority of committed Waldorf advocates who were also active in the Nazi movement, including Eugen and Margarete Link, Leo Tölke, Hermann Mahle, Els Moll, and Hans Pohlmann. The openly pro-Nazi faction within the Waldorf camp had extensive roots in the anthroposophical movement and for a time played a substantial role in shaping and representing Waldorf education. Longtime anthroposophists Eugen and Margarete Link, the parents of four Waldorf pupils, had known Steiner personally and belonged to the Anthroposophical Society from 1924 onward. Eugen Link was an officer in the Luftwaffe and worked on the construction of the Autobahn, while Margarete Link devoted much of her time to advancing the Waldorf cause through her Nazi connections.<sup>34</sup> Both were Nazi party members and served on influential Waldorf boards. In May 1934 Eugen Link joined the Executive Committee of the Stuttgart Waldorf School Association at the invitation of Emil Molt, whose own stance was “loyal cooperation with the new regime.”<sup>35</sup>

A further active figure in the aggressively pro-Nazi faction was Leo Tölke, father of four Waldorf pupils and secretary of the Stuttgart Waldorf school. Tölke worked for the publishing arm of the Waldorf movement, was a member of the Anthroposophical Society as well as the SA, and has been described as a “dedicated National Socialist.”<sup>36</sup> Christian Community member Hermann Mahle was another prominent Waldorf official who belonged to the Nazi party. Mahle was one of the leading Waldorf representatives in negotiations with party and state agencies in 1934 and 1935. He headed the “National Socialist Parents Group” at the Stuttgart Waldorf school, which included 53 party members and 22 members of other Nazi organizations.<sup>37</sup> Els Moll, a member of the Anthroposophical Society since 1925, was among the most outspoken advocates for a synthesis of Waldorf education and Nazism as a teacher at the Stuttgart school in 1933 and 1934. Despite an embittered split with the rest of

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<sup>34</sup> See Eugen Link’s NSDAP file: BA PK H/142: 1967–2066, as well as his 1932 anthroposophical pamphlet *Ueber Goethes Naturwissenschaft* (a copy is in BA R58/6186: 203–15).

<sup>35</sup> Oberman, *The Waldorf Movement*, 136.

<sup>36</sup> Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 118. Cf. the January 1934 “Bericht über den Besuch des Sekretärs Leo Tölke von der Waldorfschule” by Stuttgart municipal official Fritz Cuhorst (BA R4901/2519: 183–84), which contradicts Werner’s account on several points.

<sup>37</sup> Deuchert, “Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 98.

the faculty, Moll remained a fervent proponent of uniting Waldorf values and Nazi ideals. She described herself as both an anthroposophist and a “convinced National Socialist.”<sup>38</sup> In June 1935 she declared that fulfilling “the pedagogy of Dr. Steiner” meant recognizing the great achievements of Adolf Hitler and National Socialism, whose “Michaelic forces” had arisen so powerfully in 1933.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the most noteworthy member of the pro-Nazi Waldorf faction was Hans Pohlmann, a wealthy building contractor and longstanding anthroposophist who had worked with Steiner personally. Pohlmann founded the second German Waldorf school in Hamburg-Wandsbek in 1922. With the exception of the failed schools in Cologne and Essen, the Wandsbek school was the only other Waldorf program in Germany established during Steiner’s lifetime, and its initial faculty and curriculum were overseen by Steiner. Pohlmann’s role thus paralleled that of Moll at the Stuttgart school. In 1933 the Wandsbek school was the second largest in Germany, after the original Stuttgart school. Pohlmann also headed a branch of the Anthroposophical Society in Hamburg and remained chairman of the local Waldorf school association throughout the Wandsbek school’s first seventeen years of existence. He joined the Nazi party some time before 1934.<sup>40</sup>

Nazi-affiliated Waldorf promoters did not all share the same vision for how to integrate Steiner education into the National Socialist project, but they did consider anthroposophy congruent with Nazi ideals. Their efforts were only partly in line with those of the larger competing faction within the Waldorf movement, which looked askance at Nazi excesses but was willing to cooperate with Nazi officials in order to maintain Waldorf schools within the new Germany. As a result of these internal rivalries, the more stalwart Nazis within the Waldorf movement, such as Moll, Tölke, and Margarete Link, eventually came to see their fellow Waldorf advocates as unwilling or unable to acknowledge the true greatness of National Socialism and its profound parallels with

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<sup>38</sup> May 10, 1935 “Bericht über den Besuch der Frau Moll” (BA R4901/2519: 156–59); see also the 1937 texts by Moll in BA R4901/2520: 123–28. In a November 28, 1936 letter to the Ministry of Education, the principal of the Stuttgart Waldorf school strongly distanced the faculty from Moll and insisted she did not represent the school (BA R4901/2520: 77). For Moll’s account see her February 25, 1937 “Erklärung” (BA R4901/2520: 128).

<sup>39</sup> Els Moll to the collegium of the Stuttgart Waldorf school, June 27, 1935, quoted in Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 512–13.

<sup>40</sup> SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, “Bericht über die Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart” January 29, 1934 (BA R58/6220b: 56–57); Staatspolizeistelle Schleswig to Gestapa Berlin, December 16, 1935 (BA R58/6190: 19); Pohlmann’s 1936 correspondence with the Ministry of Education (BA R4901/2520: 8–20).

anthroposophy.<sup>41</sup> By 1936 the emphatically pro-Nazi Waldorf tendency had effectively lost the internal struggle to their more moderate colleagues, as compromise prevailed over collaboration.

The mainstream tendency comprised most of the major figures within the Waldorf movement in the 1930s, including Caroline von Heydebrand, Ernst August Karl Stockmeyer, Paul Baumann, René Maikowski, and Elisabeth Klein. Heydebrand (1886–1938) and Stockmeyer (1886–1963) were two of the core founders of the original Waldorf school and primary authors of the Waldorf curriculum. Heydebrand also edited *Erziehungskunst*. Baumann (1887–1964) taught at the first Waldorf school from 1919 onward, participated centrally in early meetings with Nazi officials, and in 1934 was named director of the Stuttgart school. Maikowski (1900–1992), a prominent anthroposophist who worked closely with Steiner in the early 1920s, was leader of the League of Waldorf Schools and chief spokesperson for the Waldorf movement during the Nazi period. He was the older brother of SA officer Hans Eberhard Maikowski, a famous Nazi “martyr” who was killed in Berlin on the night of January 30, 1933.<sup>42</sup> His principal colleague in negotiations with Nazi authorities was Elisabeth Klein (1901–1983), a personal student of Steiner who founded the Dresden Waldorf school in 1929 and led it until its closure in 1941.

In contrast to the openly pro-Nazi wing, the mainstream Waldorf movement generally tried to make concessions to Nazi officials only to the extent necessary to ensure the survival of their own schools. But many Waldorf advocates viewed the Nazi era initially as a positive opportunity, a chance for anthroposophical pedagogy to come into its own. Waldorf was to become the form of education appropriate to the national community in Germany’s newly revived status under Hitler’s leadership. As anthroposophist Fritz von Bothmer announced to the parents’ council of the Stuttgart school in 1936:

The Waldorf schools were born in the same world-historical hour as the National Socialist movement. Rudolf Steiner rooted the schools in

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<sup>41</sup> This did not entail rejection of Waldorf education; see e.g. Margarete Link’s July 3, 1936 letter to the Minister of Education, BA R4901/2519: 361–62.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Eberhard Maikowski attended the Stuttgart Waldorf school as a teenager, and accordingly to his brother continued to hold Waldorf and anthroposophy in high esteem after joining the Nazi movement. See René Maikowski, *Schicksalswege auf der Suche nach dem lebendigen Geist* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1980), 95–97, 140–41, and the substantial file on Hans Eberhard Maikowski in BA NS 26/323. René Maikowski frequently invoked his late brother in meetings and correspondence with Nazi officials. Such connections were not unusual in Waldorf circles; Helene Rommel, for example, sister of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, was one of the founding teachers at the Stuttgart Waldorf school.

German soil, German language and German spirit, as the seedling for the education of the youth, through which Germany and thus the world will be healed.<sup>43</sup>

Such hopes found expression in Waldorf literature throughout the Third Reich. A June 1933 notice in *Erziehungskunst* announced a series of public talks by Waldorf representatives under the title “Contributions to overcoming intellectualism and materialism in education and pedagogy.” The notice declared that all teachers in the new Germany should “contribute to building a new education based on the German spirit,” boasting that Waldorf schools had pursued this goal for a decade and a half in order to “overcome the materialist and intellectualistic attitudes that have had such a disastrous influence on German schools in recent years.” Since Waldorf schools had shown how a true German education could be achieved, they were eager to share this experience with “teachers seeking new paths” in pedagogy.<sup>44</sup> Similar sentiments appeared in a newsletter sent by the Kassel Waldorf school to parents and supporters in March 1934, announcing a public conference to promote Waldorf education:

Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy, which has struggled for its position through years of silent effort, may now hope that its goals and achievements will find greater understanding in the new Germany. [...] Since their founding, Waldorf schools have fought for an educational art drawn from the wellsprings of the German *Volk*, and fought against Western intellectualism and Eastern Bolshevism.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Priestman, “Illusion of Coexistence,” 136. Compare Paul Baumann's declaration “Die Waldorfschule und der Nationalsozialismus” from July 1933: “Am 1. Juli sprach Adolf Hitler aus, dass das Wesentliche einer Revolution nicht die Machtübernahme, sondern die Erziehung des Menschen ist. Die Waldorfschulen können zu dieser Erziehung des deutschen Menschen Wesentliches beitragen und stellen ihre Arbeit, die sie in diesem Sinne schon seit ihrer Gründung leisten, der nationalen Erhebung zur Verfügung, gleichsam als Musterschulen.” (Quoted in Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 425)

<sup>44</sup> “Aus der Schulbewegung” *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 383–84, announcing presentations by Heydebrand, Uehli, Stockmeyer, and others. Such courses continued for years; see e.g. *Erziehungskunst* August 1935, 134–35. Caroline von Heydebrand, “Wege der Überwindung der materialistischen Weltanschauung durch die Menschenkunde Rudolf Steiners” *Erziehungskunst* December 1933, 493–98, depicted Waldorf teachers as “warriors against the dragon of materialism” (498) and a bulwark against intellectualism and Western influences.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from the Freie Waldorfschule Kassel to parents and friends of the school, March 2, 1934 (BA R58/6220c: 48). The public conference included presentations on “Overcoming intellectualism and materialism through Rudolf Steiner's art of education” and “Educating toward the

Statements of this sort indicated a vision of Waldorf education as a complement to the rebirth of Germany heralded by Nazism.

This vision was effectively the official position of the League of Waldorf Schools for the first several years of the Nazi era. When faced with an imminent decision by the Ministry of Education in 1935 to dismantle all private schools, the League's leader René Maikowski wrote to the Ministry requesting that Waldorf schools be exempted. Maikowski argued that Waldorf schools were not really private schools, because they did not pursue private interests but the interests of the entire national community. Waldorf pedagogy, he explained, was a boon to the whole German people and "urgently needed for the national strengthening of our growing youth." Referring contemptuously to the Weimar era, Maikowski emphasized that National Socialism presented the long-awaited opportunity for Waldorf to unfold its true potential. In the "new Germany," he hoped, "the pedagogical labor of the Waldorf schools will find sympathy and encouragement."<sup>46</sup>

A week before this letter to the Ministry of Education, the League of Waldorf Schools submitted a lengthy memorandum to Rudolf Hess, one of their foremost supporters. Titled "Nature and Tasks of the Waldorf Schools," the memorandum declared unequivocally: "Waldorf schools educate for the national community." Maikowski's formulations were bold and ambitious, asserting that Waldorf schools "realize on a small scale that which the national community strives for on a large scale in the National Socialist state." The memorandum stressed Waldorf pedagogy's dedication to "the soul-spiritual and physical renewal and recovery of our *Volk* and our spiritual life." A section on "Waldorf schools in the new Germany" boasted of the schools' ability to educate pupils toward "national convictions" through "cultivating *völkisch* thought and accentuating the essence and mission of the German spirit." Waldorf education was "in harmony with the fundamental attitude of the National Socialist state."<sup>47</sup>

Even in later years, after a series of setbacks for this vision of Waldorf education in the "new Germany," comparable hopes continued to animate the Waldorf movement. In an internal report from an October 1937 newsletter, the director of the Stuttgart Waldorf school declared: "today as always, the teaching staff aspires to contribute to the constructive pedagogical measures of the state. The Waldorf school has much to contribute to these efforts of the

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German character through Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy." For additional examples see the January 1934 newsletter of the Kassel Waldorf school, calling for a "renewal of the German *Volk* through the German spirit" in order to defeat "the intellectualism of the West" (BA R58/6220c: 1–4).

<sup>46</sup> League of Waldorf Schools to Ministry of Education, March 9, 1935, BA R4901/2519: 122–24.

<sup>47</sup> "Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen," March 2, 1935, BA R4901/2519: 243–62.

state.”<sup>48</sup> Another article in the newsletter reflected a combination of concern and hopeful expectation:

The basic mood of the participants in this year’s membership assembly of the Waldorf school association could be described as one of ‘anticipation.’ In every face the anxious question could be seen: Will our efforts meet with understanding, will the contribution that we are willing to make to the rise of the new Germany be accepted?

In spite of difficult circumstances, the article expressed confidence: “The conviction that our efforts are in accordance with the resurgence of our German *Volk* and fatherland gives us the strength to meet these challenges.” The Nazi ‘revolution’ of 1933 was cast as a signal opportunity for the Waldorf movement:

After the turn-around of our public life in 1933, the leadership of Germany recognized the renewal of the education of our youth as its most urgent task. Both the faculty of the Waldorf school and the Waldorf school association could hope that the years of selfless labor which they had contributed toward this task would now find recognition and support.<sup>49</sup>

These hopes were not to be fulfilled. While the efforts of the Waldorf movement to establish their place within Nazi Germany met with a number of remarkable successes, they eventually faced harsh defeat. Rival groupings within the Nazi regime disagreed fundamentally on the suitability of Waldorf education for the rebuilding of Germany under National Socialist leadership. As with other anthroposophist endeavors, the Waldorf movement’s aspirations encountered both steadfast supporters and tenacious opponents among Nazi officials. But the range of Nazi responses to Waldorf cannot be neatly divided into two camps. Nazi figures who opposed Waldorf education did so for disparate reasons, including intense aversion to occult worldviews, opposition to private schools as such, and educational concerns about specific aspects of Waldorf pedagogy.

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<sup>48</sup> “Bericht des Leiters der Waldorfschule,” *Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder des Waldorfschulvereins Stuttgart*, October 1937, BA R58/6220b. These reports were internal communications within the Waldorf movement itself, not texts prepared for Nazi functionaries.

<sup>49</sup> “Schulbetrachtungen,” *Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder des Waldorfschulvereins Stuttgart* October 1937, 16–17. The article concluded on a worried note: “In great concern over the continuation of the school, the school leadership is still awaiting this recognition.”

Heydrich's November 1935 order dissolving the Anthroposophical Society disparaged Waldorf schools for "individualistic" methods which had "nothing in common with National Socialist educational principles," but did not ban the schools themselves.<sup>50</sup> For years afterward the Gestapo and SD remained notably restrained in their actions against Waldorf schools. Gestapo inspections of the Waldorf schools in Stuttgart, Breslau, Dresden, Hannover and Kassel in November 1935 produced no incriminating evidence, and Heydrich's men largely backed off after that.<sup>51</sup> As late as January 1937, the Gestapo reported to Hess's office that it was not engaged in surveillance of Waldorf schools.<sup>52</sup> The anti-occultist faction nonetheless remained committed to the eventual goal of eradicating anthroposophical institutions from German public life.

Aside from these powerful enemies, several Waldorf schools faced formidable opponents in the local or regional Nazi apparatus. This problem was especially acute for the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart, located in the province of Württemberg. The governor of Württemberg was longtime Nazi Christian Mergenthaler, an adversary of all private schools who took particular umbrage at the successful Stuttgart Waldorf school, with over 1000 pupils in 1933. He charged the school with spreading "dubious anthroposophical doctrines" which stood "in the strongest contrast to the worldview of National Socialism."<sup>53</sup> From the beginning of the Nazi era Mergenthaler did his best to obstruct and eliminate the Waldorf school in his jurisdiction, the center of the Waldorf movement as a whole.

He was frustrated in this effort by the intervention of the national Ministry of Education under Bernhard Rust. Through a series of contradictory decrees, Rust's staff played an ambivalent role in shaping the possibilities for Waldorf schooling in Nazi Germany.<sup>54</sup> In June 1934 Rust ordered Mergenthaler to allow

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<sup>50</sup> For the SD's perspective on Waldorf pedagogy as dangerously individualistic see the August 1935 memo in BA R58/6195/3: 479–80.

<sup>51</sup> Gestapa Berlin to Leitgen, November 22, 1935 (BA R58/6220a: 14–16); Württembergisches Politisches Landespolizeiamt, Stuttgart, February 4, 1936 (BA R58/6220b: 89).

<sup>52</sup> Gestapa Berlin to Stab des Stellvertreters des Führers, January 18, 1937 (BA R58/6195/1: 419).

<sup>53</sup> Mergenthaler to Rust, January 18, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 5).

<sup>54</sup> The full name of the Nazi education ministry was the Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, hereafter RMWEV. For background see Hans-Jochen Gamm, *Führung und Verführung: Pädagogik des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1984), 125–45; Armin Nolzen and Marnie Schlüter, "Das Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem" in Klaus-Peter Horn and Jörg Link, eds., *Erziehungsverhältnisse im Nationalsozialismus: Totaler Anspruch und Erziehungswirklichkeit* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2011), 341–57; Anne Nagel, *Hitlers Bildungsreformer: Das Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung 1934–1945* (Frankfurt: Fischer,



the Stuttgart Waldorf school to continue accepting new pupils and sent a copy of the letter to the educational administrations of all the provinces, ordering them “not to hinder the work of the Waldorf schools.”<sup>55</sup> In March 1936, however, in the midst of a campaign to prevent all private schools from taking on new pupils, Rust forbade Waldorf schools across Germany from accepting new students.<sup>56</sup> These conflicting responses stemmed in part from differences within the Ministry of Education staff regarding the merits of Waldorf schooling. Mid-level education officials held a range of critical views on Waldorf pedagogy, though two high officials in Rust’s ministry were occasional allies of the Waldorf cause. Helmut Bojunga, head of the Education Office in the Ministry of Education from 1934 to 1938, and his successor Albert Holfelder were at times on Waldorf’s side in the complex controversy over the schools’ future.<sup>57</sup> But their actions were not always effective, and Mergenthaler succeeded in shutting down the Stuttgart Waldorf school in April 1938.

Alongside the ban on private schools accepting new pupils, the closure of the original Waldorf school dealt a severe blow to the Waldorf movement as a whole. In the course of 1938 and 1939 several of the remaining schools closed on their own initiative. The circumstances of these self-closings revealed the ongoing divide within the Waldorf movement. When the faculty of the Rudolf Steiner School in Berlin decided to shut down the school in 1938 rather than accept further compromises with Nazi authorities, they were criticized by other members of the League of Waldorf Schools.<sup>58</sup> The schools in Altona and Breslau closed in 1938 and 1939, respectively, due to economic factors exacer-

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2012). The Waldorf leadership sometimes considered Rust’s ministry their ally (Bund der Waldorfschulen to Reichsminister des Innern, February 14, 1936, BA R58/6220a: 75), a view confirmed by Horst Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft: Das Fach Religionswissenschaft an der Universität Tübingen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 201–03.

<sup>55</sup> Rust to Mergenthaler, June 9, 1934, BA R4901/2519: 49–50.

<sup>56</sup> RMWEV, March 12, 1936, BA R58/6220a: 103. Shortly thereafter Rust instructed both Mergenthaler and the local administration in Kassel, who had been pushing for more severe measures against their respective Waldorf schools, to refrain from such measures: Rust to Mergenthaler, April 4, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 342); RMWEV to Regierungspräsident Kassel, April 27, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 327); RMWEV to Regierungspräsident Kassel, June 30, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 344).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Maikowski, *Schicksalswege*, 143; Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 438; Deuchert, “Der Kampf um die Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 118. For context on Bojunga and Holfelder see Nagel, *Hitlers Bildungsreformer*, 54–58, 115–19, 169–72.

<sup>58</sup> Schulrat Fielitz, Berlin, to RMWEV, March 14, 1938, BA R4901/2520: 276–77; Leschinsky, “Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus,” 265.

bated by the restrictions on private schools.<sup>59</sup> All of the remaining Waldorf schools applied for official recognition as ‘experimental schools’ in late 1936. The outcome of these applications illustrates the contradictory dynamics at work within the Nazi apparatus in relation to alternative educational initiatives, as well as the multiple strategies employed by Waldorf representatives in their attempts to come to terms with the new regulations.

The Ministry of Education’s campaign against private schools left few routes open to independent pedagogical institutions aside from applying for the status of state-recognized experimental schools. This option involved significant concessions to National Socialist educational principles and was not granted lightly.<sup>60</sup> In February 1937 Rust promulgated demanding guidelines for the conferral of experimental school status, emphasizing the need to “limit the number of such schools to a necessary minimum” and ordering a general restriction on new approvals.<sup>61</sup> Individual schools had to show “special achievement” in order to qualify. These hurdles made it difficult to gain experimental status even for schools that enjoyed the firm support of high party organs. The holistic “Wittmann method” schools, for example, were well established in northern Germany by 1933, and in 1935 received a very positive endorsement from the Nazi party’s Head Office for Education. State educational authorities nevertheless pursued a policy of attrition, and the Wittmann schools were subjected to “a severe reduction” in 1936.<sup>62</sup> Montessori schools were shut down

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<sup>59</sup> Leschinsky, “Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus,” 265–68; cf. Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 226–27. Leschinsky hypothesizes that these self-closings also had to do with an attempt by the League of Waldorf Schools to concentrate its energies on schools which had better prospects of being accepted by the educational authorities as state-sponsored *Versuchsschulen* or ‘experimental schools’. For additional context on the Altona and Wandsbek Waldorf schools see Uwe Schmidt, *Hamburger Schulen im “Dritten Reich”* (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2010), 281–83.

<sup>60</sup> The RMWEV files contain substantial material on various schools applying for experimental school status; BA R4901/2519, 2520, 2521, and 2522 all concern the “Einrichtung von Versuchsschulen” 1934–43. Correspondence regarding Waldorf schools takes up a considerable portion of these files. The chief Ministry of Education official evaluating such requests was Wilhelm Thies, whose perspective vacillated between rejection of Waldorf practices and willingness to countenance experimental status for the schools he considered most promising; see e.g. Thies, “Vortrag betr. Waldorf-Schulen” June 17, 1936, BA R4901/2519: 354–55, and Thies, “Waldorf-Schulen (Rudolf Steiner Schulen)” March 17, 1938, BA R4901/2520: 261. Priestman writes that Thies “saw both the value and the threat contained in the Waldorf schools and both condemned and praised them at the same time.” (“Illusion of Coexistence,” 153)

<sup>61</sup> RMWEV February 13, 1937, BA R4901/2522: 211.

<sup>62</sup> August 5, 1935 evaluation of Wittmann schools by NSDAP-Reichsleitung, Hauptamt für Erzieher, BA R4901/2522: 219; October 1, 1936 report from Schulrat Elbertzhagen, Kiel,

by Nazi officials the same year.<sup>63</sup> The “Jena-Plan” schools founded by Peter Petersen faced similar difficulties despite their *völkisch* roots and sympathies for National Socialism.<sup>64</sup>

Beginning in October 1936, the Waldorf schools in Hannover, Kassel, Dresden, and Wandsbek applied for recognition as experimental schools.<sup>65</sup> The first application, from Hannover, emphasized the school's commitment to “preserving valuable forces for the national community.” Waldorf pedagogy promoted “the struggle against the damaging influences of modern technical culture” and “individualism,” educating pupils to be “active members of the national community.”<sup>66</sup> The application from the Wandsbek school boasted that the Waldorf movement led “an arduous struggle for the German spirit against the corrosive contemporary spirit of intellectualism” and offered an educational approach “which the Third Reich especially can approve.”<sup>67</sup> The Kassel school asserted confidently that “the positive power of Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy will find recognition in the new state.”<sup>68</sup> The application from

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BA R4901/2522: 221. The schools were named after Dr. Johannes Wittmann, author of *Theorie und Praxis eines ganzheitlichen Unterrichts*.

<sup>63</sup> Wolfgang Keim, *Erziehung unter der Nazi-Diktatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 124; Hélène Leenders, *Der Fall Montessori: Die Geschichte einer reformpädagogischen Erziehungskonzeption im italienischen Faschismus* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2001), 233–34.

<sup>64</sup> See the 1935 negative reports on the Jena-Plan schools in BA R4901/2522. For context cf. Ehrenhard Skiera, “Peter Petersens politisch-pädagogisches Denken in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus” *Pädagogische Rundschau* 44 (1990), 25–41; Tobias Rülcker, “Erziehung für die Volksgemeinschaft: Die Funktion von Petersens völkisch-realistischer Erziehungswissenschaft in der NS-Zeit” in Tobias Rülcker and Peter Kaßner, eds., *Peter Petersen: Antimoderne als Fortschritt? Erziehungswissenschaftliche Theorie und pädagogische Praxis vor den Herausforderungen ihrer Zeit* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 193–246; Torsten Schwan, “Dem Nationalsozialismus gefolgt und gescheitert? Zur Verortung der Jenaplan-Pädagogik im polykratischen NS-Erziehungssystem” *Jahrbuch für historische Bildungsforschung* 9 (2003), 91–118; Robert Döpp, *Jenaplan-Pädagogik im Nationalsozialismus* (Münster: Lit, 2003); Benjamin Ortmeyer, *Mythos und Pathos statt Logos und Ethos: Zu den Publikationen führender Erziehungswissenschaftler in der NS-Zeit* (Weinheim: Beltz, 2009), 75–89, 290–303.

<sup>65</sup> The applications were coordinated via the League of Waldorf Schools and had been planned for some time; Maikowski's May 9, 1936 letter to Thies announced the League's intention to work toward “recognition of the Waldorf schools as experimental schools” (BA R4901/2519: 350–51).

<sup>66</sup> Freie Waldorfschule Hannover to RMWEV, October 6, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 394–410).

<sup>67</sup> Freie Goetheschule Wandsbek to RMWEV, October 30, 1936 (BA R4901/2520: 8–20).

<sup>68</sup> Freie Waldorfschule Kassel to RMWEV, November 17, 1936 (BA R4901/2520: 21–43).

Dresden explained that Waldorf schools simply wanted “to serve the national community.”<sup>69</sup>

These proposals for experimental school status met with stiff resistance from local education authorities.<sup>70</sup> By April 1938, however, Rust’s ministry lifted the ban on new pupils and extended experimental status to the Waldorf schools in Dresden and Wandsbek.<sup>71</sup> The reprieve came too late for the Hannover and Kassel schools, both of which faced tenacious opposition from local officials and closed in 1939. Rust’s belated intervention on behalf of the Hannover school was insufficient.<sup>72</sup> The Wandsbek school followed suit in 1940, despite having achieved official recognition as an experimental school. The decisions for self-closure were hastened by the ambivalent and dilatory response of Ministry of Education officials to the experimental school proposals; with enrollments already severely reduced due to the prior ban on incoming pupils, Waldorf schools faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles and were unable to obtain a clear answer about their future prospects from Rust’s staff.

By the end of 1940, in a nation mobilized for war, the only remaining Waldorf school in Germany was the Rudolf Steiner School in Dresden headed by Elisabeth Klein.<sup>73</sup> The number of pupils and teachers at the Dresden Waldorf school increased substantially in 1938 and 1939, and Klein’s outlook remained optimistic throughout the first half of 1941. The school had the support of influential Nazis as well as the approval of the Ministry of Education.<sup>74</sup> External

<sup>69</sup> Rudolf Steiner Schule Dresden to RMWEV, October 31, 1936 (BA R4901/2520: 44–64).

<sup>70</sup> See the January 8, 1937 report on the Wandsbek school (BA R4901/2520: 132–33); Regierungspräsident Schleswig to RMWEV, February 17, 1937 (BA R4901/2520: 135); negative responses from education officials in Kassel and Hannover, March 1937 (BA R4901/2520: 296–97). The possibility of experimental school status was also raised for the Breslau Waldorf school; see March 17, 1938 RMWEV memo by Thies (BA R4901/2520: 261) and March 1938 correspondence from Breslau municipal school officials (BA R4901/2520: 292–94).

<sup>71</sup> RMWEV to Regierung Hamburg and Regierung Dresden, April 14, 1938 (BA R4901/2520: 282); RMWEV to Stab Hess, December 7, 1938 (BA R4901/2521: 47).

<sup>72</sup> BA R4901/2521: 49, 56, and Holfelder to Thies, March 26, 1939, BA R4901/2521: 102; cf. December 31, 1936 report on the Freie Waldorfschule Kassel, BA NS15/301: 58152–53; Regierungspräsident Hannover, Abteilung für Kirchen und Schulen, to RMWEV, March 17, 1938, BA R4901/2521: 45; October 1938 reports on the Hannover Waldorf school, BA R4901/2521: 69–70. Maikowski was head of the Hannover school.

<sup>73</sup> The fate of the Waldorf school in Vienna is unclear. With the Anschluss in March 1938, Maikowski traveled to Vienna to negotiate the school’s future (Maikowski, *Schicksalswege*, 155–56). An SD report a year later stated that the school was still operating (February 6, 1939 SD memorandum, BA R58/6193/1: 206). It appears to have been shut down some time after that date.

<sup>74</sup> See Klein’s July 1939 report on the Dresden school, BA NS15/302: 58002, and the surrounding correspondence from Klein to Alfred Baeumler, February–May 1941; Klein to Holfelder,

circumstances soon put an end to this last hope of the Waldorf movement. Along with other anthroposophical institutions, the Dresden Waldorf school was closed by the Gestapo in July 1941 in the wake of the campaign against occultism.<sup>75</sup> In the end, anthroposophy's adversaries within the Nazi movement prevailed over its allies, after eight years of efforts to establish Waldorf education as a pillar of the national community.

Several factors contributed to this outcome, including the inauspicious conditions for private schools within the Third Reich and the skepticism of educational authorities toward alternative pedagogical practices. Waldorf schools had already faced challenges from education officials in the Weimar period.<sup>76</sup> Many of the criticisms Waldorf schools received during the Nazi era concerned shortcomings within the curriculum and teaching methodology rather than ideological objections based on National Socialist principles.<sup>77</sup> But the decisive factor in the demise of the Waldorf movement's aspirations was the shifting balance of power between the anti-occultist faction of the Nazi leadership and the array of Nazi functionaries who supported Waldorf schooling as an appropriate form of education for the national community.

Prominent figures in the party apparatus such as Hess, Ohlendorf, and Baeumler played important roles in sustaining Waldorf initiatives during the

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March 16, 1939, BA R4901/2521: 89; RMWEV to Ministerium für Bildung, Sachsen, March 17, 1939, BA R4901/2521: 92.

<sup>75</sup> On the closure of the Dresden school see 1941 correspondence of Bormann and Rust in BA R43II/955a: 19–21.

<sup>76</sup> The 1932 school inspector reports on Waldorf schools in BA NS15/301: 58188–89 bear remarkable similarities to the surrounding reports from 1933 onward. Leschinsky, "Waldorfschulen im Nationalsozialismus," 263 notes that Weimar-era educational agencies often took a skeptical stance toward Waldorf, citing a series of archival sources from 1927–1932. Elisabeth Klein, *Begegnungen* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1978), 66–70 describes the challenges involved in starting the Dresden Waldorf school in the late 1920s; even with the support of the provincial Minister of Culture, the school had to meet various demands of the educational authorities in Saxony. The Waldorf school in Cologne was closed by local authorities in 1925. More thorough investigation of the attitudes of Weimar-era education officials toward Waldorf schooling could provide fuller context for the response to the Waldorf movement after 1933.

<sup>77</sup> Such pedagogical concerns recur frequently throughout the extensive reports on Waldorf education filed by school inspectors after 1933; a substantial cross-section of these reports is available in BA NS15/301: 58132–80. The pedagogical criticisms include charges of inadequate instruction in the natural sciences; a lack of sufficiently trained teachers; excessively large class sizes; and the concern that basic reading and arithmetic skills were taught too late. Some inspectors noted the poor performance of Waldorf graduates in comparison with public school students.

Third Reich and are recalled fondly in the memoirs of Waldorf representatives.<sup>78</sup> Other powerful Nazi officials also intervened in support of Waldorf education. Hess's counterpart at the Führer Chancellery, Philipp Bouhler, provided early assistance to the League of Waldorf Schools and arranged crucial contacts within the party hierarchy. Hans Schemm, founding leader of the National Socialist Teachers League, was a significant advocate for Waldorf schools but died in March 1935.<sup>79</sup> Alfred Leitgen and Ernst Schulte-Strathaus used their positions on Hess's staff to promote the interests of Waldorf schools and defend them from adversaries in other Nazi agencies. They were aided by Lotar Eickhoff, reliable sponsor of anthroposophist endeavors, from his post in the Interior Ministry.<sup>80</sup> Even Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick impeded attempts by anti-anthroposophical Nazis to dismantle the Waldorf schools.<sup>81</sup> At times the Waldorf movement enjoyed a notably positive reception in the Nazi press.<sup>82</sup>

With the backing of these allies, Waldorf supporters vigorously publicized their political compatibility with National Socialism. In a 1934 letter complaining about Mergenthaler's actions, a Nazi party member and parent from the Stuttgart school declared that Waldorf education pursued "exactly what we National Socialists strive for" and insisted that the Führer himself would

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<sup>78</sup> See Klein, *Begegnungen*, 85–94, 112–20, and Maikowski, *Schicksalswege*, 146–53.

<sup>79</sup> On Bouhler's active support for Waldorf schools see Schulte-Strathaus to Rust, March 8, 1935, BA R4901/2519: 238–40; Maikowski, *Schicksalswege*, 144; Priestman, "Illusion of Coexistence," 123–24. On Schemm cf. Götte, "Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie," 424–26, 433–35; Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 102–06; Priestman, "Illusion of Coexistence," 114–17.

<sup>80</sup> Eickhoff urged the Ministry of Education in 1937 "not to make any decisions which would impede the further activities of these schools." (RMWEV "Vermerk" March 10, 1937, BA R4901/2520: 146) See also the June 17, 1936 notes by Thies on Eickhoff as a patron of Waldorf, BA R4901/2519: 356, and the June 11, 1936 letter by Maikowski and Klein invoking Eickhoff as a supporter, BA R4901/2519: 358–59. A February 1939 SD report on anthroposophy decries Eickhoff's efforts on behalf of the Waldorf schools: BA R58/6193 Teil 1: 296.

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Interior to Gestapo Berlin, February 18, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 94); League of Waldorf Schools to Ministry of Interior, May 8, 1936 (BA R58/6220a: 117); Maikowski to Thies, May 9, 1936 (BA R4901/2519: 350); RMWEV memorandum, January 10, 1937 (BA R4901/2520: 120).

<sup>82</sup> The August 1935 issue of *Erziehungskunst*, 134–36, carried three pages of extremely positive excerpts from the local, regional, and national press on various Waldorf events, including reports from the *Stuttgarter NS-Kurier*, the local Nazi newspaper, as well as three excerpts from the *Völkischer Beobachter*. As late as 1939, a lengthy article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* noted the "healthy" aspects of Waldorf education as an example of what was "valuable and worthy of adoption" from anthroposophy into National Socialism; see "Wissenschaftliche Arbeit am nationalsozialistischen Gedankengut" *Völkischer Beobachter* January 29, 1939, 5–6.



surely intercede on behalf of the school if he were made aware of the situation. Invoking the Waldorf schools' contribution to the "new Germany," the writer maintained that his views were shared by all parents at the Stuttgart Waldorf school.<sup>83</sup> Four years later, after Mergenthaler's final blow against the school, 363 Waldorf parents signed a letter to Rust asking that Mergenthaler's order to close the school be rescinded:

The Waldorf school in Stuttgart was founded as a bulwark against the corrosive powers of intellectualism and materialism in 1919, when our *Volk* was at its lowest point politically and culturally. [...] Already at that time, when international tendencies were dominant, and despite facing strong hostility, the school consistently cultivated German spiritual life and built the entire education of the children on this basis. Eighteen years of experience have proven that through the Waldorf school, our children are being brought up to be hardworking, full-fledged members of the national community, healthy in body and soul. We are therefore convinced that the educational work of the Waldorf school can be successfully made fruitful for the cultural rebuilding of our *Volk* within the framework of the National Socialist state.<sup>84</sup>

A 1936 letter from 230 parents at the Wandsbek school similarly insisted that Waldorf pedagogy "fulfills the educational principles established by the Führer himself."<sup>85</sup> Waldorf spokespeople confirmed these views. Franz Brumberg, director of the Rudolf Steiner School in Altona, emphasized in 1934 that "our school has an important role to play in the efforts to renew the whole pedagogy of Germany on the basis of national and social impulses," adding that Waldorf schools were committed to "the powerful moral and spiritual renewal of Germany."<sup>86</sup> In the wake of the ban on the Anthroposophical Society, a December 1935 letter argued that "with support from the party" it would be possible to "adopt the part of Steiner's pedagogy that is still worthwhile today

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<sup>83</sup> Adolf Karcher to Verbindungsstab der NSDAP, March 16, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 8–9). Karcher enclosed an essay by Richard Karutz and asked that it be presented to Hitler.

<sup>84</sup> Eingabe der Elternschaft der Stuttgarter Waldorfschule, March 14, 1938, BA R4901/2521: 9–22; see also the March 1939 letters from parents at the Hannover Waldorf school, BA R4901/2521: 94–101.

<sup>85</sup> Julius Carlsson to RMWEV, April 28, 1936, co-signed by 229 further parents from the Freie Goetheschule Wandsbek (BA R4901/2519: 335–38). The letter quotes *Mein Kampf* to substantiate this claim.

<sup>86</sup> Brumberg to Thies, March 7, 1934, BA R4901/2519: 77–79.



and expand it in a National Socialist manner.”<sup>87</sup> A 1938 submission to the Ministry of Education spelling out guiding principles for the proposed Waldorf experimental schools called for an “administration in the National Socialist spirit.”<sup>88</sup> Elisabeth Klein viewed her task as promoting the “honest work of the Waldorf schools in building the Third Reich.”<sup>89</sup> The opening sentence of the 1939 draft constitution for the Dresden Waldorf school stated unequivocally: “The Rudolf Steiner School in Dresden stands on the foundation of the National Socialist state.”<sup>90</sup>

This perspective was shared by Klein’s interlocutors within the Nazi party hierarchy. In 1934 Hess commissioned his assistant Schulte-Strathaus to prepare a comprehensive report on Waldorf schools. Schulte-Strathaus concluded that Waldorf schools “work according to National Socialist principles and produce excellent benefits.” In his view, Waldorf education was “wholly positive from the standpoint of the National Socialist movement.”<sup>91</sup> His 1934 report began:

The goals of the Waldorf schools coincide in their fundamental principles with what the Führer has called for in education: “above all the development of character, especially fostering willpower and determination, as well as educating toward a joyful embrace of responsibility, and only last scientific instruction” (*Mein Kampf* 452). The Waldorf schools have been fulfilling this mission, as articulated by the Führer, for fifteen years.

The report continued:

The educational approach of the Waldorf schools grows out of the German essence and is systematically directed against materialist thinking and mere intellectualism. A way must be found to make this educational approach useful to the reshaping of the educational system in

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<sup>87</sup> Regierungsvizepräsident von Heydebrand und der Lasa to Alfred Rosenberg, December 17, 1935 (BA NS15/301: 58248). The letter endorses Els Moll’s efforts at the Stuttgart Waldorf school.

<sup>88</sup> League of Waldorf Schools to RMWEV, March 15, 1938, signed by Maikowski (BA R4901/2520: 269–72).

<sup>89</sup> Klein to Baeumler, December 18, 1937 (BA NS15/301: 58127–28). Like most of Klein’s correspondence with Baeumler, the letter is handwritten and notably informal and friendly.

<sup>90</sup> “Entwurf einer Konstitution der Rudolf Steiner-Schule Dresden (gleichzeitig als Entwurf für andere Waldorfschulen)” March 13, 1939, signed by Elisabeth Klein, BA NS15/301: 58092–94.

<sup>91</sup> Vermerk, February 21, 1935, RMWEV meeting with Schulte-Strathaus, BA R4901/2519: 113.

order to secure the spiritual and soul content of National Socialism. This should not be difficult, since the basic principles of Waldorf schooling are much closer to the ideas of National Socialism than may appear at first glance; the words of the Führer quoted earlier prove this.<sup>92</sup>

Views like these were not anomalous among Waldorf advocates, who routinely proclaimed Waldorf education's special affinity for the German nation. Articles in *Erziehungskunst* juxtaposed the wonders of "the Aryan race" to the debased "materialist and intellectual era" and denounced "the decadent French cultural element" while extolling the "Germanic national soul."<sup>93</sup> The journal printed lengthy excerpts from Houston Stewart Chamberlain and praised his work.<sup>94</sup> A 1935 statement from the League of Waldorf Schools titled "On the Nature and Method of the Waldorf Schools" affirmed that Steiner's pedagogy integrated pupils into the "national community" and served the "national tasks of our Volk." Drawing on the depths of the "German essence," Waldorf schools were eager to join in "the present and future national goals of the German people."<sup>95</sup>

Emphatic commitment to the national community was not confined to official statements from the Waldorf leadership. A 1934 essay written by Richard Karutz on behalf of the parents at the Stuttgart Waldorf school offered a detailed example of anthroposophist thinking on the new political situation. The first page announced:

Since the national uprising of 1933, the awakening of the nation toward the unified National Socialist people's state and the profound transformation of all political and social life, the school is committed to participation in the rebuilding of the Reich, along with every other cell of German life and every individual German. Toward this goal, the school is committed to active collaboration, putting itself at the service of the leaders of the school system of the new Reich and showing them what positive values the school has to offer from its pedagogical experience.

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<sup>92</sup> Ernst Schulte-Strathaus, "Bericht an den Stellvertreter des Führers über die Waldorfschulen" May 14, 1934 (BA R4901/2519: 43–45).

<sup>93</sup> Emil Kühn, review of Uehli's book on Atlantis, *Erziehungskunst* December 1936, 225–26; "Michaelieveranstaltung der Freien Goetheschule in Hamburg-Wandsbek" *Erziehungskunst* December 1933, 520–21; Ernst Uehli, "Germanische Sagenstoffe als erzieherische Aufgabe in den Oberklassen" *Erziehungskunst* October 1933, 457–68.

<sup>94</sup> *Erziehungskunst* June 1934, 89–91; cf. Caroline von Heydebrand, "Lebensbegegnungen" *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* February 1935, 2–4.

<sup>95</sup> Bund der Waldorfschulen, "Vom Wesen und von der Arbeitsweise der Waldorfschulen" November 18, 1935 (BA R58/6220a: 6–11).

Karutz continued:

For fifteen years Waldorf pedagogy has been pursuing methodological paths and striving toward practical goals that point in the spiritual direction of the National Socialist uprising. Waldorf schooling anticipated the demands of the new state and is well positioned to produce students who are thoroughly prepared in body, soul and spirit, who are capable and determined to serve the new state with personal dedication.

The essay emphasized that all teachers at the Stuttgart Waldorf school shared the same “national convictions” centered on the “spiritual-cultural mission of the German *Volk*.” As a result of the “authoritarian” methods of Waldorf pedagogy, Karutz observed, many Waldorf graduates had “enthusiastically joined the National Socialist movement.” Quoting Hitler repeatedly, Karutz noted Waldorf schooling’s success in keeping the pupils’ “hereditary endowment” healthy by staving off “the damaging influences of the materialist and technical-mechanistic era.”<sup>96</sup>

Karutz espoused similar ideas in published works. In a 1934 article in the journal of the Waldorf movement he called for a return to “homeland and *Volk*” and a “conscious commitment to kin and nation,” celebrating “love and loyalty to race and nation, to blood and homeland.”<sup>97</sup> The same year he wrote that an anthroposophical approach “must be the order of the day for education in the Third Reich.”<sup>98</sup> Other anthroposophists championed “*völkisch* education” as a “national duty.”<sup>99</sup> In December 1933 the editor of *Erziehungskunst* announced that the aim of Waldorf education was to “place stalwart and duty-conscious people into the nation and the state.”<sup>100</sup> Books, articles, and pamphlets by Waldorf leaders incorporated comparable tropes.<sup>101</sup> Across a broad spectrum

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<sup>96</sup> Richard Karutz, “Erklärung aus dem Kreise der Elternschaft der Freien Waldorfschule Stuttgart” (BA R58/6220b: 39–48). The leadership of the Stuttgart Waldorf school association endorsed the Karutz text and distributed it to the association’s membership in March 1934.

<sup>97</sup> Richard Karutz, “Durch die Sprache zum Volk” *Erziehungskunst* June 1934, 103–22.

<sup>98</sup> Karutz, *Rassenfragen*, 82.

<sup>99</sup> Hippel, *Mensch und Gemeinschaft*, 161; cf. 160: “Es gehört zu den wesentlichen Einsichten der Gegenwart, daß Erziehung notwendig eine völkische, und daß deutsches Unterrichtswesen daher in diesem Sinne nationalpolitisch sein muß.” For background cf. Hubertus Kunert, *Deutsche Reformpädagogik und Faschismus* (Hannover: Schroedel, 1973).

<sup>100</sup> Caroline von Heydebrand, “Waldorfschule und Anthroposophische Gesellschaft” *Erziehungskunst* December 1933, 499–501.

<sup>101</sup> Examples include Hermann von Baravalle, *Die Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners und die Erneuerung der deutschen Kultur* (Stuttgart: Waldorf-Verlag, 1933); Erich Gabert, “Ansprache

of Waldorf documents, from official submissions for government agencies to internal reports, letters, and periodicals, a considerable degree of consensus emerged around the Waldorf movement's commitment to the German national community under Nazi leadership.

The depth of this commitment can be assessed by examining the detailed reflection on educational principles and practices sent by longtime Waldorf leader E. A. Karl Stockmeyer to Alfred Baeumler in 1939. Stockmeyer, one of the founding fathers of Waldorf pedagogy, had been a member of Steiner's Esoteric School since 1907 and remained a central figure in the Waldorf movement after World War II. His extensive 1939 correspondence with Baeumler, a leading Nazi authority in the field of education, was decidedly cordial and not of an official or instrumental nature. Stockmeyer's letters did not address the current political situation of the Waldorf schools or request assistance or intervention from Baeumler's office. He seems to have found in Baeumler a sympathetic ear for his own pedagogical views.<sup>102</sup>

Baeumler was director of the Institute for Political Pedagogy and a high official on the staff of chief Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg. In December 1939 Stockmeyer sent Baeumler an essay titled "The Goal of German Education."<sup>103</sup> In an attempt to reconcile National Socialism and anthroposophy, Stockmeyer's essay offered a synthesis of Baeumler's pedagogical writings with Steiner's works, quoting extensively from both. Stockmeyer also drew on Rosenberg's tome *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, for which Baeumler had written an introduction. Stockmeyer presented a theory of "spiritual-soul-bodily exis-

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anlässlich einer nationalen Feier in der Freien Waldorfschule" *Erziehungskunst* June 1933, 372–76; "Rudolf Steiners Pädagogik und die Forderungen der Gegenwart" *Erziehungskunst* February 1934, 537–47; Elisabeth Klein, *Goethes Geistesart in der Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners* (Dresden: Emil Weise, 1937).

<sup>102</sup> See e.g. Stockmeyer to Baeumler, March 2, 1939 (BA NS15/301: 58099–101), an effusive letter following up on a personal conversation between the two. Here Stockmeyer explained his views on the connection between karmic spiritual inheritance and physical heredity. On Baeumler's longstanding support for Waldorf see Klein to Leitgen, November 16, 1940 (BA R58/6223/1: 268); Klein, *Begegnungen*, 85–94; Maikowski, *Schicksalswege*, 146–59.

<sup>103</sup> E. A. Karl Stockmeyer, "Das Ziel der deutschen Erziehung" (BA NS15/301: 58034–53), twenty page typescript with accompanying letter from Stockmeyer to Baeumler dated December 6, 1939. Two decades earlier Stockmeyer had assayed the "Grundlage einer nationalen Erziehung" in his 1918 pamphlet *Vom deutschen Volksstaat und von der deutschen Erziehung*, discussed in chapter 2 above. For background on Baeumler's pedagogical views see Winfried Joch, *Theorie einer politischen Pädagogik: Alfred Baeumlers Beitrag zur Pädagogik im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1971) and Hermann Giesecke, *Hitlers Pädagogen: Theorie und Praxis nationalsozialistischer Erziehung* (Weinheim: Juventa, 1993), 75–122.

tence” and outlined an educational approach befitting the German character in its current “cultural struggle” against materialism. Building on the philosophical basis provided by Rosenberg and Baeumler, Stockmeyer heralded Steiner’s teachings as the culmination of the “German worldview.” Unlike the deficient worldviews of the French and English, the German worldview was anchored in “honor and loyalty” and provided the pedagogical foundation for the German state.

Having established the groundwork for his educational vision, Stockmeyer ventured a partial endorsement of National Socialist thought while simultaneously criticizing some Nazi conceptions of race as excessively materialistic. The “physical reality of race” must be complemented by the “soul-reality of *Volk*,” and the bodily must be integrated with the spiritual. A one-sided focus on the physical aspects of race, Stockmeyer cautioned, was distinctly un-German and a capitulation to English materialism. While acknowledging that the English were also of “Nordic blood,” he blamed them for unleashing a “war of lies” against Germany. Just as the British were seizing German ships on the seas, Stockmeyer warned in December 1939, so were materialistic English ideas seizing German minds. The way to overcome this materialist distortion of proper German thinking was through Steiner’s doctrine of harmony among soul, spirit, and body. As the pure product of the German soul, uncorrupted by materialist deformations and English falsifications, Steiner’s work “must become the indisputable measure of judgement for all educational aims and goals.”

This document suggests several reasons for the eventual failure of the campaign to portray Waldorf schooling as the proper form of education for the national community. Like other branches of anthroposophy, Waldorf pedagogy posited Steiner’s ideas as the final arbiter of true Germanness. Waldorf leaders contended that anthroposophist pedagogical principles were “identical with the educational ideal of the living German spirit.”<sup>104</sup> That stance was incompatible with Nazism’s totalitarian aspirations and difficult even for pro-Waldorf Nazi figures to accept. Claiming for itself the right to set the standard of judgement for all educational goals, the Waldorf movement miscalculated its own chances of success after 1933 and overstepped the boundaries of what was practically attainable for an esoteric group and alternative educational tendency within the framework of National Socialist Germany. Moreover, Waldorf approaches to the spiritual significance of race sometimes conflicted with the more materialist cast of Nazi racial thinking. This tension, already evident in the 1933 dispute at the Breslau Waldorf school explored at the beginning of

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<sup>104</sup> “Die Leitung der Freien Waldorfschule, Stuttgart, den 20. Februar 34,” BA R58/6220b: 78.

this chapter, reverberated throughout the controversy over Waldorf schooling in the Third Reich.

Waldorf conceptions of the “national community” were not simply open to one and all. A March 1935 memorandum from the League of Waldorf Schools forcefully distanced itself from Jews, socialists, and “international tendencies.” Under the heading “Attitude toward Jewry” the memorandum stated:

Because the basic outlook of Waldorf schools is emphatically Christian, and because Waldorf pedagogy rejects the one-sided intellectual element, the Jews show little sympathy for Waldorf schools. The percentage of Jewish pupils is therefore very low.<sup>105</sup>

These remarks reflected standard anthroposophist attitudes toward Jewishness and Germanness, but were not framed in racial terms, an orientation which provoked vehement reactions from some Nazi quarters.<sup>106</sup> In a revealing 1934 exchange with an SD opponent of Waldorf schooling who objected to the role of “full-blooded Jews” within anthroposophist ranks, Eugen Link responded that Steiner’s followers from Jewish backgrounds had “none of the negative Jewish qualities” and thus were not genuinely Jewish.<sup>107</sup>

Race had been part of Waldorf education from the beginning. Steiner instructed the first generation of Waldorf teachers to include “knowledge of races” and discussion of “the different races and their various characteristics” in elementary school.<sup>108</sup> Waldorf schools incorporated *Rassenkunde* or “racial studies” within their curriculum before the Nazis came to power. The approved Waldorf curriculum plan published in 1931 stated that “racial studies” were to be introduced in the seventh grade. This official curriculum also included

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<sup>105</sup> “Wesen und Aufgaben der Waldorfschulen,” BA R4901/2519: 253. Waldorf representatives shared the belief that because Jews do not recognize Christ they are ensnared in “the tragedy of Jewry,” in the words of anthroposophist Friedrich Hiebel—himself of partial Jewish heritage—in *Erziehungskunst*, October 1933, 479.

<sup>106</sup> See e.g. Adolf Krenn to Alfred Baeumler July 29, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57858–61), Krenn to Baeumler, August 5, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57853–57), and Krenn to Baeumler, August 26, 1940 (BA NS15/302: 57867). Krenn was an obsessive foe of Waldorf and a specialist in race questions for the high court of the Nazi party; he demanded a much harder line against Waldorf schools and other anthroposophical institutions than Baeumler was willing to allow.

<sup>107</sup> SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, “Bericht über die Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart” January 1934, BA R58/6220b: 51.

<sup>108</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (Great Barrington: Anthroposophic Press, 1997), 23–24. Racial doctrines of this kind were not unusual among German educational reformers in Steiner’s day; cf. Oelkers, *Reformpädagogik*, 168, 262–63.

discussion of “the contrast between Northern and Southern ethnic types” and the cultural impact of “foreign national souls.”<sup>109</sup> Steiner’s guidelines for Waldorf faculty included teaching pupils about “the worst Oriental peoples” and their “Mongolian-Mohammedan terror” which threatened Europe for centuries.<sup>110</sup> Waldorf leaders emphasized the role of race and nation in pedagogical contexts prior to 1933, based firmly on Steiner’s racial doctrines. In 1931 Caroline von Heydebrand published a lengthy essay on Steiner’s teachings about “national souls” and “racial spirits.” She underscored the ways in which “race” and “nation” shape the maturing child, highlighting the need to make the German child’s own people the centerpiece of education. The teacher’s task was to work “in allegiance to the archangels” so that the pupil could grow into “an organ of the *Volk*, serving the whole *Volk*.”<sup>111</sup>

In negotiations with Nazi educational authorities, the League of Waldorf Schools agreed to adopt Nazi content into their courses, combined with Steiner’s ideas:

We must be ensured the right to retain the method and the distribution of curricular material for each age level, on the basis of anthropological experience regarding the interaction of bodily and soul development as outlined in the pedagogical writings of Rudolf Steiner. We will of course take into account the special emphasis on subjects that are more intensely cultivated in the Third Reich, such as racial studies and genetics, the

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<sup>109</sup> Caroline von Heydebrand, *Vom Lehrplan der Freien Waldorfschule* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Freien Waldorfschule, 1931), 25, 41, 47. The passages remained unaltered in the post-war edition of the book: Caroline von Heydebrand, *Vom Lehrplan der Freien Waldorfschule* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1949); the reference to *Rassenkunde*, for example, appears on 28. Several sources mistakenly claim that Waldorf schools added “racial studies” to their curriculum after 1933 or refused to do so entirely; cf. Götte, “Erfahrungen mit Schulautonomie,” 461; Deuchert, “Zur Geschichte der Waldorfschule im Nationalsozialismus,” 101; Priestman, “Illusion of Coexistence,” 138 and 144. Oberman, *The Waldorf Movement*, 132 acknowledges that “Racial theory has a place in the Waldorf curriculum as designed by Rudolf Steiner.”

<sup>110</sup> Rudolf Steiner, “Pädagogisches Seminar” *Erziehungskunst* February 1933, 241–53. See also Elisabeth Klein, *Die Altersstufen und der naturwissenschaftliche Unterricht* (Dresden: Laube, 1930), 43, on “solchen Völkerstämmen, die, heute auf niedrigen Kulturstufen stehend, degenerierte Zweige in der Menschheitsentwicklung darstellen.”

<sup>111</sup> Caroline von Heydebrand, “Aus der Arbeit der Stuttgarter Arbeitsgemeinschaft” *Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* August 1931, 3–7. After the Nazis came to power, von Heydebrand spoke on “heredity and reincarnation” at an anthroposophist conference in Stuttgart (*Korrespondenz der Anthroposophischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft* October 1933, 2).



study of prehistory and a stronger emphasis on the Nordic-Germanic cultural sphere.<sup>112</sup>

Since these themes already formed a significant part of anthroposophical thought, placing greater emphasis on them within the Waldorf curriculum presented no fundamental challenge. But problems arose due to substantive differences over what race was and what it meant. These differences drew critical attention from both allies and adversaries of Waldorf education within the Nazi hierarchy.

Even Baeumler, who did so much to encourage Waldorf advocates, was unconvinced about Waldorf attitudes toward “the race question.” In December 1937 Baeumler prepared a report on Waldorf schools at the request of Hess, sending it to various Nazi agencies.<sup>113</sup> The report was a careful analysis of Steiner’s pedagogical works and their application within the Waldorf curriculum. While commending the “deep and correct insights” underlying the Waldorf worldview, Baeumler emphasized that race from a National Socialist standpoint was above all a natural reality rather than a primarily spiritual phenomenon. He noted the considerable role that biological factors play in Steiner’s approach to the education of children, but contrasted this approach with the basic orientation of Nazism, concluding that “Rudolf Steiner’s thinking is not biological-racial, but biological-cosmic.” As a result, “Steiner’s educational theory cannot accommodate the concept of the national community.” In Baeumler’s judgement, Waldorf pedagogy was incapable of making the

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<sup>112</sup> Bund der Waldorfschulen, “Wesentliche Gesichtspunkte für die Weiterführung der Schulen in Dresden, Hamburg-Wandsbek and Hannover bei Wahrung ihres Charakters als Waldorfschulen” October 25, 1938 (BA NS15/301:58115–18). On racial education in the Nazi era see Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 131–62; Gregory Wegner, “Schooling for a New Mythos: Race, Anti-Semitism and the Curriculum Materials of a Nazi Race Educator” *Paedagogica Historica* 27 (1991), 189–213; Änne Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology and Schools* (New York: Lang, 1995); Hans-Christian Harten, Uwe Neirich, and Matthias Schwerendt, *Rassenhygiene als Erziehungsideologie des Dritten Reichs* (Berlin: Akademie, 2006); Sheila Faith Weiss, *The Nazi Symbiosis: Human Genetics and Politics in the Third Reich* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 219–64.

<sup>113</sup> Alfred Baeumler, “Gutachten über die Waldorfschulen” (BA NS15/303), eleven page typescript. Baeumler sent a copy to Holfelder in the Ministry of Education in November 1938 (BA NS15/301:58110). See also Baeumler’s notes on Steiner’s publications (BA NS15/303:58499–536). For his own views on race cf. Alfred Baeumler, “Rasse als Grundbegriff der Erziehungswissenschaft” *Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehung* 8 (1939), 252–55, and Baeumler, “Das Bild des Menschen und die deutsche Schule” *Weltanschauung und Schule* 4 (1940), 225–33.

national community the true “origin and goal of education,” because “community in Steiner’s sense is a spiritual community.”<sup>114</sup>

In addition to his thoroughgoing critique of anthroposophist conceptions of race and nation as manifested in the Waldorf curriculum, Baeumler expressed severe skepticism toward other aspects of Waldorf education, from shortcomings in natural science instruction to the “priestly character” of the teachers. He also took a dim view of the Waldorf movement’s claim to have overcome individualism. Baeumler’s report nevertheless praised several facets of Waldorf schooling, above all its anti-intellectual orientation, which he saw as fully compatible with National Socialist principles. In this respect, Baeumler portrayed Waldorf pedagogy as a significant advance and a much-needed complement to Nazi educational objectives. The report endorsed the idea of transforming Waldorf schools into state-sponsored experimental schools while modifying the unsatisfactory elements of the curriculum. Baeumler looked forward to the possibility of incorporating some current Waldorf teachers, those willing to adapt to the Nazi conception of history, into a campaign for a new type of schooling for the German nation.<sup>115</sup> His evaluation concluded with an appreciation of “the great advantages of Waldorf pedagogy.” A year later, in a broader analysis of Steiner’s philosophy, Baeumler offered a notably positive appraisal of Waldorf education despite its shortcomings regarding race.<sup>116</sup>

Many other Nazi representatives criticized the Waldorf movement for inadequate attention to racial matters. This complaint recurred in a variety of reports on Waldorf schools submitted by officials of the National Socialist Teachers League.<sup>117</sup> One report combined approval and disapproval, objecting

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<sup>114</sup> Baeumler’s report on Waldorf schools does not cite Steiner’s principal racial works. Paradoxically, a thorough analysis of Baeumler’s published writings on race strongly emphasizes their non-biological character: Joch, *Theorie einer politischen Pädagogik*, 28–31, 135–44. On Baeumler’s prickly response to thinkers he perceived as encroaching on his own central themes see Tobias Schneider, “Ideologische Grabenkämpfe: Der Philosoph Ludwig Klages und der Nationalsozialismus 1933–1938” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49 (2001), 275–94.

<sup>115</sup> Baeumler’s optimism on this score was shared by other Nazi advocates of Waldorf education. In 1934 Leo Tölke surmised that revamping the Stuttgart Waldorf school in a fully National Socialist direction would initially require the replacement of only six to eight teachers: SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West, “Bericht über die Freie Waldorfschule Stuttgart” January 29, 1934 (BA R58/6220b: 51–59). The Stuttgart school had a total of 58 teachers at the time.

<sup>116</sup> Alfred Baeumler, “Rudolf Steiner und die Philosophie” (BA NS15/303: 58344–76). Baeumler submitted the document to Hess in October 1938.

<sup>117</sup> There were exceptions to this trend. A report on the Dresden Waldorf school by a regional official in the Nazi women’s organization offered a typically mixed assessment of Waldorf schooling, conjoining praise and censure. She noted the school’s classes in “biol-

to “the peculiar cult-like character” of the Waldorf school while noting that the pupils were active in the Hitler Youth. Lauding several aspects of the teaching, the report emphasized points of commonality with National Socialism, particularly organicism, anti-individualism, and anti-intellectualism. These areas of overlap did not preclude disagreements, and the report offered a detailed critical assessment of a Waldorf class on “racial studies,” finding it too spiritual and too abstract:

A pupil’s notebook on racial studies contained a description of the six European races and the Mendelian laws. Jewry, the meaning of racial hygiene, population policy and so forth were not mentioned—but apparently the instructional unit on racial studies had not yet been completed. A sentence from this notebook seemed to me typical of the general inner stance; it read more or less as follows: “Bodily and soul characteristics are inherited, but the essential part of each human, his spirit, belongs to him alone.” From here it is only a small step to the brotherhood of all free spirits, and even if I naturally have no grounds for this, I nonetheless could not shake the feeling that the enthusiasm for the heroic and the Germanic remains in a bloodless sphere and is granted to every human individual.<sup>118</sup>

Another report from 1937 contained very positive comments on the Waldorf curriculum and teaching but noted with dismay that the underlying framework was “Theosophy” rather than “our National Socialist worldview.” In light of the school’s considerable strengths and potential contributions to Nazi education, the author of the report found this ideological divergence regrettable. “This school community would be exemplary,” she wrote, “if it would base itself on our concepts of race and nation.”<sup>119</sup>

Beyond concerns about race, there were other issues at stake in the controversy over Waldorf schooling in the Third Reich, from occultism to individualism to elitism. Some Nazis distrusted all private schools as enclaves of privilege

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ogy and racial questions” with no criticism of their content, objecting instead to their co-educational character: “Gerade in diesen Fächern wünscht man doch, daß das heranwachsende Mädel von einer Frau allein betreut wird.” (Report by Lotte Rühlemann, BA NS15/301: 58161–63)

<sup>118</sup> Undated report by Erna Stamm on her visit to the Hannover Waldorf school (BA NS15/301: 58170–72).

<sup>119</sup> March 9, 1937 report by Marie Niemax, local official of the National Socialist Teachers League, on her visit to the Waldorf school in Wandsbek (BA NS15/301: 58173–74).

and considered anthroposophy an elitist doctrine suffused with disdain for the masses. A 1935 analysis of the Altona Waldorf school warned that occultism was “a grave danger for the youth, indeed a poison for the soul, which stands in direct contrast to the National Socialist worldview.”<sup>120</sup> The arguments put forward by Waldorf representatives in response to such charges were occasionally incoherent. Sometimes Waldorf advocates denied that their pedagogy had anything to do with anthroposophy, while at other times they highlighted the ideological overlap between anthroposophy and National Socialism. In some cases they insisted on both the great individual benefits of Waldorf education and its anti-individualistic devotion to the national community.

It is nevertheless significant that controversies over Waldorf schooling frequently returned to the contested question of race and nation. Indeed many of the other disputes surrounding Waldorf in the Nazi era were expressed through debates around race. The differences between Nazi and Waldorf representatives on “the race question” were themselves rooted in an underlying disagreement over the nature and limits of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the national community. Broad overlap between anthroposophical and National Socialist ideals of German rebirth and renewal, along with a mutual opposition to materialism and intellectualism, assisted the partial convergence between Waldorf schooling and the educational expectations of the Nazi state. But they could not completely bridge contrary understandings of national belonging, a factor which progressively undermined the quest to establish Waldorf education as an integral part of the institutional landscape of National Socialist Germany.

Constant invocations of national community in an esoteric register did not usher in the spiritual restoration which Waldorf proponents sought, and did not yield a fusion of Nazi precepts with anthroposophist practices. The resulting highly conflicted interaction between Waldorf ambitions and Nazi limitations can make simplified explanations appear enticing: Either Steiner’s followers were craven and pliant fellow travelers of the Hitler regime, or they consistently stood in irreconcilable opposition to Nazism’s worldview. Both viewpoints misconstrue the knotty ideological relationship between occultism and fascism and give short shrift to the under-examined facets of both anthroposophist and National Socialist varieties of racial thought. In the debate over Waldorf education’s bonds to the national community, conceptual affinities

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<sup>120</sup> Staatspolizeistelle Kiel, December 16, 1935, BA R58/6190: 21. SD analysts discerned covert individualism in the anthroposophist belief that Waldorf pupils are karmically formed before birth; see the August 1935 memorandum on “Anthroposophische Pädagogik,” BA R58/6195/3.

did not always lead to practical cooperation, and fine distinctions at the level of ideas sometimes became coarser when institutional priorities were at stake.

In some ways the particulars of anthroposophist doctrines on nation and race stood in the way of closer convergence with elements of National Socialism rather than facilitating it. This was nonetheless the shared intellectual territory on which the controversy over Waldorf schools was carried out. To the extent that this complex interplay of ideas resulted in conflict rather than congruence between Waldorf education and its Nazi counterparts, it is tempting to reduce the conflict to a basic ideological incompatibility. In an important sense, however, it was the similarities between anthroposophical and National Socialist views of the world which led to their opposition, not the differences. Waldorf versions of the national community constituted a mirror image of Nazi ideals, one which Nazism itself could not abide.

For Nazis inclined to be skeptical of an esoteric worldview, anthroposophy's pedagogical aspirations were unsettling rather than re-assuring. Waldorf professed not only an education for the national community, but hoped to educate the nation itself, to lead Germany to its proper spiritual destiny. Waldorf advocates were convinced that they had a superior understanding of the true German essence and the authentic meaning of the *Volk*. At issue was a debate over the parameters of the German mission in the world, a debate grounded in common assumptions about national providence and a common sense of vocation. From this perspective, the ideological dimension of the controversy between Nazi officials and Waldorf representatives can be seen not merely as a fundamental divergence in worldviews but as an argument within a shared worldview: a series of disagreements about national redemption and the nature of the *Volk*, of the German essence, of the nation itself.

## The Nazi Campaign against Occultism

On June 9, 1941, less than two weeks before Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Nazi security services launched an all-out campaign against occultist organizations and individuals. Officially dubbed the “Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences” (*Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften*), this sweeping move aimed at the definitive elimination of occult activities from the national community. Why did the SD and Gestapo put so much effort into pursuing marginal occult groups in June 1941, when the Nazi leadership had more pressing concerns? The answers to this question reveal the complexities and contradictions at the heart of the contested relationship between occultism and National Socialism.

The hard-line anti-occultist faction within the Nazi movement was concentrated in the SD, the *Sicherheitsdienst* or ‘security service’ of the SS under Reinhard Heydrich. From 1933 to 1941 they were largely kept in check by other Nazi officials, including the staff of Rudolf Hess in his position as Deputy of the Führer and nominal head of the Nazi party. Hess was the highest-ranking Nazi protector of anthroposophical endeavors. The longstanding tension within the Nazi hierarchy over the status of occult groups was complicated by the pivotal role of Martin Bormann, technically Hess’s subordinate but his de facto equal in power, influence, and access to Hitler. Bormann was a confirmed opponent of occult organizations and a crucial ally of the SD, which in turn formed a central component of the police imperium overseen by SS head Heinrich Himmler.

Heydrich’s SD had hounded a wide variety of occultist tendencies since the early days of the Third Reich. Its obligatory counterpart in this endeavor was the Gestapo, the ‘secret police’ of the Nazi state. The development of these two Nazi agencies, and their peculiar dynamic of simultaneous cooperation and competition, gave momentum to the anti-occultist campaign that culminated in June 1941. The SD’s enduring hostility toward occult groups stemmed in part from the perceived organizational competition they represented, but the anti-occultist Nazi faction viewed esoteric doctrines above all as an ideological threat to the integrity of National Socialist principles. In the eyes of the SD, occultists belonged—willingly or not—to the broad panoply of *weltanschauliche Gegner* or “ideological enemies” of Nazism. Combating these ostensible enemies was a crucial part of the SD’s *raison d’être*.

Anthroposophy was one of many such ‘enemies’ within the occult camp. By the time of the June 1941 actions, the ire of the SD, the Gestapo, and their allies

such as Bormann and Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels encompassed not just anthroposophists but theosophists, ariosophists, astrologists, parapsychologists, fortune tellers, faith healers, rune readers, dowsers, and myriad other practitioners of supposed occult arts. Esoteric movements with a well-defined worldview figured centrally in this pantheon of hidden adversaries, and anthroposophy thus came to occupy a prominent position as a perceived opponent of National Socialism. Paradoxically, official Nazi hostility toward organized occult groups depended as much on underlying ideological similarity as on overt ideological distance.<sup>1</sup>

The June 1941 campaign was as much a move against pro-anthroposophist Nazis as against anthroposophists themselves. Like the events of June 1934, the so-called 'Night of the Long Knives,' one faction of Nazis seized the opportunity to eliminate internal rivals as well as settle old scores with non-Nazi figures, including those ideologically close to—and thereby competitors to—Nazism itself. The dialectic of affinity and distance which had governed the relationship between National Socialism and anthroposophy all along came to a head in 1941, exacerbated by a well-rehearsed SD dynamic in which familiarity bred enmity.

Behind this long-brewing confrontation lay unpredictable institutional factors in Nazism's fearsome but fractured surveillance system. The SD's fixation on perceived "ideological enemies" derived from its own uncertain status within the intricate apparatus of the Nazi party-state. Founded in 1931 as an SS intelligence service, the SD struggled for years to establish a distinctive operational profile and an adequate budget for its activities, which included keeping tabs on friend and foe alike. Even in the latter half of the 1930s the SD remained "in search of image and mission."<sup>2</sup> With the consolidation of police powers under Himmler's control between 1933 and 1936, Heydrich's SD managed to

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<sup>1</sup> For an extended analysis see Peter Staudenmaier, "Nazi Perceptions of Esotericism: The Occult as Fascination and Menace" in Ashwin Manthripragada, ed., *The Threat and Allure of the Magical* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 24–58; cf. the contrasting interpretation in Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 210–42. Brief overviews of the 1941 campaign against occultism are available in Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 519–20; Jochen von Lang, *Der Sekretär: Martin Bormann, der Mann, der Hitler beherrschte* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1977), 167–69; Kurt Pätzold and Manfred Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß: Der Mann an Hitlers Seite* (Leipzig: Militzke, 1999), 269–71. First-hand accounts include Walter Schellenberg, *The Schellenberg Memoirs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1956), 199–203, and Felix Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 88–89.

<sup>2</sup> See the chapter "The SD Into 1937: In Search of Image and Mission" in George Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 175–96. On the early history of the SD see Shlomo Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von SD und Gestapo* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt,



secure an institutional base but continued to face challenges in defining its own role. For the SD was not a police force but an intelligence gathering arm of the party. This required cooperation with the Gestapo: If an SD officer wanted somebody arrested, he had to have the Gestapo make the arrest.

As a state organ rather than a party agency, the Gestapo was in charge of such police operations, depending on the SD for research and analysis. From the SD's perspective this arrangement represented both a significant limitation and an important opportunity. The SD generally set the priorities for the Nazi security services as a whole and was often able to determine the course of an investigation. Its dependence on the Gestapo for enforcement measures nonetheless marked SD self-perceptions and its standing among other Nazi agencies: "The SD always seemed vulnerable to replacement by a more fully empowered and better financed police force."<sup>3</sup> This uneven history formed the background for the SD's exaggerated efforts to prove its own indispensability to the Nazi cause. Even in the midst of their day-to-day cooperation, the ongoing rivalry between the SD and the Gestapo helped catalyze an escalating radicalization of the SD's expectations and standards.<sup>4</sup>

Nowhere was this more evident than in the branch of the SD devoted to *Gegnerforschung* or "research on enemies." From the mid-1930s onward, SD cadre were increasingly hard pressed to justify their activities in the face of the Gestapo's success in eliminating potential opposition to the Nazi regime. Since actual enemies were scarcely to be found in Germany anymore, this research

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1971), and George Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*, 125; see also Robert Koehl, *The Black Corps: The Structure and Power Struggles of the Nazi SS* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 88–95, 123–29, 161–62.

<sup>4</sup> Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*, 124–26, 190–92; Wolfgang Dierker, "‘Niemals Jesuiten, niemals Sektierer': Die Religionspolitik des SD 1933–1941" in Michael Wildt, ed., *Nachrichtendienst, politische Elite, Mordeinheit: Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 86–117. The same dynamic continued even after the 1939 incorporation of both agencies under the RSHA, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* or Reich Security Main Office. For an example of SD rivalry with police organs see SD-Oberabschnitt Süd-West to Sicherheitshauptamt Berlin, July 24, 1936 (BA R58/6191/2: 422–24), a three page tirade by SD officers in Stuttgart complaining bitterly about lax treatment of anthroposophists by the Württemberg Politische Polizei. In a May 1939 incident Stuttgart SD officials reported that a plan to disrupt anthroposophist finances failed because the Stuttgart Gestapo did not communicate with the local SD office, while "vom Gestapa einerseits und vom SD-Hauptamt andererseits völlig verschiedene Anweisungen herausgegeben worden sind" (BA R58/6189/1: 102).

role had become precarious and seemingly obsolete. SD analysts had to re-orient their efforts after the totalitarian transformation of German society made the notion of 'enemies of National Socialism' fundamentally different from what it had been prior to 1933. They thus shifted their attention toward *ideological* enemies, a term which became a key concept in the SD's arsenal. SD officers began to see themselves as experts trained in the authentic Nazi worldview, compiling information on the movement's ostensible foes. In the process, they tended to overemphasize the ideological divergence between the groups they surveilled and National Socialist principles.

SD researchers had a strong incentive to play up the threat posed by their objects of study. Putative enemies of National Socialism "had to be portrayed as even more dangerous, so that only the SD as ideological intelligence service [...] could be entrusted with defining and combating these enemies."<sup>5</sup> They came to see Nazism as surrounded on all sides by invisible adversaries, working covertly—in some cases even unconsciously—to undermine Nazism from within. And it was precisely groups sharing points of agreement with the Nazi worldview around concepts of race, Germanness, and the national community which aroused the suspicions of the SD. These groups were considered even more dangerous than open opponents of Nazism. What made esoteric organizations appear especially threatening was the ease with which SD analysts were able to assimilate them to pre-existing notions of a shadowy international conspiracy against the German people. In this context, movements like anthroposophy became particularly conspicuous. The proliferation of 'enemy' images provided ample ammunition for Nazi officials in search of covert antagonists.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lutz Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher: Die Karriere des SS-Führers Franz Alfred Six* (Munich: Beck, 1998), 145. Cf. Wolfgang Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger: Der Sicherheitsdienst der SS und seine Religionspolitik 1933–1941* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); Yaacov Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil* (London: Continuum, 2002), 19–26; Carsten Schreiber, "Generalstab des Holocaust oder akademischer Elfenbeinturm? Die 'Gegnerforschung' des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS" *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 5 (2006), 327–52; Robert Gerwarth, "Fighting the Enemies of the Reich" in Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life and Death of Reinhard Heydrich* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2011), 84–115.

<sup>6</sup> The surviving files of the SD *Gegnerforscher* and materials from their Gestapo colleagues are contained in the very large (but nevertheless fragmentary and incomplete) holdings of the RSHA, collection R58 at the German federal archives in Berlin. Within the R58 files, documents on the Anthroposophical Society extend from 6185 to 6195; 6196–6204 largely concerns theosophical groups, with miscellaneous documents on other forms of occultism continuing through 6223. The Nazi state was not the first to subject occultist groups to scrutiny; on surveillance and

Internal SD documents categorized occult groups as lesser religious sects and as “lodge-like” organizations under the influence of freemasonry. This association had serious consequences for the anti-occultist campaign. The SD’s eventual goal was “the complete destruction and elimination of all sects,” while the notion of occultists as freemasons carried even more dangerous implications.<sup>7</sup> In the worldview of Nazi *Gegnerforschung*, freemasonry was an especially insidious enemy, at the very center of the shadowy realm of secret societies and international plots. The SD devoted considerable resources to ferreting out hidden Masonic machinations.<sup>8</sup> While a number of occult groups did have historical and personal ties to freemasonry, the SD’s treatment of occultists as quasi-masonic was based on the loose analogies and associational logic typical of conspiratorial thought.

The results were nonetheless very real. Nazi officials estimated that there were 170 “freemasonic, occultist, and spiritualist sects” in Germany in 1933.<sup>9</sup>

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suppression of occult activities during the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras see Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 192–209.

<sup>7</sup> “Dienstsanweisung für das Sachgebiet II 1133 (Sekten)” (BA R58/5713/1: 153–61); “Warum bekämpft der Staat das Sektenwesen?” (BA R58/5713/1: 231); “Sekten und Logen” (BA R58/1074: 26–34); Gestapo list of “Sekten 1935–1937” (GStAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 57). In the October 1939 RSHA organizational outline, Amt II, “Gegnerforschung,” included sub-division II B, “weltanschauliche Gegner,” with five sections: Freimaurer, Judentum, Politische Kirchen, Marxismus, Liberalismus (BA R58/840: 169). A selection of polemics against ‘sects’—including adherents of theosophy, astrology, reincarnation, etc.—from various press organs in 1937–1941 can be found in BA NS22/565.

<sup>8</sup> On the central role of the anti-masonic campaign to the SD as a whole see Jörg Rudolph, “Sämtliche Sendungen sind zu richten an: . . .’ Das RSHA-Amt VII ‘Weltanschauliche Forschung und Auswertung’ als Sammelstelle erbeuteter Archive und Bibliotheken” in Wildt, ed., *Nachrichtendienst, politische Elite, Mordeinheit*, 204–40.

<sup>9</sup> Hauptschulungsamt der NSDAP, “Kampf gegen okkultes Sektierertum und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften in Deutschland,” December 1941, R187/267a. Cf. Merit Petersen, “Der schmale Grat zwischen Duldung und Verfolgung: Zeugen Jehovas und Mormonen im ‘Dritten Reich’” in Manfred Gailus and Armin Nolzen, eds., *Zerstrittene ‘Volksgemeinschaft’: Glaube, Konfession und Religion im Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 122–50: “Anders als mit Protestantismus und Katholizismus gingen die neuen Machthaber mit den meisten kleineren Religionsgemeinschaften hart ins Gericht, weil diese ihren Ursprung oft im Ausland hatten und von dort auch finanzielle Unterstützung erhielten. Allein deshalb waren sie verdächtig, vom ‘Weltjudentum’ und Kommunismus beeinflusst zu sein oder zumindest ‘landesverräterische Beziehungen’ zu unterhalten. Zu einer Gefahr für die ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ stilisiert, wurden kleinere Religionsgemeinschaften entweder zur Selbstauflösung gezwungen oder verfolgt. Ähnlich ging es heidnischen, germanisch-okkulten oder anderen ‘völkischen’ Vereinigungen, die ebenfalls nach und nach verboten wurden.” (128) Christine King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions* (New York: Mellen, 1982), 231–38 provides a list of sects banned by the Nazis.

For much of the 1930s, SD research on occultism was handled by the same staff who oversaw the anti-masonic campaign.<sup>10</sup> Nazi attitudes toward freemasonry revealed dynamics remarkably similar to those regarding occultism. Substantial segments of the Masonic milieu displayed extensive ideological overlap with National Socialist thought and worked assiduously to accommodate themselves to the Third Reich. As with occultists, many German freemasons were simultaneously “victims and sympathizers of the National Socialist regime.”<sup>11</sup> Gestapo reports featured inflated depictions of the ideological distance between freemasonry and Nazism, casting Masonic lodges as an international brotherhood standing apart from the national community. The elitism and exclusiveness of both freemasonry and esotericism offended Nazi populist sensibilities.

Two figures with extensive anthroposophist ties played a central role in promoting the notion of a Masonic conspiracy and helped pave the way toward the June 1941 campaign against occultism. Swiss anthroposophist Karl Heise was a prolific author of conspiratorial anti-masonic texts in the years after World War I. His 1921 book on “occult lodges” made an impression on Himmler, who praised it in 1926 as “a deeply serious work.”<sup>12</sup> In the same year, Heise published another anti-masonic and antisemitic article in Alfred Rosenberg’s Nazi periodical *Der Weltkampf*.<sup>13</sup> Heise’s works excoriated freemasons, Jesuits and Jews in Britain, France, Russia and America for attempting to destroy Germany, and gave particular emphasis to the notion of a Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik

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<sup>10</sup> Examples include SD officials Erich Ehlers, Helmut Knochen, Theodor Christensen, Walter Kolrep, and Erich Ehrlinger, as well as Gestapo liaison Karl Haselbacher and his assistant Max Bandow. The “Logenreferent im Innenministerium,” Lotar Eickhoff, was a crucial counter-example; in marked contrast to the SD and Gestapo specialists on Masonry, Eickhoff was an active supporter and defender of anthroposophists.

<sup>11</sup> Ralf Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung: Freimaurerei in der Weimarer Republik und im “Dritten Reich”* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1999), 228; cf. Marcus Meyer, “Anmerkungen zum Spannungsverhältnis von Freimaurerei, völkischer Bewegung und Nationalsozialismus” in Puschner and Vollnhals, eds., *Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus*, 491–507, and Chris Thomas, “Defining ‘Freemason’: Compromise, Pragmatism, and German Lodge Members in the NSDAP” *German Studies Review* 35 (2012), 587–605.

<sup>12</sup> February 1926 quotation from Himmler’s private journal in Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe*, 34; cf. Karl Heise, *Okkultes Logentum* (Leipzig: Max Altmann, 1921). Heise’s book extols Steiner and his teachings unreservedly and quotes extensively from other anthroposophist authors.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Heise, “Der rote Faden in der Freimaurerpolitik der Gegenwart” *Der Weltkampf* May 1926, 1–10. As in his earlier writings, Heise here recommends the work of anthroposophist conspiracy theorist Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz. For a further example of anti-Masonic literature by an anthroposophical author see Johannes Eyberg, *Die Freimaurerei im Geisteskampfe der Gegenwart* (Pfullingen: Baum, 1930).

conspiracy while commending the authentic German occultism represented by Rudolf Steiner. From an early stage, anthroposophical themes figured prominently in the volatile mix of ideas that eventually came to be turned against anthroposophy.

Beyond the impact of his work on Himmler and Rosenberg, Heise's more direct legacy was as mentor to Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, a Russian émigré to Germany who was a committed anthroposophist throughout much of the 1920s. Schwartz-Bostunitsch belonged to the Theosophical Society in Kiev in 1919 and embraced anthroposophy after moving to Germany in 1922. He met Steiner in 1923 and remained an anthroposophist until 1929, when he turned sharply against anthroposophy.<sup>14</sup> Schwartz-Bostunitsch dedicated his 1928 jeremiad against freemasonry to his teacher Heise.<sup>15</sup> Like Heise, Schwartz-Bostunitsch combined antisemitic and anti-Communist motifs and collaborated with Rosenberg's *Weltkampf*. His active participation in the Nazi movement overlapped substantially with his anthroposophical period: he began as a public promoter for the Nazi party in Bavaria in 1923, met Himmler in 1924 and Hitler in 1925, and was named a speaker for the NSDAP at the national level in 1927. He wrote for the *Völkischer Beobachter* from 1925 onward.<sup>16</sup>

Schwartz-Bostunitsch's break with anthroposophy was sudden and severe. In July 1928 he described himself as "the only one of the *völkisch* writers in

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<sup>14</sup> An excellent biographical account is available in Michael Hagemeister, "Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch" in Karl Schlögel, ed., *Die Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941* (Berlin: Akademie, 1995), 209–18. For a celebratory contemporary portrait see Josef Fischer-Hartinger, "Der Dichter Gregor Bostunitsch: Ein kleines Lebensbild" *Ariosophie: Zeitschrift für Geistes- und Wissenschaftsreform* 4 (1929), 333–38. Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots of Nazism*, 170, notes that Schwartz-Bostunitsch "became an enthusiastic Anthroposophist" in 1923, but in 1929 turned on Steiner's movement as yet another cog in the immense occult conspiracy. Anthroposophical Society leader Hermann Poppelbaum, writing in 1934, claimed that Schwartz-Bostunitsch became "an over-zealous follower" of Steiner in 1922 and turned against anthroposophy in 1929. See Poppelbaum's June 1934 circular "Für die Zweigleiter der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft-Deutschland: Beitrag zur Gegnerbekämpfung" (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 317).

<sup>15</sup> Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, *Die Freimaurerei: Ihr Ursprung, ihre Geheimnisse, ihr Wirken* (Weimar: Duncker, 1928); cf. Hagemeister, "Das Leben des Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch" 212 on Schwartz-Bostunitsch's reverential attitude toward Heise. For Heise's reminiscence of his relationship with Schwartz-Bostunitsch, emphasizing the latter's intense devotion to Steiner and extensive contributions to the anthroposophical movement, see Karl Heise to Karl Heyer, July 7, 1930 (BA R58/6188/2: 481–83).

<sup>16</sup> Schwartz-Bostunitsch to Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP, April 30, 1932 (BA OPG/I93: 1242); Schwartz-Bostunitsch, "Lebenslauf" 1939 (BA RK/B207: 1914); Schwartz-Bostunitsch's SS file, BA SSO/121B: 592–865.

Germany who is not joining in the idiotic agitation against Dr. Steiner.”<sup>17</sup> He quoted Steiner positively in an article on “*völkisch* occultism” published in an ariosophist journal in 1929.<sup>18</sup> By June 1929 he turned on anthroposophy and in 1930 published a pamphlet attacking Steiner as an occult swindler and a false prophet.<sup>19</sup> Anthroposophists were taken aback by the ferocity of Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s about-face; Heise decided that his former friend and follower must have been “possessed by demons.”<sup>20</sup> Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s Nazi career continued apace, now as a fervent opponent of anthroposophy rather than an anthroposophist. He joined the SS in 1931, and his attacks on anthroposophy became increasingly scurrilous, extending into the late 1930s.

In reacting to Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s denunciations, the Anthroposophical Society in Germany tried to portray him as a danger to Germany, deriding the Russian author as “anti-German” and a “hack writer.” In June 1934 the Anthroposophical Society leadership claimed that Schwartz-Bostunitsch’s works were “aimed against Germany” and dedicated to a “pan-Slavic world mission.” With an admiring nod to the Nazi regime’s “powerful work of construction and defense,” they noted that “government organs and party organs” could not be expected to “concern themselves with details such as anthroposophy.”<sup>21</sup> Still, in the midst of delicate negotiations with Nazi officials, they had cause to worry about the malicious claims spread by “this sinister Russian.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Schwartz-Bostunitsch to Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, Dornach, July 2, 1928 (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 318).

<sup>18</sup> Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, “Völkischer Okkultismus” *Ariosophie* 4 (1929), 345–50; the article also praised Heise’s book *Okkultes Logentum*.

<sup>19</sup> Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, *Doktor Steiner—ein Schwindler wie keiner: Ein Kapitel über Anthroposophie und die geistige Verwirrungsarbeit der ‘Falschen Propheten’* (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1930). On the break with anthroposophy see Heise to Schwartz-Bostunitsch, June 8, 1929 (BA R58/6188: 476–79).

<sup>20</sup> Karl Heise, April 7, 1934, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 319; see also the correspondence between Heise and Karl Heyer regarding Schwartz-Bostunitsch in BA R58/6188/2: 390–528.

<sup>21</sup> June 1934 circular “Für die Zweigleiter der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft-Deutschland: Beitrag zur Gegnerbekämpfung” (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 33/3: 317–19).

<sup>22</sup> Sekretariat am Goetheanum, Dornach, to Alfred Reebstein, Anthroposophical Society in Germany, January 11, 1934, BA R58/6193/2: 420. See also the 1931 correspondence between Karl Heyer and Fritz Rascher in BA R58/6188/2: 390–94, entertaining the notion that Schwartz-Bostunitsch was a Bolshevik and a Jew. Schwartz-Bostunitsch feared that anthroposophist Nazis were maneuvering to hinder his advance within the party and was convinced that “the anthroposophists have the *Gauleitung* of Baden completely in their hands”; see his July 16, 1934 SD report “Anthroposophie,” BA R58/6186: 162, and his November 23, 1934 memorandum, BA R58/6191/2: 543.



Schwartz-Bostunitsch began working for the SD in 1934, serving as a specialist on freemasonry at SD headquarters in Berlin, where he produced a lengthy paper trail of internal memoranda on the evils of anthroposophy and theosophy. He was forcibly retired by Heydrich in early 1937, however. Even in the overwrought atmosphere of Nazi *Gegnerforschung*, Schwartz-Bostunitsch's fanatical pursuit of freemasons, Bolsheviks, and Jews concealed behind occult masks was considered crude and excessive, and the SD eventually repudiated his work.<sup>23</sup> By the time of the 1941 "Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences," Schwartz-Bostunitsch no longer played an active role. But he and Heise contributed significantly to the ideological groundwork upon which SD efforts were based, as the idea of "occult lodges" became central to Nazi harassment of esoteric groups.<sup>24</sup>

Labeled "lodge-like organizations" by the SD, numerous occult groups were banned in the course of the 1930s. Their members faced severe restrictions in civil service employment, party membership, and other areas. The SD obsession with freemasonry offered a reliable point of reference whenever troublesome esoteric tendencies came under official scrutiny.<sup>25</sup> Harsh measures were also employed against non-occult organizations suspected of Masonic connections or classified as minority religious sects. Many of these groups were anything but hostile to National Socialist principles. They included the Pan-German League, the Thule Society, the Ludendorff movement, Artur Dinter's

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<sup>23</sup> See the withering internal SD report from November 3, 1938, designating Schwartz-Bostunitsch's work "downright dangerous" and contrary to the SD's "serious educational efforts." (BA R58/6144/2: 162–64)

<sup>24</sup> Examples from SD files include the undated list titled "Freimaurerische, okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten" (BA R58/5713/2: 551) identifying 31 different organizations, and Heydrich's July 20, 1937 order regarding "Auflösung freimaurerlogenähnlicher Organisationen" (BA R5101/23856: 161–64) listing several dozen "lodge-like organizations" to be dissolved. For context see the incisive treatment by Pfahl-Traughber, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos in der Weimarer Republik und im NS-Staat*.

<sup>25</sup> SD publications on the topic include Hans Richter, "Freimaurerei in der Abwehr" *Volk im Werden* September 1938, 436–42; Dieter Schwarz, *Die Freimaurerei: Weltanschauung, Organisation und Politik* (Berlin: Eher, 1938; "Dieter Schwarz" was a collective pseudonym for SD *Gegnerforschung* specialists); Franz Alfred Six, *Studien zur Geistesgeschichte der Freimaurerei* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1942). The July 1939 special issue on freemasonry of *Der Schulungsbrief: Das zentrale Monatsblatt der NSDAP* carried an article on "Winkellogen" with brief references to "the Theosophical Societies, the Anthroposophical Society and the Mazdaznan movement" (282).



*Deutsche Volkskirche*, the Nordic-Aryan Faith Community, and others large and small.<sup>26</sup>

As the institutional nucleus of the anti-esoteric faction within the Nazi movement, the SD and Gestapo were acutely aware of the resistance they faced from other parts of the Nazi hierarchy which actively or passively supported various occult groups and activities. Building on the notion of a fundamental link between esoteric organizations and Masonic lodges while extending the general logic of the struggle against “ideological enemies of National Socialism,” the SD analysts who oversaw the anti-occult campaign applied an identical catalogue of charges to virtually every occultist tendency they scrutinized. This constantly repeated list of complaints invariably included accusations of internationalism, pacifism, Jewish influence, aloofness from the national community, and the promotion of heterodox views on race, views allegedly incompatible with and intolerable to a genuinely National Socialist perspective. For the guardians of Nazism’s ideological purity, such claims amounted to the ultimate charge of defying the Nazi state.

The SD and Gestapo devoted impressive efforts to investigating, controlling, curtailing and dismantling occult organizations. The “Association for Occult Science” in Augsburg, with a total of twenty-eight members, was dissolved in March 1935 due to its “lodge-like character.”<sup>27</sup> A Christian esoteric group called the “League of Fighters for Faith and Truth” was banned in August 1935.<sup>28</sup> The *Gottesbund Tanatra* was disbanded in July 1936.<sup>29</sup> The “New Salem” movement was prohibited in May 1937.<sup>30</sup> A “Society for Esoteric Studies” in Leipzig and Berlin was placed under surveillance.<sup>31</sup> Grail mystics and rune mystics were targeted as well.<sup>32</sup> In November 1934 Heydrich decreed: “The Grail movement

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<sup>26</sup> See the 1937 list of “Ortsgruppenvorsitzende des Alldeutschen Verbandes, die als Freimaurer festgestellt werden konnten” (BA R58/6108: 4–10), or the list of “Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen” under SD surveillance (BA R58/5713/2: 456–59). The *Deutsch-Völkische Bruderschaft* was designated a “lodge-like organization” (BA R58/405: 77), while the *Kampfbund für Germanische Weltanschauung* was banned in October 1933 (BA R58/405: 80). On repression of the Ludendorffers between 1933 and 1937 cf. Schnoor, *Mathilde Ludendorff und das Christentum*, 208–14.

<sup>27</sup> BA R58/6106a/1: 10.

<sup>28</sup> “Verzeichnis der seit 1933 verbotenen Sekten,” June 7, 1939, BA R58/405: 80–84.

<sup>29</sup> BA R58/405: 57. For background on the *Gottesbund Tanatra* see Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 32–35, as well as their pamphlet *Der Gottesbund ‘Tanatra’: Die Entwicklung und die Grundzüge der Geistlehre in dem neuen Deutschen Reiche* (Görlitz, 1934).

<sup>30</sup> “Aufstellung der bisher verbotenen Sekten,” April 1939, BA R58/5713/1: 253–54.

<sup>31</sup> BA R58/6200/3; BA R58/7560: 66 and 77.

<sup>32</sup> “Auflösung des Bundes der Runenforscher,” February 21, 1935, BA R187/219.

belongs to those international occult federations with freemasonic connections whose activities in National Socialist Germany are to be impeded as much as possible.”<sup>33</sup> The same fate befell larger spiritualist and esoteric organizations. The Weissenberg sect, founded by Joseph Weißenberg at the beginning of the twentieth century, combined spiritual healing with *völkisch* elements and theosophical components, gaining a membership in the tens of thousands by the 1930s. Despite the high proportion of Nazi party members in its ranks, the group was suppressed in January 1935.<sup>34</sup>

A few months later the Gestapo moved against the Mazdaznan movement, an important occult tendency with members in Germany, Switzerland, and elsewhere. Founded in the United States at the turn of the century and established in Germany in 1908, Mazdaznan was influenced by theosophy and displayed a strong life reform emphasis, bringing together alternative nutrition, breathing exercises, and racial hygiene. It propounded a religion of racial regeneration, preaching a new Aryan race of the future and a return to ancient Aryan values while opposing racial mixing.<sup>35</sup> The Ministry of the Interior declared the Mazdaznan movement an enemy of the state in October 1935, and the group was dissolved in November.<sup>36</sup>

Other groups shared Mazdaznan's conjunction of occult and life reform themes. The *Deutsche Neugeistbewegung*, German offshoot of the New Thought movement, began as a split-off from the Theosophical Society and promoted yoga and vegetarianism in esoteric form. Its adherents advocated

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<sup>33</sup> Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt an alle Staatspolizeistellen, November 15, 1934, BA R58/405: 7. The “Naturphilosophischer Verein von Gralsanhängern e.V.” was banned in July 1937: R58/5713/1: 254. After the *Anschluss* the ban was extended to Austria; cf. “Das Ende der ‘Gralsanhänger’” *Reichspost* June 11, 1938.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Ulrich Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker: Heilssuche im Industriezeitalter* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), 91–211, and Rudolf Olden, “Märkische Reinkarnation: Weißenberg, der göttliche Meister” in Olden, ed., *Das Wunderbare oder die Verzauberten*, 21–36.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ulrich Linse, “Mazdaznan—die Rassenreligion vom arischen Friedensreich” in Schnurbein and Ulbricht, *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne*, 268–91; Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras: Geschichte, Gegenwart, Rituale* vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 378–400; Bernd Wedemeyer-Kolwe, *“Der neue Mensch”: Körperkultur im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 153–64; Johannes Graul, “Die Mazdaznan-Bewegung im Deutschen Kaiserreich: Eine archivalienbasierte Spurensuche” *Religion-Staat-Gesellschaft* 12 (2011), 369–86; David Ammann, *Die Rasse der Zukunft und Rassenhygiene* (Leipzig: Mazdaznan-Verlag, 1914); Otoman Hanish, *Mazdaznan-Rassenlehre* (Leipzig: Mazdaznan, 1933). For a critical overview of the Mazdaznan milieu after 1945 see Klaus Bellmund and Kaarel Siniveer, *Kulte, Führer, Lichtgestalten: Esoterik als Mittel rechtsradikaler Propaganda* (Munich: Knaur, 1997), 227–52.

<sup>36</sup> BA R58/6194/1: 240; BA R43II/149: 38.

faith healing through physical exercise and spiritual purification. By the early 1930s it had dozens of branches in Germany and tens of thousands of members. Although the group was emphatically pro-Nazi and its leadership made up largely of party members, it was expelled from the official Nazi life reform association in 1934.<sup>37</sup> The SD categorized the movement as an occultist sect and a Masonic front and monitored its publications.<sup>38</sup> Like similar groups, the *Neugeistbewegung* was deemed a competitor to, rather than an ally of, Nazi efforts to assimilate alternative spiritual tendencies. In 1938 the SD prepared to ban the movement.<sup>39</sup>

Theosophical organizations faced comparable treatment regardless of their stance toward Nazism. The "Theosophical Brotherhood" founded by Hermann Rudolph presented its version of theosophy as the appropriate vehicle for the spiritual renewal of Germany and greeted the dawn of the Third Reich with enthusiasm. Rudolph described National Socialism as the glorious next step in spiritual evolution, portraying theosophy as the fullest expression of Nazism's true goals. His publications promoted the German mission to unify the Aryan peoples and characterized the Theosophical Brotherhood as "the partner of the National Socialist movement in the spiritual sphere." According to Rudolph, "theosophical doctrines provide the ideological and religious foundation of National Socialism."<sup>40</sup> The SD did not share this view, and in

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<sup>37</sup> "Arbeitstagung des Sachverständigenbeirats für Volksgesundheit," *Der Heilpraktiker*, April 1934, 10–16. For background on the *Neugeistbewegung* see Wedemeyer-Kolwe, "Der neue Mensch", 164–74; Wolfgang Krabbe, "Die Weltanschauung der Deutschen Lebensreformbewegung ist der Nationalsozialismus: Zur Gleichschaltung einer Alternativströmung im Dritten Reich" *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 71 (1989), 431–61; Karl Baier, *Meditation und Moderne: Zur Genese eines Kernbereichs moderner Spiritualität in der Wechselwirkung zwischen Westeuropa, Nordamerika und Asien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), 520–42; Mathias Tietke, *Yoga im Nationalsozialismus: Konzepte, Kontraste, Konsequenzen* (Kiel: Ludwig, 2011), 61–74, 98–105, 119–25.

<sup>38</sup> See the 1934 "Übersicht über einige Theosophische Vereinigungen und Gesellschaften und deren Verbindungen zur Freimaurerei und anderen Geheimorden," BA R58/6197/1: 257.

<sup>39</sup> "Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten," June 20, 1938, BA R58/6074: 119.

<sup>40</sup> Hermann Rudolph, *Die Deutsche Theosophische Gesellschaft: Ihr deutscher Charakter und ihre deutsche Sendung*, Leipzig, September 1933; Theosophische Verbrüderung, *Was verkünden die theosophischen Vorträge?* January 1934; cf. Rudolph, *Die Theosophische Verbrüderung: Die arische Religion, ihr Wesen und ihre Prinzipien*, Leipzig 1933, and Rudolph, *Die deutsche Sendung der Theosophischen Verbrüderung*, Leipzig, October 1934. Copies of these pamphlets can be found in BA R58/6198/2. See also Hermann Rudolph, *Deutschlands Aufstieg: Des deutschen Volkes sittliche und religiöse Wiedergeburt, der Weg ins neue Zeitalter* (Leipzig: Theosophischer Kultur-Verlag, 1931); Rudolph, *Nationalsozialismus und Theosophie* (Leipzig: Theosophischer Kultur-Verlag, 1933); Rudolph, "Die Theosophische Verbrüderung und der Nationalsozialismus" April 14, 1933,

February 1935 ordered Rudolph's publications confiscated and banned. In April 1936 Himmler instructed the Gestapo to pursue the Theosophical Brotherhood "ruthlessly and unrelentingly."<sup>41</sup>

Rudolph's rival Hugo Vollrath, head of another Theosophical Society based in Leipzig, was equally aggressive in establishing a staunchly pro-Nazi standpoint. Vollrath had been a member of the Nazi party since 1931, and in 1933 declared Hitler's new order to be "the will of God."<sup>42</sup> In 1936 he boasted of his own contribution to integrating the theosophical movement into the Nazi state, and proposed establishing a "department for theosophy, mysticism and related areas" in the Reich Chamber of Culture.<sup>43</sup> The proposal fell on deaf ears. Effusive proclamations of esoteric support for Nazism did not mollify the SD and Gestapo; on the contrary, they provoked a harsher response. Vollrath's Theosophical Society was under surveillance from 1934 onward, and SD reports depicted the group as especially dangerous precisely because of its outspokenly pro-Nazi posture. It was dissolved in July 1937 as a "lodge-like organization." Vollrath's writings were taken as further evidence that theosophists were veiled internationalists, pacifists, freemasons and Bolsheviks. By attempting to mix their own doctrines with Nazi teachings on "the race question," theosophists like Vollrath threatened the ideological integrity of National Socialism.<sup>44</sup>

A paradigmatic figure in this regard was Johannes Maria Verweyen, General Secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society Adyar from 1928 to 1935. In 1933 Verweyen forcefully defended Nazi Jewish policy, arguing that "the so-called persecution of the Jews" in the new Germany was in fact

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BA R58/6201/4: 855–57. Though Rudolph's publications emphatically opposed racial mixing, the SD was unimpressed, dismissing his brochure *Nationalsozialismus und Theosophie* in November 1934 as "internationale, weltbürgerliche, sektiererische und aufklärerische Menschheitsduselei" (BA R58/6197/1: 235). On the Theosophical Brotherhood during the Nazi era see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 308–17, and the very informative unpublished master's thesis by Bernadett Bigalke, "Zur Theosophie in Leipzig in den Dreißiger Jahren" (Universität Leipzig, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Himmler to Heydrich, April 17, 1936, BA R58/6199/1: 230. In October 1937 Werner Best ordered that Rudolph be taken into "protective custody" (BA R58/6201: 947).

<sup>42</sup> Bigalke, "Zur Theosophie in Leipzig in den Dreißiger Jahren," 61; Vollrath's March 19, 1936 statement to the Leipzig police, BA R58/6199/2: 509.

<sup>43</sup> Vollrath to Heydrich, April 3, 1936, on letterhead of Theosophical Society, BA R58/6199/2: 476–87. The twelve page letter highlights Vollrath's Nazi credentials and the mutual compatibility of theosophy and National Socialism, and gives particular attention to Vollrath's longstanding opposition to Steiner and anthroposophy.

<sup>44</sup> 1935 SD report "Die Grundlagen der Theosophie," R58/6199/3: 345–51; April 1936 Gestapo report on Vollrath and the Leipzig Theosophical Society, BA R58/6199/2: 512–24.

“a response to the persecution of non-Jews by Jews, to the predominance of Jews in theater, literature, commerce, and so forth.” He deplored the “Jewish writings” which “corrupted young and old” in “our land,” and insisted that Hitler had saved Europe from “Bolshevism and chaos.”<sup>45</sup> Verweyen praised the Nazi “reconstruction of the nation” as the work of “divine providence” while commending Hitler’s “Christian spirit” and “living faith in God.”<sup>46</sup> In 1934 he ventured a synthesis between theosophy and Nazism, emphasizing their commonalities.<sup>47</sup> He offered an esoteric justification of “racial differences” and published a series of articles which “glorified Hitler and National Socialism.”<sup>48</sup> These efforts were fruitless, and Verweyen’s Theosophical Society was banned in July 1937. Though he had since left the theosophical fold, he was arrested as a result of the 1941 anti-occult campaign and died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen in March 1945.<sup>49</sup>

With even ardently pro-Nazi theosophists encountering utter rejection from the SD and Gestapo, the situation for the occult milieu as a whole looked bleak by the late 1930s. Developments in Nazi domestic strategy brought esoteric groups increasingly into the crosshairs of the security services. Direct confrontation with the mainstream churches had been subordinated, on Hitler’s orders, to foreign policy goals, depriving *Gegnerforschung* personnel of one of their primary targets. In the absence of systematic political opposition to Nazism, the SD had to prove itself through the identification and elimination of new and ever more sinister internal enemies to secure the German nation against the rising occult tide. An internal document from June 1938 indicates

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<sup>45</sup> Johannes Verweyen, “Zur Frage der Adyar-Gesellschaft” *Theosophische Rundschau* September 1933, 240–42. For additional information on Verweyen’s views on race see Christian Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 1043–45: “Gravierende Rassenunterschiede unterstellte Johannes Maria Verweyen, wobei er forderte, den volksfremden Einfluß der Juden in Deutschland einzudämmen, ihnen nicht dieselben Rechte zu gewähren, ihnen keine Ämter und schon gar nicht—wie nach 1918 geschehen—ihnen eine ‘Vorherrschaft im eigenen Volksleben’ einzuräumen.” (1044) Verweyen’s many-sided career cannot be reduced to these positions, but it would be historically irresponsible to overlook them.

<sup>46</sup> J. M. Verweyen, “Hitlers Lebensglaube” *Pädagogische Warte*, December 15, 1933, 1062.

<sup>47</sup> Johannes Maria Verweyen, *Nationalsozialismus und Theosophie* (Düsseldorf: Ring-Verlag, 1934). Verweyen was also extensively involved in the *Neugeist* movement; cf. Johannes M. Verweyen, *Neugeist und die Krisis der Gegenwart* (Pfullingen: Baum, 1933).

<sup>48</sup> Jessica Klein, *Wanderer zwischen den Weltanschauungen: Johannes Maria Verweyen (1883–1945)* (Münster: Lit, 2009), 169. See *ibid.*, 139–42 for context on Verweyen’s ambivalent reaction to Nazism.

<sup>49</sup> The SD summary report prior to his 1941 arrest can be found in BA R58/6287b/1: 251.

that the SD hoped to achieve a complete ban on occult groups in Berlin by the end of the year and extend the ban throughout the Reich soon after that.<sup>50</sup>

But there was no all-out campaign against occult groups in 1938 or 1939, and by the time the war began, the SD's efforts on this front were largely dormant. While many esoteric organizations had been suppressed, others continued to operate, and the guardians against "ideological enemies" were stymied and unable to eradicate the remaining threat. By early 1939 SD officials found themselves on the defensive and viewed the struggle against occult groups as a losing battle. Anthroposophy was a prime example: Surveying the course of the campaign against anthroposophists in February 1939, SD specialists summarized past successes in restricting the activities of Steiner's followers, but noted with frustration that anthroposophists and their supporters had managed to circumvent, suspend or reverse many of these measures. After a thorough review of current negotiations over the legal status of anthroposophist projects, they concluded that the effort to abolish anthroposophy had so far failed and that anthroposophists seemed likely to re-establish their public initiatives.<sup>51</sup>

The anti-esoteric faction ensconced in the SD and Gestapo recognized that they faced influential adversaries in other sectors of the Nazi hierarchy. They knew that Hess and his staff, Baeumler in the *Amt Rosenberg*, and Ohlendorf in the SD itself were willing to intervene on behalf of anthroposophical endeavors. Minister of Agriculture Darré and Lotar Eickhoff in the Interior Ministry were also seen as sympathizers of anthroposophy, and the SD considered the head of the party's "Examination Commission for Safeguarding National Socialist Writings," Karl Heinz Hederich, a supporter of occultists and astrologers.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> "Arbeitsplan der Sachgebiete: 'Völkisch-religiöse Gruppen' sowie 'Okkultistische und spiritistische Sekten, Astrologie,'" June 20, 1938, BA R58/6074: 116–19.

<sup>51</sup> February 6, 1939 "Vermerk: Betr.: Anthroposophie," BA R58/6193/1: 205–15: "Aus allen ergibt sich, daß die Organisation der anthroposophischen Lehrart keineswegs verschwunden ist. Abgesehen von dem Verbot der 'Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft' bestehen sämtliche früher mit ihr in enger Verbindung gewesenen und von ihr abhängigen Gruppen weiter," naming Waldorf schools, biodynamic agriculture, the Christian Community, and eurythmy enterprises. "Andererseits haben sich gerade in der letzten Zeit die Versuche auffällig gehäuft, eine Rehabilitation sowohl der einzelnen ehemaligen Anthroposophen als auch des anthroposophischen Schrifttums und damit der anthroposophischen Lehre überhaupt zu erreichen." (215)

<sup>52</sup> See the SD list of "Überzeugte Anhänger der Anthroposophen," BA R58/5563: 59; the related list of leading anthroposophists and their sympathizers, BA R58/5563: 35; and the materials sent from the SD-Leitabschnitt Berlin to RSHA Amt IV on May 16, 1941, BA R58/5563: 39. A February 1935 Gestapo report noted: "In Anbetracht des Umstandes, daß sich der Stellvertreter des Führers für die Antroposophische [sic] Gesellschaft interessi-



These intra-Nazi rivalries are essential to understanding the timing of the June 1941 anti-occult campaign.

Since 1940 preparations had been in progress for the invasion of the Soviet Union. The SD was intimately involved in planning for the surprise invasion and subsequent occupation. Military dynamics may have encouraged anti-occultist Nazis to seize the opportunity for a move against their preferred suspects. John Conway has suggested that Nazi opponents of minority religious organizations saw a chance to strike in May and June 1941, after a series of German military victories in the Balkans, and thus ride a wave of popular support for the regime before the next armed adventure.<sup>53</sup>

It was Hess's unexpected flight to Britain on May 10, 1941, however, that triggered the "Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences." The Deputy of the Führer apparently hoped to arrange a separate peace with the British and flew alone and unannounced on a quixotic mission without Hitler's knowledge.<sup>54</sup> The event came at a delicate time for Nazi authorities and represented a significant embarrassment for the regime. As soon as Hess's flight became known the search for a face-saving explanation commenced, along with the usual jockeying for position and power among Hess's former colleagues and competitors. The incident provided an unforeseen opportunity for Hess's chief of staff Bormann, whose longstanding ties to the SD were an advantage in responding quickly to the crisis. With the help of Heydrich, Bormann came up with a narrative about Hess's flight that struck Hitler and Goebbels as a credible way to allay potential anxieties among the German people.

The story they devised centered on Hess's susceptibility to occult doctrines and practices. This was not pure invention; for some time Hess had "surrounded himself with clairvoyants and astrologers" and personally cultivated

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ert, kommt es in erster Linie darauf an, den jüdischen und freimaurerischen Einfluß innerhalb der Antroposophischen Gesellschaft nachzuweisen und näher darzulegen, daß die in der Antroposophischen Gesellschaft vertretenen Gedankengänge mit der völkischen Weltanschauung des neuen Staates unvereinbar sind." (BA R58/6193/1: 173)

<sup>53</sup> J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933–45* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 259; cf. Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskriege*, 525–26.

<sup>54</sup> Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß*, 252–68; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 2000), 369–81; David Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality: Rudolf Hess and his Mission to Scotland* (London: Random House, 2002); Armin Nolzen, "Der Heß-Flug vom 10. Mai 1941 und die öffentliche Meinung im NS-Staat" in Martin Sabrow, ed., *Skandal und Diktatur: Formen öffentlicher Empörung im NS-Staat und in der DDR* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 130–56; Jo Fox, "Propaganda and the Flight of Rudolf Hess, 1941–45" *Journal of Modern History* 83 (2011), 78–110.



esoteric approaches to health care and nutrition.<sup>55</sup> He was “profoundly interested in astrology, anthroposophy, the occult and related areas” and kept a biodynamic diet.<sup>56</sup> Hess told the British doctor who examined him after his flight “that he had for years been interested in Steiner’s anthroposophy.”<sup>57</sup> Goebbels remarked that the letters Hess left behind explaining his decision were “overflowing with half-baked occultism.”<sup>58</sup> Writing in 1946, former Reich Minister Hans Frank recalled the May 11, 1941 emergency meeting of high Nazi officials to discuss the Hess crisis; according to Frank’s account, Hitler blamed the flight on “the claue of astrologers Hess kept around himself and allowed to influence him.” Hitler reportedly declared: “It is time to do away with this stargazing nonsense once and for all.”<sup>59</sup>

On the basis of these suspicions Nazi leaders disseminated the claim that Hess had taken his errant step under occult influence. Astrologers and anthroposophists were said to have manipulated the Deputy of the Führer through occult means. The claim served as a convenient rationalization of the embarrassing episode as well as a useful pretext for a final settling of accounts with the occultists Heydrich and his allies despised. Much of the backlash after Hess’s flight involved Bormann’s intrigues to take over Hess’s key position, while Goebbels viewed the Hess crisis as an opportunity to put occultists behind bars.<sup>60</sup> As a result of the chosen explanation for Hess’s seemingly

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<sup>55</sup> Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs*, 89; cf. Alfred Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs* (Göttingen: Musters Schmidt, 1955), entry from November 1939: “Heilkundige aller Art umgaben ihn. Astrologen, Pendler, waren in seiner Umgebung.” (89)

<sup>56</sup> Peter Longerich, “Hitler’s Deputy: The Role of Rudolf Hess in the Nazi Regime” in Stafford, ed., *Flight from Reality*, 114; Albert Speer, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1969), 133–34. Cf. Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 199–202; Rainer Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß: Botengang eines Toren?* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1997), 44, 46, 170; Peter Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter: Führung der Partei und Kontrolle des Staatsapparates durch den Stab Heß und die Partei-Kanzlei Bormann* (Munich: Saur, 1992), 111–13.

<sup>57</sup> J. R. Rees, *The Case of Rudolf Hess* (London: Heinemann, 1947), 35.

<sup>58</sup> Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels* vol. 9 (Munich: Saur, 1998), 311, entry from May 14, 1941.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Frank, *Im Angesicht des Galgens* (Munich: Beck, 1953), 411.

<sup>60</sup> Lang, *Der Sekretär*, 162–89; Schellenberg, *Schellenberg Memoirs*, 202–03; diary entry by Goebbels on May 16, 1941 in Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, 315. Bormann may have planned an anti-astrology drive before Hess’s flight; see his May 7, 1941 circular on “Aberglaube, Wunderglaube und Astrologie als Mittel staatsfeindlicher Propaganda,” warning against “occult circles” attempting to confuse the people: Bormann, Rundschreiben an alle Gauleiter, streng vertraulich!, May 7, 1941, BA NS8/185: 81–83. For context see the detailed account by Ellic Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1984).

inexplicable act, astrologers and anthroposophists came to be central targets in the anti-occult campaign.

The emphasis on Hess's connection to anthroposophy was augmented by the intervention of Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, professor of comparative religion at the university of Tübingen. Hauer had been a critical analyst of anthroposophy since the early 1920s, initially as a scholar but shifting to a denunciatory approach in 1934, when he began to collaborate with the SD.<sup>61</sup> In the course of pursuing ostensible enemies of National Socialism, Hauer also pursued his own religious goals centered on a mixture of Nordic, neo-pagan and Aryan elements. As founder of the German Faith Movement he tried to rally the disparate *völkisch* religious factions under his leadership. Hauer engaged in constant polemics against spiritual tendencies other than his own in an attempt to establish the hegemony of his idiosyncratic vision of religious renewal.<sup>62</sup> The attempt failed. In 1935 the German Faith Movement ran afoul of the SD and Heydrich forbade Hauer from leading public meetings, while his extravagant denunciations of other spiritual movements grew more shrill.<sup>63</sup>

By 1941 Hauer's views on anthroposophy had degenerated into a blend of paranoia and belligerence, though retaining traces of the detailed research from his earlier academic analyses. In view of his troubled relationship with the SD, he embraced the opening provided by the Hess crisis to position himself as an expert on anthroposophist iniquity. In the days immediately following Hess's flight Hauer wrote three lengthy letters to Himmler insisting that

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<sup>61</sup> The best study of Hauer is Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*. His publications include J. W. Hauer, *Werden und Wesen der Anthroposophie: Eine Wertung und eine Kritik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1922); Hauer, "Die Anthroposophie als Weg zum Geist" *Die Tat* February 1921, 801–24; Hauer, *Deutsche Gottschau: Grundzüge eines deutschen Glaubens* (Stuttgart: Gutbrod, 1935); Hauer, *Germany's New Religion: The German Faith Movement* (New York: Abingdon, 1937). For a remarkably positive anthroposophist assessment of Hauer's teachings see Wilhelm Salewski, "Wilhelm Hauer: Deutsche Gottschau" *Die Christengemeinschaft* July 1936, 115–20.

<sup>62</sup> Compare Horst Junginger, "Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung als ideologisches Zentrum der völkisch-religiösen Bewegung" in Puschner and Vollnhals, eds., *Die völkisch-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus*, 65–102; Ulrich Nanko, *Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung: Eine historische und soziologische Untersuchung* (Marburg: Diagonal, 1993); Schaul Baumann, *Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung und ihr Gründer Jakob Wilhelm Hauer* (Marburg: Diagonal, 2005); Karla Poewe and Irving Hexham, "Jakob Wilhelm Hauer's New Religion and National Socialism" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20 (2005), 195–215.

<sup>63</sup> See the February 11, 1935 order for surveillance of the Deutsche Glaubensbewegung, BA R58/405; 16; cf. BA R58/5713/2: 456–59 and BA R58/7410. For context see Junginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, 152–54; Tietke, *Yoga im Nationalsozialismus*, 149–73; Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskriege*, 206–09.

Hess was “a victim of anthroposophy.”<sup>64</sup> Offering his expertise in the final offensive against Steiner’s movement, Hauer once again joined the SD in tracking down the culprits. Even before the June 9 actions he held a lecture for Nazi cadre on “Occultism and its dangers for the Reich.”<sup>65</sup> An underlying factor in this collaboration was Hauer’s residual resentment against anthroposophy as an obstacle to the spread of his own spiritual ideals.

According to Horst Junginger, anthroposophy represented for Hauer “a worldview that stood in the way of the religious goals of the German Faith Movement and must therefore be combated with all available means.”<sup>66</sup> Hauer had initially approached Steiner’s esoteric system as a possible contributor to spiritual regeneration, but came to view it as a competitor to be eliminated. In the early 1920s “Hauer saw anthroposophy as the beginning of a new era, an epoch of new and powerful intellectual and spiritual creation.”<sup>67</sup> Like Steiner’s followers, Hauer rejected the “biological and materialist narrowing of the concept of race” and insisted on the “soul-spiritual dimension” of racial identity.<sup>68</sup> For Hauer the SD expert, however, Steiner had simply become a “fraud” who peddled a “clever mélange of symbol and allegory with no creative power.”<sup>69</sup> When the chance came in May 1941, Hauer vigorously promoted the notion that Hess had fallen prey to the occult machinations of devious anthroposophists.

Fanciful as it may have been, the connection posited between Hess’s disappearance and astrologers and anthroposophists had immediate repercussions for senior members of Hess’s staff. His adjutant Alfred Leitgen, who had done so

<sup>64</sup> Hauer’s May 1941 letters to Himmler are in BA R58/6194/2: 10–15.

<sup>65</sup> See Hauer’s June 7, 1941 letter to SD supervisor Albert Hartl, BA R58/6194/2: 9.

<sup>66</sup> Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 197. Junginger’s chapter on Hauer’s developing attitudes toward anthroposophy (197–215) provides crucial background to his role in the 1941 campaign.

<sup>67</sup> Karla Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4. Junginger concurs: “Although Hauer emerged as one of the harshest critics of anthroposophy, he viewed anthroposophy at first as a spiritually related movement based on a foundation similar to his own, namely an answer to the spiritual desolation of the industrial age with all of its negative features.” This changed as Hauer’s own religious ambitions grew: “From a perceived ally in the struggle for the spiritualization of life, anthroposophy quickly turned into a rival that had to be combated.” (Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 197–98) For anthroposophist accounts see Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 301–09, and Wolfgang Gädeke, *Das Verbot der Christengemeinschaft und Prof. Jakob Wilhelm Hauer* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Junginger, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft*, 175.

<sup>69</sup> Hauer, “Theosophie und Anthroposophie,” unpublished typescript, October 1941, BA NS 15/404, quote on 50. The 69 page document offers a retrospective view of Hauer’s shifting perspective on anthroposophy over the course of two decades.

much to promote anthroposophist endeavors, was arrested the day after Hess's flight. Leitgen was expelled from the Nazi party, interned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, then sent to fight on the Eastern front.<sup>70</sup> Similar punishment was meted out to Leitgen's colleague Ernst Schulte-Strathaus, Hess's specialist for occult matters and the other prominent supporter of anthroposophy on his staff. Schulte-Strathaus, an astrologer, was accused of aiding preparations for Hess's flight by casting horoscopes for a propitious departure date. He was expelled from the party and sent to Sachsenhausen, and was released in 1943.<sup>71</sup> Hess's aides became suitable scapegoats for Nazi factions vying for the upper hand in the wake of his ill-fated flight.

Anti-occultist Nazis had looked askance at Leitgen and Schulte-Strathaus for years and took special umbrage at their purported role in the Hess affair. The ensuing scramble for accountability heightened the stakes. In late May 1941 Rosenberg's staff contended that they had been trying to counter occultists and astrologers all along but had been hindered by "circles around the Deputy of the Führer, above all *Reichsamtsleiter* Schulte-Strathaus."<sup>72</sup> The SD, meanwhile, viewed Rosenberg's office as supporters of occultism and especially of astrology, while also noting: "On the staff of the Deputy of the Führer it was principally Schulte-Strathaus who enlisted Rudolf Hess into occultism."<sup>73</sup> In a letter to Bormann, Rosenberg indicated that he saw the Hess debacle as a chance to take back competencies stolen from him by Hess's staff, emphasizing his particular opposition to "astrologers and occultists" and calling for more thoroughgoing strictures against them.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> On Leitgen's expulsion from the party see BA SA 154-A: 20-31. A copy of Leitgen's June 22, 1941 interrogation regarding Hess, with considerable attention to anthroposophical matters, is in BA R58/6194/2: 17-18.

<sup>71</sup> On Schulte-Strathaus' expulsion from the party see BA PK/L95: 2785-2866. Along with Leitgen and Schulte-Strathaus, four other ranking members of Hess's staff were taken into "protective custody" on Hitler's orders and expelled from the party. Hess's secretaries and chauffeur were arrested as well.

<sup>72</sup> "Lagebericht auf dem Gebiet des astrologischen Schrifttums," BA NS8/185: 52. Another memorandum from Rosenberg's office railed against Schulte-Strathaus for protecting "den gesamten Bereich des Okkultismus" (BA NS8/185: 65-68).

<sup>73</sup> "Maßnahmen gegen Okkultisten, Astrologen, Kurpfuscher u. dgl.," May 22, 1941, BA R58/6197/1: 13-17. Longtime occultist Gerda Walther, who belonged to the Christian Community in the mid-1930s, recounts that the Gestapo discovered her correspondence with Schulte-Strathaus while searching her home and considered it incriminating. She also reports that the official order for her arrest on June 9, 1941 read "Sonderaktion Rudolf Hess." Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer* (Remagen: Reichl, 1960), 474 and 591.

<sup>74</sup> Rosenberg to Bormann, May 28, 1941, BA NS8/185: 43-48.

The SD and Gestapo had been compiling information on occultists since the early years of the regime, and the Hess crisis was a welcome opportunity to round up as many of them as possible. The compressed timing of the action compromised its effectiveness. Heydrich gave local SD and Gestapo agencies little time to respond to his far-reaching orders, and reports from regional offices noted that they could do little more than collate and submit data from existing records within the time period available.<sup>75</sup> The initial order for the "Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences" was issued on Wednesday, June 4, with the arrests, searches, and interrogations to occur on Monday, June 9, between 7:00 and 9:00 AM. The directive applied to the entire territory of the expanded German Reich, including Austria, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. It referred specifically to ten different esoteric tendencies, identified as "astrologers, occultists, spiritualists, adherents of occult theories of rays, soothsayers, faith healers, adherents of Christian science, anthroposophy, theosophy, and ariosophy."<sup>76</sup> But every conceivable variety of occultism was eventually encompassed in the campaign's spotlight. The targeted groups came to include palm readers, graphologists, mediums, clairvoyants, dowsers, mesmerists, fortune tellers, purveyors of alternative health therapies, believers in runes, pendulums, numerology, divination, Grail mysticism, Rosicrucianism, hollow earth theories, and others.

Comprehensive in its scope, the June 4 order was preceded by a flurry of preparations within the SD central office prompted by Bormann's telegram to Heydrich on May 14, 1941. The telegram reported: "The Führer wishes that the strongest measures be directed against occultists, astrologists, medical quacks, and the like, who lead the people astray into stupidity and superstition."<sup>77</sup> Bormann asked Heydrich to provide concrete recommendations for anti-occult actions as soon as possible. SD staff working under Albert Hartl, specialist for religious matters, generated a list of immediate measures two days later, and a longer list within a week.<sup>78</sup> These included arrest and interrogation

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<sup>75</sup> See the responses from local and regional SD offices regarding "Okkultistische Gruppen," BA R58/5660.

<sup>76</sup> Der Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD an alle Leiter der Staatspolizei(leit)stellen und Kripo(leit)stellen und Führer der SD (Leit)Abschnitte, Betrifft: Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften, June 4, 1941, BA R58/1029: 57–70. A translation appears in Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 378–82.

<sup>77</sup> Bormann to Heydrich, May 14, 1941, BA R58/6197/1: 19.

<sup>78</sup> See the four page proposal from Hartl's office on May 22, 1941, BA R58/6197/1: 13–17, referring to their previous *Sofortmaßnahmen* from May 16.

of leading occultists, confiscation of occult literature, and a ban on all occult organizations, with special emphasis on anthroposophical institutions. The June 4 order outlined the steps to be taken against occult publishers in particular, as well as basic interrogation procedures for individual occultists. Suspects were to be punished according to their level of participation in esoteric activities; penalties ranged from release on probation with a stern warning and permanent prohibition on future occult activities, to internment in a concentration camp. Upon release, all those detained were to be sworn to secrecy regarding the action itself.

General orders were soon followed by in-depth materials with information on hundreds of individual suspects, spelling out concrete actions to be implemented. On June 6 Hartl issued detailed instructions for interrogation of arrested occultists.<sup>79</sup> The eleven-page guidelines contained descriptions of four different types of occultists followed by questions to be asked in each case. A number of the questions indicated the SD's abiding preoccupation with Steiner's influence.<sup>80</sup> The instructions for dealing with occultist publishers and booksellers were notably harsh; since the aim of the action was to vanquish "ideological enemies" and put an end to occult doctrines, an essential part of achieving that end was to eliminate the institutional basis for disseminating these doctrines. Hence all copies of every occult publication of any kind were to be immediately confiscated, including inspections of printing shops, bookstores, warehouses, and the business and personal quarters of all occult publishers. Correspondence with authors was to be impounded. The stated goal was "the complete elimination of all texts of this kind."<sup>81</sup>

Finally, the SD distributed specific reports on several hundred individuals to be charged with "occult activities," providing details on those ostensible activities as well as recommended penalties for each person arrested.<sup>82</sup> Some

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<sup>79</sup> Hartl's circular to all *Staatspolizeistellen* and *SD-Abschnitte*, June 6, 1941, marked "Geheim! Betr.: Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sog. Geheimwissenschaften," sending "Sachhinweise für die Vernehmungen der Anhänger okkulten Lehren," BA R58/5713/1: 216–27.

<sup>80</sup> The last of the four types of occultists listed was "theosophists, anthroposophists, and similar groups," but the section concentrated much more on anthroposophy than on theosophy. Questions for the other three types of occultists included queries about anthroposophy; the final three questions to be posed to "spiritualists" asked: "Have you read writings by Rudolf Steiner? If so, what do you think of them? How do you propose to bring your occult views into line with the National Socialist worldview?" (BA R58/5713/1: 220)

<sup>81</sup> "Anlage zum Schnellbrief vom 4.6.1941," BA R58/1029: 67–70.

<sup>82</sup> This voluminous series of documents can be found in BA R58/6287a and R58/6287b. There is generally one page for each person to be detained, with basic information on the suspect in question, including addresses and further identifying evidence when available. The



of the targets were organizations. While anthroposophists were in the center of the SD's sights, they were supposed to receive relatively mild treatment compared to other occultists. Anthroposophist Gerhard Hardorp, pastor of the Christian Community congregation in Bielefeld, was to be given a police warning after a house search. A dozen other "leading members of the Christian Community" scattered throughout the Reich were to receive the same treatment. Anthroposophist publisher Karl Eymann, former head of the Rudolf Steiner branch of the Anthroposophical Society and treasurer of the Dresden Waldorf school, was subject to further sanctions: his house was to be searched and his writings impounded. The recommended action for Franz Dreidax was "house arrest for the duration of the investigation."<sup>83</sup> In the majority of cases the recommended measures for anthroposophists were house search, interrogation, and police warning, as well as confiscation of correspondence in exceptional circumstances.

Other occultists faced extended imprisonment. The recommended punishment for a fortune teller named Caroline Thun was "arrest and transferal to a concentration camp."<sup>84</sup> An even stiffer sentence was slated for occultist publisher Karl Rohm, a fierce critic of anthroposophy and competing esoteric doctrines. Rohm published a broad assortment of occult materials in addition to life reform, astrological, and antisemitic literature. He was a Nazi party member and had been involved in *völkisch* causes for decades.<sup>85</sup> Along with

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nature of their alleged "occult activities" ("okkulte Betätigung") is specified, followed by an "Exekutivvorschlag" or "executive recommendation," as the SD's role was to make 'recommendations' for the police forces to follow. These recommended executive measures could include interrogation, house search, warning, surveillance, protective custody, regular arrest, imprisonment, and internment in a concentration camp. Some of the information was out of date; the SD sought the arrest of a number of figures who were dead or had left Germany years earlier.

<sup>83</sup> Hardorp: BA R58/6287a/1: 301; Dreidax: BA R58/6287/2a: 240; Eymann: R58/6287a/2: 253. Eymann (1889–1943) was owner of the Emil Weises publishing house. Retrospective accounts from Christian Community pastors indicate that many were arrested on June 9 and jailed for several weeks; cf. Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. IV, 26–40, and Kurt von Wistinghausen, "Aus der Verbotszeit der Christengemeinschaft" *Flensburger Hefte Sonderheft 8* (1991), 131–43. On their relatively comfortable internment conditions see Gundhild Kačer-Bock, *Emil Bock: Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993), 447–58.

<sup>84</sup> BA R58/6287b/1: 233. Further points of comparison include the June 1941 records of Gestapo interrogation of former members of the *Bund der Kämpfer für Glaube und Wahrheit*, BA R58/6074: 446–69.

<sup>85</sup> Karl Rohm (1873–1948) was engaged in Nazi activities as early as 1923 and joined the party in 1933. Cf. Manfred Schramm, *Stadt und Kloster Lorch im Nationalsozialismus* (Schwäbisch Gmünd: Einhorn, 2004), 30–31, 177.



his employees, Rohm was to be sent to a concentration camp “for a long period of time” and have all of his property confiscated.<sup>86</sup> His son was arrested by the Gestapo and incarcerated at the Welzheim concentration camp near Stuttgart, then sent to the Eastern front.<sup>87</sup> In other cases the outcome is difficult to determine, but first-hand testimony is available from several individuals detained on June 9, 1941.<sup>88</sup> One estimate puts the total number of arrests between 300 and 1000.<sup>89</sup>

Based on information provided by local and regional SD offices, virtually the entire spectrum of anthroposophist institutions was included in the “Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences,” from Waldorf education to eurythmy programs to biodynamic farming. SD agents in the modestly sized Rhineland town of Neustadt listed nineteen anthroposophist groups in the local area and provided names, dates of birth, addresses, and further information on dozens of individual anthroposophists. The Stuttgart SD branch

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<sup>86</sup> BA R58/6287/2b: 126 on the Karl Rohm Verlag in Lorch, noting that “die Firma gehört zu den Zentralpunkten der okkultistischen Bewegung.” Rohm was first on the list of “Verlage, die im Dienste okkulturer Gruppen stehen” submitted by the SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart on June 1, 1941: “In dem ganzen Bücherverzeichnis findet sich nicht ein einziges Buch, das dem nationalsozialistischen Empfinden auch nur annähernd entspricht.” (R58/5660: 255)

<sup>87</sup> Post-war account from Richard Rohm in Schramm, *Stadt und Kloster Lorch im Nationalsozialismus*, 126–28.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer*, 583–98; Klein, *Begegnungen*, 100–02; Wilhelm Wulff, *Tierkreis und Hakenkreuz: Als Astrologe an Himmlers Hof* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1968), 109–11. Walther reports that she was jailed for roughly a week and interrogated on an almost daily basis, with the questions focusing on “Okkultismus, Astrologie, Anthroposophie usw.” (596). Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs*, 88–89, describes his arrest in May 1941 and his interrogation by Heydrich regarding Hess’s flight, but says he was held for only five hours and released on Himmler’s orders. For a contemporary anthroposophist report see Jürgen von Grone’s June 19, 1941 letter to a sympathetic high official in the Prussian State Ministry (GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 34: 9–14) describing house searches of former members of the Anthroposophical Society, confiscation of literature, Gestapo interrogations, and Christian Community pastors placed in investigative custody.

<sup>89</sup> Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich*, 197. See also the testimony from Friedrich Schlotterbeck, a prisoner at the Welzheim concentration camp, about the arrival of occultists in June 1941: “Heß, ‘das Gewissen der Partei’, war durchgegangen. Ein Autobus brachte eine Fuhre von Wahrsagern, Sterndeutern, Redakteuren und Verlegern. Sie wurden beschuldigt, den Geist von Heß verwirrt zu haben. Es waren wunderliche Käuze.” Schlotterbeck, *Je dunkler die Nacht desto heller die Sterne: Erinnerungen eines deutschen Arbeiters 1933–1945* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1945), 99. Tietke, *Yoga im Nationalsozialismus*, 119 reports that the directors of the *Neugeist Verlag* were arrested in the June 1941 action and sent to Welzheim, and the entire holdings of the publishing house destroyed.

submitted membership lists for the Anthroposophical Society in Württemberg and subscription lists for anthroposophist periodicals, as well as information on the Weleda company and the Waldorf publishing house.<sup>90</sup> Many of these projects were shut down in the course of the anti-occultist campaign, with the significant exception of SS-sponsored biodynamic endeavors and the Weleda enterprises, which continued to operate throughout the Nazi era. Anthroposophist publications were banned and books by Steiner were confiscated. In July 1941 the last remaining Waldorf school was closed, the Christian Community was dissolved, and the Reich League for Biodynamic Agriculture was disbanded.

The Christian Community received particularly careful attention from the SD and Gestapo, who considered it the direct successor to the Anthroposophical Society.<sup>91</sup> Its publishing house was also liquidated in July 1941. Despite these measures, anthroposophist authors were able to write long after June 1941. Franz Dreidax, Max Karl Schwarz, Elisabeth Klein, Johannes Bertram-Pingel, Georg Halbe, Otto Julius Hartmann, Rudolf Hauschka, Jürgen von Grone, Wolfgang Schuchhardt and others continued to publish throughout the war. But serious disruptions were common. In a June 12, 1941 letter to Darré, Alwin Seifert described police actions against the biodynamic movement, with anthroposophist homes searched and copies of *Demeter* confiscated.<sup>92</sup> While Seifert himself was unmolested, Erhard Bartsch and Hans Merkel were arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo.<sup>93</sup>

Aside from anthroposophist groups, other esoteric associations were suppressed in the 1941 campaign. The "League for Spiritual Culture" in Nuremberg

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<sup>90</sup> SD-Abschnitt Neustadt an der Weinstraße, May 31, 1941, BA R58/5660: 11–16; SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart to RSHA Amt III C, June 1, 1941, BA R58/5660: 227–30; cf. SD-Abschnitt Nürnberg, "Betr.: Okkultistische Gruppen" June 1, 1941, "Gruppe F: Anthroposophen und Theosophen," BA R58/5660: 50.

<sup>91</sup> See the September 16, 1941 circular from Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller ordering ongoing surveillance of former Christian Community members (BA R58/6193/1: 267) and the SD recommendation from June 9, 1941 that the group's headquarters in Berlin be closed and the property impounded (BA R58/6287a/2: 220). The Christian Community was not banned in the occupied Netherlands, where it had several congregations.

<sup>92</sup> Seifert to Darré, June 12, 1941, BAK N1094 II 1. Seifert speculated that the chemical industry was behind the actions. The SD viewed Seifert as an anthroposophist; he features prominently in the list of "Führende Anthroposophen" sent by the SD-Leitabschnitt Berlin to RSHA Amt IV on May 16, 1941 (BA R58/5563: 37). On November 14, 1941, however, Heydrich ordered that no measures be taken against Seifert: BA R58/6194/2: 170.

<sup>93</sup> Bartsch interrogation, June 20, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 299–305; Merkel interrogation, June 24, 1941, BA R58/6223/1: 288–97.

was dispersed, though its chairman and vice-chairman were both Nazi party members. The "German Society for Scientific Occultism" was broken up.<sup>94</sup> Ariosophists were also targeted, including Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, the Austrian founder of ariosophy, and Herbert Reichstein, his foremost German representative.<sup>95</sup> Many reports submitted in advance of the June 1941 action addressed ariosophy as one of the more dangerous forms of occultism, and the SD often combined ariosophy with theosophical and other groups in one amalgamated category. Internal SD analyses harshly dismissed ariosophist racial teachings as irreconcilable with National Socialism.<sup>96</sup> This treatment of ariosophy is singularly striking in light of the broad continuities between ariosophical race doctrines and Nazism.

The SD's evaluation of a 1936 book on "Aryan wisdom" by ariosophist and Nazi party member Ernst Issberner-Haldane provides a revealing example.<sup>97</sup> In March 1936 an SS corporal in the SD text analysis department in Leipzig submitted a report on Issberner-Haldane's book, characterizing its treatment of race as "dilettantish and pseudo-scientific." The SD analyst's chief concern was the ariosophical appropriation of Nazi themes. His report noted that Issberner-Haldane "repeatedly endorses the basic principles and actions of

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<sup>94</sup> On the "Bund für Geisteskultur" in Nuremberg see BA R58/5660: 36–37; on the "Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftlichen Okkultismus" see R58/6287a/2: 232.

<sup>95</sup> For the SD summary on Lanz von Liebenfels, including his address in Vienna, see BA R58/6287/2b: 10; for Reichstein, including his address in Berlin, see BA R58/6287/2b: 195. Both documents list the author's respective publications. Neither contains an "Exekutivvorschlag"; it is unclear if the two ariosophists were in fact detained.

<sup>96</sup> See e.g. the July 29, 1936 SD memorandum on "Theosophie, Mazdaznan, Ariosophie, Astrologie usw." (BA R58/6201: 47), or the materials on ariosophy and the *Armanenschaft* in BA R58/5994/2: 768–70. The June 1936 *Monatsbericht* from the SD *Hauptabteilung Presse und Schrifttum* includes a detailed assessment of ariosophy (BA R58/64: 45–52). It begins: "Nach der Machtergreifung durch den Nationalsozialismus witterte eine Reihe von Leuten, die ihre sektiererischen Anschauungen mit völkischen und rassischen Gedanken vermischten, in Deutschland eine Konjunktur für ihr Schrifttum." After a basically accurate summary of ariosophical race doctrine, the report states categorically: "Im einzelnen besteht die ariosophische Rassenlehre aber aus einer Reihe unhaltbarer Verirrungen, die es erforderlich machen, daß sich der Nationalsozialismus und der nationalsozialistische Staat scharf von dieser Lehre absetzen." (48) Under the heading "Ariosophie und Judentum" the report avows: "Die Ariosophen gebärden sich zwar antisemitisch, vergiften aber ihre Anhänger mit jüdischen Anschauungen" (49).

<sup>97</sup> Ernst Issberner-Haldane, *Arisches Weistum* (Zeulenroda: Sporn, 1935). For background on Issberner-Haldane (1886–1966), a major proponent of esoteric racism from the 1920s onward, see Goodrick-Clarke, *Occult Roots of Nazism*, 165–68, and Tietke, *Yoga im Nationalsozialismus*, 111–19. Issberner-Haldane joined the Nazi party in 1933 and published in *Der Stürmer* in 1934. His racial writings focused on Jews as a threat to Aryan spiritual values.

the National Socialist state in maintaining racial purity and eugenic health, which he compounds with his own doctrine of reincarnation and perfection.” Moreover, the ariosophist author “emphasizes somewhat ostentatiously his positive stance toward the National Socialist state” and presented himself as a “pioneer of the Aryan idea, fulminating against the Jews as racially inferior.” In the SD’s judgement, however, Issberner-Haldane’s book was “far removed” from the National Socialist worldview.<sup>98</sup> Nazi officials seem to have found ariosophy embarrassing. A June 1936 SD report warned that ariosophy’s ornate racial mythology “offers especially suitable material for the international agitation against German race doctrine.” The report concluded: “Ariosophist racial teachings consist of a series of untenable aberrations, making it necessary for the National Socialist state to distance itself sharply from this theory.”<sup>99</sup>

With anthroposophists, ariosophists, astrologers and others under tight supervision, and with attention shifted to the new war in the East, the “Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences” wound down in the summer of 1941. On a few occasions anthroposophists with secure positions protested the crackdown, to little effect. In a June 15, 1941 letter to the *Amt Rosenberg*, Wilhelm Schmundt lamented that the relentless pursuit of anthroposophists was destroying “fertile seeds of German cultural life” precious to the nation. A month later he wrote to the local Gestapo headquarters declaring anthroposophy “a decisive achievement of the German spirit.”<sup>100</sup> An anthroposophist since 1926, Schmundt was the scion of a Prussian military family. Under the Nazis he served as technical director of the power supply for East Prussia, and his brother was Colonel Rudolf Schmundt, Chief Adjutant of the Wehrmacht on Hitler’s staff. His objections were of no avail. Other anthroposophist protests invoked urgent national needs. Jürgen von Grone, a retired military officer, warned that the persecution of Steiner’s followers would dangerously weaken the German war effort at a crucial time for the fatherland. Writing to a friendly government official, he demanded: “Are anthroposophists

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<sup>98</sup> ss-Sturmann Nicolai, Verbindungsstelle Leipzig, March 8, 1936, BA R58/7560: 27–38. The accompanying letter to Nicolai’s superior noted the book’s “congruence with theosophy and anthroposophy.” For context see Jan-Pieter Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im Dritten Reich: Institutionen, Kompetenzen, Betätigungsfelder* (Munich: dtv, 1995), 110–14.

<sup>99</sup> SD Hauptabteilung Presse und Schrifttum, June 1936, BA R58/64: 49.

<sup>100</sup> Wilhelm Schmundt to Amt Rosenberg, June 15, 1941, BA NS 15/303: 58297; Schmundt to Staatspolizeileitstelle Königsberg, July 15, 1941, BA NS 15/303: 58289–96. See also Schmundt’s July 19, 1941 letter to Alfred Baeumler, BA NS 15/303: 58286–88. Schmundt (1898–1992) became a teacher at the Hannover Waldorf school after the war.

whose sons and relatives are fighting on the battlefield to face the same treatment as the Jews?"<sup>101</sup>

While the June 1941 campaign removed organized occult activities from public view, occultism remained an object of the Nazi struggle against "ideological enemies," with ongoing efforts by the SD and others to keep the esoteric threat at bay. In October 1942 a "Central Agency on Occultism" was established in the Nazi party's Main Office for Public Health. It was headed by Bernhard Hörmann, an enthusiastic supporter of biodynamics in the 1930s.<sup>102</sup> Kurd Kisshauer, an official in the *Amt Rosenberg*, oversaw a program of "agitation against occultism and superstition" from 1941 to 1943.<sup>103</sup> As late as August 1944 the SD continued its attempts to keep track of military officers who previously belonged to the Anthroposophical Society, theosophical groups, and other "occultist tendencies."<sup>104</sup> The SD was still filing detailed reports on Hermann Poppelbaum, former leader of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany, in November 1944.<sup>105</sup>

A few months after the conclusion of the campaign an internal SD report appeared summing up the case against anthroposophy. The anonymous fifty-five page pamphlet titled *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände* was evidently meant for use within the Nazi security services.<sup>106</sup> It noted several facets

<sup>101</sup> Jürgen von Grone to *Ministerialrat* Marotzke, June 19, 1941, GSAPK I. HA Rep. 90 P Nr. 34: 9–14. See also Jürgen von Grone to Außenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP, August 6, 1941, BA NS 15/303: 58261–63.

<sup>102</sup> October 26, 1942 memorandum announcing the establishment of a new *Hauptstelle* "Okkultismus" in the *Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit der NSDAP*, BA NS 18/494.

<sup>103</sup> See the files on "Agitation gegen Okkultismus und Aberglaube 1941–43" from Kisshauer's office in the *Hauptamt Weltanschauliche Information*, BA NS 15/399. Kisshauer, an astronomer, earlier led the "Abwehrstelle gegen Astrologie und Welteislehre" in the *Amt Rosenberg*: R58/5713/2: 431.

<sup>104</sup> BA R58/6189/1: 2. See also the October 1942 "Programm der Arbeitstagung des Amtes VII im RSHA," BA R58/5959: 440; the 1942 files on occultism from Goebbels' office, BA NS18/497; the seven page letter regarding anthroposophy sent from the SD to the Hauptamt Ordnungspolizei on June 22, 1943, BA R187/219; and the lengthy "Liste der bei VII A 1 (Ausweichstelle Niemes) aufgestellten Zeitschriften" from RSHA Amt VII, including very extensive lists of occultist books and periodicals, BA R58/6501.

<sup>105</sup> BA R58/6187: 192–93.

<sup>106</sup> *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände: Bericht unter Verwendung von Ergebnissen der Aktion gegen Geheimlehren und sogenannte Geheimwissenschaften vom 5. [sic] Juni 1941*; the cover is marked "Geheim!" and publication data listed simply as "1941—Gedruckt im Reichssicherheitshauptamt." I consulted the copy in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin. A photographic reproduction is available in Wagner, ed., *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung*, vol. V, 10–63.

of anthroposophy ideologically akin to Nazi principles, observing that anthroposophy is “in accord with many aspects of the National Socialist conception of nature,” while also remarking with derision that anthroposophists typically try “to present themselves as the best Germans.”<sup>107</sup> Insisting that anthroposophical race doctrines were incompatible with Nazi precepts, the pamphlet came to the damning conclusion that despite anthroposophy’s constant privileging of Germanic and *völkisch* elements, Steiner’s teachings could only bring about the corruption of National Socialist ideals:

Although the anthroposophists invariably seek to accentuate their national solidarity and their advocacy for the German cause, it must be unequivocally stated that it is impossible to conjoin anthroposophical theories with a Germanic *völkisch* worldview and that ultimately anthroposophy must lead to the degradation of the National Socialist worldview.<sup>108</sup>

Indeed the very fact that anthroposophy did not openly oppose Nazism was what made it exceptionally dangerous: “Precisely because anthroposophy gives no external appearance of a politically combative position toward National Socialism, the threat of corruption of National Socialism by anthroposophy is especially great.” Anthroposophy’s function was to prime its sympathizers for “all the other occult teachings” and thus “pave the way for all occult doctrines.” The pamphlet concluded that “the adherent of anthroposophy must inevitably become an enemy of National Socialism.”<sup>109</sup>

This conclusion underscores the SD’s misjudgment of the potential danger that anthroposophy and other forms of occultism posed to National Socialism as a movement, as a worldview, and as a regime. Within the panorama of SD *Gegnerforschung*, occultism loomed large enough to warrant thoroughgoing repressive measures even in the midst of military mobilization. In justifying such measures, SD representatives invoked the standard sequence of ideological infractions: internationalism, pacifism, Masonic and Jewish connections, deviation or recalcitrance regarding the “race question.” This was the template

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<sup>107</sup> *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände*, 13–14.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, first paragraph under the sub-heading “Gegensatz zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Anthroposophie.” Cf. SD-Leitabschnitt Stuttgart to RSHA, Amt III, June 6, 1941: “Die Angleichung an das Germanische und Völkische [...] ist eine gefährliche Verballhornung des echten völkischen Gedankens und letztenendes eine geschickte Tarnung des internationalen okkultistischen Charakters der Christengemeinschaft.” (BA R58/5660: 192)

<sup>109</sup> *Die Anthroposophie und ihre Zweckverbände*, 15–16, 46.



SD analysts applied to any occult grouping they surveyed, from ariosophists to astrologers. The remarkable consistency with which such classifications were replicated suggests that they depended not on empirical examination of individual schools of esoteric thought but on a priori categorizations that suited the SD's larger aims. In many cases, the charge of heterodox racial views is difficult to reconcile with the stated principles of the groups in question.

SD evaluations depicted "the theosophical and anthroposophical associations" as a gathering place for surreptitious subversion of Nazi racial doctrine: "They attempt to give their endeavors a *völkisch* appearance and thus represent an acute danger to the ideological rectification of the German people."<sup>110</sup> The rejection of occult race theories was frequently based on inaccurate analysis of those theories. One SD report claimed: "According to the anthroposophical-theosophical conception, there is an absolute separation between the body and the spirit-soul."<sup>111</sup> A 1936 Gestapo summary alleged that "anthroposophy does not recognize racial differences," which led to a "negation of national and racial values."<sup>112</sup> These agents worried that in the hands of "ideological enemies," the basic principles of National Socialism had been systematically distorted, re-interpreted, and corroded to such an extent that the misuse of racial and national terminology "must be regarded as an attack on the National Socialist worldview." Unauthorized invocations of race and nation, they feared, would lead to the "hollowing out" of Nazism's fundamental creed.<sup>113</sup>

Overstated as these appraisals were, esoteric racial thinking did diverge from the mainstream of National Socialist doctrine. Historians have yet to

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<sup>110</sup> BA R58/6074: 118. Cf. the collection of anti-theosophical memoranda under "Sektierer als Volksverführer" in BA R58/6201, and the section on "Anthroposophie und die nationalsozialistische Rasseidee," BA R58/64: 18–21.

<sup>111</sup> BA R58/5959: 118. See also the section titled "Theosophie und Rasse" from the 1935 SD report "Die Grundlagen der Theosophie," BA R58/6199/3: 354–65; after a lengthy analysis which includes several significant errors in describing theosophical race doctrine, the conclusion reads simply: "Aus alledem geht hervor, daß die Theosophie im schärfsten Gegensatz zum nationalsozialistischen Rassengedanken steht."

<sup>112</sup> Gestapostelle Düsseldorf to Gestapo Berlin, June 22, 1936, BA R58/6193/1: 330.

<sup>113</sup> SD Sonderbericht "Zersetzung der nationalsozialistischen Grundwerte im deutschsprachigen Schrifttum seit 1933," June 1936, BA R58/5959: 268. See in particular the section "Die Gefährdung der nationalsozialistischen Rassenidee durch die Konjunkturritter" (42–51). Published texts also portrayed occult teachings on race as a vital threat to Nazi Germany; cf. G. Meyer-Heydenhagen, "Verfälschung des Rassengedankens durch Geheimlehren" *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* September 1935, 770–78; Hans Sturm, *Entlarvte Dunkelmächte* (Berlin: Pistor, 1936), 23–40; Werner Böckenkamp, "Weltanschauung und Sektenbildung" *Völkischer Beobachter* June 1, 1938, 5.



gauge this factor adequately. Corinna Treitel concludes that “in denying rigid racial hierarchies,” occult groups “denied a basic tenet of the Nazi worldview.”<sup>114</sup> But many occult groups quite explicitly espoused racial hierarchies, and while these may not always have been as rigid as their Nazi counterparts, the basic postulate of a hierarchy of races was central to occult racial theory in its predominant forms. Theosophical, anthroposophical, ariosophical and other esoteric tendencies alike endorsed the notion of a hierarchical scale of racial evolution tied to cosmic progress. Rather than a denial of racial hierarchy, what caused consternation among SD analysts was the propensity of occult groups to cast their own elaborate spiritual precepts as the ideological foundation upon which a consistent German viewpoint could arise. In doing so, esoteric thinkers posited National Socialism as the political expression and practical realization of an occult vision, not as an all-encompassing worldview in its own right.

In the SD's eyes, occultists had inverted the proper relationship between Nazism as overarching philosophy and the unconventional spiritual beliefs that gravitated toward it. Merely celebrating the Third Reich as a grand stage in the unfolding of cosmic-racial evolution was insufficient. SD investigators conspicuously ignored the lengths to which theosophists, anthroposophists and others were willing to go to accommodate their views to the demands of the Nazi regime. Indeed the aggressively exaggerated tone of their assessments suggests that SD analysts were trying to convince themselves of the enormous gap that supposedly separated their own worldview from those of the occult sects they so forcefully opposed.<sup>115</sup>

If SD evaluations of esoteric thinking were wide of the mark, what does the campaign against occultism reveal about the conceptual affinities and dissonances between anthroposophy and Nazism? The June 1941 action demonstrates the volatility of Nazi attitudes toward alternative worldviews, particularly those that placed significant emphasis on race and nation. Nazi officials targeted a wide range of openly racist organizations and did not tolerate their continued existence under National Socialist sponsorship. In April 1936 the “Weltbund der Völkischen—Alliance Raciste Universelle” was banned on Heydrich's orders because its activities were “endangering the measures of

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<sup>114</sup> Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, 223.

<sup>115</sup> Consider this example from an unsigned SD report on the Mazdasnan movement: “Gesamturteil: Masdasnan ist jedem deutschen und nationalsozialistischen Empfinden in allen Einzelheiten wie auch insgesamt vollkommen entgegengesetzt. [...] Masdasnan verneint alle nationalsozialistischen Grundsätze. [...] Masdasnan hat nichts mit Deutschtum zu tun. Masdasnan muß vernichtet werden.” (BA R58/6197/3: 609–11)

the Reich government on the race question.”<sup>116</sup> The anti-esoteric faction of the SD pursued *völkisch* organizations, Aryan orders, and occultist groups that supported Nazism even before 1933 and had high proportions of Nazi members. They persecuted the emphatically pro-Nazi Theosophical Brotherhood, Nordic supremacists, ariosophists, and many others.

Placing the Nazi campaign against occultism into historical context means taking the parameters of SD *Gegnerforschung* seriously and exploring how these factors influenced perceptions of anthroposophy. The notion of a vast ideological gap separating anthroposophists from the German national community derived from the SD's self-declared role as guardian of the authentic Nazi worldview. From the start, the institutional determinants of SD practice were structured to overemphasize doctrinal differences and dangers in just those cases where actual conceptual closeness obtained.<sup>117</sup>

What made occult organizations into “ideological enemies,” in other words, was not so much ideological distance as ideological proximity. The SD discerned a menacing potential in esoteric discourse on themes central to Nazism's own self-understanding, above all on the intertwined topics of nation and race.<sup>118</sup> What the SD feared was any challenge to the hegemony of strict National Socialist teachings, especially from currents which shared signifi-

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<sup>116</sup> BA R58/1029: 32. Cf. the 1935 materials from the group in BA R187/219 and BA R187/267a. According to its letterhead, the organization alternately called itself the “Bund Völkischer Europäer / European Racist Union / Alliance Raciste Universelle / Lega Razzista Europea.” Its president was longtime Nazi propagandist Johann von Leers. See also the SD files on the “Pan-Arische Liga / Bund der weißen Rasse” in BA R58/6240.

<sup>117</sup> Previous accounts of the topic have not acknowledged this essential context. A simplistic schema of Nazis-versus-anthroposophists disregards the bureaucratic imperatives at stake in the SD's campaign against occultism and misconstrues the competitive polycentrism peculiar to the Nazi security services. Intra-Nazi rivalry affected not just relations between Nazi supporters of anthroposophy and Nazi opponents of anthroposophy, but the interaction of the SD and Gestapo themselves. The result was a process of increasing radicalization in which the SD cast an ever wider net in search of unseen ideological enemies. These dynamics show that the reasons for Nazi hostility toward anthroposophy were not simple and straightforward but complex and convoluted.

<sup>118</sup> Krabbe, “Die Weltanschauung der Deutschen Lebensreformbewegung ist der Nationalsozialismus,” 460, notes that “rassentheoretisches Abweichlertum” among occult groups was especially intolerable to Nazi authorities. Cf. Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 133, 146–49; Hachmeister, *Der Gegnerforscher*, 30–31, 117–18, 151–53; Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im Dritten Reich*, 222–30. For similar analyses compare Christian Langenbach, *Freireligiöse im Nationalsozialismus: Die Selbstdarstellung freireligiöser Organisationen in Deutschland 1933 bis 1945* (Marburg: Tectum, 2008), and Horst Junginger, “Harmless or Dangerous? The Eranos Conferences in the 1930s from the Perspective of National Socialist Germany” *Archaeus* 14 (2010), 41–55.

cant theoretical overlap with Nazi imagery and ideals. Far from safeguarding a coherent National Socialist paradigm, however, this process revealed just how mutable Nazi conceptions of race could be. When pressed to substantiate their arguments, SD analysts frequently seemed to pick and choose from the chaotic profusion of Nazi racial theory, emphasizing its scientific and biological aspects while minimizing their spiritual correlates. The nebulous nature of racial thought allowed proponents of Nazi orthodoxy to narrow the meanings of nation and race in ways that served to exclude competing versions of the same motifs.

Well before the “Campaign against occult doctrines and so-called occult sciences” was launched, inherently unstable ideas of racial identity and national belonging provided a battleground where the political competition between contrary tendencies within National Socialism was carried out. This in turn shaped the central arena within which the anti-esoteric faction of the Nazis staged their confrontation with anthroposophy as an occult danger to the national community. The events of June 1941 represented the culmination of a long-running conflict between the rarefied world of esoteric belief systems and the concrete political choices imposed on occultists by the advent of Nazism. It was the similarities between Nazi and occult conceptions of race and nation, as much as the differences, which governed this dynamic.

Aggravated Nazi responses to occultism reflected the flexible contours of information gathering in the police apparatus and intelligence services of a totalitarian state. The approach adopted by SD and Gestapo agents contained crucial elements of fantasy and projection; in their grudges against imaginary occult adversaries, ideological preoccupations took on a life of their own and gained institutional impetus. Convinced of the corruption portended by esoteric outsiders, SD reports depicted a looming menace from within the body of the nation that needed to be warded off by excising the corrupting element. The same officials were simultaneously working to establish their own hegemonic status in the array of Nazi agencies concerned with ideological rectitude. In this way, the contradictory realities of the anthroposophist movement during the Third Reich were subsumed under the ready-made construct of “ideological enemies.”

Anthroposophist projects represented a confluence of esoteric worldviews with alternative endeavors in education, nutrition, health care, agriculture, and other areas of life reform. This constituted both an alluring potential and an alarming hazard from Nazi points of view. In their efforts toward holism and rebirth, in their mission to heal Germany from the ravages of materialism, in their ambition to redeem humankind through the German spirit, anthroposophists appeared both as allies and as enemies of Nazism's own goals.

What emerged was a variable series of alignments and re-alignments forged against the backdrop of institutional exigencies and idealistic aspirations. The resulting labyrinth of expectations and counter-expectations, of apprehensions and uncertainties, of mutual suspicions coupled with recognition and cooperation, yielded delusions on both sides. Neither common commitment to German destiny nor broad agreement on a practical level led to consistent partnership. Though some looked forward to a synthesis of occult worldviews and fascist politics, the chance for this synthesis to succeed was thwarted by the very same factors which had given rise to it originally. In the end, the hope of anthroposophist accommodation with the Third Reich remained unfulfilled. From the vantage point of June 1941, when so much else of world importance was at stake, Steiner's beleaguered followers confronted the dispiriting climax of anthroposophy's conflicted, ambivalent and imbalanced relationship to the Nazi state.

## The Spirit of the Race and the Soul of the Nation: Anthroposophy and the Rise of Fascism in Italy

In the early decades of the twentieth century anthroposophy was a primarily German phenomenon, a movement concentrated in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, the lands where Steiner spent his life. By the time of Steiner's death in 1925 anthroposophy had established footholds in other European countries, particularly the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and England. Its only substantial presence in southern Europe was in Italy, which was home to a numerically small but intellectually vibrant and culturally influential anthroposophist movement beginning around 1910. Like its German counterpart, Italian anthroposophy comprised a wide range of political perspectives and a variety of stances on race and ethnicity, all correlated to a spiritual foundation. The emergence of Fascism after World War One gave rise to divergent anthroposophical responses; while several leading anthroposophists embraced Mussolini's movement, others kept their distance, and the Fascist regime treated Steiner's followers inconsistently.<sup>1</sup> This complicated situation set the stage for a series of remarkable anthroposophist engagements with Fascist racial policy in the 1930s and 1940s.

The origins of Italian anthroposophy can be traced to Steiner's dispute with the India-based leadership of the Theosophical Society. Steiner had cultivated an Italian audience for several years as Secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society. He visited Venice, Genoa and Rome in 1907 and Naples in 1908, returning in spring 1909 at the invitation of an Italian princess for a series of theosophical lectures in Rome, Milan, Palermo and Trieste. He gave another lecture series in Italy in 1910. Steiner's future wife Marie was active in

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<sup>1</sup> Italian anthroposophy's early history has attracted little scholarly attention. For an excellent overview see Marco Pasi, "Teosofia e antroposofia nell'Italia del primo Novecento" in Gian Mario Cazzaniga, ed., *Storia d'Italia. Annali 25: Esoterismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2010), 569–98; on the Fascist period compare Michele Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista" *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 14 (2002), 145–79, and Peter Staudenmaier, "Anthroposophy in Fascist Italy" in Arthur Versluis, ed., *Esotericism, Religion, and Politics* (Minneapolis: North American Academic Press, 2012), 83–106. On the lively interest in the esoteric and occult throughout modern Italian history see Cecilia Gatto Trecchi, *Storia esoterica d'Italia* (Milan: Piemme, 2001).

Italian theosophical circles since the turn of the century. From 1910 onward several prominent Italian theosophists sided with Steiner in the escalating controversy within the international Theosophical Society. Steiner emphasized the superiority of European spiritual traditions over Eastern ones, against the “Indian” and “English” variant of theosophy represented by Annie Besant. This position held strong appeal among Italian esotericists.

In the midst of the ongoing discord, Italian theosophists harshly criticized the “Indian mysticism” of Besant and championed the “Christian esotericism” of Steiner. Steiner’s Italian followers portrayed the intra-theosophical conflict as a struggle between “oriental” and “occidental” forms of spirituality.<sup>2</sup> From the point of view of Italian anthroposophists, “the Western peoples have progressed further than the peoples of the Orient and must therefore pursue a more elevated spiritual path.”<sup>3</sup> Similar sentiments played a role in Germany as well. In 1911 longtime theosophist Günther Wagner, who sided with Steiner in the split, wrote to another leading German theosophist explaining the significance of racial-spiritual differences between Europeans and Asians. Wagner noted that according to Steiner and his followers, “Since we are the most advanced race, we have the most advanced religion.”<sup>4</sup>

Such statements were consistent with Steiner’s own teachings: “But this Oriental form of truth is worthless for us Western peoples. It could only obstruct us and hold us back from our goal. Here in the West are the peoples who shall constitute the core of the future races.” This accounted for the divergence in

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<sup>2</sup> Carlo Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* March 1911, 534–36; Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* October 1911, 156–58; Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* October 1912, 137–39; Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* February 1913, 509–17; Edouard Schuré, “Il dissidio nel campo teosofico” *Rassegna Contemporanea* June 1913, 817–22.

<sup>3</sup> Carlo Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* April 1912, 146–49, quote on 147.

<sup>4</sup> Günther Wagner quoted in Klatt, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie*, 102; cf. Richard Karutz, “Ruf aus dem Osten” *Anthroposophie* June 1933, 229–33. An in-depth discussion of Steiner’s treatment of Eastern traditions is available in Myers, “Colonial consciousness.” See also Christian Fuchs, *Yoga in Deutschland: Rezeption, Organisation, Typologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990), 48–54; Ulrich Linse, “Asien als Alternative? Die Alternativkulturen der Weimarer Zeit: Reform des Lebens durch Rückwendung zu asiatischer Religiosität” in Hans Kippenberg, ed., *Religionswissenschaft und Kulturkritik* (Marburg: Diagonal, 1991), 325–64; Justus Ulbricht, “‘Buddha,’ ‘Sigfrid’ oder ‘Christus’: Religiöse Suchbewegungen als Ausdruck kultureller Identitätskrisen im deutschen Bildungsbürgertum” *Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* 4 (1998), 209–26; Tom Neuhaus, “How Can a War Be Holy? Weimar Attitudes Toward Eastern Spirituality” in John Williams, ed., *Weimar Culture Revisited* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 117–37.

occult paths: "The dying races of the East still need the Oriental school. The Western school is for the races of the future."<sup>5</sup> As Steiner put it in 1915, "How could people fail to notice the profound differences, in terms of spiritual culture, between the European and the Asian peoples. How could they fail to notice this differentiation, which is tied to external skin color!"<sup>6</sup> Eastern teachings were an expression of the "severely decadent Oriental essence" and thus inappropriate for Westerners.<sup>7</sup>

These beliefs highlighted the divide between mainstream theosophy and the Eurocentric perspective propounded by Steiner, a rift reflecting unresolved questions which had accompanied the growth of the Theosophical Society from the beginning.<sup>8</sup> In the Italian context, Steiner's emphasis on the Western heritage and Christian esoteric traditions were compelling factors in garnering

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<sup>5</sup> Steiner, *Aus den Inhalten der esoterischen Schulen*, 221, 227. According to Steiner, Asian peoples are descendants of the obsolete races of Atlantis who reached a "racial standstill" and are not suited to further evolution: Rudolf Steiner, *Ägyptische Mythen und Mysterien* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1911), 132. The Italian edition is Steiner, *Miti e misteri dell'Egitto* (Milan: Bocca, 1943).

<sup>6</sup> Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, 36. Cf. Steiner, *Grundelemente der Esoterik*, 108–15; Steiner, *Die Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen*, 76–93; Steiner, *Anthroposophie als Kosmosophie*, 14–29; Steiner, *Westliche und östliche Weltgegensätzlichkeit* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1981), 226–39.

<sup>7</sup> Steiner, *Gegensätze in der Menschheitsentwicklung*, 153. For Steiner's remarks on "Asiatic barbarism" in English see Steiner, "The Question Before the World" *The New Age* November 3, 1921, 4–5. For similar claims in Italian see Steiner, *I misteri dell'Oriente e del cristianesimo* (Milan: I.T.E., 1936).

<sup>8</sup> Compare van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, 55–82; Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 253–428; McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, 169–77; Christine Maillard, "Ex oriente lux. Zur Funktion Indiens in der Konstruktion der abendländischen esoterischen Tradition im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert" in Kilcher, ed., *Constructing Tradition*, 395–412; Christopher Partridge, "Lost Horizon: H. P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism" in Hammer and Rothstein, eds., *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 309–33; Agehananda Bharati, "Mundus vult decipi: Falsche Lamas, ein Märchentibet und vermischte Esoterica" in Hans Peter Duerr, ed., *Authentizität und Betrug in der Ethnologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), 38–57; Mark Bevir, "The West Turns Eastward: Madame Blavatsky and the Transformation of the Occult Tradition" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994), 747–67; Siv Ellen Kraft, "Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism in the History of Theosophy" *Numen* 49 (2002), 142–77; Srinivas Aravamudan, *Guru English: South Asian Religion in a Cosmopolitan Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 105–41; Alan Trevithick, "The Theosophical Society and its Subaltern Acolytes (1880–1986)" *Marburg Journal of Religion* 13 (2008), 1–32; Isaac Lubelsky, "The Star in the East: Theosophical Perceptions of the Mystical Orient" in Andreas Önnersfors and Dorothe Sommer, eds., *Freemasonry and Fraternalism in the Middle East* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 2009), 85–108; Aurélie Choné, *Rudolf Steiner, Carl Gustav Jung, Hermann Hesse. Passeurs entre Orient et Occident: Intégration et transformation des savoirs*



support in the debate with Besant.<sup>9</sup> Racial considerations contributed to the split. In 1910 a prominent founder of Italian anthroposophy, Giovanni Colazza (1877–1953), distinguished Western from Eastern forms of occult wisdom: “The desire to exclusively apply Indian methods in our time and to our race disregards the fact that evolution has considerably modified the potential of our organism, and does not take into account the new spiritual currents that have been introduced into the world.”<sup>10</sup> A decidedly Western approach to enlightenment seemed much more promising.

Like their German brethren, Italian anthroposophists adopted Steiner’s linking of spiritual and racial distinctions. An additional factor in the rise of the Italian wing of the movement was the nationalist background shared by several of its leading figures. The most important of these was Giovanni Antonio Colonna di Cesarò (1878–1940), a politician and nobleman known as “the anthroposophist duke” whose career illustrates the inconsistent anthroposophical response to the emergence of Fascism.<sup>11</sup> Colonna published the journal *Rassegna contemporanea*, a political and cultural review which served as a significant forum for early anthroposophical viewpoints and sponsored translations of Steiner’s works. Anthroposophist poet Arturo Onofri published regularly in its pages. With an irredentist and pro-colonial stance, the journal’s politics have been characterized as “radical-nationalist.”<sup>12</sup> Colonna was a fervent proponent of Italian colonialism and a spokesperson for “democratic imperialism,” a position which reflected Steiner’s teachings on national missions. When the war came in 1914–15, Colonna was a vocal interventionist.<sup>13</sup> He volunteered for military service and became an artillery officer.

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*sur l’Orient dans l’espace germanophone (1890–1940)* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2009), 98–125; Marco Pasi, “Oriental Kabbalah and the Parting of East and West in the Early Theosophical Society” in Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi and Kocku von Stuckrad, eds., *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 151–66.

<sup>9</sup> For a summary case see Carlo Paes, “Cronaca di Teosofia” *Rassegna Contemporanea* May 25, 1914, 662–66.

<sup>10</sup> Colazza quoted in Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 147.

<sup>11</sup> A sympathetic biographical overview can be found in Michele Beraldo, “Il duca Colonna di Cesarò, ministro antroposofico” in Gianfranco de Turreis, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo: Storia, interpretazioni, documenti* (Rome: Mediterranee, 2006), 237–41.

<sup>12</sup> Lina Ferraresi, “Radicalismo antigiolittiano ed imperialismo democratico—Profilo politico della ‘Rassegna contemporanea’ (1908–1915)” in Fausto Fonzi, ed., *Roma tra ottocento e novecento: Studi e ricerche* (Rome: Istituto di Scienze Storiche, 1981), 237–90, quote on 289.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Colonna’s notice “Ai nostri lettori” *Rassegna Contemporanea* December 25, 1914, 569–71. For background on Italian responses to WWI see Giuseppe Galasso, “Gli intellettuali

In late 1917 Colonna co-founded a nationalist group, the *Fascio di Difesa Nazionale*, with an anti-clerical and anti-socialist emphasis. The group dedicated itself to “eliminating the causes of disorder” in Italy.<sup>14</sup> Colonna belonged to its executive council. He also served as an official of the Radical Party from 1907 onward, breaking off in early 1922 to form a new political party, *Democrazia Sociale*. Colonna did not have a consistent political ideology, and in the wake of the World War he and his party moved toward the right.<sup>15</sup> Though never a large force, the party’s forty-one parliamentary representatives occupied a critical voting bloc. Along with much of the Italian political elite, *Democrazia Sociale* opposed the entry of mass parties into politics, above all the Socialists and the Popular Party. This attitude shaped Colonna’s initial backing for Mussolini, as the anthroposophist duke found himself involved in the rise of the Fascist regime.

After the ‘March on Rome’ in October 1922, Benito Mussolini was appointed prime minister of Italy with the help of other political factions. “The government formed at the end of October 1922 was a coalition, not a one-party government,” and it depended centrally on the active assistance of Colonna and his party.<sup>16</sup> In return for *Democrazia Sociale*’s crucial support, Mussolini made Colonna a cabinet minister, a position he held from 1922 until February 1924. His party was chiefly devoted to its own self-preservation and acquiring govern-

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italiani e la guerra alla vigilia del 1914” in Vincenzo Calì, ed., *Gli intellettuali e la Grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), 19–39. The entry on Colonna in the standard Italian biographical dictionary notes that his promotion of “democratic imperialism” was influenced by “suggerimenti provenienti dal pensiero di R. Steiner, fondatore dell’antroposofia e teorico di ‘missioni’ nazionali prestabilite secondo un progetto divino dell’evoluzione storica.” Luigi Agnello, “Colonna di Cesarò, Giovanni Antonio” in Alberto Ghisalberti, ed., *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* vol. 27 (Rome: Treccani, 1982), 459–62, quote on 459.

<sup>14</sup> Francesco Pullè, ed., *Memorie del Fascio Parlamentare di Difesa Nazionale* (Bologna: Licinio Cappelli, 1932), 176; on Colonna’s role see 39–46, 53–55, 102–06.

<sup>15</sup> Danilo Veneruso, *La vigilia del fascismo: Il primo ministero Facta nella crisi dello stato liberale in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1968), 14, 39–40, 246–51, 499; Giuseppe Micciché, *Dopoguerra e fascismo in Sicilia 1919–1927* (Rome: Riuniti, 1976), 91, 116–17, 165–66. Roberta Raspagliesi, “Cenni biografici” in Giovanni Colonna di Cesarò, *Diario della neutralità italiana, 1914–1915* (Rome: Aracne, 2010), 31–38, characterizes *Democrazia Sociale* as “demagogic, reactionary, and anti-socialist” (35).

<sup>16</sup> F. L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 65. Cf. Antonino Répaci, *La marcia su Roma: mito e realtà* (Rome: Canesi, 1963), 571–74; Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870–1925* (London: Methuen, 1967), 612–47; Enzo Santarelli, *Storia del fascismo I: La crisi liberale* (Rome: Riuniti, 1973), 323–29; R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 178–83.

ment posts for its clientele.<sup>17</sup> In January 1923 Colonna affirmed: “*Democrazia Sociale* is collaborating with the government with sincere intentions, in light of the programmatic points we share in common with Fascism.”<sup>18</sup>

Colonna did not remain a supporter of the Duce, however. As Mussolini maneuvered toward dictatorship, the first anthroposophist minister in the first Fascist government turned his back on politics and became a critic of Fascism. After his resignation in 1924, Colonna ruefully denounced his former associates. By April 1925 he inveighed against Fascism as a vehicle for “reactionaries and Bolsheviks in black shirts” beholden to “the proletariat” or “big business.”<sup>19</sup> From 1925 onward Colonna “was considered an antifascist and abandoned political life, dedicating himself exclusively to literary activity.”<sup>20</sup> Rumors of his involvement in a 1926 attack on Mussolini were dismissed by Fascist authorities. The would-be assassin was Violet Gibson, an eccentric Anglo-Irish aristocrat with a theosophical background. A British Foreign Office report explained that Colonna “is not one of those Opposition leaders who have incurred special Fascist resentment,” observing that “the idea of connecting him with Miss Gibson’s attempt seems too ridiculous to merit serious consideration.”<sup>21</sup> The Italian political police viewed Colonna as a reclusive aristocrat unlikely to act against the government.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919–1929* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 101–02, 135, 138–40; compare Veneruso, *La vigilia del fascismo*, 246–51; Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista: La conquista del potere 1921–1925* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), 506–10; Danilo Veneruso, *L’Italia fascista 1922–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981), 18–19. Colonna’s position was Postal Minister.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in De Felice, *La conquista del potere*, 508. Arturo Onofri also responded positively to the rise of Fascism; see Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 149–50.

<sup>19</sup> Colonna quoted in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il fascista: L’organizzazione dello Stato fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), 31–32.

<sup>20</sup> Ferraresi, “Radicalismo antigiolittiano ed imperialismo democratico,” 242. Cf. Luigi Salvatorelli and Giovanni Mira, *Storia d’Italia nel periodo fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964), 174–75, 224–25, 235–36, and Marco Rossi, “‘Lo stato democratico’ (1925) e l’antifascismo antidemocratico di Julius Evola” *Storia contemporanea* 20 (1989), 5–43.

<sup>21</sup> 1926 report excerpted in Frances Saunders, *The Woman Who Shot Mussolini* (New York: Holt, 2010), 194.

<sup>22</sup> See his political police file, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 320 fasc. pers. Colonna di Cesarò; it records his sparse surveillance in the latter half of the 1920s. For background on the Fascist political police see Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 33–123; Italo Savella, “Arturo Bocchini and the Secret Political Police in Fascist Italy” *The Historian* 60 (1998), 779–93; Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin:

Colonna's participation in the early stages of Mussolini's regime stands as a prominent counter-example to the image of anthroposophists as 'unpolitical.' He declared in retrospect:

I am not a Fascist and never have been. I was an admirer of Mussolini and sympathized with the movement he created. I now understand that I deluded myself and that my own views are incompatible with some of his political conceptions. This explains why I am not one of those who at every opportunity praise Mussolini, right or wrong, just as I am not one of those who condemn *a priori* everything that Fascism does, merely because it is Fascism that does it.<sup>23</sup>

During his tenure as minister in Mussolini's cabinet, Colonna may have acted as a conduit for anthroposophical interest in the new political phenomenon of Fascism. In 1923 Steiner reportedly asked Colonna to deliver a copy of Steiner's book on "social threefolding" to Mussolini, but the Duce evidently never received it.<sup>24</sup> German anthroposophists were divided about Italian Fascism. Some early assessments were clearly negative, while subsequent analyses were more affirmative. A 1928 profile by Johannes Hemleben in the Christian Community journal offered an enthused portrait of the Duce, and the lead article in a 1930 issue of *Anthroposophie* by editor Emil Leinhas was also admiring toward Mussolini.<sup>25</sup> These perceptions drew on the spiritual image cultivated by Fascist thinkers. The same image beguiled other esotericists; as one theosophist wrote in 1934: "Fascists are working for the helping of humanity, are

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Bollati Boringhieri, 1999); Romano Canosa, *I servizi segreti del Duce: I persecutori e le vittime* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Colonna quoted in Beraldo, "Il duca Colonna di Cesarò," 238; Beraldo tentatively dates the text to 1926.

<sup>24</sup> Compare the accounts in Luigi Capano, "Se il Duce avesse letto Steiner" in de Turreis, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, 107–09, and Beraldo, "Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista," 164.

<sup>25</sup> Leinhas in *Anthroposophie* July 13, 1930, 217–18; Johannes Hemleben, "Mussolini" *Die Christengemeinschaft* June 1928, 91–92. Hemleben praised the Duce as "blutvoll, dynamisch, erdhaft": "Eine Widerspiegelung seines Wesens ist das Instrument, durch das Mussolini heute über Italien herrscht: der Faschismus, die Organisation der 'Schwarz-Hemden'. Diese aus dem Krieg hervorgegangene italienische Jugend pflegt in erster Linie und großer Ausschließlichkeit die Tugenden römischer Überlieferung [...] Der Faschismus ist Mussolinis eigentliche Schöpfung." (91) See also "Mussolinis Bekenntnis zum Christentum" *Die Christengemeinschaft* March 1937, 83. For an early critical view cf. Karl Heyer, "Mussolini über den Faschismus" *Anthroposophie* September 14, 1922, 5–6.

assisting, even if they do not know it, in the glorious work which the Masters of Wisdom are doing.”<sup>26</sup>

It was Colonna's mother, Baroness Emmelina de Renzis, who introduced Steiner's works to Italy. A German-speaking Italian theosophist and then anthroposophist, she translated many of Steiner's works. Her son sometimes provided introductions to these texts.<sup>27</sup> They were aided considerably in spreading anthroposophist ideas by Colonna's colleague Giovanni Preziosi (1881–1945), an influential Fascist publicist and notorious antisemitic ideologue. Preziosi strongly recommended de Renzis' translations of Steiner's books to a major publishing house, Laterza, which published eight titles by Steiner between 1919 and 1932.<sup>28</sup> Including other publishers, by 1924 twelve of Steiner's central works were available in Italian. Many further titles appeared in the 1930s and 1940s, some of them as part of the “Spiritual-Scientific Library” published by another major press, Bocca. The same series included a variety of other anthroposophist authors. Preziosi continued to support the publication of Steiner's works for many years.<sup>29</sup>

Colonna collaborated with Preziosi from 1910 onward. His *Rassegna contemporanea* and Preziosi's *La Vita Italiana* were sister journals, and after his own periodical ceased publication in 1915, Colonna published regularly in Preziosi's journal. Steiner himself chose *La Vita Italiana* as the venue for the Italian version of an important article in the aftermath of WWI.<sup>30</sup> Despite his philosemitic views, Colonna continued his copious contributions to *La Vita Italiana*

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<sup>26</sup> Laurence Hemshell, “Fascism and Theosophy” *The Theosophist* April 1934, 103–06, quote on 103. Hemshell predicted that Fascism “will elevate humanity to heights it has never seen since the golden days of Atlantis at its best and purest.” (104) On the spiritual image of Fascism see Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), and Robert Mallett, “Fascism as the Expression of a Spiritual Revolution in Italy” in Roger Griffin, Robert Mallett, and John Tortorice, eds., *The Sacred in Twentieth-Century Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 89–106.

<sup>27</sup> Giovanni Colonna di Cesarò, “Prefazione” to Rudolf Steiner, *Le entità spirituali nei corpi celesti e nei regni della natura* (Milan: I.T.E., 1939), 5–11.

<sup>28</sup> Daniela Coli, “Religione e occultismo nella ‘casa editrice di Croce’” *Passato e Presente* 1 (1982), 162–69.

<sup>29</sup> Daniela Coli, *Croce, Laterza e la cultura europea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983), 219–21. The back cover of Rudolf Steiner, *Cronaca dell'Akasha* (Milan: Bocca, 1940) lists 19 titles in Bocca's “Biblioteca Scientifico-Spirituale,” directed by anthroposophist Rinaldo Küfferle. Twelve of the titles are by Steiner, the rest by other anthroposophist authors. Bocca and Laterza were two of the premier publishing houses in modern Italy.

<sup>30</sup> Rudolf Steiner, “Al popolo tedesco e al mondo civile” *La Vita Italiana* November 1919, 399–402; the editorial note reports that Steiner personally chose *La Vita Italiana* to bring his views to an Italian audience.

well after its turn to aggressive antisemitism.<sup>31</sup> What drew together figures like Colonna and Preziosi was a shared interest in occultism, opposition to materialism and socialism, and common values regarding national heritage and the spiritual stature of Italy.

In shifting between supporter of Mussolini and opponent of Mussolini, in maintaining a philosemitic stance while collaborating closely with infamous antisemites, in combining an esoteric worldview with a political career, Colonna di Cesarò embodied the contradictory anthroposophical reaction to the rise of Fascism. He and Colazza played significant roles within the international anthroposophist movement; Colazza represented Italy at the founding of the Anthroposophical Society in 1912/13, and Colonna represented Italy at the re-organization of the Society in 1923/24, while he was a minister in Mussolini's government. Both men, one an aristocratic politician, the other a renowned physician, reflected the upscale social makeup of Italian anthroposophy, where nobles and professionals held leading positions. This demographic accent was noted during the Fascist era; police reports frequently mentioned the social composition of anthroposophist gatherings—mostly older, many women, numerous professors and retirees, very few workers—and even remarked on the luxurious automobiles present.<sup>32</sup> Anthroposophical events attracted relatively large audiences. Colazza's lectures on "anthroposophy and occult medicine" from 1935 through 1938 were consistently crowded, with forty to fifty people in attendance on each occasion.<sup>33</sup> Anthroposophist organizations maintained substantial memberships, larger than theosophical groups. A 1931 report from the General Directorate for Public Security estimated that there were roughly one hundred anthroposophists in Rome alone, in addition to groups in Milan, Trieste, and elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Examples include Colonna's articles in the July 1920, August 1920, and May 1921 issues of *La Vita Italiana*, in each case directly following violently antisemitic articles by Preziosi; Colonna also had the opening article in the October 1921 issue. On the early influence of *La Vita Italiana* on Mussolini see Giorgio Fabre, *Mussolini razzista. Dal socialismo al fascismo: la formazione di un antisemita* (Milano: Garzanti, 2005), 253–54.

<sup>32</sup> See the 1935 reports from the Questura di Roma on meetings of the "Italian Group for Anthroposophical Studies," ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317; the May 2, 1935 report notes: "deve trattarsi di elemento di grado sociale elevato, poiché fuori dal palazzo vi sono diverse lussuose automobili che le attendono e con le quali le vediamo allontanarsi alla fine." The founders of the group included a Countess, a Baroness, a Marquis, a doctor, and an engineer; see the 1931 statutes of the *Gruppo Italiano di Studi Antroposofici* in *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Questura di Roma, April 11, 1938, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>34</sup> "Oggetto: Movimento Antroposofico," May 18, 1931, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317. Theosophist groups were much smaller; a March 1932 report from the Prefect of Genoa estimated only 20

Fascist authorities typically took a bemused but benevolent view of anthroposophist public events. An anonymous police agent attending a meeting of the Italian Group for Anthroposophical Studies in Rome in 1935 reported that he felt like he was in a "Masonic temple." He found the featured lecture "rather abstruse": "There is a little bit of everything: Theosophy and astral bodies, an indeterminate divinity, references to astrology, negation of the Darwinian theory of the evolution of species."<sup>35</sup> These police reports did not offer political criticisms of anthroposophy, though the international nature of the movement was cause for concern. But the fact that anthroposophical endeavors were subject to surveillance in the first place indicates the suspicious official attitude toward esoteric tendencies. Fascist Italy harassed a variety of occult groups.<sup>36</sup>

Anti-esoteric measures were a potential danger to Italian anthroposophy, not least because several anthroposophists were involved in antifascist activities. Futurist poet Armando Cavalli, a liberal antifascist, was an anthroposophist. A more ambivalent case was the physicist Eugenio Curiel, an eminent figure in the antifascist resistance. Born to a Jewish family in Trieste in 1912, Curiel played a courageous part in Resistance groups in the late 1930s and 1940s. He was murdered by Fascist soldiers in February 1945. In the early 1930s Curiel was deeply influenced by anthroposophical ideas, and this attachment to Steiner's work left significant traces in his later thought. Between approximately 1931 and 1933 Curiel "dedicated himself with fervor and seriousness" to anthroposophy.<sup>37</sup> His commitment to Steiner's teachings was part of a turbulent ideological and political development. Near the end of his anthroposophical period he was attracted to the spiritual theories of Fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile and briefly became a member of the Fascist party. He eventually joined the

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participants total at the national Theosophical congress: ACS PCM 1931–33 14.3.4696 Società Teosofica Italiana.

<sup>35</sup> Questura di Roma, "Gruppo italiano di studi antroposofici," May 2, 1935, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. "La teosofia nell'occhio della polizia politica" in Canosa, *I servizi segreti del Duce*, 89–98, and the detailed account by Dana Lloyd Thomas, "Il Tempio assalito: Introduzione allo studio della campagna antiesoterica nell'Italia fascista" *Politica Romana* 5 (1999), 253–300. An additional factor in the tenuous situation of occult groups during the Fascist era was Mussolini's rapprochement with the Catholic Church; clerical attitudes toward esotericism were almost uniformly negative.

<sup>37</sup> Primo de Lazzari, *Eugenio Curiel al confino e nella lotta di liberazione* (Milan: Teti, 1981), 28. Eugenio Garin, "Eugenio Curiel" in Garin, *Intellettuai italiani del XX secolo* (Rome: Riuniti, 1974), 265–88, in contrast, refers to this phase as Curiel's youthful "infatuation with Steiner" (278).



clandestine Communist party.<sup>38</sup> Alongside Colonna, Curiel's ideological trajectory indicates the political volatility of anthroposophist engagement in the Fascist era.

Despite this unpredictability, for most of the Fascist period anthroposophists experienced little significant persecution. When they did draw the attention of the state, the verdict was generally forgiving. After 1925 Colonna was viewed as an antifascist, but a harmless one, while Colazza was considered "indifferent toward the Regime."<sup>39</sup> In some cases overeager police agents inflated the supposed threat posed by anthroposophy. One confused report filed ten years after Steiner's death expressed anxieties about anthroposophy's international character. Writing in 1935, in the midst of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the agent asserted that Steiner was alive in Switzerland and had appealed to divine forces to intercede on behalf of the Ethiopian people against their Italian aggressors.<sup>40</sup> But warnings such as these were counterbalanced by a range of remarkably positive assessments. Fascist authorities were often impressed by the political reliability of anthroposophists.

In case after case from the 1930s, individuals who applied for membership in the Anthroposophical Society were given positive political evaluations emphasizing their "good political conduct" and their "favorable sentiments toward the Regime."<sup>41</sup> Several anthroposophists were members in good standing of the Fascist party, the PNF. A 1942 report from provincial police officials on anthroposophist Angelo Giusti, for example, noted that he displayed "good moral and political conduct" and was "a member of the PNF since 1933." Other assessments voiced concern about his involvement with "occult sciences" but

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<sup>38</sup> See "L'influenza steineriana" in Nando Briamonte, *La vita e il pensiero di Eugenio Curiel* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 20–26, and Mario Quaranta, "La formazione filosofica di Eugenio Curiel" in Lino Scalco, ed., *Eugenio Curiel nella cultura e nella storia d'Italia* (Padova: Programma, 1997), 67–98, particularly the sections "Il periodo steineriano" (68–77) and "Da Steiner e Gentile all'impegno politico" (77–80). Though Curiel's adherence to anthroposophy was transitory, it was not an anomaly in antifascist circles; Briamonte, *La vita e il pensiero di Eugenio Curiel*, 126, quotes a 1944 correspondence between two young antifascists interested in anthroposophy, while Pasi, "Teosofia e antroposofia nell'Italia del primo Novecento," 594, notes that Steiner's works "were read with great interest in the youthful antifascist milieu in the 1930s."

<sup>39</sup> Questura di Roma, March 26, 1931, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>40</sup> ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1307 fasc. pers. Steiner Rudolf.

<sup>41</sup> See the large file compiled by the General Directorate for Public Security, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317: Società Generale Antroposofica con Sede in Dornach (Svizzera), containing materials from 1931 to 1942. The unnumbered documents are sorted into sub-files by geographical location. Representative examples can be found in the series of 1932 cases from Rome in *ibid.*

observed that he “belongs to the Aryan race.”<sup>42</sup> In December 1940 the Prefect of Milan reported that the local branch of the Anthroposophical Society was not politically suspect in any way. A January 1941 report on the Anthroposophical Society branch in San Remo found that it was “not in disagreement with the current regulations for public associations or with Fascist doctrine.” A report on the anthroposophist group in Faenza stated that it undertook no activities contrary to the regime.<sup>43</sup> A comprehensive assessment from 1932 declared that none of the anthroposophical groups in Italy displayed any activities or any attitudes contrary to the Fascist government.<sup>44</sup>

Even when they did not belong to the Fascist party, leading anthroposophists were considered pro-Fascist in the eyes of the security services. Alcibiade Mazzarelli (1873–1932), a key figure in the development of Italian anthroposophy, was a personal student of Steiner and translated several of his works into Italian. Local authorities noted that “Mazzarelli is an irreproachable person in every respect,” and he was commended for his “good political conduct.”<sup>45</sup> Fanny Podreider, president of the San Remo anthroposophist group, belonged to the Fascist women’s organization.<sup>46</sup> Other anthroposophist officials were longtime members of the Fascist party. Marquis Luigi Andrea Calabrin, Secretary of the Italian Group for Anthroposophical Studies in Rome, joined the PNF in May 1921, a year and a half before Mussolini came to power.<sup>47</sup> The co-founder and Secretary of the Italian Anthroposophical Society, Ettore Martinoli, became a Fascist at the very beginning in 1919.<sup>48</sup> Anthroposophist poet and playwright

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<sup>42</sup> Prefettura di Lucca to DGPS, February 23, 1942, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>43</sup> Prefettura di Milano to DGPS, December 26, 1940; Memorandum from the Divisione Polizia Politica, Rome, January 16, 1941; Memorandum January 23, 1941; all in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>44</sup> DGPS memorandum, August 5, 1932, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317: “Dalla vigilanza che questa Direzione Generale ha sempre esercitato sul movimento delle anzidette Società Antroposofiche e sul comportamento dei rispettivi componenti, nulla è emerso che possa far dubitare di una attività o di atteggiamenti contrari alle direttive del Governo Fascista.”

<sup>45</sup> Prefettura di Arezzo to DGPS, February 26, 1932, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>46</sup> See the 1938 “Elenco dei Soci” of the San Remo anthroposophical group, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>47</sup> Questura di Roma, March 26, 1931, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>48</sup> See the nine page application to the Interior Ministry dated Trieste, August 7, 1931, signed by Martinoli on behalf of the Società Antroposofica d'Italia, boasting of his service to the Fascist movement and regime (ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317). Martinoli characterized himself as “fascista con anzianità dal luglio 1919” and avowed that he had “esplicato nel Partito un'attività continua e nota alle Autorità gerarchiche” and even received “la nomina a Cavaliere della Corona d'Italia dopo la marcia su Roma.”

Rinaldo Küfferle (1903–1955) was also a PNF member, and described himself as a “Catholic Aryan Fascist.”<sup>49</sup>

Prominent anthroposophist Marco Spainì (1887–1969), who financed the publication of many Italian anthroposophical works, received benign appraisals from Fascist authorities. Police documents attested to Spainì’s “favorable sentiments toward the Regime.”<sup>50</sup> A 1938 report painted a congenial picture: “Spainì leads a secluded life. He is a cultivated and intelligent person, reserved and of serious character. He occupies himself above all with anthroposophical studies.” The report observed: “although not a member of the PNF, he has proven himself an admirer of the Duce and is positively disposed toward the Regime.”<sup>51</sup>

The small Italian biodynamic movement displayed comparably pro-Fascist sympathies. Luciano Chimelli, who introduced biodynamic agriculture to Italy, was the chief representative of biodynamics in the Fascist period. Chimelli (1880–1943) was “a passionately and unyieldingly committed anthroposophist” whose “devotion and dedication to anthroposophy were absolute.”<sup>52</sup> He was also an outspoken admirer of Mussolini and Fascism, particularly its environmental programs, invoking the Duce’s dictum that Italy must “redeem the soil, and with the soil the men, and with the men the race.”<sup>53</sup> Chimelli came from a wealthy northern Italian family and served as a cavalry officer in World War One, when he encountered anthroposophy. In 1927 he became president

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<sup>49</sup> Rinaldo Küfferle, letter to editor, *Regime Fascista* October 5, 1938, 3. The letter stressed Küfferle’s political agreement with the paper’s editor, Roberto Farinacci, a leading Fascist hard-liner. Küfferle’s detractors nonetheless accused him of insufficient commitment to Fascism; see the anonymous complaints from 1935 and 1936 in his political police file, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 692 fasc. pers. Kufferle Rinaldo. See also Küfferle’s excursus on Atlantis appended to Steiner, *Cronaca dell’Akasha*, 15–20. After the war Küfferle became editor of *Antroposofia: Rivista mensile di Scienza dello Spirito*, established in 1946.

<sup>50</sup> Prefettura di Imperia to DGPS, July 23, 1933, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>51</sup> Questura di Imperia to DGPS, December 4, 1938, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1292 fasc. pers. Spainì Marco. On Spainì’s anthroposophist activities see also, with caution, Riccardo Mandelli, *Al casinò con Mussolini: Gioco d’azzardo, massoneria ed esoterismo intorno all’ombra di Matteotti* (Turin: Lindau, 2012), 203–10.

<sup>52</sup> Enrico Pappacena, *Di alcuni cultori della Scienza dello Spirito* (Bari: Andriola, 1971), 169.

<sup>53</sup> Luciano Chimelli, “Prefazione all’edizione italiana” to Giovanni Schomerus, *Il metodo di coltivazione biologico-dinamico* (Pergine: Luigi Torgler, 1934), iii–xx, quote on xvii. His works include Luciano Chimelli, *Della lavorazione del terreno* (Pergine: Luigi Torgler, 1941), and Chimelli, *Del governo dei concimi organici* (Trent: Edizioni Mutilati e Invalidi, 1942). Weleda’s representative in Italy during the Fascist era was Alberto Galli in Milan (cf. Chimelli, *Del governo dei concimi organici*, 73).

of the Fascist agricultural federation for the province of Trent. He visited his biodynamic colleagues in Germany in 1935 as an official in the Fascist agriculture apparatus. The biodynamic league proudly reported the visit to their Nazi party sponsors.<sup>54</sup>

German biodynamic leaders were enthusiastic about Fascist environmental efforts. In 1940 *Demeter* published an article by Italian forestry expert Aldo Pavari, followed by a German author praising Fascist policies.<sup>55</sup> Though not a biodynamic practitioner, Pavari's ecological approach appealed to Steiner's followers. His article extolled Fascism for rescuing the Italian landscape, for "saving the soil and thereby saving the race."<sup>56</sup> He celebrated Fascist reforestation programs and declared that such successes were only possible under Mussolini's regime. Writing for an English audience six years earlier, Pavari vouched that "the forests and the mountains" were finally coming into their own "under the inspiring influence of the Duce of the new Italy."<sup>57</sup> Chimelli shared these views, while warning that Fascist achievements would remain incomplete unless complemented by biodynamic principles. "If we fail at our task, the consequences for the future of the race could be disastrous." But "the climate created by Fascism" was especially hospitable to a biodynamic approach, with its anti-materialist thrust and its spiritual basis.<sup>58</sup>

Pro-fascist testimonials from high-profile anthroposophists were matched by positive portrayals of anthroposophy in Fascist publications. According to anthroposophist Enrico Pappacena, references to Steiner and anthroposophy were not unusual in Italian periodicals in the Fascist years.<sup>59</sup> In 1930 the

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<sup>54</sup> Erhard Bartsch to Bernhard Hörmann, Reichsleitung der NSDAP, July 19, 1935 (BA R9349/1); Bartsch to H. G. Müller, July 19, 1935, forwarding a text by Chimelli on biodynamics.

<sup>55</sup> Aldo Pavari, "Die Wiederbewaldung des Appenins" *Demeter* February 1940, 13–17; Gerhard Reinboth, "Die italienischen Urbarmachungen" *Demeter*, July 1940, 66–67.

<sup>56</sup> Pavari, "Die Wiederbewaldung des Appenins," 15.

<sup>57</sup> Aldo Pavari, "The Fascist Government and the Restoration of Italian Forests" *Forestry* 8 (1934), 67–75, quote on 75.

<sup>58</sup> Chimelli, "Prefazione all'edizione italiana," xvii, xx. Chimelli also translated German texts by anthroposophist authors and published a book and pamphlet series, the "Collana dell'agricoltura bio-dinamica," which included E. Pfeiffer, *La fertilità della terra* (Milan: La Prora, 1938), F. Dreidax, *Il coltivare nel vivente: Introduzione al metodo bio-dinamico* (Pergine: Torgler, 1939), and M. K. Schwarz, *La frutticoltura secondo il metodo di coltivazione bio-dinamico* (Pergine: Torgler, 1940).

<sup>59</sup> Enrico Pappacena, *Da Lucifero al Cristo: Itinerario spirituale d'un uomo 'rinato'* (San Casciano: Casa del Libro, 1933), 427.

illustrated magazine accompanying Mussolini's *Popolo d'Italia*, the foremost Fascist newspaper, carried a highly sympathetic portrait of anthroposophy complete with a large photograph of Steiner.<sup>60</sup> It lauded him as "the ideal priest of a new faith in life." In 1937 the hard-line newspaper *Regime Fascista* printed a substantial interview with Albert Steffen, president of the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach. Steffen, who visited Fascist Italy regularly, praised the nation and predicted that it would once again rise to spiritual greatness. The interview was conducted by Rinaldo Küfferle and suggested a considerable degree of agreement between anthroposophy and Fascism, amid discussion of the Archangel Michael and the Mystery of Golgotha and the need to "cultivate awareness of the spiritual worlds."<sup>61</sup>

Relations between the Italian anthroposophical movement and the Fascist state became increasingly strained with the developing alliance between Italy and Germany from the mid-1930s onward. In April 1936 Himmler signed a pact with the chief of the Italian police to cooperate in pursuing mutual foes, setting the institutional backdrop for a shift in Fascist attitudes.<sup>62</sup> In July 1941, in the aftermath of the Nazi campaign against occultism, the Fascist security services requested reports from regional police agencies on anthroposophist activities in their jurisdictions. Most provinces had no branch of the Anthroposophical Society. The Rome branch reportedly had only fifteen members by this time, while the Milan section dissolved in December 1941. Its assets were confiscated and donated to a local rehabilitation center for war veterans.<sup>63</sup> Organized anthroposophy did not entirely disappear, however. An October 1941 document submitted to the Directorate for Public Security outlined the goals of the Anthroposophical Society, denying that anthroposophy had any political content and declaring that its objectives were limited to the study of Steiner's works and nurturing spiritual science as the antithesis to materialism. Its final sentence read: "All members are of the Aryan race."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Innocenza Cappa, "L'euritmia e Rodolfo Steiner" *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* February 1930, 48–49.

<sup>61</sup> Rinaldo Küfferle, "Colloquio con Steffen" *Regime Fascista* December 12, 1937, 5.

<sup>62</sup> For the complex background see Patrick Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis: Die Polizei im Dritten Reich und im faschistischen Italien 1933 bis 1943" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59 (2011), 229–62.

<sup>63</sup> Questura di Roma to DGPS, October 23, 1941, and 1931 to 1942 documents on the Milan anthroposophical group in ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>64</sup> "Lo scopo della Società Antroposofica," October 24, 1941, ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

This last claim pointedly indicated the altered situation in Italy after the adoption of an official antisemitic policy. The change was announced in July 1938 with the publication of the "Manifesto of Race," followed by a series of laws aimed against Italy's Jews beginning in September.<sup>65</sup> The racial laws inaugurated a new phase in the regime's outlook, as "ethnic racism became the main ideological component of Fascism from 1938 until the end of the Second World War."<sup>66</sup> Legal measures against Jews intensified steadily until Mussolini's temporary overthrow in 1943. This context brought "spiritual racism" to the fore. Many Fascist intellectuals "stressed the 'spiritual' rather than the biological idea of race" and called for "denying Jews influence in government or education because they had a different spirit."<sup>67</sup> Others championed "Italian spirituality" against "degenerate Jewish influence."<sup>68</sup> In the words of the April 1940 "Race Exhibition" in Rome:

The rise of Fascism has opened a new era of greatness for the Italian people, a greatness which finds its truest expression not only in the physical renewal of the race, but above all in the spiritual strengthening of the race. Under the guidance of the Duce, the race is returning to its role as the center from which a new civilization and a new social organization shine forth.<sup>69</sup>

The Fascist race laws entailed a number of complications for anthroposophist activities. In 1939 zealous antisemites in the Fascist cultural bureaucracy mistook Steiner for a Jewish author and tried to have his works banned. Steiner's publishers pointed out that he was not in fact Jewish, and Küfferle submitted

<sup>65</sup> "Il Fascismo e il problema della razza," *Giornale d'Italia*, July 15, 1938, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Edward Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture 1922–1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 78. Detailed studies include Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Robert Wistrich and Sergio Della Pergola, eds., *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1995); Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History* (New York: Enigma, 2001); Joshua Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience*, 78. As an example see Pasquale Pennisi, "Appunti per la dottrina fascista della razza" *Gerarchia* July 1942, 286–89.

<sup>68</sup> ACS SPD/CR 1922–1943 480/R b. 146 f. 401.

<sup>69</sup> ACS PCM (1937–39) 14/1/8147.

a copy of Steiner's Aryan certificate to the Ministry of Popular Culture.<sup>70</sup> In 1942, under pressure from their German colleagues, the Ministry declined to authorize re-printing of previously published works by Steiner. A wide variety of his books were nonetheless available throughout the Fascist period, and new titles continued to appear. Many other works by anthroposophist authors were published in Italian.<sup>71</sup> Publication difficulties were not the only repercussion the race laws had on organized anthroposophy. Several leading Italian anthroposophists were of Jewish descent, most importantly Lina Schwarz in Milan and Maria Gentilli Kassapian in Trieste.

Schwarz (1876–1947), a well-known children's author, was president of the Milan section of the Anthroposophical Society from 1933 onward. She translated various anthroposophist works into Italian. After the race laws were imposed she moved to Switzerland, returning to Italy in 1945.<sup>72</sup> Kassapian (1893–1970) was titular president of the Anthroposophical Society in Italy from its founding in 1931, as well as head of the Trieste branch of the Society. Though the Fascist authorities categorically affirmed their good political conduct, the presence of Jews in anthroposophical ranks played a role in the Trieste group's dissolution in September 1938, immediately after the enactment of the racial laws.<sup>73</sup> Anthroposophist responses to antisemitic legislation were complicated by serious disagreements among Steiner's followers. Divergent interpretations of anthroposophy's racial and ethnic doctrines revealed widely differing understandings of the spirit of the race and the soul of the nation. Even as assimilated Jews like Schwarz and Kassapian occupied public positions in anthroposophical organizations, other anthroposophists enthusiastically greeted Fascism's antisemitic turn.

<sup>70</sup> Giorgio Fabre, *L'Elenco: Censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei* (Turin: Zamorani, 1998), 287.

<sup>71</sup> Examples include Guenther Wachsmuth, *Le forze eteriche plasmatici nel cosmo, nella terra e nell'uomo* (Todi: Atanor, 1929); Ernst Uehli, *La nascita dell'individualità dal mito come esperienza artistica di Riccardo Wagner* (Milan: Bocca, 1939); Lidia Baratto, *Euritmia: La nuova arte del movimento creata da Rudolf Steiner* (Milan: Bocca, 1939); G. A. Colonna di Cesarò, *Saggio d'interpretazione del Vangelo di Luca* (Modena: Guanda, 1941); Enrico Zagwijn, *L'evoluzione spirituale della musica in oriente ed occidente* (Milan: Bocca, 1943). See also the incomplete 1941 list of "alcuni libri di Rudolf Steiner," comprising 30 titles, in ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317.

<sup>72</sup> See the reminiscence by Pappacena, *Di alcuni cultori della Scienza dello Spirito*, 123–28.

<sup>73</sup> Memorandum from the Prefect of Trieste, December 20, 1938, ACS M1/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317, reporting that the Trieste anthroposophist group dissolved in September 1938 and that many of its approximately 60 members were Jewish, while noting: "non hanno mai dato luogo a rilievi con la loro condotta morale e politica."



Ettore Martinoli, one of the central figures in the Italian anthroposophist movement, was a committed antisemite and a voluble advocate of “spiritual racism.” Martinoli (1895–1958), a lawyer from Trieste, served as founding Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Italy and continued to promote Steiner’s work throughout the Fascist period. An active Fascist from the earliest days of Mussolini’s movement, he was an emphatic supporter of the racial laws promulgated in 1938. He referred to Mussolini in 1940 as “the genius of the millennium.”<sup>74</sup> Martinoli was a frequent collaborator of the School of Fascist Mysticism in Milan. Established in 1930, the School and its journal *Dottrina Fascista* enjoyed Mussolini’s avid support. The Duce himself emphasized the importance of “mysticism” and “the life of the spirit.”<sup>75</sup> From 1938 onward the School of Fascist Mysticism offered a series of courses on racial education and published extensively on the topic of race, with a particular focus on “the Jewish problem.”<sup>76</sup> In 1940 the school sponsored a contest for the best new volume on Fascist racial thought. The winning title, out of twenty-four candidates, was a book on “The Mysticism of Fascist Racism” which pilloried the “ruinous influence of Judaism” and exhorted the Italian people to defend itself against “Jewish contamination.”<sup>77</sup>

Martinoli took part in the February 1940 National Conference on Fascist Mysticism with a presentation on “The function of mysticism in the Fascist revolution.”<sup>78</sup> He published a book on the same theme later that year, employing anthroposophical vocabulary and quoting Mussolini copiously. The book’s opening sentence declared: “The mysticism of Fascism was born when the Duce, in the immediate aftermath of the war, took into his hands the rebirth of Italy and with it the fate of Europe.” Martinoli presented Fascism as a “spiritual fact,” a “counterattack of the spirit against materialism.” He insisted that “the principle of hierarchy” was a “necessary element of any human society based

<sup>74</sup> Ettore Martinoli, *Liriche e canti* (Trieste: Trani, 1940), 38. Cf. Martinoli, “In tema di formulazione di una nuova sintesi spirituale” *Tempo di Mussolini* January 1941, 1058–67.

<sup>75</sup> *Dottrina Fascista* January 1941, 226–27. The standard scholarly study of the School of Fascist Mysticism is Daniele Marchesini, *La scuola dei gerarchi. Mistica fascista: storia, problemi, istituzioni* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976). A recent sympathetic account of the School discusses Martinoli’s role in a variety of contexts: Tomas Carini, *Niccolò Giani e la Scuola di Mistica Fascista 1930–1943* (Milan: Mursia, 2009), 39, 124–26, 212, 225.

<sup>76</sup> See the list of publications on race in “Atti della Scuola di Mistica Fascista,” *Dottrina Fascista* January 1942, 12–13; cf. Renzo Sertoli Salis, *Le leggi razziali italiane* (Milan: Scuola di Mistica Fascista, 1940).

<sup>77</sup> Enzo Leoni, *Mistica del razzismo fascista* (Milan: Scuola di Mistica Fascista, 1941), 11, 99; details on the contest in *Dottrina Fascista* January 1941, 241–42.

<sup>78</sup> Marchesini, *La scuola dei gerarchi*, 178.

on spiritual foundations.”<sup>79</sup> For Martinoli, “the Fascist revolution not only brought a new political-social order into the world, it also ushered in the beginning of a new civilization.” But this new civilization was menaced by a “Jewish-Masonic demo-plutocracy” threatening the future of Europe. Nevertheless: “The impulse of renewal at work within Fascism demonstrates that the future task of the white race is still to guide human civilization toward its further goals.”<sup>80</sup>

Even antifascist anthroposophists devoted attention to racial themes. One of the last works that Colonna di Cesarò authored, a book on the mysteries of ancient Rome published in November 1938, contained ample material on race. The book cited Steiner repeatedly, along with Ernst Uehli, Elise Wolfram, Helena Blavatsky, Herman Wirth, Arthur de Gobineau, and René Guénon, and quoted Julius Evola at length. Colonna endorsed Steiner’s notion of national missions and elaborated it throughout the book. He distinguished “the Nordic, Aryan peoples” from “the southern and oriental races,” describing “the savage populations of Africa and Australia” as “degenerated races.”<sup>81</sup> In contrast to Martinoli, however, Colonna maintained a philosemitic position.

Other esoteric authors adopted stances similar to Martinoli’s. Writer and art critic Aniceto del Massa (1898–1975), a well-known figure in artistic circles in Florence, was active in Fascist ranks from the creation of Mussolini’s black-shirts. By the early 1920s he was a student of Steiner’s spiritual science and remained attached to anthroposophy throughout his life.<sup>82</sup> A 1941 collection of his writings invoked Steiner in its opening pages.<sup>83</sup> Like Colazza, Del Massa collaborated with Evola and took part in the esoteric UR group in the late 1920s. He was a vociferous antisemite who argued that Fascist Italy must go beyond “ordinary racism” to a “spiritual racism.” In 1937 he praised the heroic Nordic peoples as saviors of the West, defending “the white race” against “biological deformation.” Denouncing democracy, rationalism, and humanitarianism,

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<sup>79</sup> Ettore Martinoli, *Funzione della mistica nella rivoluzione fascista* (Trieste: Trani, 1940), 7, 45, 56.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 19, 32.

<sup>81</sup> Giovanni Colonna di Cesarò, *Il ‘Mistero’ delle Origini di Roma* (Milan: La Prora, 1938), 74, 52.

<sup>82</sup> See the autobiographical account in Aniceto del Massa, *Pagine esoteriche* (Trent: La Finestra, 2001), 28–29, 44, 52, 75, 90–94. Beraldo, “Il movimento antroposofico italiano durante il regime fascista,” 151, describes Del Massa as a “sympathizer of Steiner.”

<sup>83</sup> Aniceto del Massa, *Cronache: Uomini e idee* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1941), 5–6.

he explained that the “racial struggle” required strong races to dominate weak races.<sup>84</sup>

For anthroposophists like Martinoli, this struggle faced tenacious enemies. In May 1942 Martinoli lectured in Milan on “Jewry’s efforts to conquer Western civilization.”<sup>85</sup> He gave a series of lectures in Trieste in June and July 1943 on “Judeo-Masonic influence in modern civilization.”<sup>86</sup> In a June 1942 essay Martinoli described “the global Jewish conspiracy”:

Jewry does not carry out its Judaic conquests solely because of an innate love of money or greed for profit or subtle Hebraic commercial cunning, but in order to fulfill a conscious age-old plan for global conquest and domination. Every Jew has in his blood the conviction, cultivated for millennia, that the Jewish people is entitled to and will one day be given dominion over the whole world and all of mankind.

The dire Jewish plot demanded constant watchfulness: “The conscience of our Aryan world, our European world, must rouse itself in the face of these facts and not remain in its state of slumber regarding the Jewish problem, a slumber which allows Jewry to achieve its aims.” Martinoli praised Mussolini as “the true historical adversary, conscious and deliberate, of the international Jewish conspiracy.”<sup>87</sup>

Writing in Giovanni Preziosi’s journal in April 1943, Martinoli depicted a life-or-death struggle between Fascism and Jewry. The goal of the Jews was “world domination,” while Fascism was fighting “to liberate and purify the world” from the Jewish peril, paving the way for “a new humankind.” Five years after the passage of the racial laws, Martinoli raged against “the Jewish plutocratic oligarchy” and castigated “the liberal democratic regimes” for siding with the Jews against Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. He warned that egalitarian

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 26, 15–16, 21. Cf. Aniceto del Massa, “Considerazioni sull’arte e sulla razza” *Regime Fascista* March 22, 1942, 3. In the 1920s Del Massa published in the radical Fascist journal *Il Selvaggio*; see e.g. Aniceto del Massa, “Gentile” *Il Selvaggio* February 1928, 4, and his poems in the June 1926 issue.

<sup>85</sup> ACS SPD/CO b. 1144 f. 509485.

<sup>86</sup> Silva Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste 1930–1945: Identità, persecuzione, risposte* (Udine: Goriziana, 2000), 263.

<sup>87</sup> Ettore Martinoli, “L’importanza di Trieste per l’ebraismo internazionale” *La Porta Orientale* June 1942, 106–10. The article blamed the ongoing world war on the Jews.

principles were “subverting the traditional European world” and turning “our race” into “a servant of Israel.” But all was not lost:

If it had not been for the providential arrival of those towering and super-human personalities, the Duce and the Führer, who succeeded in saving the two great peoples of Aryan civilization from the abyss, the Jewish plan would surely have been achieved.

The strongest defense against “Jewish servitude” was “racism, which opposes itself to Judaism.”

Racism has now established itself in the center of the political, cultural, and ethical development of our century. With the achievement of Aryan racial consciousness, racism is erecting a barrier against Jewish domination, a barrier that is not just political but spiritual. Racism is beginning to shape a continental European conscience, the only possible basis for an orderly and harmonious convergence toward a unified civilization of the peoples of Europe.

Mussolini and Hitler, Martinoli concluded, were the “saviors of Aryan civilization.” Thanks to “divine providence,” Fascism and Nazism had rescued “the new Europe” from the clutches of international Jewry.<sup>88</sup>

Two months later Martinoli followed up this antisemitic article with a glowing portrait of Steiner in the pages of Preziosi’s *La Vita Italiana*, presenting anthroposophy as the continuation of Fascism in spiritual form. Martinoli gave particular emphasis to Steiner’s rejection of democracy and characterized him as a devoted German patriot and Aryan. Above all Martinoli stressed “the perfect correspondence between Steiner’s thought and the fundamental tendencies of Fascism and National Socialism in the political, social, and spiritual camp.”<sup>89</sup> The article reported that Steiner “became well-known as an antisemite” during his years in Vienna and carried this over to his anthroposophical works: “In numerous lectures in the years 1917 and 1918 he directly confronted the influence of Jewish intellectualism within European civilization.” Martinoli closed with this summary:

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<sup>88</sup> Ettore Martinoli, “Gli impulsi storici della nuova Europa e l’azione dell’ebraismo internazionale” *La Vita Italiana* April 1943, 355–64.

<sup>89</sup> Ettore Martinoli, “Un preannunziatore della nuova Europa: Rudolf Steiner” *La Vita Italiana* June 1943, 555–66, quote on 562.

Rudolf Steiner was a true ideal precursor of the new Europe of Mussolini and Hitler. The aim of this essay has been to reclaim the spirit and the figure of this great modern German mystic for the political and spiritual movement introduced into the world by the two parallel revolutions, the Fascist revolution and the National Socialist revolution, to which Steiner belongs as an authentic predecessor and spiritual pioneer.<sup>90</sup>

For Martinoli, Steiner was the herald of a New Europe who presaged Fascism and Nazism and provided a spiritual foundation for antisemitic engagement. Martinoli's views were not an individual anomaly; they were shared by influential anthroposophist voices. Vital as he was to the early development of Italian anthroposophy, Martinoli is today overshadowed by a much more renowned esoteric author. The foremost Italian anthroposophist of the twentieth century was Massimo Scaligero (1906–1980), a celebrated spiritual teacher who is widely admired in the esoteric milieu. The Anthroposophic Press describes Scaligero as

a contemporary Italian spiritual master who has drunk deep from Western and Eastern traditions. Equally at home by direct experience with Western philosophy and psychology, Western esotericism (Rosicrucianism, Templarism, and Anthroposophy) and Eastern meditative practice (Zen and Tibetan Buddhism), Scaligero created a body of work that will continue to influence spiritual seekers well into the new millennium.<sup>91</sup>

Official anthroposophist organs acclaim “the astonishing work of Massimo Scaligero” as an essential “purification” for the “health of the soul.”<sup>92</sup> In 2006 the Italian Anthroposophical Society held a conference in Trieste on Scaligero's centenary, honoring his life and work. Both anthroposophist sources and scholarly sources deny Scaligero's involvement in Fascism and in the racist campaign launched in 1938. The standard anthroposophist biography claims

<sup>90</sup> Martinoli, “Un preannunziatore della nuova Europa,” 566.

<sup>91</sup> SteinerBooks Catalog 2010, 53. Massimo Scaligero was the pen name of Antonio Massimo Sgabelloni. His works include Massimo Scaligero, *Avvento dell'uomo interiore: Lineamenti di una tecnica dell'esperienza sovrasensibile* (Florence: Sansoni, 1959); Scaligero, *La via della volontà solare* (Naples: Tilopa, 1962); Scaligero, *Magia sacra: Una via per la reintegrazione dell'uomo* (Rome: Tilopa, 1966); Scaligero, *Reincarnazione e karma* (Rome: Edizioni mediterranee, 1976); Scaligero, *Die Logik als Widersacher des Menschen* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1991); Scaligero, *Traktat über das lebende Denken* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1993); Scaligero, *The Light: An Introduction to Creative Imagination* (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2001).

<sup>92</sup> Karen Swassjan in *Das Goetheanum* February 1992, 12–13.

that Scaligero “was never politically involved, and certainly not involved in Fascist politics.”<sup>93</sup> Others defend his racial writings from the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>94</sup> Historical accounts, in contrast, have pointed to Scaligero as a major promoter of Fascist antisemitism for decades.<sup>95</sup>

Scaligero began writing for the Fascist press at a young age. Several of his earliest essays appeared in 1931, hailing Fascism as the bearer of “that luminous spirituality which is the principal characteristic of superior civilizations.”<sup>96</sup> He published in Fascist youth organs in 1932 and 1933.<sup>97</sup> His early articles employed esoteric terminology, and spiritual concerns were a consistent element throughout his work. Scaligero envisioned a “Fascist spirituality” in a

<sup>93</sup> Letizia Mancino, “Scabeloni, Antonio Massimo” in von Plato, ed., *Anthroposophie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 695–96, quote on 696. Massimo Introvigne, “Scaligero, Massimo” in Wouter Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* vol. II (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1038–39, writes that “Scaligero was not particularly interested in Fascist politics” (1039). Introvigne, an expert on Italian esotericism, does not mention Scaligero’s Fascist activities in the 1930s and 1940s, his extensive involvement in neo-fascist politics after 1945, or his numerous explicitly racist and antisemitic publications. Scaligero himself insisted in his autobiography that he was never involved in politics and tried to intervene against the racist campaign; cf. Massimo Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce* (Rome: Perseo, 1972), 92–97. Even here he maintained “the ethical validity of the positions I held” in the Fascist era (93), and emphasized: “I still believe the same things about racism that I believed back then.” (96)

<sup>94</sup> Marco Rossi, *Esoterismo e razzismo spirituale: Julius Evola e l’ambiente esoterico nel conflitto ideologico del Novecento* (Genoa: Name, 2007), 118–27; Andrea Federici, “Massimo Scaligero e la maya politica” *Graal: Rivista di scienza dello Spirito* December 2005, 139–58, and June 2006, 48–68.

<sup>95</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962), 448, 510; Silvio Bertoldi, *Salò: Vita e morte della Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1976), 395; Maria Teresa Pichetto, *Alle radici dell’odio: Preziosi e Benigni antisemiti* (Milan: Angeli, 1983), 87–89, 93–94, 135–39; Nazario Sauro Onofri, *Ebrei e fascismo a Bologna* (Bologna: Grafica Lavino, 1989), 100, 117–18, 202–03; Centro Furio Jesi, ed., *La menzogna della razza: Documenti e immagini del razzismo e dell’antisemitismo fascista* (Bologna: Grafis, 1994), 84, 88, 249, 252; Giorgio Israel and Pietro Nastasi, *Scienza e razza nell’Italia fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), 236–37; Roberto Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1999), 266, 278, 286, 305; Gianni Rossi, *La destra e gli ebrei: una storia italiana* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003), 108, 166, 221–27, 239; Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *L’Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 287, 384, 516, 520, 543–44; Michele Loré, *Antisemitismo e razzismo ne La difesa della Razza, 1938–1943* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2008), 193–97; Francesco Germinario, *Fascismo e antisemitismo: Progetto razziale e ideologia totalitaria* (Rome: Laterza, 2009), 16, 24–25, 39–40, 74, 80–81, 86, 105.

<sup>96</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Pericolo di un mito contemporaneo” *Critica Fascista* July 15, 1931, 268–69.

<sup>97</sup> See Luca La Rovere, *Storia dei Guf: Organizzazione, politica e miti della gioventù universitaria fascista 1919–1943* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 193, 212, 224.

front-page article in *Regime Fascista* in August 1938.<sup>98</sup> Racial themes appeared in his writings as early as 1935. Scaligero's mentor was Julius Evola (1898–1974), a pre-eminent figure in modern Italian esotericism. They first met in 1930. Evola's initial analyses of Steiner's teachings were harshly critical, though he maintained good relationships with Italian anthroposophists.<sup>99</sup> He was the driving force behind the seminal UR group, which has since attained legendary status in esoteric circles. Anthroposophy was "the most prominent school" within the UR group.<sup>100</sup> Such distinctions were lost on Fascist authorities, who sometimes deemed Evola an anthroposophist himself.<sup>101</sup> It was Evola who introduced Scaligero to Colazza and anthroposophy.<sup>102</sup>

According to Scaligero's own testimony, he was drawn to anthroposophy all along: "I always felt connected to Steiner and his esoteric teachings." Other sources agree that Scaligero was "a devoted Anthroposophist throughout his entire life."<sup>103</sup> Anthroposophical vocabulary can be found in his writings from at least 1938 on. But Evola's influence was decisive for his early development. Scaligero's first article in Preziosi's *La Vita Italiana* was a long homage to Evola. By 1943 he pointed in the same journal toward a synthesis of Evola's Traditionalism with Steiner's esotericism.<sup>104</sup> Many of his publications combined Evolian and anthroposophist themes, with terminology drawn from disparate streams of occult thought.

Evola was the chief theorist of the esoteric current of racism in Italy and argued indefatigably for a racial re-alignment of Fascism on spiritual lines.

<sup>98</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La scuola della gerarchia" *Regime Fascista* August 14, 1938, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Compare Julius Evola, "Che cosa vuole l'antroposofia di Rudolf Steiner" *Ignis* July 1925, 185–96; Evola, *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo* (Turin: Bocca, 1932), 79–93; Evola, *Il cammino del cinabro* (Milan: Scheiwiller, 1963), 69, 82, 125–26.

<sup>100</sup> Hans Thomas Hakl, "Julius Evola and the UR Group" *Aries* 12 (2012), 53–90, quote on 70. Cf. Marco Rossi, "L'avanguardia che si fa tradizione: l'itinerario culturale di Julius Evola dal primo dopoguerra alla metà degli anni trenta" *Storia contemporanea* 22 (1991), 1039–90.

<sup>101</sup> "Relazione sul processo Evola-Reghini," February 11, 1930, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1105 fasc. pers. Reghini Arturo; February 25, 1930 report describing Evola as Italian representative of "the Swiss sect of Steinerites," ACS Pol. Pol. b. 467 fasc. pers. Evola Julius.

<sup>102</sup> Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 62–63, 80–81; cf. Gianfranco de Turre, "Massimo Scaligero e Julius Evola" in Fausto Belfiori, ed., *Massimo Scaligero: Il coraggio dell'impossibile* (Rome: Tilopa, 1982), 120–33.

<sup>103</sup> Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 79; Introvigne, "Scaligero, Massimo," 1039.

<sup>104</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La saggezza 'antimoderna' e il suo significato nella cultura fascista" *La Vita Italiana* July 1937, 62–74; Scaligero, "Scienza dello Spirito contro sovversivismo occulto" *La Vita Italiana* March 1943, 256–60.



Racism stood “at the core of Evola’s philosophy.”<sup>105</sup> In 1937 he wrote to the Minister of Popular Culture that he had been trying since 1926 “to give an anti-semitic orientation to Fascist spirituality.”<sup>106</sup> Evola advocated a “totalitarian racism” encompassing body, soul, and spirit.<sup>107</sup> He held that limiting the view of race to the physical body was a Jewish deception, whereas an expanded understanding of race made it possible to confront the Jewish problem in its full breadth and recognize the true antithesis between the Jewish and Aryan spirit. In spite of disagreements with some of his teachings, Evola held Steiner in high esteem and considered him an Initiate.<sup>108</sup> In his major racial work, *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*, Evola published two photographs of Steiner

<sup>105</sup> Paul Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola* (London: Routledge, 2011), 40. See also Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, “Julius Evola and the Kali Yuga” in Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 52–71; Francesco Germinario, *Razza del sangue, razza dello spirito: Julius Evola, l’antisemitismo e il nazionalsocialismo, 1930–43* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001); Aaron Gillette, “Julius Evola and spiritual Nordicism, 1941–1943” in Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 154–75; Francesco Cassata, *A destra del fascismo: Profilo politico di Julius Evola* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003); Gianni Scipione Rossi, *Il razzista totalitario: Evola e la leggenda dell’antisemitismo spirituale* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2007); Giovanni Rota, “Un filosofo razzista: Julius Evola” in Rota, *Intellettuali, dittatura, razzismo di stato* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008), 51–91; Francesco Cassata, “Esoteric-traditionalist Racism and Eugenics: Julius Evola” in Cassata, *Building the New Man: Eugenics, Racial Sciences and Genetics in Twentieth Century Italy* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 263–68.

<sup>106</sup> Evola quoted in Dana Lloyd Thomas, *Julius Evola e la tentazione razzista* (Brindisi: Giordano, 2006), 144.

<sup>107</sup> Julius Evola, “Razzismo totalitario” *Rassegna Italiana* December 1938, 847–53. Cf. Evola, “Razza e cultura” *Rassegna Italiana* January 1934, 11–16; Evola, *Tre aspetti del problema ebraico* (Rome: Mediterranee, 1936); Evola, “La guerra occulta: Ebrei i massoni alla conquista del mondo” *La Vita Italiana* December 1936, 645–55; Evola, *Il mito del sangue* (Milan: Hoepli, 1937); Evola, “Gli ebrei in Italia e il vero problema ebraico” *La Vita Italiana* June 1937, 659–68; Evola, “La razza come problema spirituale” *Regime Fascista* October 25, 1938, 5; Evola, “Sulla visione ariana del mondo” *Rassegna Italiana* March 1939, 167–75; Evola, “La culla della razza ariana” *La Difesa della Razza* April 5, 1939, 17–20; Evola, “Sul concetto di Mistica Fascista e sui rapporti con la dottrina della razza” *Dottrina Fascista* March 1940, 555–56; Evola, “Coscienza di razza e idea imperiale” *La Vita Italiana* August 1940, 150–55; Evola, “Ebraismo ed Occultismo” *La Vita Italiana* October 1940, 390–95; Evola, “Andare avanti sul fronte razzista” *La Difesa della Razza* February 20, 1941, 18–20; Evola, “Sulla genesi dell’ebraismo come forza distruttrice” *La Vita Italiana* July 1941, 25–35; Evola, “Che cosa significa ‘Ario’?” *Augustea* November 16, 1941, 17–20; Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale* (Naples: Conte, 1941); Evola, “Sul problema della ‘razza dello spirito’” *La Vita Italiana* February 1942, 153–59; Evola, “Razza ed ‘ascesi’” *Rassegna Italiana* April 1942, 164–69; Evola, “Razzismo nordico-ario” *La Difesa della Razza* April 20, 1942, 10–11.

<sup>108</sup> Julius Evola, *The Hermetic Tradition* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995), 111, 207.

as a prime example of the Nordic racial type, praising him as a superior representative of “spiritual insight” and the “solar element.”<sup>109</sup>

The common ground between Evola and Steiner facilitated Scaligero's transition to a key spokesman for esoteric antisemitism. Scaligero combined a spiritual view of race with an aesthetic flair, a vision of cultural renewal and life-affirming creativity as constitutive aspects of the racist project. A typical passage praised Fascism for “ennobling thought with the virility of action” and “creating a new aspiration for the formation of the race”:

In the midst of the confused contrast between scientific sterility and spiritual subversion which afflicts the modern world, Fascism is creating a new era, a revival of beauty, wisdom, and a new poetry, rainbow-colored images and deeds uncontaminated by rhetoric. This creative culture, this style and way of life, is an essential principle of our racism.<sup>110</sup>

Scaligero declared that “the racist ethic” was “the only force which can oppose the enormous decadence of modern civilization, presaged in ancient traditions which speak of one unique race, the masters of destiny who alone will survive the end of this cycle.”<sup>111</sup> The Aryan race was “the model of humankind,” the race in which “the formative forces of the Divine most fully manifest their creative will.”<sup>112</sup> The fulfillment of this promise lay in “the victory of the totalitarian principle of Fascism and National Socialism by force of arms.”

The collapse of the old Europe in a clash of iron and fire will not bring material prosperity to those who have not learned harsh and holy sacrifice, but the spiritual integration of a united occidental civilization and a single Aryan race, the advent of a Romano-Germanic spirituality that can restore to mankind the vision of the sacred and eternal.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Julius Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Milan: Hoepli, 1941), 275–76.

<sup>110</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “La razza e lo spirito della Rivoluzione” *La Vita Italiana* May 1939, 601–05, quote on 602.

<sup>111</sup> Scaligero, “Fine di una civiltà e nascita di una razza” *La Vita Italiana* January 1940, 32–39, quote on 39.

<sup>112</sup> Scaligero, “Limiti alla comprensione del problema razzista” *La Vita Italiana* September 1941, 255–63, quote on 261.

<sup>113</sup> Scaligero, “Funzione occidentale della nuova civiltà romano-germanica” *La Vita Italiana* February 1941, 152–57, quote on 157.

This vision of a revived Aryan race was joined to a categorical rejection of the age-old adversary of Aryan spirituality: the Jews. In Scaligero's esoteric account, the "Aryan type" was "produced by the absolute absence of Semitic contamination." Fascism's "new racist campaign" vindicated "Italian racial values" and allowed "the fertile union of the Aryan sub-races toward the integral reconstitution of the ancient inextinguishable solar race."<sup>114</sup> Only a "spiritual conception of race" could preserve the "perennial values of the blood."<sup>115</sup> In addition to the negative and exclusionary component of racism, Scaligero highlighted a 'positive' racism as an inspiring vision of spiritual revitalization. He demanded that racism not remain a mere theory but become an active force in re-shaping the world, in making it a better, stronger, more beautiful place. The practical consequences of this purportedly positive vision became all too clear in the concrete context of Fascist race policy.

Scaligero spelled out his esoteric perspective in an early magnum opus, a 1939 book titled *The Race of Rome*. Its opening sentence referred to "our racist stance" as a specifically Italian form of racism. Decrying the "materialism of the democratic societies," Scaligero characterized the Italians as "a race destined for victory," with the Fascist regime enshrining "racism in the true and superior sense."<sup>116</sup> Concerned to demonstrate the Aryan roots of the Italian race, he presented an elaborate narrative modeled on the theosophical root-race theory, comprising Hyperborean racial origins, the rise and fall of Atlantis, and a vast evolutionary panorama in which "the white Aryan race" founded Western civilization in prehistoric times. Nordic and Mediterranean racial groups came together in the race of Rome thousands of years ago, synthesizing the best traits of both groups. The ancient Romans represented the harmonization of two great racial legacies united in a noble empire. European peoples recovered their primordial Aryan unity under the guidance of Imperial Rome.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Scaligero, "Omogeneità e continuità della razza italiana" *La Difesa della Razza* June 5, 1939, 38–40: "The Aryan occidental race" represents "the classic solar spirit," while "Semitic man is the merchant, the nomad, the invader, bearer of obscure Telluric cults and a sensualistic-individualistic religion." (38)

<sup>115</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Compito eroico dello spirito nell'azione razzista" *La Vita Italiana* September 1939, 327–33.

<sup>116</sup> Massimo Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma* (Tivoli: Mantero, 1939), 9. Cf. Scaligero, "Motivi originari della razza di Roma" *Regime Fascista* October 22, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "Razze meridionali e razze nordiche" *Regime Fascista* November 4, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "Il mistero della razza atlantica" *Regime Fascista* November 20, 1938, 3; Scaligero, "La razza italica dopo il Primo Impero di Roma" *Regime Fascista* December 4, 1938, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma*, 12, 49. For background on the Aryan myth in Italy see Mauro Raspanti, "Il mito ariano nella cultura italiana fra otto e novecento" in Alberto Burgio, ed., *Nel*

At the core of this Roman race was “a superior ethnic element” which had carried aloft for millennia the great racial heritage of Imperial glory and protected it against mixture with inferior elements. The Italian people remained “a homogenous racial whole” thanks to specially advanced members of the race who formed its proper leaders, the custodians of its spiritual patrimony. By re-establishing “anti-modern, anti-egalitarian, aristocratic” values, Fascism would achieve “the re-birth of a superior race that is Roman once more.” Scaligero insisted on the universality of Fascist racial renewal: “Racism of a superior character can only be the result of a spirituality universal in essence.” The “resurrection of the spiritual values of race” would bring about “the diffusion of Fascist spirituality throughout the world.”<sup>118</sup> Interspersed with these claims were references to the Grail, Thule, ancient India and Persia, the Edda, Telluric races, and assorted occult lore.

In a central chapter titled “Anti-Judaism as Anti-materialism,” Scaligero denounced “apologists for Jewry” and proclaimed that the Jews represent “sub-human Ahrimanic forces.” He delineated “our anti-Jewish stance” by explaining that the Roman way of dealing with enemies was to “eliminate that which can do us harm.” A spiritual conception of race was necessary to an incisive racist policy because it was entirely possible for a “non-Roman, non-Aryan, non-Italian” soul to be disguised in a body with Italian traits.<sup>119</sup> For this reason, “the Italian racist stance” aimed to “surpass the materialistic aspects of race.” Materialist approaches failed to account for the racial spirit, fundamental to both racial dignity and racial degeneration. Here biology met its limits. “The spirit of the race cannot be the object of scientific analysis, of cold logical vivisection and mere chronology.”<sup>120</sup> The “mission of the spirit,” as Scaligero explained elsewhere, called for rejection of “rationalistic discussion” in favor of “heroic mysticism” and “virile action.” Only thus would a “new spiritual race” be able to arise “under the sign of the Fasces and the Swastika.”<sup>121</sup>

The spirit of the race and the soul of the nation could take surprisingly belligerent forms. From Mussolini’s ascension to power in 1922 to the height of Fascist racism two decades later, anthroposophists played conspicuous

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nome della razza: *Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia 1870–1945* (Bologna: Mulino, 1999), 75–85, and Fabrizio De Donno, “‘La Razza Ario-Mediterranea’: Ideas of Race and Citizenship in Colonial and Fascist Italy, 1885–1941” *Interventions* 8 (2006), 394–412.

<sup>118</sup> Scaligero, *La Razza di Roma*, 99, 122, 170, 195, 256.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 203, 214, 259.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 130, 134.

<sup>121</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Missione dello spirito nell’ordine nuovo” *Augustea* March 16, 1942, 176–77.

supporting roles, ideologically as well as institutionally. The rise of Fascism was disrupted in July 1943, when Mussolini was deposed and imprisoned by his own associates. With the Allies gaining ground in Sicily and Axis forces in retreat on the Eastern front, the Duce was temporarily toppled from power and replaced by an interim regime under Marshal Pietro Badoglio which sought to end the pact with Nazi Germany. Badoglio's administration ruled Italy for six weeks, eventually signing an armistice with the Allies. German troops then occupied central and northern Italy and established a new hard-line Fascist state in the territory still under their control, with Mussolini as its nominal head. This diminished regime was dubbed the Italian Social Republic or RSI, better known as the Republic of Salò.<sup>122</sup> While others switched sides, Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli continued their allegiance to Fascism in its reduced and radicalized form, supporting the RSI until its final destruction in 1945.

Even after the defeat of Fascism, anthroposophists featured prominently in the Italian neo-fascist milieu as principal proponents of its esoteric current. Aside from Evola, this influential segment of the extreme right included Del Massa, a leading protagonist of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* or MSI, the primary neo-fascist party in Italy for five decades. Del Massa served as an editor at the MSI newspaper until 1961.<sup>123</sup> Scaligero also contributed substantially to the development of the Italian far right during the post-war period, even while keeping a discreet distance from direct political participation. He was a

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<sup>122</sup> Histories of the RSI include F. W. Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler, and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962); Giorgio Bocca, *La Repubblica di Mussolini* (Rome: Laterza, 1977); Lutz Klinkhammer, *Zwischen Bündnis und Besatzung: Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Republik von Salò 1943–1945* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993); Aurelio Lepre, *La storia della repubblica di Mussolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999); Luigi Ganapini, *La repubblica delle camicie nere* (Milan: Garzanti, 2002).

<sup>123</sup> For details on Del Massa's neo-fascist activities see Adalberto Baldoni, *La Destra in Italia 1945–1969* (Rome: Pantheon, 2000), 407, 483, 491; Luciano Lanna and Filippo Rossi, *Fascisti immaginari: Tutto quello che c'è da sapere sulla destra* (Florence: Vallecchi, 2003), 155, 428; Giuseppe Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini: Le origini del neofascismo in Italia, 1943–1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 136, 156, 165, 240, 330–31; Daniele Lembo, *Fascisti dopo la liberazione: Storia del fascismo e dei fascisti nel dopoguerra in Italia* (Pavia: Maro, 2007), 23–24; Mario Bozzi Sentieri, *Dal neofascismo alla nuova destra: Le riviste 1944–1994* (Rome: Edizioni Nuove Idee, 2007), 9, 16, 33, 73, 93, 168; Luca La Rovere, *L'eredità del fascismo: Gli intellettuali, i giovani e la transizione al postfascismo, 1943–1948* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008), 195–96. Much of the information on esoteric engagement in the Italian neo-fascist milieu comes from sympathetic observers and first-hand accounts by participants in the post-war extreme right. These sources offer important material but are to be used with caution.

revered mentor to the radical youth groups that formed the extreme right wing of the MSI, as well as the spectrum of underground factions further to the right of the party. Scaligero was instrumental in introducing esoteric viewpoints into militant sectors of the neo-fascist movement and profoundly shaped the longstanding interest in anthroposophy within Italian ultra-right circles.<sup>124</sup>

Scaligero's authority continued well after his death. In the twenty-first century his followers cast Steiner's social threefolding proposals as "the resurrection of the fatherland," a national alternative to the "colorless cosmopolitan fog" of "democratic-parliamentary" society.<sup>125</sup> Through the mediation of Scaligero, Steiner's work had a significant impact on neo-fascist thought in Italy from 1945 onward. Pino Rauti (1926–2012), one of the more notorious leaders of the Italian extreme right, acknowledged Steiner's influence. After the war Scaligero held conferences with Rauti and his comrades and recommended Evola's works to them along with anthroposophist texts. Recalling discussions with fellow intransigent neo-fascists in the late 1940s, Rauti noted: "We were fascinated by anthroposophy and the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, whose major exponent in Rome was Scaligero."<sup>126</sup> For many years

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<sup>124</sup> On Scaligero's involvement in neo-fascist politics see Baldoni, *La Destra in Italia*, 340–43, 354–56; Sentieri, *Dal neofascismo alla nuova destra*, 21, 52–53; Gianfranco de Turre, *Elogio e Difesa di Julius Evola: Il Barone e I terroristi* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1997), 50, 55–56, 59–60, 80; Nicola Rao, *Neofascisti: La destra italiana da Salò a Fiuggi nel ricordo dei protagonisti* (Rome: Settimo Sigillo, 1999), 39–40, 74–75; Arianna Streccioni, *A destra della destra: Dentro e fuori l'MSI, dai FAR a Terza Posizione* (Rome: Settimo Sigillo, 2000), 63–64; Nicola Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica: Sessant'anni di neofascismo da Salò ai centri sociali di destra* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2006), 49–50, 82–84; Antonio Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò: Il "Sessantotto nero" dei giovani neofascisti nel dopoguerra, 1945–1951* (Milan: Mursia, 2008), 99–102, 139, 168, 175.

<sup>125</sup> Enzo Erra, Preface to Gaetano Colonna, *La resurrezione della patria: Per una storia d'Italia* (Rome: Tilopa, 2004), v–xiv, quotes on vi and x. The book, co-published by the Fondazione Massimo Scaligero, includes lengthy excerpts from Steiner and offers an extended rehabilitation of Fascism and the Axis in WWII (64–88).

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Rauti in Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 88. See the detailed studies of Rauti and his milieu by Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy after the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and Anna Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), as well as Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 75–81, 197–208, 219–31, 240–54; Leonard Weinberg, *After Mussolini: Italian Neo-Fascism and the Nature of Fascism* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979), 23–25, 32–33, 38–42, 46–48; Richard Drake, *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 1–5, 123–34, 192, 195; Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg, eds., *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 80–92; Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London: Penguin, 1995),



Steiner remained an important point of reference for the post-war far right in Italy.<sup>127</sup>

Anthroposophists Pio Filippini-Ronconi (1920–2010) and Enzo Erra (1926–2011), both friends of Scaligero, were members of the second esoteric generation in the neo-fascist scene. Filippini-Ronconi, an orientalist of aristocratic background, had been an officer in the Italian SS division during World War II and late in life was still defiantly proud of his service to Nazi Germany. Steiner was “especially cherished by the volunteers of the esoteric circle” within the Italian Waffen-ss.<sup>128</sup> Filippini-Ronconi claimed that the symbol of the Italian ss legion, consisting of three crossed arrows, was inspired by anthroposophy and based on motifs from Steiner’s work.<sup>129</sup> Uniting martial and spiritual ideals in a pose both heroic and stoic, Filippini-Ronconi exemplified a soldierly style of esoteric commitment. At the age of fifteen he was leader of a Fascist youth squad, and later served as a minor official in the RSI.<sup>130</sup> He met

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253–71; Giorgio Cingolani, *La destra in armi: Neofascisti italiani tra ribellismo ed eversione* (Rome: Riuniti, 1996), 14–15, 51–53, 124–25; Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 96–105.

<sup>127</sup> See Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 71–72; Streccioni, *A destra della destra*, 209; Rao, *Neofascisti*, 39; Lanna and Rossi, *Fascisti immaginari*, 20, 153–56; Piero Vassallo, *Le culture della destra italiana* (Milan: Effedieffe, 2002), 90–92, 128; Ugo Tassinari, *Fascisteria: Storie, mitografia e personaggi della destra radicale in Italia* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2008), 20–21.

<sup>128</sup> Nicola Guerra, “I volontari italiani nelle Waffen-SS: Il pensiero politico, la formazione culturale e le motivazioni al volontariato” (Doctoral thesis, University of Turku, 2012), 305. Guerra draws extensively on Filippini Ronconi’s unpublished memoir of his SS days and portrays him as chief representative of the “anthroposophist component within the Italian Waffen-SS” (161); cf. 86–90 and 150–53.

<sup>129</sup> Pio Filippini Ronconi, “Testimonianze” *Volontari* October 2005, 43–53; cf. Alfonso Piscitelli, “Suggestioni esoteriche nelle ss italiane: Con una testimonianza di Pio Filippini-Ronconi” in de Turris, ed., *Esoterismo e Fascismo*, 369–75, and Sergio Corbatti and Marco Nava, *Sentire—Pensare—Volere: Storia della Legione SS italiana* (Milan: Ritter, 2001), 356–57. The hagiographic reminiscence by Sergio Corbatti, “In Memoriam Prof. Pio Filippini-Ronconi” in the SS nostalgia magazine *Der Freiwillige* June 2010 reports: “Seine philosophischen wie auch geistigen Kenntnisse waren bei der weltanschaulichen Vorbereitung der Stämme der italienischen Waffenverbände der SS sehr gefragt, wobei auch weitere Intellektuelle wie Asvero Gravelli und Leale Martelli tätig waren. Obersturmführer Filippini-Ronconi und diese andere Intellektuellen waren u.a. verantwortlich für die Auswahl der drei gekreuzten Pfeile als Abzeichen auf dem rechten Kragenspiegel der italienischen Waffenverbände der ss. Die drei Pfeile symbolisieren die drei Eigenschaften des Geistes nach Rudolf Steiner, der viele Anhänger unter den Männern der italienischen Waffen-ss hatte: das Denken, das Fühlen, das Wollen. Der Ring war das Symbol der Vereinigung dieser drei Eigenschaften.” (12)

<sup>130</sup> See the July 11, 1935 report in his father’s file, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 503 fasc. pers. Filippini-Ronconi Fulvio fu Pio. For autobiographical reflections on his combat roles in the Fascist era



Scaligero in 1946. After the war he collaborated with Colazza and wrote introductions to several of Scaligero's works. In his last years he was considered "a grand old man of neofascism."<sup>131</sup>

Filippani-Ronconi's colleague Enzo Erra fought for the RSI as a teenager and met Scaligero just after the end of the war. He became an early activist in the MSI, working closely with Rauti, and disseminated the ideas of Evola and Scaligero within the far right. Erra was the leader of a tendency calling itself "the children of the sun," a group of young neo-fascists seeking a synthesis of spirituality and political militance. The periodicals he edited were an inspiration for right-wing ideologists, featuring articles by Scaligero on modern esoteric thought alongside Mussolini's declarations of Fascist doctrine.<sup>132</sup> Throughout his political career Erra took an uncompromising stance, calling on the inheritors of Fascism not to give in to democracy and the corruptions of the modern world.<sup>133</sup> He regarded Steiner and Scaligero as the "two Masters" of the era and promoted their works across half a century. Erra provided introductions and commentaries to Steiner's publications in Italian translation, and held that Steiner as well as "Evola, Scaligero, and other occultists" were motivated by the need to confront "the total aversion of the contemporary world against any contact with the spirit."<sup>134</sup> Both a public advocate of anthroposophy and a highly visible campaigner for the extreme right, he remained dedicated to Steiner to the end.<sup>135</sup>

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see "Sono un guerriero con interessi culturali: Intervista a Pio Filippani-Ronconi" in Marco Ferrazzoli, ed., *Cos'è la destra* (Rome: Minotauro, 2001), 143–52.

<sup>131</sup> Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica*, 8. On Filippani-Ronconi's role in the post-war extreme right cf. *ibid.*, 11–13, 84, 366–67, and Franco Ferraresi, ed., *La destra radicale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1984), 99–100. See also the contribution by Filippani-Ronconi to Belfiori, ed., *Massimo Scaligero*, 46–54.

<sup>132</sup> See e.g. Massimo Scaligero, "Esoterismo moderno: L'opera di Julius Evola e l'Antroposofia di Rudolf Steiner" *Imperium* June 1950, 31–32, followed by Mussolini's "Dottrina del Fascismo," 38–40. Erra was the journal's editor.

<sup>133</sup> See the sympathetic obituary by Antonio Carioti, "Enzo Erra, il progetto di una destra antimoderna capace di fare politica" *Corriere della Sera* September 23, 2011, 57; cf. Marcello Veneziani, "Quel fascista scomodo che nel dopoguerra sognava un'altra destra" *Il Giornale* September 24, 2011. In 2007 Erra referred to the Rome-Berlin Axis as "la grande alleanza destinata a ricostituire la Mitteleuropa ed a guidare la riscossa europea contro i dominatori anglosassoni." Enzo Erra, *L'Italia nella luce e nell'ombra* (Rome: Tilopa, 2007), 143; the text was co-published by the Fondazione Massimo Scaligero, with a preface by anthroposophist Gaetano Colonna.

<sup>134</sup> Enzo Erra, *Steiner e Scaligero: Due maestri, una via* (Rome: Settimo Sigillo, 2006), 141. The book consists of Erra's texts on Steiner and Scaligero published from 1956 onward.

<sup>135</sup> Extensive information on Erra's stature within the neo-fascist movement is available in Ferraresi, ed., *La destra radicale*, 17–19, 194–96; Sentieri, *Dal neofascismo alla nuova destra*, 37, 42–43, 52–55, 222, 229; Rossi, *La destra e gli ebrei*, 66, 93, 164–65, 188, 223–25; Streccioni, *A des-*

Apart from their entanglement in neo-fascist efforts after Mussolini's downfall, the active involvement of anthroposophists in the racial politics of Italian Fascism raises a series of questions about the interpretation of Steiner's teachings. While Colonna upheld a philosemitic standpoint and Curiel joined the antifascist struggle, other Italian anthroposophists adopted an aggressively antisemitic perspective and heartily endorsed Fascism. Their conclusions about race were significantly more radical than those put forward by anthroposophists elsewhere. Even outspoken racists like Karutz did not preach racial principles as drastic as those propounded by Scaligero and Martinoli. These differences reveal a divergence in the reception of Steiner's racial and ethnic doctrines as well as distinctions between Fascism and Nazism.

For German anthroposophists, the 'Aryan' component in Steiner's teachings often took second place to the 'German' component, due to Steiner's own focus on German national destiny. This option was not available to Italian anthroposophists. Because they could not unreservedly endorse the strongly Germanic cast of anthroposophical thinking found in its German, Austrian, and Swiss strongholds, Italian anthroposophists gravitated toward the broader racial features of Steiner's work. Taking up its esoteric variant of the Aryan myth and highlighting the ostensible contrast between Jewish and Aryan spirituality, Scaligero and his colleagues developed a conception of the spirit of the race and the soul of the nation befitting their surroundings. Steiner's anthroposophy was better suited to this project, in an Italian context, than other varieties of occult racial thought circulating at the time.

Ariosophy, for example, presented a number of obstacles to Italian appropriation. Italy's esoteric race theorists could not easily embrace the work of

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*tra della destra*, 63–70; Rao, *Neofascisti*, 19–20, 39–43, 50–57, 67–72, 238–39, 245–46; Baldoni, *La Destra in Italia*, 338–44, 355–57, 361–62, 512–13; Carioti, *Gli orfani di Salò*, 22–23, 76–98, 130–40, 168–89, 207–08, 239–53; Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini*, 177, 238, 298–99; Lembo, *Fascisti dopo la liberazione*, 90–92, 112–16, 129; Marco Revelli, "La RSI e il neofascismo italiano" in Pier Paolo Poggio, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana 1943–45* (Brescia: Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, 1986), 419, 423–24, 428; Marco Tarchi, *Cinquant'anni di nostalgia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1995), 59–60, 105–07, 234–35; Piero Ignazi, *Il polo escluso: Profilo storico del Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), 41–44, 77–78, 116–19, 246–47; Francesco Germinario, *Da Salò al governo: Immaginario e cultura politica della destra italiana* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005), 64, 89–90, 95–99; Giuseppe Pardini, *Fascisti in democrazia: Uomini, idee, giornali (1946–1958)* (Florence: Le lettere, 2008), 76, 102–03, 124; Adalberto Baldoni, *Storia della destra: Dal postfascismo al Popolo della libertà* (Florence: Vallecchi, 2009), 47–52, 94–95, 297–98; Antonio Carioti, *I ragazzi della Fiamma: I giovani neofascisti e il progetto della grande destra 1952–1958* (Milan: Mursia, 2011), 8–9, 68–75, 98–104, 125–30, 167–72, 241–45.

Guido List because of its forceful anti-Roman orientation and its pejorative view of Italian racial origins. According to List, Italians were “debased Aryan-Teutons who became inferior mixed races through the presence of foreign blood.”<sup>136</sup> These factors rendered anthroposophy more appealing for Italian esotericists seeking a framework for integrating racial and spiritual elements, and facilitated the adoption of anthroposophical tropes into the Fascist version of spiritual racism. Evola, meanwhile, emphasized involution rather than evolution, decadence rather than progress, an important distinction between his racial theory and Steiner’s. Anthroposophist concepts could also serve as a mediator between pagan and Christian currents within Fascist thought, a divide which otherwise proved difficult to bridge.<sup>137</sup>

The specific conditions of Mussolini’s Italy complicated matters, however. Relations between anthroposophy and the Fascist state were often mutually obliging, even if some anthroposophists became increasingly diffident in the face of Mussolini’s consolidating dictatorship. An array of individual anthroposophists were openly supportive of Fascist politics during its two-decade reign. Yet the tensions between Steiner’s followers and the Duce’s government left their mark. The fact that some Italian anthroposophists were antifascists, and that several leading members of the small anthroposophical community in Italy were Jews, inevitably affected Fascist attitudes toward Steiner’s movement. These same facts shaped the path that Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli chose, and helped account for the intensity and duration of their pro-Fascist and antisemitic convictions. Spiritual racism in Fascist Italy took shape against the backdrop of a regime whose agents were at times inhospitable toward anthroposophist endeavors. The success of Steiner’s Italian followers in influencing Fascist racial policy is all the more remarkable in light of these volatile circumstances.

Viewed through the lens of its racial theories, the political contours of modern occultism become both more distinct and more ambiguous. If the history of the occult is a history of implicit politics, its racial legacy remains perplexing. Although anthroposophy generally did not belong to the overtly right-wing end of the esoteric spectrum in interwar Europe, it found significant points of contact with Fascist thought through compatible doctrines about race and nation. In an esoteric environment crowded with manifestly racist ideologies,

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<sup>136</sup> List, *Die Ursprache der Ario-Germanen und ihre Mysteriensprache*, 29.

<sup>137</sup> For an anthroposophist explication of the Christian dimensions in Steiner’s esoteric approach adapted to an Italian context see “La Scienza dello Spirito” in Pappacena, *Da Lucifero al Cristo*, 427–34.

from ariosophy to Evola, anthroposophy did not seem the most likely candidate for impacting the policies of a racist regime. But its combination of scientific vocabulary with spiritual themes offered a potent expedient for both propaganda purposes and practical application once Fascist Italy placed race at the forefront of its concerns. Particularly in an Italian context, recasting racial discourse by reference to myths of past and future grandeur and beauty provided a powerful catalyst to the evolution of a Fascist worldview.

The history of anthroposophist involvement in Fascism sheds a revealing light on Steiner's principles of universalism, and indicates a number of antinomies built into esoteric conceptions of universalism itself. Proponents of Fascist racism invoked the rhetoric of universal values while simultaneously preaching the virtues of racial and national particularism, without recognizing a contradiction between the two. Scaligero posited Aryan unity as the route to salvation for the world as a whole. His texts combined modern and anti-modern elements, as Steiner's work did, and merged religious and biological terminology into a racial idiom that harked back to ancient roots while heralding a revitalized future. These claims depended on a series of occult distinctions between soul and spirit, between the etheric body and the astral body, based on an underlying triad of spirit, soul, and body. Such notions were in turn imperfectly correlated to ostensibly physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of race. This model had unusual consequences in the context of Fascism's racial turn.

Before the promulgation of the race laws in 1938, racism in Fascist Italy had often focused more on Africans and non-white peoples, with relatively little attention to Jews. For anthroposophists involved in the racial campaign, however, antisemitic assumptions were paramount. While Scaligero, Del Massa and Martinoli offered little that was innovative in anti-Jewish rhetoric, instead largely recycling standard antisemitic tropes with an esoteric veneer, their work shows what was appealing about spiritual versions of racial thinking: its idealistic content, its emphasis on harmony, strength, and beauty, on cultural palingenesis and a vivid, shining future. For authors like Scaligero, "the real power of the race" had finally come into its own in Fascist form.

These qualities suggest the seductive power of spiritual racism. In attempting to harness the spirit of the race and the soul of the nation, Italian anthroposophists were divided from the start over how to relate to their government and took opposite sides when the tide turned toward open persecution of Jews. Even as the Fascist regime subjected Steiner's supporters to surveillance and included Jewish anthroposophists in antisemitic repression, it provided a

prominent platform for anthroposophists to infuse esoteric themes into Fascist racial policy. Disdaining the material realm as irredeemably part of *maya*, the world of illusion, the exponents of spiritual science fell prey to a different sort of illusion. Anthroposophical complicity in Fascism exposed the underside of elevated spiritual ideals.

## Spiritual Racism in Power: Italian Anthroposophists and the Fascist Racial Laws, 1938–1945

Italian anthroposophists faced unique choices and challenges during the Fascist era. While their German counterparts confronted a regime fully committed to a racist program from the beginning, Steiner's Italian followers found themselves in a more mercurial situation. Unlike National Socialism, which professed racial antisemitism as one of its core principles, Italian Fascism developed toward an antisemitic policy over a long period of time through a series of uncertain stages. It was not until 1938, a decade and a half after coming to power, that Mussolini promulgated the racial laws aimed against Italy's Jews. In the complex evolution of government-sanctioned Fascist antisemitism, several Italian anthroposophists came to play a conspicuous role as promoters of "spiritual racism." This occult version of racist thought eventually included practical involvement in the implementation of Italian racial policy. It was in Fascist Italy rather than Nazi Germany that esoteric ideas about the spiritual nature of race came to fruition and influenced concrete measures adopted by the state.

The anthroposophist contribution to spiritual racism in theory and in practice yields new insights into the nature of the Fascist racial campaign between 1938 and 1945. Spiritual racists touted a synthesis of biological and spiritual forms of racial discrimination centered on a radicalized antisemitism. Their emphasis on Italian racial character was readily compatible with an outspokenly pro-Nazi stance. Spiritual racism was no mere theoretical construct, but demanded ruthless practical enforcement. It cast its claims far beyond the borders of Italy, insisting that its strictures applied to the whole world. The neglected history of anthroposophist participation in Fascism's racist turn reveals a harder edge to seemingly softer forms of esoteric racial discourse, as anthroposophists attempted to put their own doctrines into practice in administering Fascist race policy under Mussolini's regime.

Fascist racial legislation imposed severe restrictions on Jewish life in Italy. Beginning in September 1938, Italy's small Jewish community of fewer than 50,000 people faced official persecution. The "Laws for Defense of the Race" deprived Italian Jews of civil rights, expelled foreign Jews, barred Jews from educational institutions and government service, prohibited marriage between Jews and non-Jews, restricted Jewish employment and ownership of property,

expropriated their assets, and established a variety of other onerous sanctions. By 1942 Jews were conscripted into forced labor. Italian Jews were not deported to extermination camps, however, until the German occupation of Italy starting in September 1943. The Fascist racial laws were accompanied by a propaganda campaign aimed at inciting antisemitic sentiment, a factor which until 1938 had ebbed and flowed according to the vicissitudes of Mussolini's own shifting stance on the 'Jewish question' and the competition of rival factions within the regime.<sup>1</sup>

Assessing the impact of spiritual racism requires engaging a series of contentious debates in the developing scholarship on Fascist racial policy. According to one long-established interpretation, the race laws of 1938 were primarily a product of Italy's alliance with Nazi Germany, while the Italian components of Fascist racial thought were fundamentally different from and incompatible with the biological orientation of Nazi racism. A popular corollary of this idea, associated with the pioneering work of Renzo De Felice, holds that Italian antisemitism and its spiritual form of racism were milder and more benign than their German correlates.<sup>2</sup> Newer research has challenged this account, focusing on internal Fascist dynamics and Italian racial ideologies rather than Nazi pressure. Recent historical analyses emphasize that racism and antisemitism were neither marginal nor external to Italian Fascism. Nor did they first arise

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Ugo Caffaz, ed., *Discriminazione e persecuzione degli ebrei nell'Italia fascista* (Florence: Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, 1988); Michele Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei: Cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: Zamorani, 1994); Alberto Cavaglion and Gian Paolo Romagnani, *Le interdizioni del Duce: Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Turin: Claudiana, 2002); Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei: Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome: Laterza, 2003); Manfredi Martelli, *La propaganda razziale in Italia, 1938–1943* (Rimini: Il cerchio, 2005); Giovanni Belardelli, "L'antisemitismo nell'ideologia fascista" in Roberto Chiarini, ed., *L'intellettuale antisemita* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008), 3–14; Frauke Wildvang, *Der Feind von nebenan: Judenverfolgung im faschistischen Italien 1936–1944* (Cologne: SH-Verlag 2008); Marina Beer, Anna Foa, and Isabella Iannuzzi, eds., *Leggi del 1938 e cultura del razzismo* (Rome: Viella, 2010). For overviews in English see Michele Sarfatti, "Characteristics and objectives of the anti-Jewish racial laws in Fascist Italy, 1938–1943" in Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, 71–80, and Mario Sznajder, "The Fascist Regime, Antisemitism and the Racial Laws in Italy" in Wistrich and Della Pergola, eds., *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews*, 19–36.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, vii–viii, xv–xvi, 204, 378–79. Cf. Gene Bernardini, "The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy" *Journal of Modern History* 49 (1977), 431–53; Enzo Collotti, "Die Historiker und die Rassengesetze in Italien" in Christof Dipper, ed., *Faschismus und Faschismen im Vergleich* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 1998), 59–77; Olindo De Napoli, "The origin of the Racist Laws under fascism: A problem of historiography" *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17 (2012), 106–22; Ilaria Pavan, "Fascism, Anti-Semitism, and Racism: An Ongoing Debate" *Telos* 164 (2013), 45–62.



in the late 1930s; instead, “racial thinking had informed Italian fascist doctrines since the first decade of the regime.”<sup>3</sup> Above all, the notion that spiritual racism was less invidious and less dangerous than biological racism has come under sustained attack.<sup>4</sup>

Mussolini's shift to overt racism was controversial. Some Fascists initially opposed the antisemitic laws, while others supported the regime's racist turn but disagreed on the proper interpretation and implementation of racial theory. Traditional Catholic antisemitism complicated matters further; Church teachings helped inhibit the spread of biological racism in Italy but offered additional fodder for anti-Jewish agitation. In external affairs, tensions over

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<sup>3</sup> Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 148. Cf. Enzo Collotti, “Il razzismo negato” in Collotti, *Fascismo e antifascismo. Rimozioni, revisioni, negazioni* (Rome: Laterza, 2000), 355–76; Angelo Ventura, “La svolta antiebraica nella storia del fascismo italiano” in Anna Capelli and Renata Broggin, eds., *Antisemitismo in Europa negli anni Trenta: Legislazioni a confronto* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2001), 212–37; Juliane Wetzel, “Der Mythos des ‘braven Italiens’: Das faschistische Italien und der Antisemitismus” in Hermann Graml, ed., *Vorurteil und Rassenhass: Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas* (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), 49–74; Valeria Galimi, “La persecuzione degli ebrei in Italia (1938–1943): Note sulla storiografia recente” *Contemporanea* 5 (2002), 587–96; Stefano Luconi, “Recent trends in the study of Italian antisemitism under the Fascist regime” *Patterns of Prejudice* 38 (2004), 1–17; Thomas Schlemmer and Hans Woller, “Der italienische Faschismus und die Juden 1922 bis 1945” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 53 (2005), 165–201; Frank Adler, “Why Mussolini turned on the Jews” *Patterns of Prejudice* 39 (2005), 285–300; Alessandro Visani, “Italian reactions to the racial laws of 1938 as seen through the classified files of the Ministry of Popular Culture” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11 (2006), 171–87; Fabio Levi, “Die Verfolgung der italienischen Juden unter dem Faschismus” in Gudrun Jäger and Liana Novelli-Glaab, eds., *Judentum und Antisemitismus im modernen Italien* (Berlin: trafo, 2007), 155–75; Dianella Gagliani, “Antisemiti militanti, antisemiti funzionari, profittatori e altra misera umanità” in Daniele Menozzi and Andrea Mariuzzo, eds., *A settant'anni dalle leggi razziali: Profili culturali, giuridici e istituzionali dell'antisemitismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2010), 227–45; Michele Sarfatti, “Autochthoner Antisemitismus oder Übernahme des deutschen Modells? Die Judenverfolgung im faschistischen Italien” in Lutz Klinkhammer, Amedeo Guerrazzi, and Thomas Schlemmer, eds., *Die ‘Achse’ im Krieg: Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939–1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 231–43; Salvatore Garau, “Between ‘Spirit’ and ‘Science’: The Emergence of Italian Fascist Antisemitism through the 1920s and 1930s” in Garau, ed., *Fascism and the Jews* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), 41–65.

<sup>4</sup> Mauro Raspanti, “Le correnti del razzismo fascista” in Capelli and Broggin, eds., *Antisemitismo in Europa negli anni Trenta*, 238–51; Cassata, *A destra del fascismo*, 12–13; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 48; Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 202; De Napoli, “The origin of the Racist Laws under fascism,” 115; Michele Sarfatti, “Il razzismo fascista nella sua concretezza: La definizione di ‘ebreo’ e la collocazione di questi nella costruenda gerarchia razziale” in Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza*, 321–32; Alberto Burgio, “Le lunghe radici del razzismo fascista” in Burgio, *L'invenzione delle razze* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1998), 115–33.

Austria disturbed relations between the Fascist and Nazi governments, though this was offset by their cooperation in the Spanish civil war, and Italian-German rivalry gave way to the Rome-Berlin axis in 1936 and the military alliance in 1939. Mussolini's ambivalent racial views and his beliefs about the power of "world Jewry" contributed to the confused context.<sup>5</sup>

An antisemitic culmination of Fascist race policy was not a foregone conclusion. Several prominent members of the Fascist party were Jews, and aggressive antisemites were a minority in the movement's early years. The initial brunt of Fascist racism was borne by Africans in a series of lethal colonial wars, from the Italian 'pacification' campaign in Libya in the early 1930s to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36. Colonial racial legislation forbade miscegenation between Italians and their African subjects. In conjunction with the drive to create a Fascist New Man, Italian racism's colonial roots helped shape domestic priorities and the developing antisemitic orientation of the regime.<sup>6</sup> The confluence of scientific and popular racial theories and enthusiasm for

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<sup>5</sup> On Mussolini's early racist and antisemitic views see Fabre, *Mussolini razzista*; on the ideological commonalities between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany see Klinkhammer, Guerrazzi, and Schlemmer, eds., *Die "Achse" im Krieg*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nicola Labanca, "Il razzismo coloniale italiano" in Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza*, 145–63; Luigi Preti, "Fascist Imperialism and Racism" in Roland Sarti, ed., *The Ax Within: Italian Fascism in Action* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 187–207; Luigi Goglia, "Note sul razzismo coloniale fascista" *Storia contemporanea* 19 (1988), 1223–66; Wolfgang Wippermann, "War der italienische Faschismus rassistisch?" in Werner Röhr, ed., *Faschismus und Rassismus* (Berlin: Akademie, 1992), 108–22; Angelo Del Boca, "Le leggi razziali nell'impero di Mussolini" in Del Boca, ed., *Il Regime Fascista: Storia e storiografia* (Rome: Laterza, 1995), 329–51; Alberto Burgio and Luciano Casali, eds., *Studi sul razzismo italiano* (Bologna: Università di Bologna, 1996); Gabriele Schneider, *Mussolini in Afrika: Die faschistische Rassenpolitik in den italienischen Kolonien 1936–1941* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 2000); Barbara Sorgoni, "Racist discourses and practices in the Italian Empire under Fascism" in Ralph Grillo, ed., *The Politics of Recognising Difference* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), 41–57; Giulia Barrera, "The Construction of Racial Hierarchies in Colonial Eritrea: The Liberal and Early Fascist Period (1897–1934)" in Patrizia Palumbo, ed., *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 81–115; Alexander De Grand, "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935–1940" *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004), 127–47; Giovanna Trento, "The Italian 'Race Laws' and the Representations of Africans" *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 3 (2008), 137–48; Robert Gordon, "Race" in R.J.B. Bosworth, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 296–316; Stefanella Spagnolo, *La patria sbagliata di Giuseppe Bottai: Dal razzismo coloniale alle leggi razziali* (Rome: Aracne, 2012); Patrick Bernhard, "Behind the Battle Lines: Italian Atrocities and the Persecution of Arabs, Berbers, and Jews in North Africa during World War II" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26 (2012), 425–46.

eugenics set the stage for this shift. Academic endorsement of Fascism's racist program was not a result of totalitarian coercion.<sup>7</sup> Intermittent crusades by radical antisemites in the Fascist camp made Italian Jews a convenient target. As a consequence of these factors, the Italian race laws of autumn 1938 were harsher in several respects than then-current German laws.

Within the Fascist hierarchy the most prominent patron of spiritual racism and its anthroposophist proponents was Giovanni Preziosi, the defrocked priest who was perhaps Italy's most outspoken antisemite from 1920 onward.<sup>8</sup> In cooperation with Julius Evola, Preziosi was the chief Italian promoter of the antisemitic forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." A seminal text of twentieth century conspiracy theory, the Protocols presented a "contradictory mixture of reactionary political ambitions, anxieties about modernity, sensationalist antisemitism, utopian societal models, occultism, and an apocalyptic mood."<sup>9</sup> Like the Protocols he peddled, Preziosi's work posited extravagant conspiracies behind the facade of prosaic events. His writings were filled with

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<sup>7</sup> Brunello Mantelli, "Rassismus als wissenschaftliche Welterklärung: Über die tiefen kulturellen Wurzeln von Rassismus und Antisemitismus in Italien und anderswo" in Christof Dipper, ed., *Deutschland und Italien 1860–1960: Politische und kulturelle Aspekte im Vergleich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), 207–27; Roberto Maiocchi, "Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista" in Maiocchi, *Scienza e fascismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2004), 139–204; Giorgio Israel, *Il fascismo e la razza: La scienza italiana e le politiche razziali del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> For a perspicacious early analysis of Preziosi's antisemitism see Joshua Starr, "Italy's Antisemites" *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1939), 105–24. There are several very good historical studies: Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio*; Luigi Parente, Fabio Gentile, and Rosa Maria Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005); Romano Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei: Mussolini, Preziosi e l'antisemitismo fascista* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006); Michele Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano: Giovanni Preziosi e l'Ispettorato generale per la razza* (Florence: Giuntina, 2008). Renato del Ponte, a follower of Evola, points to "Preziosi's constant especially benevolent attitude toward anthroposophy and the theories of Rudolf Steiner" (Del Ponte in Parente, Gentile, and Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia*, 263).

<sup>9</sup> Eva Horn and Michael Hagemeister, eds., *Die Fiktion von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung: Zu Text und Kontext der "Protokolle der Weisen von Zion"* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), xv. Cf. Sergio Romano, *I falsi protocolli: Il "complotto ebraico" dalla Russia di Nicola II a oggi* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1992); Cesare De Michelis, *Il manoscritto inesistente: I "Protocolli dei savi di Sion": un apocrifo del XX secolo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998); Michael Hagemeister, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Between History and Fiction" *New German Critique* 35 (2008), 83–95; Richard Landes and Steven Katz, eds., *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

denunciations of Jews, freemasons, democracy, and other enemies of the spirit. He praised Hitler in his journal *La Vita Italiana* as early as 1930.<sup>10</sup>

By the late 1930s spiritual forms of racism abounded in Italy. Despite the pointedly biological orientation of the “Manifesto of Race,” Fascist authors proclaimed that “the race problem is above all a spiritual problem.”<sup>11</sup> In a 1939 pamphlet titled *Why we are Antisemites*, the leader of the School of Fascist Mysticism declared that “spiritual antisemitism is a duty of every Italian.”<sup>12</sup> A book called *Race and Fascism* announced: “Our racism is spiritual. It is the polar opposite of materialist racism.”<sup>13</sup> Another pamphlet noted that Fascist racism was not based on “abstract intellectualism” but on a profound spirituality. Each people had its own soul, it explained, and mixture with “inferior” races led to “decadence.” Since the Jews were “insidious, poisonous, and dangerous,” the “spiritual conservation of our race” demanded constant vigilance: “The characteristics of our race must never be in any way mixed, exchanged, or confused with other races. The Jews are a race unto themselves that has nothing to do with our race.” The pamphlet concluded: “We base our rights on the purity and beauty of our blood, which is spiritual blood.”<sup>14</sup>

Standard statements of “spiritual racism” generally relied on nebulous terminology, often signifying little more than traditional cultural and religious factors.<sup>15</sup> Anthroposophists and their allies went further. Preziosi was the principal sponsor of the current of *esoteric racism*, a variety of Fascist racial thought which formed the hard core of the spiritual faction. Esoteric racists contended with more conventionally biological versions of racism for ideological

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Preziosi, “Hitler” *La Vita Italiana* September 1930, 209–13; Preziosi, *Giudaismo Bolscevismo Plutocrazia Massoneria* (Milan: Mondadori, 1941).

<sup>11</sup> Roberto Volpe, *Problema della razza e problemi dello spirito* (Salerno: Di Giacomo, 1939), 6. For Volpe, “Racism is Italianism.” (21)

<sup>12</sup> Niccolò Giani, *Perché siamo antisemiti* (Milan: Scuola di mistica fascista, 1939), 41. Giani cites Ludwig Thieben, *Che cos'è l'Ebraismo* (Milan: I.T.E., 1937), the Italian edition of Ludwig Thieben's classic anthroposophist statement on “the enigma of Jewry,” translated by Lina Schwarz.

<sup>13</sup> Giuseppe Maggiore, *Razza e Fascismo* (Palermo: Agate, 1939), 95.

<sup>14</sup> Oreste Neri, *Il valore spirituale della difesa della razza* (Reggio di Calabria: Filocamo, 1939), 6, 31, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Examples include Carlo Cecchelli, “Valore spirituale dell'idea di razza” *Giornale d'Italia* August 12, 1938, 3; Giuseppe Omarini, “Spirito e materiale nel razzismo” *La Nobiltà della Stirpe* February 1939, 1–3; Giovanni Marro, *Caratteri fisici e spirituali della razza italiana* (Rome: Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista, 1939). For background see Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 241–77, and the chapter “Razzismo ‘spirituale’” in Fabre, *L'elenco*, 104–13.

hegemony within the Fascist racial campaign.<sup>16</sup> Among other challenges, esoteric racists faced the daunting task of conjoining the Mediterranean character of their Italian compatriots with the Nordic emphasis of Nazi racial doctrine. Debates among competing strands of racial theory commanded considerable attention in the Fascist press between 1938 and 1943. The range of positions was complex, with changing constellations of Mediterranean, Nordic, and Aryan proponents, biological and spiritual tendencies, pro-German stances and an accent on Italian uniqueness, all vying for recognition from different elements within the regime. Their fierce disputes have been described as “the minor war of the racists amongst themselves.”<sup>17</sup>

Throughout these conflicts esoteric racism was “the most radical sector of Fascist antisemitism.”<sup>18</sup> Esoteric racists demanded stricter standards than their competitors, elevating “the spirit of the race” to the height of racial consciousness. They insisted that the spiritual dimension of racial character determined biological features rather than the other way around. This stance led to stormy confrontations with other schools of racial thought, especially those based on the natural sciences and established ethnological models. Esoteric racists invoked occult sources and vocabulary, deriding approaches centered on

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<sup>16</sup> Historical analyses of esoteric racism in its Fascist form include the astute pioneering study by Mauro Raspanti, “I razzismi del fascismo” in Centro Furio Jesi, ed., *La menzogna della razza*, 73–89; Raspanti, “Le correnti del razzismo fascista” in Capelli and Broggin, eds., *Antisemitismo in Europa negli anni Trenta*, 238–51; Francesco Cassata, “Tradizionalismo e razzismo: ‘Diorama Filosofico’, terza pagina del *Regime Fascista* (1934–1943)” *Razzismo & Modernità* 2 (2002), 32–63; Cassata, “‘Guerra all’ebreo’: La strategia razzista di Giovanni Preziosi e Julius Evola (1937–1943)” in Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano*, 45–75; Alberto Cavaglion, “Due modeste proposte” in Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza*, 379–86; Michele Loré, “Il razzismo spirituale nelle pagine de *La difesa della Razza*” in Loré, *Antisemitismo e razzismo ne La difesa della Razza*, 185–97; Germinario, *Fascismo e antisemitismo*, 77–110; Valentina Pisanty, “Razzismo esoterico” in Pisanty, *Educare all’odio: ‘La Difesa della razza’ (1938–1943)* (Rome: Motta, 2004), 40–42; Francesco Cassata, *“La Difesa della razza”: Politica, ideologia e immagine del razzismo fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 2008), 76–103.

<sup>17</sup> Matard-Bonucci, *L’Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs*, 294. For thorough context, including the important strand of “national racism,” see Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*.

<sup>18</sup> Germinario, *Fascismo e antisemitismo*, 39; cf. Sarfatti, “Il razzismo fascista nella sua concretezza.” This facet of esoteric racism is frequently misunderstood by authors inclined to view Evola, Scaligero and their fellows as proponents of a milder form of antisemitism that was supposedly less harsh than strictly biological variants; for examples see Rossi, *Esoterismo e razzismo spirituale*, and H. T. Hakl, “Evola und der Rassismus” and “Evolas Stellung zum Judentum” in Julius Evola, *Menschen inmitten von Ruinen* (Tübingen: Hohenrain, 1991), 88–111. In reality, esoteric racists often advocated more draconian criteria and more extreme sanctions than their Fascist peers.

physical attributes as simple-minded materialism incapable of comprehending the true nature of racial difference. According to Preziosi, the “Jewish-Masonic school of Italian anthropology” interpreted race “merely as a simple, brute biological reality” and thus missed its profound spiritual significance.<sup>19</sup>

Evola was the leading theorist of esoteric racism. Working closely with Preziosi, Evola and his associates developed an extensive literature on the spiritual grounds for an antisemitic orientation of Fascism beginning well before the declaration of the racial laws in 1938. Evola’s own occult predilections were pagan and at times anti-Christian, committed to an austere Traditionalism similar to that of René Guénon. Though highly critical of several aspects of National Socialist race theory, Evola admired Nazism and the SS in particular. He spent much of the 1930s and 1940s in Germany and Austria cultivating contacts with the German right.<sup>20</sup> Evola was eager to take part in Himmler’s *Ahnenerbe*, and when Allied forces entered Rome in 1944 he fled to Vienna and spent the final year of the war working with the ss.

Mussolini read Evola’s *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race* with enthusiasm in the summer of 1941 and provisionally adopted it as the semi-official line of the regime. From mid-1941 to mid-1942, esoteric racism was the predominant doctrine in Fascist racial policy. In September 1941 Mussolini authorized Evola to

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<sup>19</sup> Preziosi, introduction to Julius Evola, “Scienza, razza e scientismo” *La Vita Italiana* December 1942, 556.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra* (Milan: Garzanti, 1979), 77–102; Marco Revelli, *La cultura della destra radicale* (Milan: Angeli, 1985); Thomas Sheehan, “Diventare Dio: Julius Evola and the Metaphysics of Fascism” *Stanford Italian Review* 6 (1986), 279–92; Marcello Veneziani, *La rivoluzione conservatrice in Italia: Genesi e sviluppo della “ideologia italiana”* (Milan: SugarCo, 1987), 198–216; Franco Ferraresi, “Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction and the Radical Right” *Archives européennes de sociologie* 28 (1987), 107–51; Patricia Chiantera-Stutte, *Julius Evola: Dal dadaismo alla rivoluzione conservatrice, 1919–1940* (Rome: Aracne, 2001); Francesco Saverio Festa, “Teosofia ed esoterismo nelle riviste italiane della prima metà del ‘900” in Elisabetta Barone, Matthias Riedl, and Alexandra Tischel, eds., *Pioniere, Poeten, Professoren: Eranos und der Monte Verità in der Zivilisationsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 143–53; Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Evola’s German publications include Julius Evola, “Die Bedeutung des faschistischen ‘Antieuropa’ für die außeritalienischen Länder” *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* December 1930, 424–25; Evola, *Heidnischer Imperialismus* (Leipzig: Armanen-Verlag, 1933); Evola, *Erhebung wider die moderne Welt* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1935); Evola, “Über die alt-arische Auffassung des Sieges und des ‘Heiligen Kampfes’” *Geist der Zeit* October 1939, 698–702; Evola, “Über die metaphysische Begründung des Rassegedankens” *Europäische Revue* March 1940, 140–44; Evola, “Arisch-römische Entscheidung” *Wir und die Welt* September 1941, 353–57; Evola, *Grundrisse der faschistischen Rassenlehre* (Berlin: Runge, 1943).



establish a bilingual German-Italian journal on race to be titled "Blood and Spirit." Evola secured the support of Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, Alfred Baeumler, and Walter Gross for the project. He proposed Massimo Scaligero and Aniceto Del Massa as collaborators on the Italian side. Plans for the journal centered on familiar esoteric themes: elaboration of the Aryan myth, the racial soul, and the spirit of the race; demands for both a biological and a spiritual dimension to racial policies; the cultivation of a racial elite; an expansive conception of the Jewish threat and a concomitantly expansive conception of antisemitism in order to combat it.<sup>21</sup> The project was terminated in March 1942 due to opposition from Evola's adversaries in Italy as well as Germany. Fascists unhappy with the esoteric orientation complained to Mussolini that "occultists" were discrediting the racial cause.<sup>22</sup>

While the ascendancy of esoteric racism within Fascist ranks was relatively brief, it indicates that spiritual racists were serious contenders for leadership of the fractious racist intelligentsia in Italy and capable of forming connections with Nazi race officials as well. Previous interpretations have not taken adequate account of this factor. In the words of one analysis: "Italian Fascist racism was very different from its German Nazi counterpart. The Italian Fascists never introduced, for example, mythological ingredients into their brand of racism, as the Germans did."<sup>23</sup> In reality, such mythological ingredients constituted an integral if controversial part of Italian racial doctrine. Fascist racism's esoteric strands extended beyond the comparatively well-known figure of Evola. The occultist current of racial thought included Roberto Pavese, an admirer of National Socialist racism, and Piero Pellicano, a protégé of Preziosi who reviled freemasonry, democracy, and Bolshevism as masks for Jewish devilry.<sup>24</sup>

The institutional stature of the esoteric racist camp was confirmed in May 1941 when one of its principal members, Alberto Luchini, was named head

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<sup>21</sup> For background see Cassata, "'Guerra all'ebreo'"; Cassata, "*La Difesa della razza*", 80–82; Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 287–88; cf. Hans-Jürgen Luthzöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1971), 272–75.

<sup>22</sup> Raspanti, "Le correnti del razzismo fascista," 243; Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, 173. For Fascist critiques of the esoteric position see Aldo Capasso, "Nazione etnia razza e l'antirazzismo mascherato" *Augustea* July 1942, 409–16, and Ugo Grimaldi, "Ai margini di una polemica sulla validità di un esoterismo razzista" *Civiltà Fascista* August 1942, 647–52.

<sup>23</sup> Sznajder, "The Fascist Regime, Antisemitism and the Racial Laws in Italy," 29.

<sup>24</sup> See Roberto Pavese, "Il mito del sangue" *La Nobiltà della Stirpe* August 1937, 90–103; Pavese, "Linee generali del problema della razza" *Tempo di Mussolini* August 1942, 1265–69; Pavese, *Gli idoli d'Israele* (Cremona: Cremona Nuova, 1943); Piero Pellicano, *Il problema politico delle potenze occulte* (Rome: Signorelli, 1937); Pellicano, *Ecco il diavolo: Israele!* (Milan: Baldoni & Castoldi, 1938).



of the Race Office in the Ministry of Popular Culture. Mussolini thought highly of Luchini's writings, and Luchini sent the Duce copies of his works on race.<sup>25</sup> Luchini stood for a "spiritual-fascist conception of race." Since "race is above all a spiritual reality," the spiritual component must be at the center of "every racial doctrine and any serious racism." He called for a "rediscovery, re-awakening, and re-consecration of our racial identity," which meant confronting the "anti-race" of "Bolsheviks, English, and Jews" who were "responsible for fifteen hundred years of inhumanity and slavery."<sup>26</sup> For Luchini, the eternal adversary of the "race of Rome" was the "race of Israel." He celebrated the military victories of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy over the Judaized West and East. Fascism was waging "a war against plutocracy, a war against Jewry, a war against Bolshevism," and the only way to win this war was through "a definitive eliminatory counter-attack."<sup>27</sup>

With practical support from Luchini, official backing from Preziosi, and ideological inspiration from Evola, the esoteric racist tendency sought to infuse Fascist race policy with spiritual force. Scaligero, student of Steiner's occult science, was one of its most prolific authors. Scaligero was often seen as Evola's "faithful popularizer," rendering the aloof theorist's ideas into vernacular terms.<sup>28</sup> But his numerous publications on racial themes invoked anthroposophical motifs as well, such as the Archangel Michael battling Lucifer and Ahriman. The flood of racist works from his pen, beginning in 1938, grew to encompass a wide array of Fascist periodicals by the early 1940s.<sup>29</sup> Recycling

<sup>25</sup> ACS S.P.D./C.O. b. 2411 f. 551694; June 9, 1931 memorandum from Mussolini; handwritten note from Luchini to Mussolini, February 10, 1942, sending one of Luchini's texts on race. For context on Luchini's role in the antisemitic campaign see Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs*, 268–69, 289–97, 384–90.

<sup>26</sup> Alberto Luchini, "Razza e Antirazza" *Gerarchia* May 1940, 201–04. Founded by Mussolini, *Gerarchia* was the "monthly journal of the Fascist revolution." Cf. Alberto Luchini, "Lettera dalla Germania: Religiosità dell nuova gioventù" *Critica Fascista* December 15, 1938, 58–60.

<sup>27</sup> Alberto Luchini, "Difesa e durata della razza fascista" in Edgardo Sulis, ed., *Nuova civiltà per la nuova Europa* (Rome: Unione Editoriale d'Italia, 1942), 119–44.

<sup>28</sup> Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*, 278. On Preziosi's esteem for Scaligero as a chief contributor to promoting antisemitism see Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei*, 271.

<sup>29</sup> Examples include Massimo Scaligero, "La storia della Rivoluzione fascista" *La Nobiltà della Stirpe* April 1938; Scaligero, "La razza e lo spirito della lingua" *Regime Fascista* August 20, 1938; Scaligero, "Diversi destini della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* September 4, 1938; Scaligero, "Per una storia della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* November 15, 1938; Scaligero, "Tradizioni della razza del sole" *Regime Fascista* November 27, 1938; Scaligero, "Il segreto di potenza della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* December 29, 1938; Scaligero, "Civiltà moderna e razza" *Regime Fascista* July 18, 1939; Scaligero, "Spirito e corpo della razza" *Regime Fascista* November 15, 1939; Scaligero, "Nuova civiltà mediterranea" *Augustea* July 1941; Scaligero, "Dalla razza di Roma alla razza italiana" *Il Tevere*

ideas and arguments in different essays, Scaligero mixed esoteric tropes with current political considerations and evinced a special fervor for severe state measures regarding race. In a 1941 pamphlet he boasted of the civilizing effects of the Italian racial laws and effusively endorsed Nazi Germany's "decisive racist campaign."<sup>30</sup>

Much of Scaligero's racial ideal revolved around a cult of *Romanità* centered on mythic images of Rome's ancient glory. Such visions of a noble Roman heritage were widespread in Fascist quarters.<sup>31</sup> What Scaligero admired about the racially robust denizens of Imperial Rome were their soldierly qualities, their success at conquering the Mediterranean basin and the European continent, and the sublime "solar tradition" they embodied. His esoteric premises yielded a combative attitude toward other varieties of Fascist racism. A December 1938 article on "Race and the spirituality of Rome" in the newspaper *Regime Fascista* rejected scientific accounts of race, arguing that Italians must regain contact with their racial soul so that "the blood of the race" could become a "vehicle for the perennial mission of the spirit."<sup>32</sup> A 1939 essay in Preziosi's journal concluded with a call to "re-awaken the power of the superior spiritual principles befitting a superior race."<sup>33</sup>

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September 18, 1941; Scaligero, "Portati dell'idea di razza del Fascismo e del Nazionalsocialismo" *L'Ora* November 1, 1941; Scaligero, "L'Ordine Nuovo e il senso perenne del Sacro Romano Impero" *Augustea* November 1941; Scaligero, "Il razzismo e l'esperienza guerriera" *L'Assalto* November 8, 1941; Scaligero, "Il razzismo e la funzione del lavoro" *Lavoro Fascista* January 18, 1942; Scaligero, "Coscienza di essere razza" *Roma Fascista* January 22, 1942; Scaligero, "Precisazioni sulla teorica razzista" *Il Fascio* March 14, 1942; Scaligero, "Si prepara un nuovo ciclo" *La Fiamma* April 30, 1942; Scaligero, "Fronte unico della razza italiana" *L'Assalto* May 8, 1942; Scaligero, "Lo spirito e il sangue" *Roma fascista* November 18, 1942.

<sup>30</sup> Massimo Scaligero, *L'India contro l'Inghilterra* (Bologna: Il Resto del Carlino, 1941), 49. The pamphlet, an anti-British diatribe encouraging Indian nationalists to side with the Axis, claimed that Jewish influence over British policy threatened "the heroic principles of the authentic Aryan tradition" in both India and Europe (12).

<sup>31</sup> Dino Cofrancesco, "Appunti per un'analisi del mito romano nell'ideologia fascista" *Storia contemporanea* 11 (1980), 383–411; Romke Visser, "Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità" *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992), 5–22; Giovanni Belardelli, "Il mito fascista della romanità" in Belardelli, *Il ventennio degli intellettuali: Cultura, politica, ideologia nell'Italia fascista* (Rome: Laterza, 2005), 206–36; Jan Nelis, "Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of Romanità" *Classical World* 100 (2007), 391–415; Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra* (Rome: Laterza, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Razza e spiritualità di Roma" *Regime Fascista* December 15, 1938, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La razza e lo spirito della Rivoluzione" *La Vita Italiana* May 1939, 601–05. The article described Fascism as a rebellion against "the old rationalistic world" and the "abstract intellectual character" of "modern materialistic civilization." (604) See also Scaligero,

In a 1941 essay Scaligero excoriated skeptics of the racial campaign who refused to acknowledge “the authentic essence of racism.” Lacking “a true intellectual grasp” of “the spiritual power of race,” they could not comprehend the integral connection between “biological evolution” and “the evolution of the spirit.” The “soul of the race” working on the “supersensible plane” rendered the Aryans fit to lead humankind as “the avant-garde of a great marching army.” For Scaligero, this demonstrated the universal significance of Fascist racism: “Only racist action, in its harmonic ascent, can express transcendent universality.”<sup>34</sup> Taking up a central point of contention between esoteric racists and their detractors, Scaligero highlighted the compatibility of Nordic and Mediterranean racial types. Another 1941 essay hailed the alliance between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as an Aryan synthesis, a “unity of the Roman and Germanic spiritual and political-military forces” who together formed “a race destined to win every battle.”<sup>35</sup>

Scaligero was unstinting in his acclaim for Nazism. “Under the emblem of the fasces and the swastika,” the German-Italian alliance was the signal achievement of “a new race of the spirit.” The military victories of the Axis powers carried “the values of a universal spirituality destined to remake the world,” and the triumph of totalitarianism over democracy augured “the establishment of a new spiritual order for the entire earth.”<sup>36</sup> He depicted the war as a racial conflict, with Fascism and National Socialism heroically resisting the destructive onslaught of the Western democracies and their Soviet allies. Only the victory of the “Aryan race” could re-integrate spirituality into human life. Scaligero exalted the swastika as an Aryan symbol, hallmark of the superior solar race.<sup>37</sup> He portrayed Italians and Germans, “the Aryan-Mediterranean

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“Declino spirituale inglese” *La Vita Italiana* May 1940, 533–36; Scaligero, “Aspetti deleteri di un falso spiritualismo” *La Vita Italiana* April 1942, 364–69; Scaligero, “Una soluzione ‘spirituale’ del problema dell’uomo moderno” *La Vita Italiana* December 1942, 564–73; Scaligero, “Il Graal e la salvezza dell’Occidente” *La Vita Italiana* May 1943, 452–57.

<sup>34</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Limiti alla comprensione del problema razzista” *La Vita Italiana* September 1941, 255–63.

<sup>35</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Motivi originari e perenni del razzismo romano” *Augustea* September 1, 1941, 15–18; see also Scaligero, “Unità razziale europeo-mediterranea” *Regime Fascista* November 12, 1938, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Funzione occidentale della nuova civiltà romano-germanica” *La Vita Italiana* February 1941, 152–57; cf. Scaligero, “Il volto romano-germanico della nuova storia” *Il Resto del Carlino* June 24, 1940.

<sup>37</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Un simbolo perenne della razza solare: la croce uncinata” *Augustea* October 1, 1941, 8–9.

race" and "the Aryan-Nordic race," as brothers facing a common enemy, "the Semitic race."

A lengthy occult history explained this clash of races: The "decadence of ancient Egypt" was due to "the unfortunate invasion" of the "Semitic peoples," who "demolished and semitized the culture." These corrosive elements "invaded Egypt in prehistoric times and profoundly polluted its race and civilization, which until then had borne superior characteristics of solar sacredness originating in Atlantis."<sup>38</sup> For Scaligero, Jews were "the race opposed to the spirit." They spread "Ahrimanic, sub-human, and materialistic" forces throughout the world.<sup>39</sup> His articles railed against "Semitic contamination" and condemned the "Jewish race" for falsifying spirituality. The "superior Mediterranean race" represented "the authentic legacy of the original white race" and had nothing in common with the "Negroid and Semitic races."<sup>40</sup>

In concert with his fellow esoteric racists, Scaligero blamed the war on the Jews. This message was transmitted through a variety of media. A series of radio broadcasts in October and November 1941 provided a platform, with contributions by Scaligero, Evola, Preziosi, Luchini, and Pellicano. The texts were published a few months later under the title "The Jews wanted the war."<sup>41</sup> Scaligero's segment, headlined "Judaism against Rome," warned against the nefarious machinations of the Elders of Zion, who were bravely resisted by a "united Aryan front" of Fascism and Nazism. Freemasonry, Bolshevism, England and the United States were all pawns in "the secret Jewish plan." The Jews were the cause of "the worst evils of modern man," particularly materialism, intellectualism, and internationalism. After scheming against Roman civilization for centuries, Jewry was now conducting an "occult struggle of the Elders of Zion" against Italy and Germany in a world war which was the outward manifestation of a great spiritual confrontation. Standing in the way of the victory of Fascism and its immense spiritual benefits were the English and Americans, instruments of the Jewish drive for world domination.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La razza, la terra e il fuoco" *La Vita Italiana* December 1941, 626–30.

<sup>39</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La tradizione di Israele: la razza contro lo spirito" *Il Resto del Carlino* September 8, 1938; Scaligero, "La decadenza spirituale del giudaismo" *Regime Fascista* September 18, 1938, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Tradizione e razze occidentali" *Il Resto del Carlino* February 8, 1939, 3; Scaligero, "La morale talmudica dei Rabbini" *Regime Fascista* September 8, 1938, 5; Scaligero, "Valori mediterranei della razza" *La Vita Italiana* March 1939, 307–13.

<sup>41</sup> Alberto Luchini, ed., *Gli ebrei hanno voluto la guerra* (Rome 1942). Cf. Giovanni Preziosi, *Come il giudaismo ha preparato la guerra* (Rome: Tumminelli, 1940).

<sup>42</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Il giudaismo contro Roma" in Luchini, ed., *Gli ebrei hanno voluto la guerra*, 21–28.

Many of Scaligero's articles appeared in the pages of the infamous Fascist periodical *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defense of the Race) between 1938 and 1943. A lavishly illustrated large-format biweekly, the magazine featured essays from various factions within the racist camp. It carried some of the most graphic expressions of antisemitism to be found in Fascist Italy.<sup>43</sup> In 1941 and 1942 Scaligero was one of its most frequent authors and had the lead article in several issues. His essays posited a millennia-long "Nordic-Mediterranean racial harmony" that bequeathed to the Italian race the finest Aryan traits and inspired its struggle against Luciferic and Ahrimanic forces.<sup>44</sup> Scaligero insisted that "authentic Mediterraneans," derived from "the original Nordic-Atlantean race," had always withstood "Negroid and Semitic admixture" and were the primary bulwark against "Asiatic-Semitic contamination."<sup>45</sup> It was "the Nordic racial element" within the ancient Roman population who rebuffed "the invasion of the Italian peninsula by the Semitic ethnic element" and prevented "the Asiatic and Semitic races" from overrunning Europe.<sup>46</sup>

Even before the war began, Scaligero's articles for *La Difesa della Razza* struck a militarist tone. In an issue from June 1939, "dedicated to the two races of the Axis," he declared that the rightful role of the "Aryan peoples" was "world conquest and the consolidation of colonial hegemony."<sup>47</sup> The article was

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<sup>43</sup> See Sandro Servi, "Building a Racial State: Images of the Jew in the Illustrated Fascist Magazine, *La Difesa della Razza*, 1938–1943" in Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, 114–57; Cassata, "La Difesa della razza"; Loré, *Antisemitismo e razzismo ne La difesa della Razza*; Valentina Pisanty, ed., *La difesa della razza: Antologia 1938–1943* (Milan: Bompiani, 2006); Elisabetta Cassina Wolff, "Biological Racism and Antisemitism as Intellectual Constructions in Italian Fascism: The Case of Telesio Interlandi and *La difesa della razza*" in Anton Weiss-Wendt and Rory Yeomans, eds., *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938–1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 175–99. Scaligero's contributions include Massimo Scaligero, "La razza italiana: La nascita della lingua" *La Difesa della Razza* August 20, 1941, 14–15; Scaligero, "La razza e l'esperienza del dolore" *La Difesa della Razza* December 20, 1941, 21–23; Scaligero, "Uomini bianchi, anime negre" *La Difesa della Razza* February 5, 1942, 52–55; Scaligero, "Nuclei della nostra razza nell'era feudale" *La Difesa della Razza* February 20, 1942, 26–29.

<sup>44</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La razza italiana dall'Impero Carolingio al feudalesimo" *La Difesa della Razza* December 5, 1941, 13–15; cf. Scaligero, "Continuità storica della razza italiana" *La Difesa della Razza* April 20, 1942, 15–16.

<sup>45</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Il volto autentico della civiltà mediterranea" *La Difesa della Razza* July 20, 1942, 14–16.

<sup>46</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Dalla razza di Roma alla razza italiana" *La Difesa della Razza* September 20, 1941, 13–15.

<sup>47</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Omogeneità e continuità della razza italiana" *La Difesa della Razza* June 5, 1939, 38–40.

accompanied by photographs of Nazi military paraphernalia. In 1941 Scaligero announced that the coming defeat of England would bring to Europe a “racial equilibrium based on hierarchy.” The victory of Germany and Italy would create “harmony among peoples” through “Aryan universalism.” Democracy and egalitarianism “suffocated the spirit” and had to be superseded by “the totalitarian principle of Fascism and National Socialism.”<sup>48</sup>

Along with military matters, Scaligero discussed the proper approach to racial policy. He criticized other proponents of “spiritual racism” for neglecting the physical aspects of race.<sup>49</sup> His lead article for *La Difesa della Razza* in August 1942 maintained that the “essential objective of racist doctrine” must include “eugenic and sanitary regulations” as well as the promotion of “racist consciousness” so that “people do not merely welcome the results of the racist campaign passively, but become conscious collaborators in this campaign.” Genuine racism combined “cosmic” and “biological” elements, and a “totalitarian racist praxis” integrated the somatic and the spiritual. Citing Nazi race theorists as a model, Scaligero endorsed far-reaching racial “selection” in order to attain “the purification of the hereditary protoplasm.”<sup>50</sup>

The lynchpin of Scaligero’s argument was an implacable antisemitism. In February 1941 he endorsed Hitler’s call for “a united Aryan front against Jewry.” To esoteric racists, Hitler’s demand represented a higher purpose for the racial campaign and indicated just how thoroughgoing the battle against the Jews must be. Portraying an apocalyptic struggle between the “Aryan spirit” and the “Jewish spirit,” Scaligero urged an intensification of “the praxis of Fascist racism.” Even individuals with the physical appearance of Aryans, he warned, could be agents of the Jews. This required expanding and radicalizing “the struggle against world Jewry.” Military combat was an essential part of this struggle. Scaligero characterized the war as a valiant act of resistance by “the indomitable Roman race” against “the blind powers of Jewish materialism.” The war would eventually lead to “a heroic victory over the Jews” and the establishment of “a new, harmonic social order.”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Verso un supnazionalismo razziale” *La Difesa della Razza* July 20, 1941, 6–9.

<sup>49</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “I caratteri dominanti della nostra razza” *La Difesa della Razza* April 5, 1941, 9–11; Scaligero, “Sangue e spirito” *La Difesa della Razza* October 20, 1941, 13–15.

<sup>50</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Coscienza del sangue” *La Difesa della Razza* August 20, 1942, 4–6.

<sup>51</sup> Massimo Scaligero, “Fronte unico ario” *La Difesa della Razza* February 20, 1941, 21–24. Scaligero praised Hitler and Mussolini throughout the article while citing the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. He warned that Jewishness “si presenta non soltanto sotto l’aspetto di razza, ma sotto quello di religione, di cultura, di modo di pensare, di conoscere, di agire.” (22) Thus people who were physically Aryan could nonetheless be “spiritualmente nemici dell’ideale ario



As early as September 1939 Scaligero envisioned a physical 'solution' to the 'Jewish problem,' calling for "the elimination of the Judaic virus and the biological re-integration of Aryan ethnic values."<sup>52</sup> This stark image from an article on "The heroic task of the spirit within the racist campaign" found its way into a number of Scaligero's other works.<sup>53</sup> Associating democracy, secularism, intellectualism and soullessness with the Jews, he warned that the Fascist regime's antisemitic campaign had not gone far enough: "the spiritual ideal of race" was still in grave danger from "the occult forces of Judaism." Scaligero appealed to his fellow Fascists to take up a ruthless struggle against the Jews as "a profound spiritual responsibility." Even self-proclaimed antisemites were not necessarily reliable allies in combating the Jewish threat, as they could be "unwitting instruments of Jewry" themselves. He implored Fascists to make certain that their antisemitism was genuine and intransigent, alert to subtle Semitic forces operating in secret.<sup>54</sup> In a 1941 article on "The Italian Race and the War" Scaligero avowed that with the proper spiritual-racial approach, "the Jew can be easily recognized and eliminated." The presence of "Jewish characteristics," even only to a "faint degree," threatened the "spiritual unity" of the Italian race.<sup>55</sup>

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in quanto agiscono come strumenti del giudaismo." (23) The article highlights Scaligero's pro-Nazi viewpoint, his endorsement of the war and the alliance of Fascism and National Socialism against the Jewish threat.

<sup>52</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Compito eroico dello spirito nell'azione razzista" *La Vita Italiana* September 1939, 327–33, quote on 327.

<sup>53</sup> See the July 1941 example in Scaligero, "Verso un supnazionalismo razziale," 8.

<sup>54</sup> Scaligero, "Compito eroico dello spirito nell'azione razzista," 332: "The present convergence between problems of the spirit and problems of politics and civilization must lead us to consider our racial dignity and our antisemitic stance as a profound spiritual responsibility. Our campaign must not content itself with a merely external approach, but instill the capacity to identify and neutralize those subtle forces of Judaism which act in secret under less suspicious guise. Behind every form of materialistic opportunism, behind every political or doctrinal camouflage, behind every personal advantage, in every polemical maneuver that tries to confound the vital problems of the spirit through cultural subversion, we must recognize a Jewish mental style, orthodox in form and corrosive in essence, disguised as antisemitic but actually Jewish in its innermost intention. We must oppose these subtle and secret forces with a campaign that is radical in the inner sense, one that can strike both conscious and unwitting instruments of Jewry, those who partake in the Semitic effort to sow doubt about the essence of our Roman Tradition or try to separate the concept of Romanness from metaphysical knowledge or sunder the concept of the Empire from universality. The racist idea must transform itself into the positive reality of the Second Roman Empire."

<sup>55</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "La razza italiana e la guerra" *La Difesa della Razza* May 5, 1941, 16–19.



Scaligero spelled out the premises of his radical antisemitism in two programmatic articles published in Preziosi's journal in 1941 and 1942. The first of these, titled "Spiritual Racism and Biological Racism," began by noting "the insufficiency of both an exclusively spiritual racism and an exclusively biological racism." Scaligero argued that there was no real opposition between the two types of racism. The very notion that such an opposition might exist represented an imposition of alien Jewish characteristics on healthy Aryan thinking.<sup>56</sup> Averting the Jewish threat to Aryan universalism required "a solution that aims to eliminate the ancient Jewish error from the world." To achieve this definitive solution Scaligero invoked anthroposophy, explaining that the proper integration of the biological and the spiritual

takes on a definite doctrinal form in the work of Rudolf Steiner, who recognizes in the two one-sided experiences of the human soul the two principal powers that obstruct evolution and the spiritual development of man; they assume symbolic form in the figures of Ahriman and Lucifer. The most complete racist synthesis is provided by the three entities which constitute the human being: spirit, soul, body.<sup>57</sup>

Conjoining Steiner and Evola, Scaligero called for a "true and complete racism." He elaborated a range of "precautionary measures" against racial "deviance or contamination":

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<sup>56</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Razzismo spirituale e razzismo biologico" *La Vita Italiana* July 1941, 36–41: "There is no reason for any antithesis between spiritual racism and biological racism; the one cannot have meaning except in harmonic relationship and complementarity with the other. Such an antithesis risks reviving the obsolete dualism of spirit versus matter which every healthy cultural and philosophical system has overcome. We must keep in mind that the notion of a dualism between spirit and life, between knowledge and reality, between the world of ideas and the material world, is a fundamental characteristic of the Jewish race—this dualism which is the cause of a profound separation between two experiences that are actually aspects of one and the same superior principle. The greatest evils of humankind derive from this divisive conception [...] In contrast, the synthesis of spirit and life is the profound characteristic of the Aryan race: to revive the world of the senses with spiritual forces and attain the spiritual worlds through experience of the sensible world—this is the universal law for Aryan man and has always been the foundation of the great civilizations. Wherever these contrary conceptions are in conflict, after the coming of Christ, we can see the opposition of the Aryan spirit to the Jewish spirit." (36–37)

<sup>57</sup> Scaligero, "Razzismo spirituale e razzismo biologico," 37. Scaligero again cited Steiner in a racial context in Massimo Scaligero, "L'idea di razza propugnata dal Fascismo e dal Nazionalsocialismo" *Il Popolo di Trieste* November 5, 1941.

Science of the spirit, science of the soul and science of the body must come together in an authentic and whole racist praxis. Biology no less than psychology, and psychology no less than spiritual science, must all play a role [...] in pointing out precisely where and how perversion or pollution occur, and what the required precautionary measures are. These measures will not be simply eugenic, biological, and sanitary, but also psychological, ethical, and spiritual.<sup>58</sup>

The same uncompromising stance marked Scaligero's 1942 essay "For a Comprehensive Racism," outlining a fusion of biological and spiritual viewpoints. Here Scaligero proposed a united front of different types of racism under the Fascist banner. Against attempts to "distort the principles of racism," an "integral racism" combined the strengths of physical and spiritual approaches, a "synthesis of biology and the science of the spirit." Only "Jewish dualism" was "unable to appreciate the spiritual dignity of race." Eugenics alone was not sufficient for racial revival, for "true spiritual ascent" and the "resurrection of Aryan values."<sup>59</sup> Scaligero's summation of his racial program merged a commitment to "spiritual science" with an all-embracing racist policy, bringing together body and soul to bolster the struggle of Aryan spirituality against Jewish treachery.

Scaligero's writings had a noticeable impact on Fascist racial discourse. They were cited positively even in works that adopted views at odds with his own. A 1940 book on *The Spirit and the Race* which rejected Nordic themes as ill-suited to Italians reproduced a lengthy antisemitic passage from Scaligero. Fascist official Giacomo Acerbo's volume *The Fundamentals of Fascist Racial Doctrine*, a classic expression of 'national racism' rather than spiritual racism or biological racism, recommended Scaligero's book *The Race of Rome*.<sup>60</sup> Alberto Luchini quoted Scaligero at length. Preziosi and others took up the phrase "integral

<sup>58</sup> Scaligero, "Razzismo spirituale e razzismo biologico," 38–39.

<sup>59</sup> Massimo Scaligero, "Per un razzismo integrale" *La Vita Italiana* May 1942, 428–34: "This opposition between universal and particular, between spirit and life, is the hallmark of Jewish culture." (431) Scaligero called for integrating political, social and biological factors of race already in March 1939; see Massimo Scaligero, "Energia della razza" *Il Resto del Carlino* March 30, 1939, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Salvatore De Martino, *Lo Spirito e la Razza* (Rome: Signorelli, 1940), 58–59; Giacomo Acerbo, *I fondamenti della dottrina fascista della razza* (Rome: Ministero della Cultura Popolare, 1940), 83. Scaligero's works were also cited frequently in the quarterly "Bibliografia sulla Civiltà del Fascismo" published in *Dottrina Fascista* between 1938 and 1943. *Dottrina Fascista* May 1942, 382–87, for example, lists nine articles by Scaligero from six different Fascist publications, all from February through April 1942.

racism" a few months after Scaligero publicized it.<sup>61</sup> His texts may have influenced Mussolini's thinking on race. The Duce was familiar with Scaligero's publications and positively disposed toward his spiritual perspective. At the beginning of the racial campaign, in August 1938, Scaligero wrote an appreciative note to Mussolini's secretary in response to the "favorable opinion expressed by the Duce about some of my articles." He also sent Mussolini "a new article of mine regarding the race problem."<sup>62</sup>

After the collapse of Mussolini's regime in 1943 and the formation of a last-ditch Fascist statelet in northern Italy, the Italian Social Republic or RSI, Scaligero continued to publish in Fascist organs. His antisemitic writings appeared regularly in the Bologna Fascist newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino* during the RSI period, insisting on "an uncompromising battle against Jewry" and "the total Aryanization of the Italian people."<sup>63</sup> He also continued to write for Preziosi's journal. The sole police record on Scaligero consists of a single page from the brief interregnum after the fall of Mussolini in mid-1943, filed just days before German troops occupied Rome. The document indicates that his Fascist activities persisted even when they were officially out of favor. It described Scaligero's "advanced Fascist sentiments," his racial publications and his contacts with German officials, and confirmed that he was still conducting "skillful propaganda on behalf of Fascism" at this point.<sup>64</sup> Scaligero was arrested as a Fascist sympathizer when the Allies entered Rome in June 1944 and imprisoned for five months. According to his autobiographical account, he was arrested because of his frequent visits to the German embassy, part of his undeterred efforts on behalf of the anthroposophist movement.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Luchini, "Razza e Antirazza," 201; Giovanni Preziosi, "Per la soluzione del problema ebraico" *La Vita Italiana* September 1942, 221–24; Felice Graziani, "Razzismo integrale" *La Difesa della Razza* December 5, 1942, 12–13. Ettore Martinoli's 1943 article on Steiner in Preziosi's journal, "Un preannunziatore della nuova Europa," also quoted Scaligero.

<sup>62</sup> Handwritten note from Scaligero to the Segreteria Particolare del Duce, August 19, 1938, enclosing an unidentified article, ACS SPD/CR (1922–43) 480/R b. 146 f. 402: 10750. Notations from the secretariat staff indicate that the article was given to Mussolini.

<sup>63</sup> Mauro Raspanti, "Il tema del razzismo ne 'il Resto del Carlino' (1938–1945)" in Valerio Marchetti, ed., *L'applicazione della legislazione antisemita in Emilia Romagna* (Bologna: Nove, 1999), 281–82; cf. Rosella Ropa, *L'Antisemitismo nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Bologna: Patron, 2000), 8. On Scaligero's continued collaboration with *La Vita Italiana* in 1944 see Francesco Germinario, "Antisemitismo senza ebrei: I temi dell'attività pubblicistica dell'ultimo Giovanni Preziosi (1943–1945)" in Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano*, 79–80.

<sup>64</sup> Unsigned memorandum dated Rome, September 6, 1943, ACS Pol. Pol. b. 1223 fasc. pers. Scaligero Massimo.

<sup>65</sup> Scaligero, *Dallo Yoga alla Rosacroce*, 101.

As profuse as his contribution was to the racist crusade in Italy, Scaligero did not occupy a formal position within the Fascist race bureaucracy. His fellow esoteric racists did, including Aniceto Del Massa, another student of Steiner's spiritual science. The institutional framework for Del Massa's efforts was the network of "Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem" established in various Italian cities in 1941. These antisemitic institutes were initiated by Luchini as head of the Race Office, with significant support from Preziosi.<sup>66</sup> Del Massa edited the bulletin of the Centers, *Il problema ebraico* ("The Jewish Problem"), from its founding in April 1942. The Centers served to disseminate the ideas of the esoteric racist current.<sup>67</sup> They promoted educational and propaganda programs highlighting the Jewish peril, including courses for youth which held the Jews responsible for "spiritual degeneration."<sup>68</sup> Del Massa was their chief theorist, and under his editorship *Il problema ebraico* expressed Fascist racism "in its most extreme form."<sup>69</sup>

His opening essay in the November 1942 issue, titled "Racism and the New Europe," was redolent of esoteric vocabulary punctuated by tirades against the Jews. Del Massa declared that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were instruments of a higher power, fighting the war to fulfill the divine plan.<sup>70</sup> In another article, "Preliminary remarks for a spiritual conception of racism," Del Massa elaborated "the spiritual foundations of the new racism, a racism of a specifically Italian character."<sup>71</sup> The Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem did not just engage in propaganda, but sought to influence active measures

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<sup>66</sup> On the Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 126–27; Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs*, 384–86; Centro Furio Jesi, ed., *La menzogna della razza*, 256–58; and the constitution of the Milan Center published in *Tempo di Mussolini* August 1942, 1261–62. In addition to Milan, there were Centers in Florence, Ancona, Genoa, and Trieste.

<sup>67</sup> Raspanti, "Le correnti del razzismo fascista," 244–45.

<sup>68</sup> The file on the Milan *Centro per lo studio del problema ebraico*, ACS SPD/CO b. 1144 f. 509485, contains a poster advertising its "courses for youth," April–June 1942, on the following topics: Fascist doctrine and the Jewish problem; racial legislation; race doctrine and Jewry; Jewish perversion in philosophy; Jewish influence in economy and finance; subversive influence of Jewry in art and morality; Jewry in history.

<sup>69</sup> Camilla Bencini, "La campagna di stampa" in Enzo Collotti, ed., *Razza e fascismo: La persecuzione contro gli ebrei in Toscana 1938–1943* (Rome: Carocci, 1999), vol. 2, 11–28, quote on 15. *Il problema ebraico* was published monthly, with an estimated total print run of 2000 copies for each issue.

<sup>70</sup> Aniceto Del Massa, "Razzismo e nuova Europa" in Collotti, ed., *Razza e fascismo* vol. 2, 17–19. The volume reprints the full text of the November 1942 issue of *Il problema ebraico* on 17–28.

<sup>71</sup> Aniceto Del Massa, "Premesse per una concezione spirituale del razzismo" in *ibid.*, 22–23.

aimed at Jews. They prodded Italian police authorities to adopt more aggressive moves against the Jewish “Trojan horse.”<sup>72</sup> The Ministry of Popular Culture ordered its liaisons in Italy’s prefectures to work closely with the Centers. As late as June 1943 the Centers monitored Jews returning to Italy from occupied France to avoid internment.<sup>73</sup> Del Massa’s *Il problema ebraico* published lists of Jews, including those who had changed their names before the race laws, and these lists likely aided in the round-ups of Jews from September 1943 onward.<sup>74</sup>

The activities of the Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem were suspended in July 1943, when Mussolini was deposed and the Badoglio regime took power for six weeks. Badoglio’s government ordered the liquidation of the Centers on August 1, 1943.<sup>75</sup> They were briefly revived with the German occupation in September 1943 and the establishment of the RSI. Del Massa was a fervent supporter of the hard-line Fascist RSI and continued to publish works on race under its auspices. In July 1944 he celebrated the RSI’s military forces and their German allies, rejecting “enemy propaganda” about “concentration camps” and praising “Nordic-Mediterranean Aryanness.”<sup>76</sup>

Del Massa’s articles for *Il problema ebraico* were published in book form in 1944. His opening essay, “The Jewish Problem and Racial Consciousness,” cast the “Jewish virus” as the root of evil in the world.<sup>77</sup> Other essays discussed “how to combat and eliminate the Jewish spirit.” According to Del Massa, Fascism and National Socialism represented “the only effective barrier” against Jewish contamination.<sup>78</sup> Del Massa invoked the work of Austrian anthroposophist Ludwig Thieben as a penetrating spiritual analysis of the essence of Jewry.<sup>79</sup> In Del Massa’s view, “the destiny of the Jewish people” was to “live parasitically amidst the other nations,” striving “first to disintegrate them and then to dominate them.” The “Jewish problem” posed an insidious threat to Italian life:

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<sup>72</sup> Carlo Moos, *Ausgrenzung, Internierung, Deportation: Antisemitismus und Gewalt im späten italienischen Faschismus (1938–1945)* (Zurich: Chronos, 2004), 102–03.

<sup>73</sup> July 3, 1943 memorandum, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318; and ACS MI/DGPS Div. Aff. gen. e ris. 1943 b. 22 cat. Cr: 85269.

<sup>74</sup> Bencini, “La campagna di stampa,” 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ufficio stralcio del soppresso Ufficio ‘Studi e Propaganda sulla Razza,’ Ministry of Popular Culture, to Prefect of Trieste, September 3, 1943, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318.

<sup>76</sup> Aniceto Del Massa, “Rinasce un esercito” *L’Ora* July 30, 1944, 4–7. The article is adorned with swastikas and photographs of Nazi officers and Italian soldiers.

<sup>77</sup> Aniceto Del Massa, *Razzismo Ebraismo* (Verona: Mondadori, 1944), 11, opening paragraph of the first essay, “Problema ebraico e coscienza razziale.”

<sup>78</sup> Del Massa, *Razzismo Ebraismo*, 12, 15.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

The truth is that in Italy the Jew was an invisible ruler and did everything possible to attain the highest command posts, to nestle himself in the neuralgic points where he could dominate without being noticed, scheming to the orders of those who operated behind the scenes according to a pre-arranged plan with the goal of establishing Jewish supremacy over the world.<sup>80</sup>

Boasting of the metaphysical dignity of “our racism,” Del Massa asserted that the “Aryan race” thrived when it resisted miscegenation. But in a world “fallen into Jewish hands” severe measures were required. Del Massa offered a spiritual justification for hatred of the Jewish enemy: “In order to advance spiritually it is necessary to hate evil.” The enemy, he exhorted, must be destroyed:

In order to be effective, hatred must be cold, relentless, constant, of maximum spiritual sharpness, because it is a question of destroying an enemy who is extremely powerful, heartless, and immensely vigorous, an enemy who embodies a great potential for brutality. It is a question of liberating the world, liberating the human organism from a savage evil which has spread itself through an extended period of deliberate poisoning. In this moment, only a will fortified by hate can be victorious, victorious in the Roman way, through the unrelenting destruction of the adversary, because this time the very existence of the Roman people is at stake: Judea is playing its final card against Rome.<sup>81</sup>

Hence the “war of the spirit” must “integrate the war of arms” and take up the military cause. Del Massa’s words revealed impatience with merely propagandistic forms of antisemitic action:

The struggle against Jewry must not limit itself to assembling documents which demonstrate that the Jews are responsible for the present disturbances; it must contribute to destroying at the root the seeds of corrosion that have crept into our own quarters through centuries of passive tolerance on our part.<sup>82</sup>

Throughout the period of the RSI Del Massa played an active role in facilitating political and military cooperation between Italian and German forces. He was particularly instrumental in initiating covert actions as director of the “secret

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 23, 25.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 34, 55, 59.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 80.

bureau" of the restored Fascist party from its inception in 1943, and was leader of a clandestine network of militant Fascists operating behind Allied lines. Del Massa defended the Fascist regime until the very end.<sup>83</sup>

The continuity in anthroposophical antisemitism before and after 1943 is illustrated by the career of Ettore Martinoli, a case study in the confluence of spiritual racist theory and practice. Martinoli had long been a leading member of the extremist Fascist faction in Trieste.<sup>84</sup> As late as November 1944 he was still contributing antisemitic jeremiads to Preziosi's journal, calling for a redoubled struggle against Jews, Masons, and hidden enemies of Fascism.<sup>85</sup> In an April 1943 letter to Mussolini, Preziosi described Martinoli as "the single most hated man in plutocratic-Jewish-Masonic circles in Trieste."<sup>86</sup> The formerly Habsburg city had the third largest Jewish community in Italy in 1938, and by the time deportations began in 1943 Trieste had the second largest Jewish population in the country, after Rome. It was a principal target of Fascist antisemites from the beginning of the racial campaign and the site of a notorious speech by Mussolini on race policy in September 1938, declaring "world Jewry" an "irreconcilable enemy of Fascism."<sup>87</sup> Already in autumn 1941 and again in summer 1942 Trieste witnessed violent antisemitic outbursts.<sup>88</sup> The city was a microcosm of the real-world effects of Fascist racism.

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<sup>83</sup> See Fabio Andriola, ed., *Uomini e scelte della RSI: I protagonisti della Repubblica di Mussolini* (Foggia: Bastogi, 2000), 229; Daniele Lembo, *I Servizi Segreti di Salò: Servizi Segreti e Servizi Speciali nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Pavia: Maro, 2001), 135, 146; Parlato, *Fascisti senza Mussolini*, 76–79 and 402–10. Del Massa continued to lead underground Fascist cells even after the final defeat of the RSI in April 1945.

<sup>84</sup> Dario Mattiussi, "Il PNF a Trieste 1938–1943" in Annamaria Vinci, ed., *Trieste in guerra: Gli anni 1938–1943* (Trieste: Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1992), 11–29.

<sup>85</sup> Germinario, "Antisemitismo senza ebrei," 101. Martinoli also penned a series of antisemitic attacks in the Trieste newspaper *Il Piccolo* from autumn 1938 onward; see Vinci, ed., *Trieste in guerra*, 88–91.

<sup>86</sup> Preziosi to Mussolini, April 13, 1943, quoted in Parente, Gentile, and Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia*, 264. On Martinoli's antisemitic agitation in Trieste before 1943 see Galliano Fogar, *Trieste in guerra 1940–1945: Società e Resistenza* (Trieste: Istituto regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nel Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 1999), 40–42.

<sup>87</sup> The text of Mussolini's September 18, 1938 "Discorso di Trieste" can be found in Cavaglion and Romagnani, *Le interdizioni del Duce*, 83–87. For an example of the attention antisemites paid to Trieste see Antonio Antonucci, "L'altra razza: Trieste centro d'irradiazione ebraica" *La Stampa* August 25, 1938, 1, the top article on the front page of the Turin daily *La Stampa*, one of Italy's chief national newspapers.

<sup>88</sup> See the detailed 1942 reports describing "grave acts of violence" perpetrated against Jews and Jewish institutions in Trieste in ACS MI/DGPS Div. Aff. gen. e ris. 1943 b. 22 cat. C1: 85342–



In addition to his duties as Secretary of the Italian Anthroposophical Society, Martinoli was the founder and director of the Trieste Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem, established in early 1942. The Trieste Center was “particularly active and in constant contact with Preziosi.”<sup>89</sup> Martinoli developed a close relationship with the German consulate and the ss delegation in Trieste as well. The surviving records of his Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem provide an illuminating example of esoteric antisemitism in action. The stated purpose of the Trieste Center was to pursue both propaganda activities and practical cooperation with local authorities.<sup>90</sup> Aside from Preziosi, Martinoli was backed by Luchini as head of the Race Office and by the Prefect of Trieste. Luchini’s February 1942 letter to the Prefect explained that the Center was necessary because “more than any other city in Italy, Trieste is faced with the hostile presence of a mass of Jews, of a Jewish spirit,” and was thus in special need of renewed efforts toward a correct “comprehension of the Jewish question.”<sup>91</sup>

According to the Minister of Popular Culture, the Center’s chief activity was to consist of “study and propaganda on the Jewish problem.” It was not to undertake direct actions beyond this mandate without authorization from

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47. For a vivid account of the everyday persecution of Jews in Trieste under the race laws see Gemma Volli, “Trieste 1938–1945” in Guido Valabrega, ed., *Gli Ebrei in Italia durante il fascismo* (Milan: Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, 1963), 38–50.

<sup>89</sup> De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 588. See also Pichetto, *Alle radici dell'odio*, 95; Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei*, 270; Lutz Klinkhammer, *Stragi naziste in Italia: La guerra contro i civili (1943–44)* (Rome: Donzelli, 1997), 67. At his post-war trial Martinoli stated that he burned the Center’s archive in 1945. The richest remaining source of primary documents is the file in AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318: Centro per lo Studio del Problema Ebraico. The documents are not numbered. I am indebted to Mirella Olivari for assistance in locating and evaluating these records.

<sup>90</sup> Minister of Popular Culture to Prefect of Trieste, February 5, 1942, announcing establishment of the *Centro per lo studio del problema ebraico* in Trieste, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318. Martinoli and the Trieste Center are discussed extensively in Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 255–64, 294–302; Carlo Ventura, “Il centro fascista di Trieste per lo studio del problema ebraico” *Trieste: Rivista politica* 8 (1961), 20–23; Giuseppe Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò: La persecuzione antisemita 1943–1945* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978), 45–50; and Michael Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 358–61, 385–86.

<sup>91</sup> Alberto Luchini, Capo dell’Ufficio Studi e Propaganda sulla Razza, to Tullio Tamburini, Prefect of Trieste, February 25, 1942, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318. Despite the Prefect’s support, Martinoli remained hostile to Tamburini; see Ettore Martinoli, “Die gegenwärtige Tätigkeit des Judentums, der Freimaurerei sowie des Bolschewismus in Italien,” November 1943, BA NS8/262: 93–101.

local officials.<sup>92</sup> Martinoli quickly made the most of these parameters, placing central emphasis on the public dissemination of propaganda while simultaneously initiating contacts with municipal authorities in order to pursue more energetic projects. The Trieste Center's "study and propaganda" efforts built on local traditions of conspiratorial antisemitism corresponding to Martinoli's own views. Anonymous submissions from early 1938 denounced "occult forces," Masonic intrigues, and the prevalence of "Jewish power" in the city.<sup>93</sup> Martinoli's propaganda activities earned him praise for his "dynamism" in making the Center "an even more effective organ in the struggle against Jewry and its subsidiaries."<sup>94</sup> Its most ominous achievement, however, did not lie in the realm of propaganda.

In August 1942 Martinoli obtained permission from the city government to conduct research in local record-keeping agencies in order to identify Jewish residents of Trieste.<sup>95</sup> The Center was given access to the municipal registry office with its complete holdings on births, marriages, and residency. Martinoli's experience as a local Fascist official provided a key opportunity; he had previously served as president of the supervisory board of the Trieste municipal registry office.<sup>96</sup> Between August 1942 and July 1943 the Center compiled a list of Jews in Trieste.<sup>97</sup> Martinoli focused much of his attention on

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<sup>92</sup> Alessandro Pavolini, Minister of Popular Culture, to Tamburini, May 29, 1942 and June 2, 1942, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318.

<sup>93</sup> AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 363: 219–23.

<sup>94</sup> June 17, 1943 report on the Trieste Center from Dr. Hermann Carbone to Ministry of Popular Culture, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318. Similar praise for Martinoli and the Trieste Center can be found in the February 1944 "Vorwort" by Dr. Hans Maier, *Hauptinsatzführer, Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Sonderkommando Italien*, attached to Martinoli's text "Die gegenwärtige Tätigkeit des Judentums, der Freimaurerei sowie des Bolschewismus in Italien," BA NS8/262: 94; according to Maier, "Martinoli ist seit seiner Studentenzeit eifriger Antisemit, vom Juden- und Freimaurerproblem leidenschaftlich bewegt und hat mit einer kleinen Zahl von Mitarbeitern und unter grossen persönlichen Opfern wertvolle Aufklärungsarbeit im Kampf gegen Judentum und Freimaurerei geleistet."

<sup>95</sup> Comune di Trieste to Prefect of Trieste, August 3, 1942, granting the Center authorization to access the municipal registry office in order to identify Jewish residents, confirmed by Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate for Demography and Race, September 24, 1942, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318.

<sup>96</sup> In his August 7, 1931 application to the Interior Ministry on behalf of the Anthroposophical Society of Italy, Martinoli described himself as "Presidente del Consiglio di sorveglianza dell'Ufficio Statistico-anagrafico di Trieste" (ACS MI/DGPS G1 b. 28 f. 317).

<sup>97</sup> See Martinoli's monthly requests to Tamburini for extension of access to the municipal registry office in AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318; the final one in the file is dated July 3, 1943.

individuals of mixed heritage, targeting those with partial Jewish background, a notably large group in Trieste.<sup>98</sup> The Center's efforts impressed the German consul, who submitted an extremely positive report to the foreign ministry in Berlin in November 1942. It underscored the Center's access to the municipal statistical office and pointed out the usefulness of its work in assembling records of Jewish residents and those of mixed ancestry. The report mentioned Martinoli's anthroposophist inclinations. It also claimed that information from the Trieste Center influenced Mussolini to order intensified surveillance of Jews across Italy.<sup>99</sup>

The data collected by Trieste's Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem yielded tangible and tragic results when German forces occupied the city in September 1943. Thanks in part to Martinoli's longstanding ties to German officials, events developed particularly rapidly in Trieste as part of the transformation of northern Italy as a whole.<sup>100</sup> Although the Centers were suppressed by the Badoglio regime, Martinoli used the Badoglio interlude to prepare the

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<sup>98</sup> Mattiussi, "Il PNF a Trieste 1938–1943," 17–20, citing detailed reports sent by a Trieste Fascist to Mussolini in early 1944. The reports depict Martinoli as part of a 'fifth column' for the Nazis and the driving force behind the radical antisemites in Trieste from 1938 onward. On the high rate of intermarriage in Trieste see Tullia Catalan, "The Ambivalence of a Port-City. The Jews of Trieste from the 19th to the 20th Century" *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 2 (2011), 69–98.

<sup>99</sup> The November 23, 1942 report from the German Consul General in Trieste to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin is excerpted in Ventura, "Il centro fascista di Trieste per lo studio del problema ebraico"; Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, 45–46; and Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 358–60.

<sup>100</sup> On the range of responses to the occupation in Trieste see the nuanced assessment by Maura Hametz, "Juden und Nationalsozialisten in Triest 1943–1945" in Andrea Löw, Doris Bergen, and Anna Hájková, eds., *Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Großdeutschen Reich 1941–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 217–36. For context see Cinzia Villani, "The Persecution of Jews in German-Occupied Northern Italy" in Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, 243–61; Sara Berger, "Judenverfolgung und Kollaboration in der Republik von Salò" in Jäger and Novelli-Glaab, eds., *Judentum und Antisemitismus im modernen Italien*, 177–97; Meir Michaelis, "La persecuzione degli ebrei" in Poggio, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana 1943–45*, 367–85; Klinkhammer, *Zwischen Bündnis und Besatzung*, 534–53; Maura Hametz, "The Ambivalence of Italian Antisemitism: Fascism, Nationalism, and Racism in Trieste" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16 (2002), 376–401; Stefano Di Giusto, *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland—Udine, Gorizia, Trieste, Pola, Fiume e Lubiana durante l'occupazione tedesca, 1943–1945* (Udine: Istituto Friulano per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione, 2005); Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, "Kain in Rom: Judenverfolgung und Kollaboration unter deutscher Besatzung 1943/44" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 54 (2006), 231–68; Nicola Tranfaglia, "La Repubblica sociale italiana e la deportazione dall'Italia (1943–1945)" *Studi storici* 51 (2010), 621–49.

Trieste Center for German intervention. In February 1944 Martinoli affirmed that “the Center remained continuously functional throughout the Badoglio period.”<sup>101</sup> With the German occupation, the city became a hub of Nazi efforts to extend the Final Solution to Italy. The ss contingent overseeing operations in Trieste included figures such as Franz Stangl and Christian Wirth. It was headed by Odilo Globocnik, administrator of Sobibor, Belzec, and Treblinka, who was born in Trieste. One of the most infamous concentration camps in Italy, the Risiera di San Sabba, was located in the city.<sup>102</sup>

While deportations of Jews proceeded haltingly elsewhere in occupied Italy, the process moved quickly in Trieste. In the rest of Italy, “the roundups of Jews achieved uneven results.”<sup>103</sup> In December 1943 Nazi officials noted with consternation that “the seizure of the Jews in Italy had failed to achieve any success worthy of mention.”<sup>104</sup> Many Italian Jews were able to escape the country or evade capture and survive until the end of the war. But circumstances in Trieste were more dire. The first roundup of the city’s Jews occurred on October 9, 1943, a week before the larger raid on the Jews of Rome. The first deportation left Trieste for Auschwitz on December 7, 1943. Trieste was effectively cleared of Jews by late January 1944.<sup>105</sup> In the space of three months, one of Italy’s largest Jewish communities was eliminated.

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<sup>101</sup> Martinoli to Trieste Prefecture, February 9, 1944, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318. The September 3, 1943 letter from the Ufficio stralcio del soppresso Ufficio ‘Studi e Propaganda sulla Razza’ (ibid.), announcing that the Trieste Center has been abolished, asked that all of its records be delivered to the liquidation office in Rome. There is no reply in the file, and the next document is from the RSI.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Enzo Collotti, *Il Litorale Adriatico nel Nuovo Ordine Europeo 1943–45* (Milan: Vangelista, 1974), 123–46; Ferruccio Fölkel, *La Risiera di San Sabba: Trieste e il litorale adriatico durante l’occupazione nazista* (Milan: Mondadori, 1979); Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival* (New York: Basic, 1987), 184–87; Galliano Fogar, “L’occupazione nazista del Litorale Adriatico e lo sterminio della Risiera” in Adolfo Scalpelli, ed., *San Sabba: Istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera* (Milan: Mondadori, 1988), vol. I, 3–137; Michael Koschat, “Das Polizeihäftlager in der Risiera di San Sabba und die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Triest 1943–1945” *Zeitgeschichte* 19 (1992), 157–71.

<sup>103</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 612.

<sup>104</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 719.

<sup>105</sup> Villani, “The Persecution of Jews in German-Occupied Northern Italy,” 248; Bon, *Gli Ebrei a Trieste*, 328; Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 361–62. For context see Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust*, 154–57 and 306–07; Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 185–87; Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (New York: Beechurst Press, 1953), 355–57; August Walz, *Die Juden*

The precise role of Martinoli's Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem in these events is difficult to reconstruct on the basis of the available evidence. Several historians suggest that its research on Trieste's Jewish population abetted the execution of Nazi plans: since lists of local Jews to be detained were available immediately after the Germans occupied the city, the Center likely provided their lists to the German forces.<sup>106</sup> Martinoli worked closely with the SS both before and after September 1943, and a local SS officer commended Martinoli for his assistance in the "struggle against Jewry and Freemasonry."<sup>107</sup> He has been aptly characterized as a supporter of "the German model of solving the Jewish question."<sup>108</sup> According to one reckoning, "with the German occupation, the documents and lists of names collected by the Centers became a death sentence for hundreds and hundreds of Jews."<sup>109</sup> The Trieste Center was a "veritable stronghold of the future Nazi antisemitic persecution" and "provided an institutional base for the promotion of the Nazi program."<sup>110</sup> More important, perhaps, than the outcome of Martinoli's obsessive hunt for Jews in the files of city offices or the destination of the lists he and his colleagues assembled—deadly as these may have been—was the fundamental part he played in preparing the ideological ground for genocide. The fateful autumn of 1943 in Trieste revealed the actual impact of spiritual racism in practice.

Martinoli's work was not complete with the German takeover. Once Trieste came under control of the Reich, several of its Fascist functionaries took up high-profile posts in the administration of the newly founded Italian Social Republic. Martinoli continued to oversee the Center in Trieste, which was renamed the "Center for Race" in 1944 along with the other former Centers for

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*in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich* (Klagenfurt: Universitätsverlag Carinthia, 1987), 285–93; Marco Coslovich, "Gli ebrei deportati dall'Adriatisches Küstenland" in Coslovich, *I percorsi della sopravvivenza: Storia e memoria della deportazione dall'Adriatisches Küstenland* (Milan: Mursia, 1994), 325–73; Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 401–02.

<sup>106</sup> See Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 358–59. Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 259, concludes: "This aspect of the Trieste Center's activities is the most precise and concrete link uniting Fascist antisemitic persecution with its Nazi counterpart." Gagliani, "Antisemiti militanti," 239 provides important context which suggests that Martinoli and the Trieste Center may have taken an earlier and more aggressive course of action than the other Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien*, 358.

<sup>108</sup> Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 226.

<sup>109</sup> Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, 46. Cf. Scalpelli, ed., *San Sabba* vol. I, 49, 200; vol. II, 231.

<sup>110</sup> Vinci, *Trieste in guerra*, 90; Hametz, "The Ambivalence of Italian Antisemitism," 393.

the Study of the Jewish Problem. On behalf of the Trieste Center, Martinoli engaged in tenacious attempts from November 1943 onward to recover funds owed by the Ministry of Popular Culture, funding which had been disrupted during the Badoglio interregnum.<sup>111</sup> He was supported in this effort by the Prefect as well as by the German ‘advisor’ for the province of Trieste, Dr. Hinteregger, a persistent advocate for Martinoli and his Center. Hinteregger addressed a series of increasingly stern missives to various agencies, requesting compliance with Martinoli’s appeals.<sup>112</sup> In February 1944 Martinoli argued that the Center needed to intensify its activities once more in order to defeat the “internal front” of Jewish influence within the Fascist camp itself.<sup>113</sup> Even with Trieste emptied of Jews, the threat had not abated.

The transition to the Italian Social Republic brought a qualitative transformation in Fascist racial policy, with practical implementation now largely in the hands of the Germans. But German personnel depended on cooperation from local authorities, and under the RSI this took the form of mutually competing agencies administering various aspects of the race laws.<sup>114</sup> At the nominal center of this bureaucratic complex stood the “General Inspectorate for Race” (*Ispettorato Generale per la Razza*) headed by Preziosi, which developed a distinctive profile during its brief existence. Mussolini appointed Preziosi

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<sup>111</sup> Bruno Coceani, Prefect of Trieste, to Ministry of Popular Culture in Salò, November 6, 1943, forwarding Martinoli’s request for funds, and Martinoli’s February 9, 1944 letter detailing the Center’s finances, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318. Coceani replaced the previous Prefect of Trieste, Tamburini, who was named national chief of police of the RSI in October 1943. According to Martinoli’s figures, the Ministry owed the Trieste Center 40,000 Lira. Martinoli also claimed that in April 1943 the Duce himself ordered an intensification of the work of the Centers for the Study of the Jewish Problem and concomitantly increased funding.

<sup>112</sup> Hinteregger’s first request, on his letterhead as “Der Deutsche Berater für die Provinz Triest,” was dated January 4, 1944; on April 28, 1944, he wrote directly to the city accountant’s office about paying the Center, and on May 15, 1944 Hinteregger wrote again to Prefect Coceani asking that the situation be resolved. AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 484 f. 318. According to the December 31, 1943 balance sheet of the Centro Triestino per lo Studio del Problema Ebraico (*ibid.*), between June 1942 and June 1943 the Center received nearly 16,000 Lira from the Ministry of Popular Culture as part of a total budget of slightly over 100,000 Lira.

<sup>113</sup> The Trieste Center prepared a report in November 1942 titled “Propaganda nemica—ebraismo—fronte interno,” warning against the “group of Jews, plutocrats, and spies” inside the party. The report sparked an attempt by other Fascists to dismiss Martinoli from his position, which was thwarted by Preziosi’s intervention with Mussolini. See Preziosi’s January 31, 1944 memorandum to Mussolini, ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 24 f. 166: 268–81.

<sup>114</sup> For overviews see Ropa, *L’Antisemitismo nella Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, and Liliana Picciotto Fargion, “The Anti-Jewish Policy of the Italian Social Republic (1943–1945)” *Yad Vashem Studies* 17 (1986), 17–49.



General Inspector for Race in March 1944.<sup>115</sup> The creation of the new agency fulfilled a longstanding demand by Evola and others.<sup>116</sup> Under the RSI, Preziosi's Inspectorate was the official sponsor of the re-founded Centers for Race and served as the institutional focal point for broadcasting the doctrines of esoteric racism during the waning days of the Fascist regime.

In Preziosi's view, an insufficiently rigorous application of the racial laws led to the betrayal of July 1943. Now in the radicalized RSI under German protection, Preziosi demanded "the total elimination of the Jews."<sup>117</sup> While Jews remained the Inspectorate's primary target, Preziosi also hoped to extend its tasks to collecting information on "the activities of freemasonry, plutocracy, and occult political forces." He warned repeatedly about "secret powers" at work behind the scenes.<sup>118</sup> Preziosi had powerful friends; to keep the printing presses rolling for his journal *La Vita Italiana* at 10,000 copies an issue into 1945, he acquired paper directly from the Germans.<sup>119</sup> He continued to hold Martinoli in high regard, boasting of the achievements of the Trieste Center for Race.<sup>120</sup>

Martinoli was promoted to a position at the national level in the RSI apparatus in the spring of 1944 when he was named Chief of the Division of Press and Propaganda in the General Inspectorate for Race. He continued in this capac-

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<sup>115</sup> The decree creating the Ispettorato Generale per la Razza can be found in ACS RSI SPD/CO b. 42 f. 2653. Many central documents are contained in ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096. For more detailed accounts cf. Liliana Picciotto, "La macchina antiebraica della Rsi e l'Ispettore generale per la razza Giovanni Preziosi" in Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano*, 17–43, and Mauro Raspanti, "L'Ispettorato generale per la razza" in *ibid.*, 109–39.

<sup>116</sup> See e.g. Julius Evola, "Per un 'Ufficio Razza' del Partito" *La Vita Italiana* March 1942, 279–84.

<sup>117</sup> January 31, 1944 memorandum from Preziosi to Mussolini, ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 24 f. 166: 268–81.

<sup>118</sup> Draft administrative statutes for the Ispettorato Generale per la Razza, ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096; Giovanni Preziosi, "Die geheimen Mächte in Italien: Zur Vorgeschichte des Badoglio-Vertrates" *Völkischer Beobachter* October 26, 1943, 3. On Preziosi's anti-Masonic obsessions see ACS RSI S.P.D./C.R. b. 48 f. 550, including material which Preziosi sent to Mussolini in late February 1945. Canosa, *A caccia di ebrei*, 308–20, portrays Preziosi's role as Inspector General for Race as largely formal without real executive power, while Raspanti, "L'Ispettorato generale per la razza," 127, emphasizes the Inspectorate's focus on press and propaganda.

<sup>119</sup> ACS RSI S.P.D./C.R. b. 48 f. 540: 057848. Preziosi published four issues of *La Vita Italiana* from September 1944 to February 1945.

<sup>120</sup> Preziosi's September 20, 1944 memorandum to Mussolini, highlighting the Trieste *Centro per la Razza*, ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096; Preziosi to Coceani, December 29, 1944, AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 374 f. 76.



ity until the defeat of Fascism in April 1945.<sup>121</sup> Responsibility for the propaganda division meant that Martinoli supervised the bulk of the Inspectorate's accomplishments; the agency never managed to promulgate its own racial legislation or confiscate Jewish property, despite Preziosi's strenuous efforts.<sup>122</sup> Its foremost task was indoctrination, with Martinoli in charge of operations. The "instruction of the masses" as an integral step toward "totalitarian Fascism" had been one of Martinoli's abiding concerns well before his appointment to high office in the RSI.<sup>123</sup> Racial propaganda during the late Fascist period was often effective, even if its content was imaginary. Circulars and directives and manuals, the kind of material Martinoli produced and distributed, were powerful vehicles for radicalizing the antisemitic campaign and extending its reach.<sup>124</sup> Martinoli made broad use of these possibilities.

Much of the publicity generated by the General Inspectorate for Race was channeled through the Centers for Race. Martinoli co-authored the handbook

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<sup>121</sup> August 13, 1944 "Elenco dei funzionari e del personale dell'Ispettorato Generale per la Razza," ACS RSI PCM b. 4 f. 3096; cf. the October 27, 1944 letter from Martinoli as "Il Direttore Capo Divisione Stampa e Propaganda," AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 477 f. 317. Raspanti, "L'Ispettorato generale per la razza," 115, notes that of all the Inspectorate officials named in its original constitution, only Martinoli still occupied his position according to the final organization chart of March 1945.

<sup>122</sup> Drafts of proposed racial regulations and related materials from the Inspectorate can be found in ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 42 f. 385, ACS RSI SPD/CR b. 24 f. 166 sf. 3, and AST Prefettura di Trieste Gabinetto (1923–1952) b. 367 f. 76. The Germans were in charge of race policy, and the RSI Ministries of Interior and Finance had greater influence than the Inspectorate, though Prefects still paid attention to the Inspectorate's directives. For context see Michele Sarfatti, "Le leggi antiebraiche proposte nel 1944 da Giovanni Preziosi" in Sarfatti, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana a Desenzano*, 141–71, and Luigi Ganapini, "L'antisemitismo nella RSI: il contesto e le implicazioni" in Parente, Gentile, and Grillo, eds., *Giovanni Preziosi e la questione della razza in Italia*, 171–94.

<sup>123</sup> See Ettore Martinoli, "L'istruzione delle masse nelle esigenze ideali d'un Fascismo totalitario" *Tempo di Mussolini* August 1942, 1296–1302.

<sup>124</sup> Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, "Die ideologischen Ursprünge der Judenverfolgung in Italien: Die Propaganda und ihre Wirkung am Beispiel Roms" in Klinkhammer, Guerrazzi, and Schlemmer, eds., *Die 'Achse' im Krieg*, 434–55, observes that "the Fascist regime produced a formidable amount of propaganda material during the war, material which inevitably penetrated individual minds. This generated fictitious enemies, threats, and conspiracies which in turn fomented artificial but no less potent feelings of hatred." (434) On the impact of circulars and directives see Wildvang, *Der Feind von nebenan: Judenverfolgung im faschistischen Italien*, 144–46 and 158–61; for general context see the section on "Stampa e propaganda" in Poggio, ed., *La Repubblica sociale italiana 1943–45*, 99–174.

designed to guide their work.<sup>125</sup> Proclaiming the “biological-spiritual unity of race,” the goal was to help the Italian nation confront “the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy which has disoriented the people.” In Martinoli’s formulation, the Centers had a dual mission: the “defensive and negative” task of “preserving the Race from contamination,” and the “positive” task of “reconstructing the values of the Italian race, values which are not just biological but above all spiritual.”<sup>126</sup> His explanations echoed central themes of esoteric racism: “The defense of the race aims to immunize the people against biological pollution of their blood” through “separation of people of Aryan race from non-Aryan racial elements,” primarily “Jews and those of mixed race deriving from cross-breeding with Jews.” The Italian people must be protected from “contamination of its spiritual faculties” so that the “Aryan spirit of the Italian race” will remain safe from “international Jewry.” Martinoli compared Jews to carriers of a contagious disease who must be quarantined, allowing Mussolini to re-assert “the spiritual force of our race” and lead Italy to re-birth.<sup>127</sup> Amid talk of purification and racial selection, Martinoli presented racism as the key to spiritual renewal.

Aside from its press and propaganda endeavors, the General Inspectorate for Race included an Office of Racial Thought and an Office for the Jewish-Masonic Problem, dedicated in part to research on “occult forces.”<sup>128</sup> Such projects aspired to go beyond the formal level of legislation and political provisions. As Martinoli explained, laws and state policies were simply the first step toward racial survival. They were bound to remain “illusory” if not accompanied by “a true and genuine anti-Judaic tendency,” and it was the job of the Centers for Race to push this committed antisemitic tendency forward. The task required a constant state of alert. Under the motto “Keep your eyes open!” the staff of the Centers were urgently warned not to be “lured by clandestine

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<sup>125</sup> Ispettorato Generale per la Razza, *Centri Italiani per la Razza: Ordinamento delle attività* (Bergamo: Cattaneo, 1944), co-authored by Martinoli and Giovanni Pestalozza, Secretary of the Inspectorate and coordinator of the Centers for Race. Martinoli wrote the two central programmatic sections: “Indirizzi programmatici dei Centri Italiani per la Razza” (7–16) and “Istruzioni ai Dirigenti” (23–25).

<sup>126</sup> *Centri Italiani per la Razza*, ii, 4, 7.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 10, 16.

<sup>128</sup> See *ibid.*, 17–21. Much of the Inspectorate’s attention was concentrated on the party itself and within the government of the RSI, where unwitting agents of freemasonry and Jewry were suspected at every turn. Roberto Pavese, another member of the esoteric racist faction, was also a functionary of the General Inspectorate for Race.

emissaries of Judeo-Masonry.”<sup>129</sup> Spreading the principles of spiritual racism remained the primary motivation even as the war closed in around the RSI. In late 1944 the Centers distributed a list of recommended texts for raising racial consciousness, with a strong esoteric and conspiracist emphasis. It included works by Preziosi, Evola, and Scaligero.<sup>130</sup>

Through his position in the Center for the Study of the Jewish Problem, the Center for Race, and the General Inspectorate for Race, Martinoli served as a crucial conduit for a radicalized version of esoteric antisemitism. He was put on trial for collaboration in 1946. Despite false testimony about the Trieste Center and his role in the RSI, Martinoli was convicted of collaborating with the Nazis and participating in the leadership of the antisemitic campaign. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and amnestied in 1950.<sup>131</sup>

The importance of the General Inspectorate for Race should not be overstated. By the time it was established, antisemitic policy was *de facto* in German hands, and with the Allied military advance Preziosi, Martinoli and their colleagues oversaw a steadily shrinking territory. Most of the Inspectorate's proposals were caught up in bureaucratic wrangling with other RSI ministries and never became law. Its transitory history nevertheless furnishes a striking image of spiritual racism in power: the ideas outlined by Scaligero and others finally realized in the context of Fascism's desperate last stand. The fulfillment of the esoteric racial vision revealed unambiguously what its aims looked like in practice. A societal agenda in spiritual garb, it represented a “crusade to redeem the world by eliminating the Jews.”<sup>132</sup>

In figures like Scaligero, Del Massa, and Martinoli, an anthroposophically inflected spiritual racism came to full flower both as a worldview and through hands-on involvement in implementing the Fascist racial laws. Inspired by Fascism's ideals, these figures took a firmly hierarchical view of society, based on occult doctrines of spiritual hierarchy and an esoteric conception of evolution, and extended this model to the realm of race. Their argument was not merely that spiritual precepts were compatible with racial persecution, but that an uncompromising racist campaign constituted the height of spiritual striving, the realization of profound spiritual goals. The practical

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 25, 38. In between references to “sub-races” and various esoteric themes, Martinoli cited the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as a blueprint of the Jewish plan for world domination.

<sup>130</sup> Raspanti, “L'Ispettorato generale per la razza,” 130.

<sup>131</sup> For details see Mayda, *Ebrei sotto Salò*, 60; Ventura, “Il centro fascista di Trieste per lo studio del problema ebraico,” 23; and Bon, *Gli ebrei a Trieste*, 259, 264, 295–96.

<sup>132</sup> Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, xviii, recapitulating his concept of “redemptive antisemitism.”

import of this stance can be seen in the harrowing vocation of one of Steiner's more visible Italian followers. That the co-founder and longtime Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Italy came to occupy a prominent position within the Fascist racial bureaucracy, even while trumpeting Steiner's work as the spiritual salvation of Europe, bears witness to the unanticipated potentials latent within esoteric racial thought.

Italian anthroposophists drew on a wide spectrum of occult approaches to mold their claims and inform their public statements. They invoked the authority of science though dismissing its conventional "materialist" premises. They proffered sweeping political verdicts and clamored for military action while simultaneously announcing the superiority of the spiritual sphere over worldly circumstances. The esoteric scaffolding of their racial ideas offered a grand mythic narrative in which Fascism appeared as an epochal regeneration of the Aryan spirit. They endeavored to harmonize 'Nordic' and 'Mediterranean' discourses, Italian and German traditions, Christian and pagan beliefs, physical factors and the mysteries of the soul. They celebrated an ancient Roman legacy and claimed universal validity for their racial mandate. And they supplied a sought-after alternative to more familiar options. In the eyes of many Fascists, "Nazi racism, with its biological basis, appeared too materialistic and spiritually deficient."<sup>133</sup> Anthroposophists reconciled these divisions.

What Scaligero, Martinoli and their confederates promoted was a racism that was neither exclusively spiritual nor exclusively biological. Their writings constantly emphasized the link between biological and spiritual aspects of race, portraying this very synthesis as a uniquely Aryan virtue. Integrating these two dimensions in the context of esoteric antisemitism produced an ambitious series of racial demands. These included not just eugenic policies and protective controls to avert racial pollution, but more meticulous methods of purification through spiritual vigilance to fend off the ever-present threat of Jewish infiltration. If materialist forms of racism heeded only the bodily manifestations of racial character, spiritual racism probed deeper in pursuit of hidden dangers.

In positing the Jew as the absolute enemy, these stringent standards left no room for a 'solution' to the 'Jewish question' other than elimination. They thereby helped pave the way for an exterminatory program.<sup>134</sup> For spiritual racists, race mixture disturbed the harmony of the spirit-soul-body triad and instigated racial decline, debasing the heritage of the Aryan spirit. In the end,

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<sup>133</sup> Garau, "Between 'Spirit' and 'Science,'" 54.

<sup>134</sup> For a compelling argument in support of this conclusion see Cassata, "Guerra all'ebreo," 69–74.

this required the eradication of the enemy. Fascist antisemitism in customary form, with its dynamics of exclusion, violence, and regeneration, did not go far enough. An “integral racism,” refracted through Steiner’s teachings, promised a more thorough answer. The same postulates made possible a resolution between Fascist and Nazi designs while retaining their Italian character. Esoteric racists stood out as exponents of a specifically Italian racial vision, rather than mere imitators of Nazi race ideology, even as they endorsed National Socialism.

By incorporating ancient Roman myths and modern Fascist motifs into this framework, anthroposophical race theorists succeeded in re-working Steiner’s Germanic emphasis to encompass Italian identity, integrated into an esoteric conception of Aryan racial consciousness. The “spiritual racism” espoused by Scaligero and Martinoli was not simply a vague catch-word meant to provide a cosmetic differentiation of Fascist racial policy from its overweening northern neighbor. It had its own acute and inexorable contours, insistently urging the Italian racist campaign toward more drastic measures in ferreting out the Jewish enemy. Its proponents demonstrated their commitment to this racial ideal as unwavering wardens of the “defense of the race.” If only for a brief period, spiritual racism in power marked a deadly junction in the interaction between occultism and fascism.

## CONCLUSION

# Occultism and Nazism in Historical Perspective

Since the defeat of Nazism in 1945, questions about its ongoing repercussions have troubled observers hoping to learn from the fatal mistakes of the last century. Because the horrors inflicted by Nazi and Fascist forces seem so overwhelmingly obvious in retrospect, it can be difficult to recall that many people greeted the rise of Nazism as the dawning of a new and better world. How did high ideals lead to disaster? What do holistic education, natural lifestyles, and alternative spirituality have to do with a regime that murdered millions? Sorting out the convoluted historical details becomes unsettling when the certainties of posterity collide with the perplexities of the past. Occult explanations retained their appeal even in the wake of war and genocide; for anthroposophists, the “demonic” interference of “the dark powers behind Hitler” brought about the Nazi calamity.<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to view National Socialism as irreducibly estranged from the normal course of things, but that conclusion misunderstands what made its crimes possible. As Claudia Koonz has observed: “Although it might seem that a human catastrophe on the scale of the Holocaust was caused by an evil that defies our understanding, what is frightening about the racist public culture within which the Final Solution was conceived is not its extremism but its ordinariness—not its savage hatreds but its lofty ideals.”<sup>2</sup>

The movement Rudolf Steiner founded a century ago has proven remarkably successful in the contemporary world. There are now more than one thousand Waldorf schools worldwide. Biodynamic goods are a predominant part of the thriving organic food business. Anthroposophist physicians represent an established branch of complementary medicine, and Weleda is a leading brand in holistic remedies. Demeter products and biodynamic wines fetch premium prices. Anthroposophical ideas circulate throughout the New Age milieu. Burgeoning interest in unconventional spiritualities and unorthodox science has raised Steiner’s profile, with his followers offering an appealing portrait of personal growth and social responsibility. The promise of deep insights and genuine community continues to attract admirers and adherents. Anthroposophy today is associated with progressive and cosmopolitan ten-

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<sup>1</sup> Spring, *A Nation's Gethsemane*, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 2.

dencies. As with any historical phenomenon, however, traces of the past persist within the present.

Anthroposophist racial doctrines did not simply disappear after 1945. They endured as part of the movement's esoteric heritage and were unabashedly promoted for decades.<sup>3</sup> Enthusiasts of Waldorf education or biodynamic agriculture are often unaware of these teachings, and committed anthroposophists are reluctant to disavow them. Figures like Karutz and Scaligero continue to be honored. This indicates one of the conspicuous limitations of Steiner's spiritual science: Anthroposophists aimed to transcend the shortcomings of established scientific knowledge. Regarding race, they failed. Occult racial thought exacerbated the flaws of mainstream race science while imbuing them with the nimbus of timeless wisdom. Recast in respectable form, they are disseminated still with an alternative ambiance, heedless of their origins. The same ideas remain part of anthroposophy, unexamined and unchallenged.

Neglect of historical perspective has also contributed to the ongoing presence of far-right elements within anthroposophy. Two twenty-first century scandals encapsulate the problem: the cases of Friedrich Benesch and Andreas Molau. Benesch (1907–1991) was an outstanding figure in post-war anthroposophy who headed the Christian Community seminary in Stuttgart for three decades, from the 1950s to the 1980s, and trained most of the movement's clergy. He was also an ardent Nazi from the late 1920s until the fall of the Third

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<sup>3</sup> Examples include Wolfgang Moldenhauer, "Anthroposophische Völkerkunde und Rassenlehre" *Das Goetheanum* March 19, 1950, 92–94; Richard Karutz, "Die Rassen der gestalteten Erde und Vorgeschichte" *Das Goetheanum* October 1950, 347–49; Margarita Karutz, "Von der Problematik der farbigen Menschen" *Die Drei* August 1954, 213–15; Ernst Uehli, *Kultur und Kunst Ägyptens, Ein Isisgeheimnis* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1955); Max Stibbe, "Het ontwaken der gekleurde rassen" *Vrije Opvoedkunst* September 1961, 44–58; Guenther Wachsmuth, *The Evolution of Mankind* (Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1961); Fred Poeppig, *Das Zeitalter der Atlantis und die Eiszeit* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1962); Richard Karutz, *Das Menschenbild in der Weisheit der Völker: Studienmaterial zur Völkerkunde* (Freiburg: Die Kommenden, 1963); Hans Rudolf Niederhäuser, *Fremde Länder—Fremde Völker: Eine Einführung in die Völkerkunde in Bildern, Mythen und Erzählungen* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1974); Ernst Uehli, *Atlantis und das Rätsel der Eiszeitkunst* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1980); Ernst Uehli, *Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie als Mysteriengeschichte* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1984); Sigismund von Gleich, *Siebentausend Jahre Urgeschichte der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1987); Nicholas Lee, ed., *Invisible Africa: A Search for the Grail in Africa* (Kenilworth: Novalis Press, 1987); Sigismund von Gleich, *Der Mensch der Eiszeit und Atlantis* (Stuttgart: Mellinger, 1990); Ludwig Thieben, *Das Rätsel des Judentums* (Basel: Perseus, 1991). See also the glowing retrospectives on Karutz and Uehli in *Die Drei: Zeitschrift für Anthroposophie* January 1960, 50–52; April 1965, 139–40; and February 1968, 39–40.



Reich. His unacknowledged past caused consternation among anthroposophists when it was brought to public attention in 2004.<sup>4</sup>

But Benesch's background had been a matter of historical record for many years. In his 1941 dissertation he wrote: "Since 1928 I have been a member of the National Socialist movement for renewal among the Germans in Romania."<sup>5</sup> Benesch was involved in the *völkisch* youth movement and belonged to the *Artamanen*, a "blood and soil" group that produced Nazi leaders like Himmler, Darré, and Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höß. His father in law and academic advisor was the well-known Nazi professor Hans Hahne. From 1934 to 1945 Benesch was a leader of the regional Romanian-German Nazi party. He applied to join the SS in 1939, and in 1941 was appointed head of the local Nazi party affiliate. Benesch engaged extensively with Steiner's teachings during his Nazi period. He read Steiner's book on the *Mission of the Folk Souls* in 1926, and his lively interest in anthroposophy continued through the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>6</sup> Yet his colleagues claimed to know nothing about his Nazi activities.

Similar dynamics marked the concurrent case of Waldorf teacher Andreas Molau. In the 1990s Molau was a prominent publicist in far-right German media and served for years as culture editor of *Junge Freiheit*, one of the more notorious journals on the extreme right. His biography of Nazi leader Alfred

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<sup>4</sup> See Johann Böhm, "Friedrich Benesch: Naturwissenschaftler, Anthropologe, Theologe und Politiker" *Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik* 16 (2004), 108–19; Böhm, *Hitlers Vasallen der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2006), 128–41; Böhm, *Nationalsozialistische Indoktrination der Deutschen in Rumänien 1932–1944* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008), 75–76, 101–02; Klaus Popa, ed., *Akten um die deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1937–1945* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2005), 52–53. While a number of the figures examined in the present study changed their views in the aftermath of 1945, the case of Benesch—one of the most prominent anthroposophists in post-war Germany—indicates the tenuous nature of such re-assessments in the absence of historical scrutiny.

<sup>5</sup> "Lebenslauf" in Friedrich Benesch, *Die Festung Hutberg: Eine jungnordische Mischsiedlung* (Inaugural-Dissertation, Universität Halle, 1941), 53. See also the extensive references to Benesch in Johann Böhm, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien 1936–1944* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1985), 41–42, 138–39; Böhm, *Die Deutschen in Rumänien und das Dritte Reich 1933–1940* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1999), 149, 272–73; Viktor Glondys, *Tagebuch: Aufzeichnungen von 1933 bis 1949* (Dinklage: AGK, 1997), 129, 221, 237–38. In 1939 Benesch applied to work with the *Ahnenerbe* on a project about "trees and forests in Aryan-Germanic spiritual and cultural history." See his *Ahnenerbe* file, BA DS/G113: 457–92.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Joachim von KönigsLöw, "Friedrich Benesch—ein Jahrhundertsschicksal" *Die Drei* December 2007, 30–38. In 1936 Benesch circulated a text on "Die anthroposophische Möglichkeit, Christ zu sein" (Glondys, *Tagebuch*, 221). For an apologetic anthroposophist biography see Hans-Werner Schroeder, *Friedrich Benesch: Leben und Werk 1907–1991* (Stuttgart: Mayer, 2007).

Rosenberg was published by a radical right press in 1993.<sup>7</sup> From 2000 onward Molau became increasingly active in the NPD, the major neo-Nazi party in Germany. Molau taught history, social studies, and German at the Waldorf school in the city of Braunschweig from 1996 to 2004. He was fired when his NPD activities became public. As the school's principal told a reporter: "This is a catastrophe for our image."<sup>8</sup> Molau's Waldorf colleagues claimed to be completely unaware of his political involvements; fellow teachers said they viewed him as "left-liberal" and "a likable oddball" and were unanimously surprised to learn of his far-right political activities. These responses are especially remarkable in light of Molau's public profile. By the time he was hired as a Waldorf teacher, Molau was considered "one of the key up-and-coming figures within German right-wing extremism."<sup>9</sup> He remained committed to Steiner and Waldorf education in the wake of the 2004 scandal, serving as speaker for education policy on the NPD executive council.

Molau is not the only right-wing extremist to be expelled from an anthroposophist organization when his political affiliations became known. Hans Krattiger, an important figure in the Swiss biodynamic movement, was dismissed from the Anthroposophical Society in 2002 when his position as treasurer of the far-right Swiss Nationalist Party was publicized. Radical right authors have published in anthroposophist periodicals, and anthroposophists in several countries have expressed "revisionist" views on the Holocaust.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Andreas Molau, *Alfred Rosenberg: Der Ideologe des Nationalsozialismus* (Koblenz: Siegfried Bublies, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Andreas Speit, "Hätten wir seine Gesinnung erkennen können?" *die tageszeitung* October 1, 2005, 12; Jochen Leffers, "Ex-Waldorflehrer arbeitet künftig für die NPD" *Spiegel-Online* October 29, 2004; Astrid Geisler, "Propagandalektion für Waldorfschüler" *die tageszeitung* September 8, 2005, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Jens Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus* (Berlin: Elefant, 1996), 494. For extensive discussion of Molau's role in the extreme right see also 198–200, 328–29, 414–16, 421–23, 429–30, as well as Helmut Kellersohn, ed., *Das Plagiat: Der völkische Nationalismus der 'Jungen Freiheit'* (Duisburg: Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung, 1994), 51–52, 89–94, 153–67, 174–78; Andrea Röpke, ed., *Neonazis in Nadelstreifen: Die NPD auf dem Weg in die Mitte der Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2008), 43–47, 86–91; Elmar Vieregge, "Biographisches Porträt: Andreas Molau" *Jahrbuch Extremismus & Demokratie* 21 (2009), 197–214; Gideon Botsch, "Die extreme Rechte als 'nationales Lager'" in Christoph Kopke, ed., *Die Grenzen der Toleranz: Rechtsextremes Milieu und demokratische Gesellschaft* (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag, 2011), 57–81. In 2012 Molau turned his back on far right politics. He recalled his eight years as a Waldorf teacher as "the best years of my life." See "Interview mit NPD-Aussteiger Andreas Molau" *Cicero Online* August 3, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> For anthroposophist 'doubts' about the Holocaust see Werner Haverbeck, *Rudolf Steiner: Anwalt für Deutschland* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1989) and Bernhard Schaub, *Adler und Rose:*

Far-right publications celebrate Steiner's "mystique of blood and soil."<sup>11</sup> This trend is not unique to anthroposophy; whether despite or because of their counter-cultural appeal, esoteric themes continue to generate considerable interest among right-wing extremists in Germany and elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

But the most visible anthroposophist impact on post-war politics is the contribution of Steiner's followers to the rise of the German Greens. With their ecological and pacifist orientation and irreverent approach to political affairs, the Greens epitomized the cultural transformations of the 1960s. Anthroposophists "played a significant role in the formation of the Green Party" in the 1970s and 1980s and had a "decisive influence on the philosophy of the German Greens" in their early years.<sup>13</sup> Through a series of 'third way' groups known informally as the Achberg circle, as well as organizations like the nationalist *Aktionsgemeinschaft Unabhängiger Deutscher*, anthroposo-

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*Wesen und Schicksal Mitteleuropas* (Dresden: Zeitenwende, 1999). Similar claims have been put forward by German anthroposophist Ernst Otto Cohrs, Swiss anthroposophist Willy Lochmann, Russian anthroposophist Gennadij Bondarew, Belgian anthroposophist Jos Verhulst, and British anthroposophist Nicholas Kollerstrom, author of "The Auschwitz 'Gas Chamber' Illusion." Writings by prolific far-right author and holocaust denier Gustav Sichelschmidt (1913–1996), a prominent fixture in hard-line German nationalist circles, appeared in *Die Drei* in the 1960s and 1970s and *Die Christengemeinschaft* in 2000. A representative example of the new generation of extreme right anthroposophy is Andreas Ferch, Bernhard Schaub, and Markus Fernbach, *Ausbruch aus den Ideologien* (Dresden: Zeitenwende, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Kerry Bolton, *Rudolf Steiner & The Mystique of Blood & Soil: The Volkisch Views of the Founder of Anthroposophy* (Paraparaumu: Renaissance Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> See Jacob Senholt, "Radical Politics and Political Esotericism: The Adaptation of Esoteric Discourse within the Radical Right" in Asprem and Granholm, eds., *Contemporary Esotericism*, 244–64; Andreas Speit, "Esoterik und Neuheidentum: Historische Allianzen und aktuelle Tendenzen" in Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 709–32; Rene Freund, *Braune Magie? Okkultismus, New Age und Nationalsozialismus* (Vienna: Picus, 1995); Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Postwar Paths of Occult National Socialism" in Jeffrey Kaplan and Helene Lööw, eds., *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 225–64; Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Stefan von Hoyningen-Huene, *Religiosität bei rechtsextrem orientierten Jugendlichen* (Münster: Lit, 2003), 52–64, 243–46, 286–89; Scott Beekman, *William Dudley Pelley: A Life in Right-Wing Extremism and the Occult* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Beck, 2006), 47–51; Andreas Speit, "Ohne Juda, ohne Rom": *Esoterik und Heidentum im subkulturellen Rechtsextremismus* (Braunschweig: Arbeitsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 105; Gayil Talshir, *The Political Ideology of Green Parties* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 91.

phist activists promoted an image of the Greens as “neither left nor right.” They were represented by figures such as August Haußleiter, Wilfried Heidt, Wilhelm Schmudt, and the artist Joseph Beuys.<sup>14</sup> These currents within the nascent Green milieu reflected the ambivalent left-right crossover that marked anthroposophy from the beginning, and some have seen them as a sign of the re-emergence of *völkisch* ideas in ecological attire.<sup>15</sup> Once the Greens moved toward the left, their more conservative founders broke off to form a series of small right-wing ecological parties, taking part of the anthroposophist wing with them.<sup>16</sup>

Anthroposophy's Janus face is illustrated by the contrasting careers of Otto Schily and Werner Georg Haverbeck, well-known founders of the German Greens on the left and right respectively. Schily, a member of the Anthroposophical Society, was a radical lawyer in the 1970s who defended members of the Red Army Faction. After a decade as a high-profile spokesman for the Greens he switched in 1989 to the Social Democrats, Germany's main center-left party. In 1998 Schily became Interior Minister in the Social Democratic-Green coalition government, a post he held for seven years. His political development can be seen as an anthroposophist success story, an emblem of the movement's integration into the mainstream. Schily's fellow anthroposophist Haverbeck (1909–1999) was also instrumental in the early stages of the Greens.<sup>17</sup> He was a protégé of Rudolf Hess in the 1930s and a proponent of environmental protection and ethnic preservation as a young Nazi

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Talshir, *Political Ideology of Green Parties*, 43–50, 91–97; Wolf-Dieter Hasenclever and Connie Hasenclever, *Grüne Zeiten: Politik für eine lebenswerte Zukunft* (Munich: Kösel, 1982), 15–18, 50–53, 217–18; Werner Hülsberg, *The German Greens: A Social and Political Profile* (London: Verso, 1988), 81–97; Rudolf van Hüllen, *Ideologie und Machtkampf bei den Grünen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 141–48, 162–68, 246–51, 309–10, 515–19; Gene Frankland and Donald Schoonmaker, *Between Protest and Power: The Green Party in Germany* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 104–06, 127–30; Silke Mende, “Nicht rechts, nicht links, sondern vorn”: *Eine Geschichte der Gründungsgrünen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011), 94–167.

<sup>15</sup> For a much discussed recent example see Hans Peter Riegel, *Beuys: Die Biographie* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2013), 398–405, 418–24, 443–48, 455–63.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Stöss, *Vom Nationalismus zum Umweltschutz* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1980), 221–23, 239, 277–78; Jürgen Wüst, *Konservatismus und Ökologiebewegung* (Frankfurt: Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1993); Oliver Geden, *Rechte Ökologie: Umweltschutz zwischen Emanzipation und Faschismus* (Berlin: Elefanten, 1996), 83–151. For a first-hand account by an anthroposophist involved in the conservative wing of the early Greens see Gottfried Büttner, *Unterwegs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1997), 263–66.

<sup>17</sup> Mende, *Nicht rechts, nicht links*, 58–59, 101–05, 109–13, 118–23, 140–41, 283–84.

functionary and leader of the *Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat*.<sup>18</sup> After 1945 Haverbeck worked as a Christian Community pastor and founded right-wing organizations with an environmental emphasis.

Haverbeck and his associates formed a focal point for the far-right fringe of anthroposophy while maintaining a steady presence in nationalist and ecological circles. In 1963 he founded the *Collegium Humanum—Akademie für Umwelt und Lebensschutz*, an institute which hosted anthroposophical, environmental, and neo-Nazi activities. It was shut down by the German government in 2008 as a center of right-wing extremism. Haverbeck also served as president of the *Weltbund zum Schutz des Lebens* and was a frequent collaborator of the *Aktionsgemeinschaft Unabhängiger Deutscher* until leaving the Greens in 1982.<sup>19</sup> For some of his fellows on the radical right, the combination of an esoteric cosmology with the organic practice of biodynamic farming offered an opening for anthroposophist ideas. A number of participants in the post-war German far right drew on this combination, from Ernst Otto Cohrs to Baldur Springmann, imparting a strange afterlife to Steiner's teachings.<sup>20</sup>

Schily and Haverbeck, joined briefly in the first years of the German Greens, exemplified diametrically opposed political trajectories. That these disparate figures both found crucial inspiration in anthroposophy testifies to the ideo-

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<sup>18</sup> Compare Uekoetter, *The Green and the Brown*, 58–60; Dominick, *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, 99–104; Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 177–79.

<sup>19</sup> Background on Haverbeck and his milieu is available in Stöss, *Vom Nationalismus zum Umweltschutz*, 243–44, 247, 250, 256; Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 319–20, 469–70; Wüst, *Konservatismus und Ökologiebewegung*, 67–73, 82–91; Geden, *Rechte Ökologie*, 105–17; Thomas Jahn and Peter Wehling, *Ökologie von rechts: Nationalismus und Umweltschutz bei der Neuen Rechten* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1990), 21–39, 101–07; Volkmar Wölk, *Natur und Mythos: Ökologiekonzeptionen der 'Neuen' Rechten im Spannungsfeld zwischen Blut und Boden und New Age* (Duisburg: Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung, 1992); Jonathan Olsen, *Nature and Nationalism: Right-Wing Ecology and the Politics of Identity in Contemporary Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). For a biography of Haverbeck by one of his far-right followers see Andreas Ferch, *Viermal Deutschland in einem Menschenleben: Werner Georg Haverbeck* (Dresden: Zeitenwende, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> See Volkmar Wölk, "Neue Trends im ökofaschistischen Netzwerk—Am Beispiel der Anthroposophen, dem Weltbund zum Schutz des Lebens und der ÖDP" in Raimund Hethey and Peter Kratz, eds., *In bester Gesellschaft: Antifa-Recherche zwischen Konservatismus und Neo-Faschismus* (Göttingen: Werkstatt, 1991), 119–40, and Gudrun Heinrich et al., *Braune Ökologen* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2012). A further anthroposophical figure in right-wing ecological circles is Reinhard Falter, co-editor of the anthroposophist journal *Novalis: Zeitschrift für spirituelles Denken*. For a perceptive critical analysis see Ulrich Linse, "'Fundamentalistischer' Heimatschutz: Die 'Naturphilosophie' Reinhard Falters" in Puschnier and Großmann, eds., *Völkisch und national*, 156–78.

logical elasticity of Steiner's work and demonstrates the divergent political potentials of an ostensibly apolitical esotericism. But the same eclecticism extends a longstanding pattern among adherents of occult worldviews: a reluctance to examine the concrete political ramifications of alternative spiritual approaches. Questions of this sort can be particularly challenging when the intersection between esoteric and exoteric aspects of anthroposophy is at stake, when the education of children or the production of food or the provision of medical advice invites inquiries about the underlying philosophy. Such practical concerns present compelling reasons for those with little interest in the occult to take these themes seriously.

The historical entwinement of anthroposophy and Nazism shows that high-minded aspirations can be put in the service of pernicious ends when the details of political context are neglected, no matter how noble the reasons and no matter how benevolent the motives. For anthroposophists in the fascist era, the pursuit of spiritual elevation led to misunderstanding the signs of the times and made Steiner's followers amenable to the objectives of an authoritarian state. Against the petty claims and counter-claims of the undignified political realm, anthroposophists posited an eternal esoteric dimension unsullied by mundane matters: Their spiritual science was true, their enlightenment was genuine, their vision of another reality was securely anchored in the higher worlds, far removed from the demeaning world below. In failing to recognize and respond to the political conditions around them, anthroposophists revealed "the distorting and harmful effects of viewing political events through an occult prism."<sup>21</sup>

Without clear-eyed analysis and informed action, the virtuous hopes at the core of esoteric worldviews are open to misuse; a yearning for alternative knowledge can lead to false alternatives. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy confronted supporters of spiritual renewal with unexpected tests which revealed the limits of occult insight. Visions of transcendence and transformation, of changed human relationships and a new cooperation with nature, need more than an 'unpolitical' ideal of esoteric illumination in order to be fulfilled. They need critical reflection, historical awareness, and conscious social engagement. By attending to the tensions and contradictions built in to modern society, "the opportunities for human emancipation which it simultaneously creates can be the more thoroughly charted. The challenge of Nazism shows that the evolution of modernity is not a one-way trip to freedom. The struggle

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<sup>21</sup> Bernice Rosenthal, "Political Implications of the Early Twentieth-Century Occult Revival" in Rosenthal, ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 379–417, quote on 392.



for freedom must always be resumed afresh, both in enquiry and in action.”<sup>22</sup> If the excesses of Nazism are not to defy our understanding, lessons like these will be a necessary part of re-evaluating the history of esoteric endeavors, life reform initiatives, and racial ideology.

The effort to blame Nazism on shadowy occult machinations is as wide of the mark as the effort to portray occultists as blameless victims of Nazism. Epic struggles between hidden forces, between light and dark or good and evil, pale in comparison to the prosaic factors which brought about the hard realities of fascism. The widespread perception of some indistinct connection between National Socialism and the occult, both considered to lie at the outer limits of historical comprehension, feeds the suspicion that there must be a hidden link between the two. But the links were ordinary, not esoteric. They can be explained not through the deviance of occultism but through its familiarity, its participation in and influence by central cultural currents of the era. The consoling thought of fascism and occultism as eruptions of irrationality depends on a simplified view of a complex history; it forgets that “the myths which fell victim to the Enlightenment were themselves its products.”<sup>23</sup> Spiritual science gave way to spiritual racism not merely through the devious designs of fascists or the oblivious dreams of occultists, but through the attempt to realize goals which still seem alluring in the present. Recognizing that multifaceted past allows us to comprehend both its historical emergence and its implications for today.

In view of the current popularity of anthroposophist institutions, it would be a mistake to relegate this problematic history to the margins, safely distanced from the mainstream. The temptation to hold both esotericism and fascism at arm’s length, as eccentric and peripheral curiosities from yesteryear, is a way of avoiding historical responsibility. Looking squarely at the vexed relations between occultism and Nazism yields a more lucid understanding not just of an ill-fated earlier era but of our own time.

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<sup>22</sup> Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 249.

<sup>23</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5.



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## Archival Abbreviations

BA	Bundesarchiv Berlin
BAK	Bundesarchiv Koblenz
GSAPK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin)
ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome)
AST	Archivio di Stato di Trieste
CO	Carteggio Ordinario
CR	Carteggio Riservato
DGPS	Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza
MI	Ministero dell'Interno
PCM	Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri
SPD	Segreteria Particolare del Duce
Pol. Pol.	Polizia Politica
b.	busta
f.	fascicolo
sf.	sottofascicolo
fasc. pers.	fascicolo personale

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# Index

- Abendroth, Walter 154  
 Acerbo, Giacomo 301  
 Adorno, Theodor 7, 177, 327  
 Africans 48–54, 72, 91–92, 161, 164–65, 270, 282, 287, 296–97  
 Ahasver 47, 172  
 Ahriman 3, 43, 67, 89, 166, 275, 293, 296–97, 300  
 Ahnenerbe 89, 150, 291, 321  
 anthroposophical medicine 10, 72, 103, 112, 123–29, 256, 319  
 Anthroposophical Society (Dornach) *see* General Anthroposophical Society  
 Anthroposophical Society in America 112  
 Anthroposophical Society in Germany 18, 88, 97, 101, 103–04, 107–18, 122, 138, 153, 172, 188–89, 197, 208, 217, 220–22, 232–33, 238, 241  
 Anthroposophical Society in Italy 259, 262, 264–65, 273, 307, 317  
 Anthroposophical Working Groups 111–12, 115, 126  
 ariosophy 13–14, 40–41, 58–59, 84–85, 90, 215, 220–21, 234, 239–40, 243–45, 280–82  
 Aryan myth 12–14, 57–59, 89–92, 158–59, 162–67, 171, 203, 223–25, 231, 239–40, 266–68, 272–75, 280–81, 290, 292, 294–302, 304–05, 315, 317–18, 321  
 Asians 15, 17, 46, 48–50, 67, 92, 155, 164, 166, 208, 249–51, 270, 297  
 astrology 130, 153, 177, 215, 218, 228–34, 236–37, 240–41, 257  
 Atlantis 12, 14, 42, 45, 57–59, 89–90, 163–66, 250, 255, 260, 274, 296–97, 320  
 Auschwitz 18, 142, 310, 323  
 Backe, Herbert 136–38  
 Badoglio, Pietro 276, 304, 309–10  
 Baeumler, Alfred 105, 116, 131, 155, 174, 198–99, 202, 205–06, 209–10, 228, 292  
 Balzli, Johannes 85–86  
 Baravalle, Hermann 204  
 Bartsch, Erhard 78–79, 116–17, 126, 130–32, 136–37, 140–41, 153, 156, 174–75, 238, 261  
 Baumann, Paul 190–91  
 Belyj, Andrej 51  
 Benesch, Friedrich 320–21  
 Benjamin, Walter 7  
 Bertram-Pingel, Johannes 79, 117, 150, 238  
 Besant, Annie 5, 12, 29, 48, 86, 249  
 Beuys, Joseph 2, 324  
 biodynamic agriculture 69, 72, 112, 115, 123, 125–27, 129–43, 152, 155–56, 173–75, 230, 237–38, 241, 260–61, 319, 322, 325  
 Blavatsky, Helena 4–5, 12, 15, 42, 58, 85, 266  
 Bloch, Ernst 7, 40  
 Blomberg, Werner von 68  
 Bock, Emil 8, 156, 158, 164, 170, 174  
 Bojunga, Helmut 195  
 Boldt, Ernst 8, 29, 61, 82, 86, 98  
 Bolshevism 75, 96, 98, 110, 112–13, 122–23, 147, 152, 164, 166, 191, 219–22, 226–27, 253, 292–93, 296, 312  
 Bolton, Kerry 323  
 Bondarev, Gennady 323  
 Boos, Roman 75, 104  
 Bopp, Walter 127–28  
 Bormann, Martin 105, 112, 117, 142, 214–15, 229–30, 233–34  
 Bothmer, Fritz von 190–91  
 Bouhler, Philipp 200  
 Brons, Bernhard 151  
 Brumberg, Franz 201  
 Bry, Carl Christian 86  
 Büchenbacher, Hans 18–19, 104, 108  
 Büsselberg, Wilhelm 133  
 Büttner, Gottfried 324  
 Calabrini, Luigi 259  
 Caucasian race 45, 50, 59, 166  
 Cavalli, Armando 257  
 Chamberlain, Houston 39, 48, 122, 203  
 Chimelli, Luciano 260–61  
 Christian Community 68, 72, 115–16, 119–23, 151, 156, 169–70, 176, 188, 232, 236–38, 242, 254, 320–21, 325  
 clairvoyance 4, 14, 54, 153, 229, 234  
 Clauss, Ludwig 160, 162–63, 292  
 Cohrs, Ernst 323, 325

- Colazza, Giovanni 251, 256, 258, 271, 279  
 Colonna di Cesarò, Giovanni 251–56, 258, 266, 280  
 conservative revolution 82–83, 291  
 conspiracy theories 9, 51, 68–70, 73–74, 95–97, 110, 153, 157, 178, 217–20, 267, 288–89, 296, 305, 308, 313–16  
 Curiel, Eugenio 257–58, 280
- Dachau 141–42  
 Dank, Elisabeth 164  
 Darré, Richard 129–30, 135–41, 160, 228, 238, 321  
 Darwin, Charles 37–38, 57, 257  
 del Massa, Aniceto 266, 276, 281–82, 292, 303–06, 316  
 Demeter 1, 126, 130, 132, 142, 175, 324  
 democracy 64, 73–76, 94, 97–98, 112, 144, 252, 266–68, 274, 277, 279, 289, 292, 295–96, 298–99  
 de Renzis, Emmelina 255  
 Diederichs, Eugen 81–83  
 Diemer, Franz 152  
 Dinter, Artur 85, 93, 222–23  
 Dornach 18, 29, 64, 105, 108–09, 111  
 Dreidax, Franz 97, 127, 132–33, 137, 141, 156, 236, 238, 261  
 Dürich, Richard 114
- Eickhoff, Lotar 104–05, 114–15, 116, 174–75, 200, 219, 228  
 English 64, 69–70, 95, 104, 148, 153, 157, 206–07, 219, 249, 283, 293–94, 296–98  
 Erra, Enzo 277–80  
 eugenics 60, 123, 162–63, 166, 204, 211, 224, 240, 287–88, 298, 301, 317  
 eurythmy 10, 51, 116, 228, 237, 262, 264  
 Evola, Julius 266, 271–73, 277, 279–82, 288, 290–93, 296, 300, 313, 316  
 Eymann, Karl 236
- Fabre d'Olivet, Antoine 58  
 Falter, Reinhard 325  
 Farinacci, Roberto 260  
 Fels, Alice 109  
 Ferch, Andreas 323, 235  
 Feyh, Otto 87, 117–18  
 Fichte, Johann 26, 28, 30, 147  
 Fidus 79–80
- Filippini-Ronconi, Pio 278–79  
 Fischer, Eugen 163  
 folk soul *see* national soul  
 Frank, Hans 102, 230  
 Freemasonry 70, 74, 96–97, 107, 110, 112–13, 116–18, 149, 152, 157, 218–26, 233, 242, 257, 265–66, 289, 291–92, 296, 306–09, 313–16  
 French 49, 51, 64–65, 69–70, 95, 148, 153, 157, 203, 206, 219  
 Frick, Wilhelm 112–14, 131, 200  
 Friehe, Albert 135
- Gabert, Erich 185, 204  
 Galli, Alberto 260  
 General Anthroposophical Society 19, 29, 65, 88, 103–04, 109, 112, 176, 256, 258, 262  
 Gentile, Giovanni 257, 266  
 Gibson, Violet 253  
 Giusti, Angelo 258–59  
 Glas, Norbert 172  
 Gleich, Sigismund von 60, 69, 79, 90, 165–66, 169, 320  
 Gleichschaltung 146, 180–82, 187  
 Globocnik, Odilo 310  
 Gobineau, Arthur 39, 54, 57, 266  
 Goebbels, Joseph 105, 147, 153, 215, 229–30, 241  
 Goethe, Johann 26, 30–31, 37, 53, 150, 155, 188  
 Goetheanum 17, 93, 103, 120, 151, 155, 161, 221  
 Göring, Hermann 112, 115, 140, 152–53  
 Gorsleben, Rudolf 90  
 grail mysticism 89, 223–24, 234, 275, 295  
 Grävell, Harald 84, 86  
 Grone, Jürgen von 69, 112, 115, 152–53, 157, 173, 237–38, 240–41  
 Gross, Walter 159, 292  
 Grund, Carl 137, 143  
 Guénon, René 266, 291  
 Günther, Hans 160–61, 163  
 Gurlitt, Ludwig 185–86
- Haass-Berkow, Gottfried 154–55  
 Haeckel, Ernst 26, 28, 36–37  
 Hahne, Hans 80, 321  
 Halbe, Georg 136, 138–39, 156, 238  
 Hardorp, Gerhard 90, 236

- Harmstorf, Ernst 127  
 Hartl, Albert 232, 234–35  
 Hartmann, Otto 83, 111, 238  
 Hauer, Jakob 231–32  
 Hauschka, Rudolf 105, 238  
 Haussleiter, August 324  
 Haverbeck, Werner 322, 324–25  
 Hederich, Karl 228  
 Hegeler, Gotthold 127  
 Heidenreich, Alfred 21, 88, 116, 121–22  
 Heidt, Wilfried 324  
 Heise, Karl 66, 84–85, 93, 96–97, 102, 110, 219–22  
 Hemleben, Johannes 254  
 Henning, Horst von 97, 107  
 Hess, Ilse 140  
 Hess, Rudolf 14, 104–05, 106, 108, 110–12, 114–18, 123, 125–26, 131, 134, 136, 175, 192, 199–200, 202, 229–33, 324  
 Hesse, Hermann 7  
 Heydebrand, Caroline von 190–91, 203–04, 208  
 Heydrich, Reinhard 105–06, 111–12, 115–16, 140–43, 153, 194, 214–15, 222–23, 226, 229–31, 234, 237–38, 244  
 Heyer, Karl 17, 72, 77, 94, 98, 101–02, 164, 173, 220–21, 254  
 Hiebel, Friedrich 180, 207  
 Himmeler, Heinrich 14, 89, 110, 115–16, 139–41, 143, 214–15, 219–20, 226, 231, 237, 262, 321  
 Hinteregger, Dr. 312  
 Hippel, Ernst von 151–52, 204  
 Hitler, Adolf 13, 17, 19, 79, 86, 102–03, 112–14, 116–18, 125, 131–32, 135, 149, 151, 154–56, 162–63, 180–81, 189, 191, 201–02, 204, 220, 227, 229–30, 268, 289, 298, 319  
 Holfelder, Albert 195  
 Hördt, Philipp 185  
 Hörmann, Bernhard 126, 241, 261  
 Höss, Rudolf 321  
 Husemann, Friedrich 125–26  
 indigenous peoples 15, 48–49, 54–55, 88, 163–64, 208, 266  
 individualism 14, 26–28, 63, 112, 122–23, 155, 186, 194, 197, 210–12, 278  
 intellectualism 3, 93–94, 121, 147, 151–52, 154–55, 166, 170–71, 173, 175, 185–86, 191–92, 197, 201–03, 206–07, 210–12, 214, 216, 268, 289, 296, 299  
 Issberger-Haldane, Ernst 239–40  
 Italian Group for Anthroposophical Studies 256–57, 259  
 Jesuits 98, 149, 152, 219  
 Jews 15, 48, 52, 61, 80–81, 89, 94–97, 101–02, 106, 108–10, 112–14, 116, 121–23, 150, 152, 154–55, 160–63, 166–73, 179–81, 207, 211, 219–23, 226–27, 233, 239–42, 255–56, 263–68, 272, 274–75, 282, 284–318  
 Kafka, Franz 7  
 Karcher, Adolf 201  
 karma 11–13, 16, 42, 44, 45, 55, 65, 124, 172, 184, 205, 212  
 Karutz, Richard 72, 85, 90–92, 97, 157–58, 160–63, 170–71, 201, 203–04, 280, 320  
 Kassapian, Maria 264  
 Kerl, Hanns 115–16  
 Kersten, Felix 230, 237  
 Kissbauer, Kurd 241  
 Klein, Elisabeth 108, 116, 174, 190, 198–200, 202, 205, 208, 238  
 Klein, Gerhard 120  
 Klein, Johannes 120  
 Kollerstrom, Nicholas 323  
 Kracauer, Siegfried 7, 25  
 Krattiger, Hans 322  
 Krenn, Adolf 207  
 Küffler, Rinaldo 255, 259–60, 262–63  
 Kühn, Emil 203  
 Lagarde, Paul de 80  
 Lanz von Liebenfels, Jörg 13, 40, 85, 239  
 Lauer, Hans 33, 98, 148–49, 171–72  
 Leadbeater, Charles 12, 86  
 League of Nations 69, 78, 149, 152  
 Lebensreform *see* life reform  
 Leers, Johann von 245  
 Lehrs, Ernst 179–80  
 Leinhas, Emil 254  
 Leiste, Heinrich 104, 109  
 Leitgen, Alfred 104, 115, 200, 232–33  
 Lemuria 12, 57–59, 165  
 Lenz, Fritz 163  
 Ley, Robert 131

- liberalism 73–74, 93, 98, 122, 147, 149, 152, 155, 166, 222, 267  
 Lienhard, Friedrich 80–81, 85, 178  
 life reform 5–7, 16, 81–82, 84–85, 123, 125, 128–29, 132–33, 145, 147, 173, 184, 224–25, 236, 246, 327  
 Linden, Wilhelm zur 87, 97, 102, 105  
 Link, Eugen 97, 188, 207  
 Link, Margarete 188, 189–90  
 Lippert, Franz 142  
 List, Guido 13, 84–86, 281  
 Lochmann, Willy 323  
 Löffler, Franz 149–50  
 Luchini, Alberto 292–93, 296, 301–03, 307  
 Lucifer 3, 43, 166, 293, 297, 300  
 Ludendorff, Erich 93, 222–23  
  
 Mahle, Hermann 188  
 Mahling, Friedrich 153–54  
 Maikowski, René 190, 192, 197–98, 200, 202  
 Mann, Thomas 64  
 Martinoli, Ettore 259, 265–69, 276, 280–82, 302, 306–18  
 materialism 2–3, 6, 8, 11, 17, 23, 57, 63–65, 74, 92, 94–95, 121–22, 125, 130, 147, 151–52, 157–58, 161–62, 166–67, 170–74, 179, 185, 191, 201–04, 206, 208–10, 212, 246, 256, 265, 270, 274–75, 289, 291, 296, 298–99, 317  
 May, Werner 181  
 Mazdaznan movement 84, 174, 222, 224, 239, 244  
 Mazzarelli, Alcibiade 259  
 Mergenthaler, Christian 194–95, 200–01  
 Merkel, Hans 137–39, 238  
 Meyer-Jungclaussen, Hinrich 134–35  
 Michaelis, Georg 130  
 Mitteleuropa 61, 70–71, 76, 92, 100, 279  
 Moeller van den Bruck, Arthur 26–27  
 Molau, Andreas 320–22  
 Moldenhauer, Wolfgang 163–64, 320  
 Moll, Els 188–89, 202  
 Molt, Emil 185, 188–89  
 Moltke, Helmuth von 66–68  
 Montessori, Maria 196  
 Müller, Hanns 123, 125–26, 132, 138, 173–74, 261  
 Müller-Link, Anni 114  
 Münch, Martin 108, 110  
  
 Mussolini, Benito 23, 156, 252–54, 256, 260–61, 265, 267–68, 276, 279, 285–87, 291–93, 298, 302, 306, 312–13, 315  
  
 national souls 11, 20, 34, 38, 60, 71, 83, 148–49, 206, 208, 211–12, 289, 321  
 Neugeist movement 224–25, 227, 237  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 26, 28  
 Nordic peoples 59, 89–91, 148, 150, 154, 159, 162–66, 171, 206, 209, 223, 231, 245, 266, 273–74, 290, 295–97, 304, 317, 320  
  
 Ohlendorf, Otto 105, 131, 153, 199, 228  
 Oldendorff, Paul 164, 170  
 Onofri, Arturo 251, 253  
  
 Pancke, Günther 141  
 Pappacena, Enrico 260–61  
 Pauli, August 93–94, 166  
 Pavari, Aldo 261  
 Pavese, Roberto 292, 315  
 Pelikan, Wilhelm 126  
 Pellicano, Piero 292, 296  
 Pestalozza, Giovanni 315  
 Petersen, Peter 197  
 Peuckert, Rudi 131, 137  
 Pfeiffer, Ehrenfried 173, 261  
 Piper, Kurt 169  
 Podreider, Fanny 259  
 Pohl, Oswald 141–42  
 Pohlmann, Hans 188–89  
 Polzer, Herman 133  
 Polzer-Hoditz, Ludwig 95, 219  
 Poppelbaum, Hermann 92, 102, 109–11, 220, 241  
 Preziosi, Giovanni 255–56, 267–68, 288–89, 291, 293, 296, 301–03, 306–07, 312–14, 316  
 Pusch, Max 113–14  
  
 Rascher, Hanns 97, 103, 111  
 Rauber, Wilhelm 132, 137, 140  
 Rauti, Pino 277–79  
 Ravensbrück 141–42  
 Reghini, Arturo 271  
 Reichstein, Herbert 59, 239  
 reincarnation 11, 16, 42–49, 92, 184, 208, 218, 240  
 Reischle, Hermann 137, 139–40

- Remer, Nicolaus 140, 142–43  
 Richter, Gottfried 78, 87, 156, 169  
 Rittelmeyer, Friedrich 30, 66, 74, 82, 115,  
 119–22, 148, 153, 158, 163, 169–70, 173  
 Rohm, Karl 236–37  
 Rommel, Helene 190  
 root races 12, 40–41, 57–59, 165, 274  
 Rosenberg, Alfred 14, 85, 93, 105, 117, 131,  
 150, 160, 163, 202, 205–06, 219–20, 230, 233,  
 321–22  
 Rudolph, Hermann 225–26  
 Rust, Bernhard 186, 194–96, 198, 201  
  
 Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Alexandre 72  
 Salewski, Wilhelm 94  
 Sauckel, Fritz 118  
 Scaligero, Massimo 269–71, 273–82, 290,  
 292–303, 316–18, 320  
 Schaub, Bernhard 322–23  
 Scheel-Geelmuyden, Helga 169  
 Schemm, Hans 200  
 Schily, Otto 324–25  
 Schmundt, Rudolf 240  
 Schmundt, Wilhelm 240, 324  
 Schneider, Hermann 132, 156  
 School of Fascist Mysticism 265, 289  
 Schuchhardt, Wolfgang 117, 156, 238  
 Schulte-Strathaus, Ernst 104, 110–11, 200,  
 202–03, 233  
 Schulz, Josef 126  
 Schuré, Edouard 58, 85, 249  
 Schwartz-Bostunitsch, Gregor 85, 220–22  
 Schwarz, Lina 264, 289  
 Schwarz, Max 78, 135, 142, 238, 261  
 Seifert, Alwin 133–35, 137, 141, 156, 238  
 Seiling, Max 85, 98  
 Sichelschmidt, Gustav 323  
 Sinnett, Alfred 12, 59  
 Slavs 32–33, 64–65, 69, 76–78, 95, 140–41,  
 148, 153, 219, 221  
 socialism 16, 75, 106, 110, 151, 207, 252, 256  
 social threefolding 68, 72–79, 85, 110, 113,  
 152, 254, 277  
 Spaini, Marco 260  
 Spörri, Gertrud 120  
 Springmann, Baldur 325  
 Steffen, Albert 25, 103–04, 112, 262  
 Stegemann, Ernst 109, 137  
  
 Steiner, Marie 5, 19, 29–30, 42, 47, 51,  
 103–04, 108, 112, 170, 248–49  
 Stirner, Max 26  
 Stockamp, Alois 143  
 Stockmeyer, Karl 76, 190–91, 205–06  
 Strakosch, Alexander 108  
 Streicher, Julius 126, 133  
 swastika 157, 275, 295  
  
 Tat circle 82–83, 94, 185  
 Theosophical Society 4–5, 12, 27–29, 65,  
 80–81, 88, 217, 220, 222, 224–27, 243, 245,  
 248–51, 257  
 Thieben, Ludwig 171, 289, 304, 320  
 Thies, Wilhelm 196–98, 200–01  
 Thorwirth, Otto 107, 117  
 Thule Society 13, 222  
 Tölke, Leo 188–89, 210  
 Tomberg, Valentin 173, 176  
  
 Uehli, Ernst 78, 85–86, 89–90, 98, 164–66,  
 170, 187, 191, 203, 264, 266, 320  
 Universal Human 42–43, 60–61, 89, 158,  
 167, 171  
 Upper Silesia 76–79  
 UR group 266, 271  
  
 Verhulst, Jos 323  
 Versailles treaty 69, 76, 78, 95, 110, 113, 157  
 Verweyen, Johannes 226–27  
 Voigt, Werner 127  
 Voith, Hanns 113  
 völkisch movement 16, 68, 72, 76, 79–88,  
 91, 93–94, 99, 110, 149–50, 159, 185–86, 192,  
 197, 204, 221, 223–24, 228, 231, 236, 242–45,  
 321, 324  
 Vollrath, Hugo 86, 226  
  
 Wachsmuth, Guenther 19, 88, 103–04,  
 109, 112, 264, 320  
 Wagner, Günther 249  
 Wagner, Richard 57, 79–80, 150  
 Waldorf education 1, 10, 22, 49, 68, 72, 76,  
 108, 110–12, 155, 179–213, 232, 237–38, 319,  
 326–27  
 Walther, Gerda 233, 237  
 Wegfrass, August 107, 118  
 Weissenberg, Joseph 224



- Weleda 1, 124–26, 130, 142, 238, 260, 319  
Wiegand, Kurt 87  
Wienert, Oskar 101–02  
Wilson, Woodrow 69–70  
Wirth, Herman 89–90, 266  
Wirz, Franz 126  
Wittmann, Johannes 196  
Wolfram, Elise 88, 124, 266  
Wollborn, Heinrich 179–81  
World War I 49, 64–71, 80–81, 95–96, 104,  
108, 110, 122, 157, 251, 260  
World War II 132, 140, 149, 156–58, 206,  
229, 240–41, 267, 273–74, 276–79, 293,  
295–99, 303–06, 310