

## Anthroposophy and Ecofascism

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In June, 1910, Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy, began a speaking tour of Norway with a lecture to a large and attentive audience in Oslo. The lecture series was titled “The Mission of National Souls in Relation to Nordic-Germanic Mythology.” In the Oslo lectures Steiner presented his theory of “national souls” (*Volksseelen* in German, Steiner’s native tongue) and paid particular attention to the mysterious wonders of the “Nordic spirit.” The “national souls” of Northern and Central Europe belonged, Steiner explained, to the “germanic-nordic” peoples, the world’s most spiritually advanced ethnic group, which was in turn the vanguard of the highest of five historical “root races.” This superior fifth root race, Steiner told his Oslo audience, was naturally the “Aryan” race.<sup>1</sup>

If this peculiar cosmology sounds eerily similar to the teutonic myths of Himmler and Hitler, the resemblance is no accident. Anthroposophy and National Socialism both have deep roots in the confluence of nationalism, right-wing populism, proto-environmentalist romanticism and esoteric spiritualism that characterized much of German and Austrian culture at the end of the nineteenth century. But the connection between Steiner’s racially stratified pseudo-religion and the rise of the Nazis goes beyond mere philosophical parallels. Anthroposophy had a powerful practical influence on the so-called “green wing” of German fascism. Moreover, the actual politics of Steiner and his followers have consistently displayed a profoundly reactionary streak.

Why does anthroposophy—a blatantly racist doctrine which anticipated important elements of the Nazi worldview by several decades—continue to enjoy a reputation as progressive, tolerant, enlightened and ecological? The details of Steiner’s teachings are not well known outside of the anthroposophist movement, and within that movement the lengthy history of ideological implication in fascism is mostly repressed or denied outright. In addition, many individual anthroposophists have earned respect for their work in alternative education, in organic farming, and within the environmental movement. Nevertheless, it is an unfortunate fact that the record of anthroposophist collaboration with a specifically “environmentalist” strain of fascism continues into the twenty-first century.

Organized anthroposophist groups are often best known through their far-flung network of public institutions. The most popular of these is probably the Waldorf school movement, with several hundred branches worldwide, followed by the biodynamic agriculture movement, which is especially active in Germany and the United States. Other well-known anthroposophist projects include Weleda cosmetics and pharmaceuticals and the Demeter brand of health food products. The new age Findhorn community in Scotland also has a strong anthroposophist component. Anthroposophists played an important role in the formation of the German Greens, and Germany’s current Interior Minister, Otto Schily, one of the most prominent founders of the Greens, is an anthroposophist.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rudolf Steiner, *Die Mission einzelner Volksseelen im Zusammenhang mit der germanisch-nordischen Mythologie*, Dornach, Switzerland 1994. These lectures are available in English under the title *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls in Relation to Teutonic Mythology*, London 1970. The “Nordic spirit” of Scandinavia continues to fascinate European anthroposophists; see, for example, Hans Mändl, *Vom Geist des Nordens*, Stuttgart 1966.

In light of this broad public exposure, it is perhaps surprising that the ideological underpinnings of anthroposophy are not better known. Anthroposophists themselves, however, view their highly esoteric doctrine as an “occult science” suitable only for a spiritually enlightened elite. The very name “anthroposophy” suggests to many outsiders a humanist orientation. But anthroposophy is in fact a deeply anti-humanist worldview, which is why humanists like Ernst Bloch opposed it from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Its rejection of reason in favor of mystical experience, its subordination of human action to supernatural forces, and its thoroughly hierarchical model of spiritual development all mark anthroposophy as inimical to humanist values.

### **Who was Rudolf Steiner?**

Like many quasi-religious groups, anthroposophists have a reverential attitude toward their founder. Born in 1861, Steiner grew up in a provincial Austrian town, the son of a mid-level civil servant. His intellectually formative years were spent in Vienna, capital of the aging Habsburg empire, and in Berlin. By all accounts an intense personality and a prolific writer and lecturer, Steiner dabbled in a number of unusual causes. Around the turn of the century, he underwent a profound spiritual transformation, after which he claimed to be able to see the spirit world and communicate with celestial beings. These ostensible supernatural powers are the origin of most anthroposophist beliefs and rituals. Steiner changed his mind on many topics in the course of his career; his early hostility toward Christianity, for example, gave way to a neo-Christian version of spiritualism codified in anthroposophy. But interest in mysticism, occult legends and the esoteric was a constant throughout his life.

In 1902 Steiner joined the Theosophical Society and almost immediately became General Secretary of its German section. Theosophy was a curious amalgam of esoteric precepts drawn from various traditions, above all Hinduism and Buddhism, refracted through a European occult lens.<sup>3</sup> Its originator, Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), was the inventor of the “root races” idea; she declared the extinction of indigenous peoples by European colonialism to be a matter of “karmic necessity.” Theosophy is built around the purported teachings of a coterie of “spiritual masters,” otherworldly beings who secretly direct human events. These teachings were, of course, interpreted and presented by Blavatsky and her successor Annie Besant (1847-1933) to their theosophist followers, thus establishing the authoritarian pattern that was later carried over to anthroposophy.

Steiner dedicated ten years of his life to the theosophical movement, becoming one of its best-known spokespeople and honing his supernatural skills. He broke from mainstream theosophy in 1913, taking most of the German-speaking sections with him, when Besant and her colleagues declared the young Krishnamurti, a boy they “discovered” in northern India, to be the reincarnation of Christ. Steiner was unwilling to accept a brown-skinned Hindu lad as the next “spiritual master.” What had separated Steiner all along from Blavatsky, Besant, and the other India-oriented theosophists was his insistence on the superiority of *European* esoteric traditions.

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<sup>2</sup> See the incisive passages on Steiner and anthroposophy in Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, Berkeley 1991.

<sup>3</sup> On the connections between theosophy and the Nazis, see George Mosse, “The Occult Origins of National Socialism” in Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York 1999.

Immediately after the split, Steiner founded the Anthroposophical Society in Germany. Shortly before the outbreak of world war one he moved the fledgling organization's international headquarters to Switzerland. Under the protection of Swiss neutrality he was able to build up a permanent center in the village of Dornach. Blending theosophical wisdom with his own "occult research," Steiner continued to develop the theory and practice of anthroposophy, along with a steadily growing circle of followers, until his death in 1925.

The centerpiece of anthroposophical belief is spiritual advancement through karma and reincarnation, supplemented by the access to esoteric knowledge available to a privileged few. The spiritual dimension, in fact, suffuses every aspect of life. For anthroposophists every illness, physical or mental, is karmically determined and plays a role in the soul's development. Natural processes, historical events, and technological mechanisms are all explained through the action of spirits. Students in Waldorf schools are taught, for example, that good spirits live inside of candles and demons live inside of fluorescent light bulbs—an instance of the anti-technological bias that runs throughout anthroposophical thought.

Steiner's doctrine of reincarnation, embraced by latter-day anthroposophists the world over, holds that individuals choose their parents before birth, and indeed that we plan out our lives before beginning them to insure that we receive the necessary spiritual lessons. If a disembodied soul balks at its own chosen life prospects just before incarnation, it fails to incarnate fully—the source, according to anthroposophists, of prenatal "defects" and congenital disabilities. In addition, "the various parts of our body will be formed with the aid of certain planetary beings as we pass through particular constellations of the zodiac."<sup>4</sup>

Anthroposophists maintain that Steiner's familiarity with the "astral plane," with the workings of various "archangels," with daily life on the lost continent of Atlantis (all central tenets of anthroposophic belief) came from his special powers of clairvoyance. Steiner claimed to have access to the "Akasha Chronicle," a supernatural scripture containing knowledge of higher realms of existence as well as of the distant past and future. Steiner "interpreted" much of this chronicle and shared it with his followers. He insisted that such "occult experience," as he called it, could never be judged or verified by reason, logic, or scientific inquiry. Modern anthroposophy is thus founded on blind faith in Steiner's convictions. Those convictions deserve closer examination.

### **Anthroposophy's Racialist Ideology**

Building on theosophy's postulate of root races, Steiner and his anthroposophist disciples elaborated a systematic racial classification system for human beings and tied it directly to their paradigm of spiritual advancement. The particulars of this racial theory are so extraordinary, even bizarre, that it is difficult for non-anthroposophists to take it seriously, but it is important to understand the pernicious and lasting effects the doctrine has had on anthroposophists and those they've influenced.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stewart Easton, *Man and World in the Light of Anthroposophy*, New York 1975, p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Steiner's racial teachings, a crucial element of the anthroposophic worldview, are spread throughout his work. For a concise overview in English see Janet Biehl's section on Steiner in Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, San Francisco 1995, pp. 42-43. Perhaps the most concentrated and chilling example of anthroposophical racism is to be found in Steiner's book *Vom Leben*

Steiner asserted that “root races” follow one another in chronological succession over epochs lasting hundreds of thousands of years, and each root race is further divided into “sub-races” which are also arranged hierarchically. By chance, as it were, the root race which happened to be paramount at the time Steiner made these momentous discoveries was the Aryan race, a term which anthroposophists use to this day. All racial categories are arbitrary social constructs, but the notion of an Aryan race is an especially preposterous invention. A favorite of reactionaries in the early years of the twentieth century, the Aryan concept was based on a conflation of linguistic and biological terminology backed up by spurious “research.” In other words, it was a complete fabrication which served only to provide a pseudo-scientific veneer to racist fantasies.

Anthroposophy’s promotion of this ridiculous doctrine is disturbing enough. But it is compounded by Steiner’s further claim that—in yet another remarkable coincidence—the most advanced group within the Aryan root race is currently the nordic-germanic sub-race. Above all, anthroposophy’s conception of spiritual development is inextricable from its evolutionary narrative of racial decline and racial advance: a select few enlightened members evolve into a new “race” while their spiritually inferior neighbors degenerate. Anthroposophy is structured around a hierarchy of biological and psychological as well as “spiritual” capacities and characteristics, all of them correlated to race.

The affinities with Nazi discourse are unmistakable. Wolfgang Treher makes a convincing case that Steiner’s racial theories, especially the repeated scheme of a small minority evolving further while a large mass declines, bear striking similarities even in detail to Hitler’s own theories. He concludes: “Concentration camps, slave labor and the murder of Jews constitute a praxis whose key is perhaps to be found in the ‘theories’ of Rudolf Steiner.”<sup>6</sup>

Steiner didn’t shy away from describing the fate of those left behind by the forward march of racial and spiritual progress. He taught that these unfortunates would “degenerate” and eventually die out. Like his teacher Madame Blavatsky, Steiner rejected the notion that Native Americans, for example, were nearly exterminated by the actions of European settlers. Instead he held that Indians are “dying out of their own nature.”<sup>7</sup> Steiner also taught that “lower races” of humans are closer to animals than to “higher races” of humans. Aboriginal peoples, according to anthroposophy, are descended from the already “degenerate” remnants of the third root race, the Lemurians, and are devolving into apes. Steiner referred to them as “stunted humans whose progeny, the so-called wild peoples, inhabit certain parts of the earth today.”<sup>8</sup>

The fourth root race which emerged between the Lemurians and the Aryans were the inhabitants of the lost continent of Atlantis, the existence of which anthroposophists take as literal fact. Direct descendants of the Atlanteans include the Japanese, Mongolians, and Eskimos. Steiner also believed that each people or *Volk* has its own “ethereal aura”

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*des Menschen und der Erde*, volume 349 of his collected works published at anthroposophy’s international center in Dornach, Switzerland. Although this book, a collection of Steiner’s lectures from 1923, has been published in English, the translation omits the chapter on “Color and the Races of Humankind”.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Treher, *Hitler Steiner Schreiber*, Emmingden 1966, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde*, p. 61. Elsewhere Steiner writes that the decimation of American Indians was due to their “racial character” (*The Mission of the Folk Souls* p. 76).

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Aus der Akasha-Chronik*, Basel 1955, p. 32.

which corresponds to its geographic homeland, as well as its own “*Volksgeist*” or national spirit, an archangel that provides spiritual leadership to its respective people.

Steiner propagated a host of racist myths about “negroes.” He taught that black people are sensual, instinct-driven, primitive creatures, ruled by their brainstem. He denounced the immigration of blacks to Europe as “terrible” and “brutal” and decried its effects on “blood and race.” He warned that white women shouldn’t read “negro novels” during pregnancy, otherwise they’d have “mulatto children.” In 1922 he declared, “The negro race does not belong in Europe, and it is of course nothing but a disgrace that this race is now playing such a large role in Europe.”<sup>9</sup>

But the worst insult, from an anthroposophical point of view, is Steiner’s dictum that people of color can’t develop spiritually on their own; they must either be “educated” by whites or reincarnated in white skin. Europeans, in contrast, are the most highly developed humans. Indeed “Europe has always been the origin of all human development.” For Steiner and for anthroposophy, there is no doubt that “whites are the ones who develop humanity in themselves. [ . . . ] The white race is the race of the future, the spiritually creative race.”<sup>10</sup>

Anthroposophists today often attempt to excuse or explain away such outrageous utterances by contending that Steiner was merely a product of his times. This apologia is utterly unconvincing. First, Steiner claimed for himself an unprecedented degree of spiritual enlightenment which, by his own account, completely transcended his own time and place; he also claimed, and anthroposophists believe that he had, detailed knowledge of the distant future. Second, this argument ignores the many dedicated members of Steiner’s generation who actively opposed racism and ethnocentrism. Third, and most telling, anthroposophists continue to recycle Steiner’s racist imaginings to this day.

In 1995 there was a scandal in the Netherlands when it became publicly known that Dutch Waldorf schools were teaching “racial ethnography,” where children learn that the “black race” has thick lips and a sense of rhythm and that the “yellow race” hides its emotions behind a permanent smile. In 1994 the Steinerite lecturer Rainer Schnurre, at one of his frequent seminars for the anthroposophist adult school in Berlin, gave a talk with the rather baffling title “Overcoming Racism and Nationalism through Rudolf Steiner.” Schnurre emphasized the essential differences between races, noted the “infantile” nature of blacks, and alleged that due to immutable racial disparities “no equal and global system can be created for all people on earth” and that “because of the differences between races, sending aid to the developing world is useless.”<sup>11</sup>

Incidents such as these are distressingly common in the world of anthroposophy. The racial mindset that Steiner bestowed on his faithful followers has yet to be repudiated. And it may well never be repudiated, since anthroposophy lacks the sort of critical social consciousness that could counteract its flagrantly regressive core beliefs. Indeed anthroposophy’s political outlook has been decidedly reactionary from the beginning.

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<sup>9</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings With Rudolf Steiner* pp. 58-59; *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde* p. 53; *Gesundheit und Krankheit* p. 189. Steiner’s typical remarks on Asian stupidity, French decadence, and Slavic primitiveness are of similar caliber.

<sup>10</sup> Steiner, *Vom Leben des Menschen und der Erde* 59, 62, 67.

<sup>11</sup> Schnurre quoted in Oliver Geden, *Rechte Ökologie*, Berlin 1996, p. 144

## The Social Vision of Anthroposophy

Steiner's political perspective was shaped by a variety of influences. Foremost among these was Romanticism, a literary and political movement that had a lasting impact on German culture in the nineteenth century. Like all broad cultural phenomena, Romanticism was politically complex, inspiring both left and right. But the leading political Romantics were explicit reactionaries and vehement nationalists who excluded Jews, even baptized ones, from their forums; they were bitter opponents of political reform and favored a strictly hierarchical, semi-feudal social order. The Romantic revulsion for nascent "modernity," hostility toward rationality and enlightenment, and mystical relation to nature all left their mark on Steiner's thought.

Early in his career Steiner also fell under the sway of Nietzsche, the outstanding anti-democratic thinker of the era, whose elitism made a powerful impression. The radical individualism of Max Stirner further contributed to the young Steiner's political outlook, yielding a potent philosophical melange that was waiting to be catalyzed by some dynamic reactionary force. The latter appeared to Steiner soon enough in the form of Ernst Haeckel and his Social Darwinist creed of Monism. Haeckel (1834-1919) was the founder of modern ecology and the major popularizer of evolutionary theory in Germany. Steiner became a partisan of Haeckel's views, and from him anthroposophy inherited its environmentalist predilections, its hierarchical model of human development, and its tendency to interpret social phenomena in biological terms.

Haeckel's elitist worldview extended beyond the realm of biology. He was also "a prophet of the national and racial regeneration of Germany" and exponent of an "intensely mystical and romantic nationalism," as well as "a direct ancestor" of Nazi eugenics.<sup>12</sup> Monism, which Steiner for a time vigorously defended, rejected "Western rationalism, humanism, and cosmopolitanism," and was "opposed to any fundamental social change. What was needed for Germany, it argued categorically, was a far-reaching cultural and not a social revolution."<sup>13</sup> This attitude was to become a hallmark of anthroposophy.

In the heady turn-of-the-century atmosphere, Steiner flirted for a while with left politics, and even shared a podium with revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg at a workers' meeting in 1902. But Steiner consistently rejected any materialist or social analysis of capitalist society in favor of "looking into the soul" of fellow humans to divine the roots of the modern malaise. This facile approach to social reality was to reach fruition in his mature political vision, elaborated during the first world war. Steiner's response to the war was determined by the final, decisive component in his intellectual temperament: chauvinist nationalism.

By his own account, Steiner actively took part in Viennese pan-German circles in the late nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> He saw World War One as part of an international

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<sup>12</sup> First two quotes from Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League*, New York 1971, pp. 16-17; third quote from George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, Madison 1985, p. 87. Haeckel's virulent racism is also extensively documented in Richard Lerner, *Final Solutions: Biology, Prejudice, and Genocide*, Philadelphia 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Gasman, p. 31 and 23. See also the classic account from an anthroposophist perspective: Johannes Hemleben, *Rudolf Steiner und Ernst Haeckel*, Stuttgart 1965.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Course of my Life*, New York 1951, p. 142.

“conspiracy against German spiritual life.”<sup>15</sup> In Steiner’s preferred explanation, it wasn’t imperialist rivalry among colonial powers or fanatical nationalism or unbounded militarism or the competition for markets which caused the war, but British freemasons and their striving for world domination. Steiner was a personal acquaintance of General Helmuth von Moltke, chief of staff of the German high command; after Moltke’s death in 1916 Steiner claimed to be in contact with his spirit and channeled the general’s views on the war from the nether world. After the war Steiner had high praise for German militarism, and continued to rail against France, French culture, and the French language in rhetoric which matched that of *Mein Kampf*. In the 1990’s anthroposophists were still defending Steiner’s jingoist historical revisionism, insisting that Germany bore no responsibility for World War One and was a victim of the “West.”

In the midst of the war’s senseless savagery, Steiner used his military and industrial connections to try to persuade German and Austrian elites of a new social theory of his, which he hoped to see imposed on conquered territories in Eastern Europe. Unfortunately for Steiner’s plans, Germany and Austria-Hungary lost the war, and his dream went unrealized. But the new doctrine he had begun preaching serves to this day as the social vision of anthroposophy. Conceived as an alternative to both Woodrow Wilson’s self-determination program and the bolshevik revolution, Steiner gave this theory the unwieldy name “the tripartite structuring of the social organism” (*Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, often referred to in English-language anthroposophist literature as “the threefold commonwealth”, a phrase which obscures Steiner’s biologicistic view of the social realm as an actual organism).<sup>16</sup> The three branches of this scheme, which resembles Mussolini’s corporatist model, are the state (political, military, and police functions), the economy, and the cultural sphere. This last sphere encompasses “all judicial, educational, intellectual and spiritual matters,” which are to be administered by “corporations,” with individuals free to choose their school, church, court, etc.<sup>17</sup>

Anthroposophists consider this threefold structure to be “naturally ordained.”<sup>18</sup> Its central axiom is that the modern integration of politics, economy and culture into an ostensibly democratic framework must falter because, according to Steiner, neither the economy nor cultural life can or should be structured democratically. The cultural sphere, which Steiner defined very broadly, is a realm of individual achievement where the most talented and capable should predominate. And the economy must never be subject to democratic public control because it would then collapse. Steiner’s economic and political naiveté are encapsulated in his claim that capitalism “will become a legitimate capitalism if it is spiritualized.”<sup>19</sup>

In the aftermath of the bloody world war, at the very moment of the greatest upheavals in history against the violence, misery, and exploitation of capitalism, Steiner emerged as an ardent defender of private profit, the concentration of property and wealth, and the unfettered market. Arguing vehemently against any effort to replace anti-social

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<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Die geistigen Hintergründe des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Dornach 1974, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Steiner wrote that “the social organism is structured like the natural organism” in his nationalist pamphlet from 1919, “Aufruf an das deutsche Volk und an die Kulturwelt.” The pamphlet is quoted extensively in Walter Abendroth, *Rudolf Steiner und die heutige Welt*, Munich 1969, pp.122-123.

<sup>17</sup> Quotes from Steiner as cited in Christoph Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner*, Hamburg 1992, pp. 111-112.

<sup>18</sup> Abendroth, p. 120.

<sup>19</sup> Steiner quoted in Thomas Divis, “Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie” in *ÖkoLinx* #13 (February 1994), p. 27.

institutions with humane ones, Steiner proposed adapting his “threefold commonwealth” to the existing system of class domination. He could scarcely deny that the coarse economic despotism of his day was enormously damaging to human lives, but insisted that “private capitalism as such is not the cause of the damage”:

“The fact that individual people or groups of people administer huge masses of capital is not what makes life anti-social, but rather the fact that these people or groups exploit the products of their administrative labor in an anti-social manner. [ . . . ] If management by capable individuals were replaced with management by the whole community, the productivity of management would be undermined. Free initiative, individual capabilities and willingness to work cannot be fully realized within such a community. [ . . . ] The attempt to structure economic life in a social manner destroys productivity.”<sup>20</sup>

Though Steiner tried to make inroads within working class institutions, his outlook was understandably not very popular among workers. The revolutionaries of the 1919 Munich council republic derided him as “the witch doctor of decaying capitalism.”<sup>21</sup> Industrialists, on the other hand, showed a keen interest in Steiner’s notions. Soon after the revolutionary upsurge of workers across Germany was crushed, Steiner was invited by the director of the Waldorf-Astoria tobacco factory to establish a company school in Stuttgart. Thus were Waldorf schools born.

### **Anthroposophy in Practice: Waldorf Schools and Biodynamic Farming**

The school in Stuttgart turned out to be the anthroposophists’ biggest success, along with the nearby pharmaceutical factory that they named after the mythical Norse oracle Weleda. Waldorf schools are now represented in many countries and generally project a solidly progressive image. There are undoubtedly progressive aspects to Waldorf education, many of them absorbed from the intense ferment of alternative pedagogical theories prevalent in the first decades of the twentieth century. But there is more to Waldorf schooling than holistic learning, musical expression, and eurythmy.

Classical anthroposophy, with its root races and its national souls, is the “covert curriculum” of Waldorf schools.<sup>22</sup> Anthroposophists themselves avow in internal forums that the idea of karma and reincarnation is the “basis of all true education.”<sup>23</sup> They believe that each class of students chooses one another and their teacher before birth. Steiner himself demanded that Waldorf schools be staffed by “teachers with a knowledge of man originating in a spiritual world.”<sup>24</sup> Later anthroposophists express the Waldorf vision thus:

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<sup>20</sup> From an untitled lecture manuscript in Steiner’s archive, reproduced in Walter Kugler, *Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie*, Cologne 1978, pp. 199-200.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Peter Bierl, *Wurzelrassen, Erzengel und Volksgeister: Die Anthroposophie Rudolf Steiners und die Waldorfpädagogik*, Hamburg 1999, p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> See Charlotte Rudolph, *Waldorf-Erziehung: Wege zur Versteinierung*, Darmstadt 1987. No systematic surveys of Waldorf schooling are available. In this section I have relied chiefly on the work of former Waldorf teachers like Rudolph as well as the excellent critical study by Bierl.

<sup>23</sup> From an international Waldorf teachers conference in 1996, cited in Bierl, p. 204.

<sup>24</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Ground of Education*, London 1947, p. 40.

“This education is essentially grounded on the recognition of the child as a spiritual being, with a varying number of incarnations behind him, who is returning at birth into the physical world, into a body that will be slowly moulded into a usable instrument by the soul-spiritual forces he brings with him. He has chosen his parents for himself because of what they can provide for him that he needs in order to fulfill his karma, and, conversely, they too need their relationship with him in order to fulfill their own karma.”<sup>25</sup>

The curriculum at Waldorf schools is structured around the stages of spiritual maturation posited by anthroposophy: from one to seven years a child develops her or his physical body, from seven to fourteen years the ethereal body, and from fourteen to twenty-one the astral body. These stages are supposed to be marked by physical changes; thus kindergartners at Waldorf schools can't enter first grade until they've begun to lose their baby teeth. In addition, each pupil is classified according to the medieval theory of humors: a Waldorf child is either melancholic, choleric, sanguine, or phlegmatic, and is treated accordingly by the teachers.

Along with privileging ostensibly “spiritual” considerations over cognitive and psycho-social ones, the static uniformity of this scheme is pedagogically suspect. It also suggests that Waldorf schools' reputation for fostering a spontaneous, child-centered and individually oriented educational atmosphere is undeserved. In fact Steiner's model of instruction is downright authoritarian: he emphasized repetition and rote learning, and insisted that the teacher should be the center of the classroom and that students' role was not to judge or even discuss the teacher's pronouncements. In practice many Waldorf schools implement strict discipline, with public punishment for perceived transgressions.

Anthroposophy's peculiar predilections also shape the Waldorf curriculum. There is no jazz or popular music at European Waldorf schools, and recorded music in general is frowned upon; these phenomena are considered to harbor demonic forces. Instead students read fairy tales, a staple of Waldorf education. Many sports, too, are forbidden, and art instruction often rigidly follows Steiner's eccentric theories of color and form. Taken together with the pervasive anti-technological and anti-scientific bias, the suspicion toward rational thought, and the occasional outbreaks of racist gibberish, these factors indicate that Waldorf schooling is as questionable as the other aspects of the anthroposophist enterprise.

Next to Waldorf schools, the most widespread and apparently progressive version of applied anthroposophy is biodynamic agriculture. In Germany and North America, at least, biodynamics is an established part of the alternative agriculture scene. Many small growers use biodynamic methods on their farms or gardens; there are biodynamic vineyards and the Demeter line of biodynamic food products, as well as a profusion of pamphlets, periodicals and conferences on the theory and practice of biodynamic farming.

Although not a farmer himself, Steiner introduced the fundamental outlines of biodynamics near the end of his life and produced a substantial body of literature on the topic, which anthroposophists and biodynamic growers follow more or less faithfully. Biodynamics in practice often converges with the broader principles of organic farming. Its focus on maintaining soil fertility rather than on crop yield, its rejection of artificial chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and its view of the whole farm or plot as an ecosystem

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<sup>25</sup> Easton, p. 388.

all mark the biodynamic approach as an eminently sensible and ecologically sound method of cultivation. But there is more to the story than that.

Biodynamic farming is based on Steiner's revelation of invisible cosmic forces and their effects on soil and flora. Anthroposophy teaches that the earth is an organism that breathes twice a day, that ethereal beings act upon the land, and that celestial bodies and their movements directly influence the growth of plants. Hence biodynamic farmers time their sowing to coincide with the proper planetary constellations, all a part of what they consider "the spiritual natural processes of the earth."<sup>26</sup> Sometimes this "spiritual" approach takes unusual forms, as in the case of "preparation 500."

To make preparation 500, an integral component of anthroposophist agriculture, biodynamic farmers pack cow manure into a steer's horn and bury it in the ground. After leaving it there for one whole winter, they dig up the horn and mix the manure with water (it must be stirred for a full hour in a specific rhythm) to make a spray which is applied to the topsoil. All of this serves to channel "radiations which tend to etherealize and astralize" and thus "gather up and attract from the surrounding earth all that is ethereal and life-giving."<sup>27</sup>

Non-anthroposophist organic growers are often inclined to dismiss such fanciful aspects of biodynamics as pointless but harmless appurtenances to an otherwise congenial cultivation technique. While this attitude has some merit, it is not reciprocated by biodynamic adherents, who emphasize that "The 'organic' farmer may well farm 'biologically' but he does not have the knowledge of how to work with dynamic forces—a knowledge that was given for the first time by Rudolf Steiner."<sup>28</sup> For better or worse, biodynamic farming is inseparable from its anthroposophic context.

Enthusiasm for biodynamics, however, has historically extended well beyond the boundaries of anthroposophy proper. For a time it also held a strong appeal for others who shared anthroposophists' nationalist background and occult orientation. Indeed it was through biodynamic farming that anthroposophy most directly influenced the course of German fascism.

### **Anthroposophy and the "Green Wing" of the Nazi Party**

The mix of mysticism, romanticism, and pseudo-environmentalist concerns propagated by Steiner and his cohorts brought anthroposophy into close ideological contact with a grouping that has been described as the green wing of National Socialism.<sup>29</sup> This group, which included several of the Third Reich's most powerful leaders, were active proponents of biodynamic agriculture and other anthroposophist causes. The history of this relationship has been the subject of some controversy, with anthroposophists typically

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<sup>26</sup> Lindenberg, p. 134.

<sup>27</sup> Steiner, Lecture Four from the 1924 Course on Agriculture.

<sup>28</sup> Easton, p. 444.

<sup>29</sup> I have borrowed the phrase "green wing of the NSDAP" (the German acronym for the Nazi party) from Jost Hermand; see his *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland*, Frankfurt 1991, especially pp. 112-118. The term is not meant to suggest an identifiable faction within the party; rather it refers to a tendency or shared ideological and practical orientation, common to many activists and leading figures in the Nazi movement, the main outlines of which are recognizably environmentalist by today's standards. For a much fuller treatment of this tendency see my "Fascist Ecology: The "Green Wing" of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents" in Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism*.

denying any connection whatsoever to the Nazis. To understand the matter fully, it is perhaps best to set it in the context of anthroposophy's attitude toward the rise of fascism.

As the extremely thorough research of independent scholar Peter Bierl demonstrates, there was considerable admiration within the ranks of anthroposophists for Mussolini and Italian fascism, the precursor to Hitler's dictatorship.<sup>30</sup> But it was the German variety of fascism which shared anthroposophy's preoccupation with race. During the 1920's and 1930's the leading anthroposophist writer on racial issues was Dr. Richard Karutz, director of the anthropological museum in Lübeck. Karutz wanted to protect anthropology as a discipline from what he termed "the sociological flood of materialist thinking," favoring instead a "spiritual" ethnology based on the root race doctrine.<sup>31</sup> Flatly denying the anthropological research of his own time, he insisted on the cultural and spiritual superiority of the "Aryan race."

Karutz was more openly antisemitic than many of his anthroposophist colleagues. He denounced the "spirit of Jewry," which he described as "cliquish, petty, narrow-minded, rigidly tied to the past, devoted to dead conceptual knowledge and hungry for world power."<sup>32</sup> During the last decade of the Weimar republic, Karutz and other anthroposophists had to contend with the growing notoriety of Nazi "racial science." Karutz criticized the Nazis' eugenic theories for their biological, as opposed to "spiritual," emphasis, and for neglecting the role of reincarnation. But he agreed with their proscription of "racial mixing," especially between whites and non-whites.

In 1931 the foremost anthroposophist journal published a positive review by Karutz of Walther Darré's book *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* ('A New Nobility out of Blood and Soil'). Darré, a leading "racial theorist" and pre-eminent figure in the Nazis' green wing, was soon to become Minister of Agriculture under Hitler.<sup>33</sup> This cozy relationship with major Nazi officials paid off for Steiner's followers once the party took command of Germany. According to numerous anthroposophist accounts of this period, the Nazis hounded the Steinerites from the beginning of the Third Reich. But this self-serving tale is incompatible with the historical record.

Immediately after the NSDAP attained state power in early 1933, the leaders of organized anthroposophy took the initiative in extending their support to the new government. In June of that year a Danish newspaper asked Günther Wachsmuth, Secretary of the International Anthroposophic Society in Switzerland, about anthroposophy's attitude toward the Nazi regime. He replied, "We can't complain. We've been treated with the utmost consideration and have complete freedom to promote our

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<sup>30</sup> See Bierl, pp. 135-138. Much of the following section is based on Bierl's work.

<sup>31</sup> Karutz quoted in Bierl, p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Steiner himself was ambivalent toward Jews. In an 1897 polemic against zionism he compared antisemites – at the time a well-organized, active and very popular presence in Central Europe – to harmless children, and argued that zionists and "the heartless leaders of European Jewry" were "much worse" than the antisemites (Steiner, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte* p. 199). On the other hand he actively supported the right side in the Dreyfus affair, albeit largely out of hostility toward the French republic. Steiner publicly rejected antisemitism, aligning himself instead with what he called the "idealistic German nationalist tendency" which opposed the "materialist" antisemitism of other pan-German agitators. Steiner also believed that Jews, uniquely among peoples, lacked their own *Volksgeist* or national spirit.

<sup>33</sup> Darré was himself influenced by Steiner's ideas; see Heinz Haushofer, *Ideengeschichte der Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik im deutschen Sprachgebiet*, volume II, Munich 1958, pp. 269-271.

doctrine.” Speaking for anthroposophists generally, Wachsmuth went on to express his “sympathy” and “admiration” for National Socialism.<sup>34</sup>

Wachsmuth, one of three top officers at anthroposophy’s world headquarters in Dornach, was hardly alone among Steiner’s followers in his vocal support for the Hitler dictatorship. The homeopathic physician Hans Rascher, for example, proudly proclaimed himself “just as much an anthroposophist as a National Socialist.”<sup>35</sup> In 1934 the German Anthroposophic Society sent Hitler an official letter pointing out anthroposophy’s compatibility with National Socialist values and emphasizing Steiner’s “Aryan origins” and his pro-German activism.

At the time Wachsmuth gave his interview, thousands of socialists, communists, anarchists, union members, and other dissidents had been thrown into concentration camps, and independent political life in Germany had been obliterated. But for years most anthroposophists suffered no harassment; they were accepted into the compulsory Nazi cultural associations and continued to pursue their activities. The exception, of course, was Jewish members of anthroposophist organizations. They were forced, under pressure from the state, to leave these institutions. There is no record of their gentile anthroposophist comrades protesting this “racial” exclusion, much less putting up any internal resistance to it. In fact some anthroposophists, like the law professor Ernst von Hippel, enthusiastically endorsed the expulsion of Jews from German universities.

Despite this extensive public support by anthroposophists for the nazification of Germany, a power struggle was going on within the byzantine apparatus of the Nazi state over whether to ban anthroposophy or co-opt the movement and its institutions. This struggle was primarily conducted between Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s personal representative and a practicing anthroposophist in his own right, and Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS and devotee of the esoteric and occult who viewed anthroposophy as ideological and organizational competition to his own pseudo-religion of Nazi paganism. It was not until November 1935, long after most other independent cultural institutions had been destroyed, that the German Anthroposophic Society was dissolved on Himmler’s orders.

The ban, signed by Himmler’s lieutenant Reinhard Heydrich, cited anthroposophy’s “international orientation” and Waldorf schools’ “individualistic” education. Nazi opponents of the party’s green wing, such as Heydrich, disliked anthroposophy because of its “oriental” origins; there was also a certain populist resentment of anthroposophy’s elitism involved. But even after the ban there was no general persecution of anthroposophists. Many of their publishing activities continued uninterrupted; anthroposophist professors, teachers and civil servants kept their jobs; Waldorf schools and biodynamic farms continued to operate. Most Waldorf schools were eventually shut down in the course of the later 1930’s, despite the pro-anthroposophist intervention of influential Nazis like SS war criminal Otto Ohlendorf. But the final blow didn’t come until 1941 when Hess, anthroposophy’s protector, fled to Britain. After that point the last Waldorf school was closed for good, biodynamic farming lost its official support, and several leading anthroposophists were imprisoned for a time.

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<sup>34</sup> The Wachsmuth interview is quoted in Bierl, p. 139. See also the five-volume collection *Dokumente und Briefe zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung und Gesellschaft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Arfst Wagner.

<sup>35</sup> Rascher quoted in Bierl, p. 140.

The Weleda factories, on the other hand, continued to operate throughout the war and even received state contracts. In fact Weleda supplied naturopathic materials for ‘medical experiments’ (i.e. torture) on prisoners at Dachau.<sup>36</sup> Weleda’s head gardener, Franz Lippert, was an SS member who in 1941 asked to be transferred to Dachau to oversee the biodynamic plantation that Himmler had established at the concentration camp. Thus anthroposophist collaboration with Nazi barbarism persisted until the bitter end of the Third Reich.

Much of this sordid history is substantiated, albeit with a very different interpretive accent, in the massive 1999 book on anthroposophists and National Socialism by Uwe Werner, archivist at anthroposophy’s world headquarters in Switzerland.<sup>37</sup> But even this revealing work presents anthroposophists’ behavior under the Nazis as merely defensive and thus absolves Steiner’s followers of responsibility for Nazi Germany’s myriad crimes. Many other postwar attempts by anthroposophists to come to terms with their history of compromise and complicity with the Third Reich are embarrassingly evasive and repeat the underlying racism which united them with the Nazis in the first place. The prevailing explanations are thoroughly esoteric, portraying the Nazis as manipulated by demonic powers or even as a necessary stage in the spiritual development of the Aryan race.<sup>38</sup>

More striking still than this mystical apology for genocide is the refusal within anthroposophic circles to acknowledge their doctrine’s formative influence on the Nazis’ green wing. The anthroposophist inflection of German ecofascism extended well beyond high-profile figures such as Darré and Hess. Powerful Steinerite Nazis included Antony Ludovici, chief land planning officer in Hess’s Reich Chancellery, and Ludolf Haase, a high ranking official in the ministry of agriculture appointed by Darré’s successor. A further central member of the green wing with strong ties to anthroposophy was Alwin Seifert, whose official title was Reich Advocate for the Landscape.

What distinguished this motley band of fascist functionaries was their allegiance to the anti-humanist “religion of nature” preached by National Socialism.<sup>39</sup> Reviving Haeckel’s blend of Social Darwinism and ecology, they embodied a historically unique and politically disastrous convergence of otherworldly ideology with worldly authority. In the green wing of the Nazi party, nationalism, spiritualism, esoteric racism and eco-mysticism acceded to state power.

The green wing’s guiding slogan was ‘Blood and Soil,’ an infamous Nazi phrase which referred to the mystical relationship between the German people and its sacred land. Adherents of Blood and Soil held that environmental purity was inseparable from racial purity. This dual concern made them natural consociates of anthroposophy. The principal intermediary between organized anthroposophy and the Nazi green wing was Erhard Bartsch, the chief anthroposophist official responsible for biodynamic agriculture. Bartsch was on friendly personal terms with Seifert and Hess and played a crucial role in persuading the Nazi leadership of the virtues of biodynamics. He constantly emphasized the philosophical affinities between anthroposophy and National Socialism. Bartsch edited the journal *Demeter*, official organ of German biodynamic growers, whose pages were

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<sup>36</sup> See Geden, p. 140. Weleda maintains that their staff was unaware of how its products were used.

<sup>37</sup> Werner, *Anthroposophen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus 1933-1945*, Munich 1999. The book is based in part on internal anthroposophist records not available to other scholars.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Jesaiah Ben-Aharon, *The Spiritual Event of the Twentieth Century*, London 1996.

<sup>39</sup> See Robert Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature*, London 1985.

filled with praise for the Nazis and their courageous *Führer* even after the start of the war. Bartsch also offered his services to the SS in their plan to settle the conquered territories of Eastern Europe with pure Aryan farmers. His early and wholehearted engagement for the Nazi cause is testimony to the political precariousness of the biodynamic model.

Nazi Minister of Agriculture and “Reich Peasant Leader” Walther Darré was initially skeptical toward biodynamic farming but became an enthusiastic convert in the late 1930’s. He bestowed on Steiner’s version of organic cultivation the official label “farming according to the laws of life,” a term which highlights the natural order ideology common to all forms of reactionary ecology. As late as mid-1941 Darré was heavily promoting state support for biodynamics, and his biographer shows that “one third of the top Nazi leadership supported Darré’s campaign” on behalf of biodynamics at a time when all varieties of anthroposophy were officially out of favor.<sup>40</sup> Indeed Nazi government encouragement of biodynamic farming had a long history: “There were two thousand biodynamic farmers registered in the Nazi ‘Battle for Production’, probably an understatement of the real figure.”<sup>41</sup>

The green wing of the Nazis represents the historical fulfillment of the dreams of reactionary ecology: ecofascism in power. The extensive intertwining of anthroposophic belief and practice with actually existing ecofascism should not be judged as an instance of guilt by association. Rather it ought to be occasion to reflect on the political susceptibilities of esoteric environmentalism. Even the anthroposophist author Arfst Wagner, who spent years compiling documentation on anthroposophy in the Third Reich, came to the uncomfortable conclusion that “a strong latent tendency toward extreme right-wing politics” is common among anthroposophists both past and present.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Continuing Legacy of Steinerite Reactionary Ecology**

The calamitous experience of Nazism failed to exorcise the right-wing spirits that haunt anthroposophy. Steiner’s dictum that social change could only be the result of spiritual transformation on an individual level led to a marginalization of sober political analysis among his followers. This left anthroposophy wide open to the same regressive forces that had surreptitiously animated it all along.

Of course there were also personal continuities between the Nazi green wing and post-war anthroposophy. While the fervent Steinerite Hess was inaccessible in Spandau prison, Darré’s judges at Nuremberg imposed a relatively short sentence, and after his release from prison Darré resumed his friendly contacts with anthroposophists until his death in 1953. Seifert returned to his professorship of landscape architecture in Munich and in 1964 was elected honorary chair of the Bavarian League for Nature Conservation. Darré’s biographer also notes admiringly “the brave handful of top Nazis” who had refused

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<sup>40</sup> Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, London 1989, p. 204. Bramwell’s chapter on the green wing of the Nazis, entitled “The Steiner Connection,” is an important source of material on the topic, as is her earlier book *Blood and Soil: Walther Darré and Hitler’s ‘Green Party’*. Bramwell’s work, however, is often unreliable and always tendentious and should be consulted with caution.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197. The ‘Battle for Production’ was Darré’s state-sponsored program to increase agricultural productivity. Initiated in 1934, its leading principle was “Keep the soil healthy!”

<sup>42</sup> Wagner quoted in Bierl, p. 162.

to cooperate with the 1941 purge of anthroposophists and “had their children educated and cared for by Anthroposophists after the Second World War.”<sup>43</sup>

The younger generation of radical right-wing anthroposophists is represented above all by Werner Georg Haverbeck. A leader of the Hitler Youth during the Third Reich, Haverbeck was converted to anthroposophy by Hess. After the war he became pastor of an anthroposophist congregation and founded the far-right World League for the Protection of Life (WSL in its German acronym).<sup>44</sup> The WSL, which has played an influential role in the German environmental movement, is anti-abortion, anti-immigration, and pro-eugenics. It promotes a “natural order of life” and opposes racial “degeneration.” As aggressive nationalism gained ever more ground in German public discourse through the 1980’s and 1990’s, Haverbeck and the WSL were instrumental in linking it to ecological issues.

In 1989 Haverbeck authored a biography of anthroposophy’s founder under the title *Rudolf Steiner – Advocate for Germany*.<sup>45</sup> The book portrays Steiner, accurately enough, as a staunch nationalist, and even uses Steiner to deny the facts of the holocaust. Haverbeck’s fellow long-time anthroposophist and WSL leader Ernst Otto Cohrs is another active holocaust denier. Cohrs, who made his living in the 1980’s and 1990’s selling biodynamic products, has also published works such as “There Were No Gas Chambers” and “The Auschwitz Myth.” A further prominent Steinerite on Germany’s extreme right is Günther Bartsch, who describes himself as a “national revolutionary.” Along with his neo-Nazi comrade Baldur Springmann, an organic farmer, WSL member, and founder of the Greens, Bartsch developed the doctrine of ‘Ecosophy.’ A mixture of anthroposophy with reactionary ecology and teutonic mysticism, ecosophy is yet another vehicle for promoting far right politics within the esoteric scene.

The persistent connection between Steiner’s worldview and neofascist politics is not restricted to a few fringe figures. Throughout the past two decades, well-known anthroposophists have been a common presence in Germany’s far right press, while the anthroposophist press often enough opens its pages to right-wing extremists. One anti-fascist researcher reports that “leading figures in the extreme right and neofascist camp are ideological proponents of biodynamic agriculture.”<sup>46</sup> Anthroposophists themselves occasionally admit that within their own organizations a “right-wing conservative consensus” remains “absolute.”<sup>47</sup>

Many contemporary anthroposophists nonetheless maintain that figures like Haverbeck are marginal to their movement. This argument overlooks the fact that several of Haverbeck’s books are published by the largest anthroposophist publisher in Germany, and ignores the substantial overlap between Haverbeck’s positions and those of Steiner and classical anthroposophy. More important, mainstream anthroposophists continue to repeat the mistakes of the past, as if Nazi tyranny and genocide had never taken place. Günther Wachsmuth, for example – as mainstream an anthroposophist as one might find – published a purportedly scientific book in the 1950’s called *The Development of Humanity*

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<sup>43</sup> Bramwell, *Blood and Soil*, Bourne End 1985, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> For more extensive discussion of the WSL and ultra-right anthroposophy see Janet Biehl’s “‘Ecology’ and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-right” in Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism*, especially pp. 44-48.

<sup>45</sup> Haverbeck, *Rudolf Steiner – Anwalt für Deutschland*, Munich 1989.

<sup>46</sup> Volkmar Wölk, “Neue Trends im ökofaschistischen Netzwerk” in Raimund Hethey and Peter Kratz, *In Bester Gesellschaft*, Göttingen 1991, p. 119.

<sup>47</sup> Anthroposophist author Henning Köhler quoted in Bierl, p. 9.

which recapitulated all the racist nonsense of pre-war anthroposophy.<sup>48</sup> In 1991, in the midst of an intense debate within Germany about restricting immigration laws, an anthroposophist journal ran an article with the title “*Deutschendämmerung*” (‘Twilight of the Germans’) which offered an ‘ecological’ version of neo-malthusian propaganda and anti-immigrant hysteria.

Mainstream anthroposophy also still has a Jewish problem. Perhaps this is not surprising in a movement whose founder blamed the persecution of Jews in the middle ages on their own “inner destiny” and proclaimed that “the Jews have contributed immensely to their own separate status.”<sup>49</sup> In 1992 a Swiss Waldorf teacher published a book claiming there were no gas chambers in Auschwitz; in 1995 a prominent anthroposophist periodical carried an article on “Jewish-Christian Hostility” which recycled the old myth of Jews as Christ-killers; in 1998 an anthroposophist from Hamburg wrote to another Steinerite journal claiming that “from 1933 to 1942 any Jew could leave the Nazi dictatorship with all of his property, and even be released from a concentration camp, as long as he went to Palestine.”<sup>50</sup> In 1991 and again in 1997 Swiss and German anthroposophists re-issued the 1931 book *Das Rätsel des Judentums* (‘The Mystery of Jewry’) by Ludwig Thieben, one of Austria’s leading anthroposophists in Steiner’s day. Jewish organizations and civil rights groups protested this ugly tract, which decries the “far-reaching negative influence of the Jewish essence,” alleges that Jews have “an anti-christian predisposition in their blood,” and holds Jews responsible for the “decline of the West.”<sup>51</sup> The anthroposophist publisher threatened the protesting organizations with a lawsuit.

The repeated occurrence of incidents such as these ought to be of considerable concern to humanists and people who envision a world free of racist ignorance. Even when approached with skepticism, anthroposophy’s consistent pattern of regressive political stances raises troubling questions about participation in anthroposophist projects and collaboration with anthroposophists on social initiatives. Those anthroposophists who are actively involved in contemporary environmental and social change movements often personify the most reactionary aspects of those movements: they hold technology, science, the enlightenment and abstract thought responsible for environmental destruction and social dislocation; they rail against finance capital and the loss of traditional values, denounce atheism and secularism, and call for renewed spiritual awareness and personal growth as the solution to ecological catastrophe and capitalist alienation. Conspiracy theory is their coin in trade, esoteric insight their preferred answer, obscurantism their primary function.

With a public face that is seemingly of the left, anthroposophy frequently acts as a magnet for the right. Loyal to an unreconstructed racist and elitist philosophy, built on a foundation of anti-democratic politics and pro-capitalist economics, and purveying mystical panaceas rather than social alternatives, Steiner’s ideology offers only disorientation in an already disoriented world. Anthroposophy’s enduring legacy of

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<sup>48</sup> Wachsmuth, *Werdegang der Menschheit*, Dornach 1953.

<sup>49</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Die Geschichte der Menschheit und die Weltanschauungen der Kulturvölker*, p. 192.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Bierl, p. 185. Bierl’s chapter on anthroposophist antisemitism includes many more examples of a similar nature.

<sup>51</sup> Ludwig Thieben, *Das Rätsel des Judentums*, Basel 1991, p. 164 and 174.

collusion with ecofascism makes it plainly unacceptable for those working toward a humane and ecological society.